



## City Research Online

### City, University of London Institutional Repository

---

**Citation:** Moise, R. & Anton, A. (2021). The Citizen Diplomats and their Pathways to Diplomatic Power. In: Pedro Sebastiao, S. & Spinola de Carvalho, S. (Eds.), *Diplomacy, Organisations and Citizens*. (pp. 219-254). Springer. ISBN 978-3-030-81876-0 doi: 10.1007/978-3-030-81877-7\_13

This is the accepted version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version.

---

**Permanent repository link:** <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/30226/>

**Link to published version:** [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-81877-7\\_13](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-81877-7_13)

**Copyright:** City Research Online aims to make research outputs of City, University of London available to a wider audience. Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. URLs from City Research Online may be freely distributed and linked to.

**Reuse:** Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

---

City Research Online:

<http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/>

[publications@city.ac.uk](mailto:publications@city.ac.uk)

---

# The Citizen Diplomats and their Pathway to Diplomatic Power<sup>1</sup>

Anca Anton<sup>2</sup> & Raluca Moise<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

This chapter focuses on individual, citizen diplomats that reached a global level of notoriety and explores their representational work in order to identify pathways to diplomatic power. We applied Sharp's taxonomy of citizen diplomats (2001), adapting traditional models of soft power and public diplomacy (Nye, 2011) and employing a multiple case design focusing on descriptive case studies (Yin, 2018). We therefore selected global citizens who reflect the challenges and trends of contemporary citizen diplomacy (Cooper, 2007, p. 126): a sense of purpose, an ability to interact with high-level state officials and a global reach. By building specific case studies drawn from diplomatic actions of highly visible individuals, our focus was to explore the conversion process of soft power as a possible pathway to diplomatic power in terms of policy making rather than awareness, a dimension often associated with the soft power of citizens.

**Keywords:** citizen diplomacy, citizen diplomats, soft power, conversion

## INTRODUCTION

In addressing the new realities of the 21st century diplomacy, Stanzel et al. (2018, pp. 62-64) consider four defining dimensions for the shifts in the focus of diplomatic activity: 1. the multiplication of public spheres through social fragmentation, differentiation and pluralisation (intra and inter-societally), 2. the dramatic effects of digitization and the transformation of digital techniques into instruments of diplomacy, 3. the increase in the number of (non-state) actors, either profit- or ideology-oriented, acting in an international context and impacting foreign policy and diplomacy directly, and 4. the critical importance of the personality and profile of future diplomats to the practice of diplomacy as they will "need to represent the fragmentation of their societies, cope socially and linguistically with changing demands, and meet the need for a different approach to publics and to digitization." While these transformations are worrisome for state diplomacy, they describe the perfect context in which civil society, through individuals, movements and organisations, can engage in diplomatic activity, defining its own public diplomacy as civic diplomacy.

This chapter uses Yin's multiple case study design (2018), Cooper's criteria for contemporary citizen diplomacy (2007, p. 126) – a sense of purpose, an ability to

---

<sup>1</sup> To be published in in (eds) Pedro Sebastiao, S. & de Carvalho, S. (2021-2022) *Diplomacy, Organisations and Citizens: A European Communication Perspective*, Springer.

<sup>2</sup> University of Bucharest, Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences, [anca.anton@fjsc.ro](mailto:anca.anton@fjsc.ro)

<sup>3</sup> University of Arts of London, London College of Communication, [r.moise@lcc.arts.ac.uk](mailto:r.moise@lcc.arts.ac.uk)

interact with high-level state officials and a global reach, and Sharp's taxonomy of citizen diplomats (2001) to select five case studies: George Clooney – a “go-between” citizen diplomat, Ashton Kutcher – a representative for sectoral, regional, or local economic interest, Malala Yousafzai – lobbyist or advocate for a particular cause, Greta Thunberg – a subverter or transformer of existing policies and/or political arrangements, domestic and/or international, Bill Gates – an autonomous agent in international relations. We then use Nye's model of conversion of soft power (2011) to analyse how these citizen diplomats transform their symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1989) into diplomatic power and whether or not this process has any policy outcomes. In this analysis we also employ an adapted Source-Credibility Model and discuss the spill of promotional culture into citizen diplomacy. The results and discussion focus on two major takeaways: the symbolic access to diplomatic power and the hybrid and multilevel nature of the citizen diplomat. The Conclusions address the use of symbolic capital in the soft power conversion process, as well as further research directions.

## **1. Theoretical framework and concept discussion**

### **1.1. The Vienna Convention diplomat and the citizen diplomat**

A nuanced understanding of the roles and functions of citizen diplomats can be achieved by a direct comparison with institutional diplomats. Fulda (2019, p. 199) makes such a comparison by focusing on Preferred mode of operation, Core interest, Qualification, Admission, Remit, Legal status, and Overseas engagement, describing citizen diplomats as operating on a people to people level (sometimes supported by transnational NGOs), pursuing public good, managing their own vision, mission and values; in addition, according to Fulda, they are generalists or specialists with language competency, they need to be invited, demanded, appreciated or at least tolerated, are self-organised and develop a short or long term engagement with the partner country. Fulda's portrayal is nuanced, but limits the citizen diplomat to being if not an ambassador of a state, at least its promoter, informally working to advance a political, cultural or economic agenda. In addition, it focuses on a cultural understanding of the citizen diplomat, on personal relationships, not on power or policy impact - it does not see the citizen as a comparable match for the institutional, traditional diplomat, but rather as an autonomous individual caught in the soft power web of the state. In this chapter we enlarge the definition of the citizen diplomat in order to advance beyond it being merely a satellite of the state and acting in a state-centric diplomatic paradigm.

Citizen diplomats are the expression of “the public's desire to participate in national and international decision-making” (Stanzel, 2018, p. 62). However, the multitude of national interests in traditional diplomacy is mirrored in the case of civic diplomacy through the diversity of issues emerging from the fragmented society and multiplied public spheres of the 21st century, as well as through the diversity of citizen diplomats. In this chapter we will use the typology proposed by Sharp (2001), which focuses on the representation function of citizen diplomats and is organised around two dimensions: who or what is being represented and to whom.

The typology consists of five broad types of citizen diplomats who facilitate, join, subvert or transcend existing diplomatic arrangements (Sharp, 2001, pp. 137-141):

1. The citizen diplomat as a go-between,
2. The citizen diplomat as a representative for a sectoral, regional or local economic interest,
3. The citizen diplomat as a lobbyist or advocate for a particular cause,
4. The citizen diplomat as a subverter or transformer of existing policies and/or political arrangements, domestic and/or international,
5. The citizen diplomat as an autonomous agent in international relations.

Developing any of these identities transforms individuals into representatives of a state, of an organisation, of an issue or of themselves, projecting them into a diplomatic system and onto an international scene they need to learn to navigate in order to successfully fulfil their representation function and develop a form of soft power comparable to that of the states (Nye, 2008). However, unlike professional diplomats, citizen diplomats lack a navigation map. The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (United Nations, 1961) identified “the efficient performance of the functions of diplomatic missions”. According to this document, diplomats perform a representation role in order to contribute to the development of friendly relations among nations; to that end, they have a clearly defined set of privileges and immunities, set in place in order to allow diplomats to carry out their mission without the intrusion or influence of the host government, the best known provision being diplomatic immunity.

As an actor outside the state diplomatic system, the citizen diplomat performs unregulated actions while trying to access a highly regulated world. Social norms, public opinion, community values and the efficient use of communication platforms regulate the performance of the citizen diplomat to a higher degree than existing diplomatic arrangements. Citizen diplomats need to excel “in their capacity to secure a following for the positions they adopt” (Sharp, 2001, p. 149). This “following” validates their representation function and grants them the “diplomat” status: they “become diplomatic”; they can achieve this by following in the steps of civil society organisations who went “from observing status on the edge of the international political process to major players in the game” (Langhorne, 2007, p. 11), but also by using high level diplomatic practice and the actions of professional diplomats as guidance. The position of citizen diplomats is, however, problematic in more ways than that of their counterparts: professional diplomats, when engaged in traditional or public diplomacy, work to engage foreign governments or publics while benefiting from the regulated support of their state diplomatic system; however, citizen diplomats work to engage not only foreign states and publics, but also their supporters or even their detractors.

### **1.2. Digitalisation and civic/citizen diplomats**

The loss of “primary control” (Langhorne, 2007, p. 13) by states over the diplomatic process that gained traction after WWI through the pressure of the public sphere, the press and the increasing number of non-state actors was amplified by digitalisation, particularly starting with the beginning of the XXI century,

generating what Nye called “the diffusion of power” (2011, pp. 113-152); however, while in the first wave it was the organisations (coming from the commercial sector or from civil society) that attained access into this international soft-power system, in the second wave it was the individual. The technological transformations, particularly in communications technology, gave “one individual the communication power that was the monopoly of the nation state in the previous century” (Cull, 2011, p. 2). This power increased exponentially with social media, to the point where on Facebook or Twitter “an individual may be as influential as a nation state or a large corporation” (Manor, 2019, p. 184), validating or challenging their actions and statements.

These individual diplomatic actors arise from the public sphere as not only citizen diplomats, but increasingly as digital citizen diplomats, either being secured as public diplomacy agents by states (Melissen & Caesar-Gordon, 2016) or following a non-state agenda of their own, of a movement or of a civil society organisation (CSO). With social media providing a platform for their voice, as well as acting as an amplifier, citizen diplomats develop their own take on digital diplomacy. This take is based, in our opinion, on three pillars, based on the idea that digital diplomacy should be discussed in a online-offline framework:

1. the conversion of individual power into diplomatic power in relation to foreign states, organisations or publics. In this chapter we will use an adaptation of Nye’s model for the conversion of soft power (2011, p. 100) as it allows for an integration of online-offline dimensions and a discussion on how models developed for state (public) diplomacy can be adapted by citizen diplomats, whose core power is soft power: Resources - Tools - Conversion skills - Target response - Outcome. This adaptation focuses on the agents (the citizens, not the state employees), and their resources, tools/actions to generate conversion, and conversion skills, as well as the results they obtain and the outcomes of this process, seen in terms of the impact of citizen diplomats on the policy they target.

2. the innate credibility of citizens in front of their peers, a type of credibility that Cull credits to being perceived as “someone like me” (2011), as well as their social influencer status. In this chapter we will use an adapted version of the Source-Credibility Model as a reference point in our discussion of the personal (digital) profile of citizen diplomats and the level of credibility they reach among their audiences. The model is sourced from marketing research and resides on three dimensions: Attractiveness, Expertise, Trustworthiness (Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2020). However, transplanting the model into diplomacy research requires a reassessment of the dimensions, and Goodwill is recommended alongside Expertise and Trustworthiness (Gass & Seiter, 2009); in order “to be perceived as credible, a source must convey respect for others and a genuine interest in their wellbeing” (p. 159).

3. the ability of individuals to navigate and communicate across a digital world dominated by networks (Cull, 2011) and networks of networks (Bjola, 2017), adapting from their own perspective the online public participation specific to digital diplomacy. In this chapter we will use the “online diplomatic participation” taxonomy proposed by Huang (2020): expression mode (of personal attitudes on political

issues online), interaction mode (with political actors online), membership mode (of online groups that have political purposes) and campaign mode (participation in online campaigns organized or enabled by political actors);

### **1.3. Promotion, Symbolic Capital and Citizen Diplomats**

Drawing from Davis' arguments (2013) about the expansion of promotional practices in areas which are not focused on promotion, we will also build a critical conversation about the role of promotional techniques and practice in citizen diplomacy. As theorists of citizen diplomats have pointed out (Bolewski, 2007; Payne et al., 2011; Sharp, 2001), we can discuss about two types of citizen diplomats: the grassroots individual, highly involved in public affairs, and the celebrity who uses his/her already acquired symbolic capital to advocate for issues and particular causes. Our interest is to build a case for the inclusion in our analysis of the importance of promotional practices and the uses citizen diplomats make of them in order to achieve their goals.

Davis (2013) discusses in his study about the intertwined relationships between promotional cultures (public relations, branding, advertising etc) and celebrity culture. He demonstrates in his book the fact that more and more social and professional areas have internalised promotional practices. Even at individual level, personas have internalised practices of self-promotion, turning themselves into promotional commodities by using online media in a more conscious way, a way which presents their individual self to a wider audience. When connecting these ideas with celebrity culture, Davis does discuss in a critical way about the ubiquitous nature of promotion which impacted social areas, such as politics, organisational leadership, publishing industry and academic environment.

At a societal level, celebrities and celebrity status cannot be solely located within entertainment industries; Davis discusses what he calls *celebritisation*, meaning the intersections between celebrity culture (its specific features or processes) and other social areas or professional fields. He talks about the fact that celebrity may also be seen as a type of symbolic capital that is transferable to other forms of capital and professional fields. Politics, organisational leadership, the literary field, all these are areas which have been dramatically changed by the interference of celebrity culture. For instance, the fact that the share prices of companies are dependent on the celebrity status of the CEO or the fact that political parties' selection of candidates and leaders is increasingly linked to a politician's stock of symbolic capital and estimates of their ability to accumulate it with future voters are undeniable proofs of the increasing *celebritisation* of today's society. This leads Davis to conclude that "Celebrity brings symbolic capital, which is transferable to economic, political and other capital forms. These bring forms of power, within fields and wider society. Symbolic capital can also have a destabilising effect on the fields in which it is used" (2013, p. 100).

Citizen diplomacy is a political mechanism specific to liberal states (Yun & Toth, 2009) by which individuals and groups of citizens who may not be directly motivated by national foreign policy objectives manifest their political identities to change the course of events. Citizen diplomats, be them advocates of a particular

international cause or autonomous agents in international relations, all employ mediation and promotional practices (branding, public relations, etc.) to position themselves as “assertive participants in globalized relations” (Bolweski, 2007, p. 70).

As our focus is on the individual’s ability and capacity of advocating for an issue or a cause, on a national, international or transnational scene, we consider that a very important element in the ways citizen diplomats become assertive subjects in globalised relations is represented by symbolic capital. For this reason, we employ Bourdieu’s (1989) conceptualisation of the term. Bourdieu defines symbolic capital as “the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognized as legitimate” (1989, p. 17). Hence, although apparently conceptually existing in Bourdieu’s work alongside the other “capitals” – economic, cultural, and social – symbolic capital is not a different form of capital, but rather should be seen as the legitimated, recognized form of the other capitals. In other words, for Bourdieu, any capital may be converted into symbolic capital. For citizen diplomats, the previously acquired forms of capital, be them economic, cultural or social, can enhance both their capacity of assertiveness and the level of influence they will exert for issue advocacy.

Sharp talked about the role of transnational media in reshaping today’s diplomacy; “revolutions in information and communication technologies, together with the worldwide rise in democratic expectations to which both revolutions contribute so much, have greatly strengthened the plausibility of the claim that the era of the ordinary person has finally arrived in international relations. In response to these changes a new series of hyphenated diplomacies (citizen-diplomacy, cyber-diplomacy, field-diplomacy, track two–diplomacy, public-diplomacy) has emerged to which the professionals must become hep [sic] or fade into irrelevance” (2001, p. 136).

Very recent studies have stressed out the importance of online media in the mobilization of social resources by citizen diplomats in bottom-up initiatives; for example, Samuel-Azran et al. (2019) analysed a case study of a high-profile citizen diplomacy initiative started by four students from Israel, for nation branding purposes. The authors have identified the promotional strategies put in place by the four students to build a campaign which aimed to repair their country’s image.

However, Bolewski (2007) warns of what he calls pseudo-diplomatic practices, especially in the case of celebrity citizen diplomats, which lead to the commodification of citizen diplomacy and a certain popularization or vulgarization of diplomacy. We therefore analyse the uses of acquired symbolic capital through mediation and promotional practices and critically discuss the connections between celebrity and citizen diplomacy, in order to identify the true diplomatic nature of a celebrity’s actions.

For all the aforementioned reasons, our analysis will therefore also include the symbolic resources a citizen diplomat mobilizes to achieve his/her goals and will critically assess them, to differentiate them from pseudo-diplomatic practices or manifestations.

## 2. Methodology

This chapter focuses on individual, citizen diplomats that reached a global level of notoriety and explores their representational work in order to identify pathways to diplomatic power. We used Sharp's taxonomy of citizen diplomats as a guideline for the selection of the individuals, focusing on their representation role (the go-between, the representative for a sectoral, regional or local economic interest, the lobbyist or advocate for a particular cause, the subverter or transformer of existing policies and/or political arrangements, domestic and/or international, and the autonomous agent in international relations). We then employed a comparative, multiple case design focusing on descriptive case studies (Yin, 2018), selecting top global citizen diplomats, a position validated by their industry, by global rankings or nominations, as well as by their overall notoriety. The individuals we selected reflect the challenges and trends of contemporary citizen diplomacy (Cooper, 2007, p. 126) – “a sense of purpose, an ability to interact with high-level state officials and a global reach”: George Clooney, Ashton Kutcher, Malala Yousafzai, Greta Thunberg, Bill Gates. Due to the fact that “citizen diplomacy can also be used to carry out diplomatic functions” (Conley & Beyerinck, 2016, p. 527), we were able to build the case studies by adapting to citizen(-led) diplomacy Joseph Nye's soft power conversion model (2011, p. 100), devised for public and state-led diplomacy. The structure and content of the case studies reflect this model's components (Resources - Policy tools - Conversion skills - Target response - Outcomes), which we adapted to the realities of citizen diplomacy and citizen diplomats and transformed into a data collection and analysis grid:

- *Resources* – positions in global rankings, media appearances, prestigious nominations and awards, network and/or industry membership or recognition, collaborations and partnerships, financial resources, involvement in movements, initiator of charities, etc.;

- *Tools* – actions, tactics and strategies employed to reach goals and objectives; we used Nye's three concentric levels of public diplomacy as benchmark: daily communications, strategic communication and the cultivation of strong, long term relationships with key or relevant individuals;

- *Conversion* – describing soft power efforts as successful often depends on the diplomat's ability to frame, persuade and attract (Nye, 2011, p. 93), therefore a citizen diplomat must be able to attract, create credibility and trust. To collect and analyse conversion data we adapted a Source-Credibility Model which resides on four pillars: Attractiveness, Expertise, Trustworthiness and Goodwill and is informed by similar models coming from marketing (Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2020) and public diplomacy (Gass & Seiter, 2009);

- *Target response* – depending on the type of citizen diplomat, the target will be represented by diplomatic/policy actors or by the public. The case study registers the response the citizen diplomat targeted/obtained and whether it was a positive or a negative one. If the process had a digital component, we will discuss the response of the public using Huang's four Modes of Online Diplomatic Participation (2020): expression, interaction, membership and campaign.

- *Outcomes* – this component is discussed in terms of results and impact, depending on the type of representation specific to each of the five categories of citizen diplomats, as well as to the results and impact they themselves expect; outcome will be evaluated based on the objectives each individuals set for their diplomatic actions, either explicitly or implicitly.

The data gathered for the case studies is publicly available: media investigative articles and reports, interviews, social media activity of the citizen diplomats, transcripts of speeches they delivered in formal and informal settings, lists published by various relevant organisations, etc. The data covers the period in which the individual acted (or acts) as a citizen diplomat, as well as the period that led up to it.

The use of Nye’s model is not accidental, but rather central to our exploration and informs the first research question:

Q1. *If citizens aspire to a diplomatic power similar to that of state-led diplomacy, how can they approach the conversion process of their soft power resources in order to achieve this outcome: diplomatic influence and impact at policy level?*

Moving from actions and process to profile and communication, we ask a second question:

Q2. *When discussing citizen diplomats, what is their nature in terms of license to operate, nature of their power, personal brand, and the presence or absence of a strategic communication approach?*

### **3. Results and discussion**

#### **3.1. George Clooney, a “go-between” Citizen Diplomat for Justice and Human Rights**

##### *Resources*

Celebrities are in the privileged position of being able to mobilise a set of resources accessible to few, desired by many: fame and popularity. George Clooney is certainly no stranger to either. His brand is enriched not only through public validation, but also through industry validation, having received multiple awards for his movies and career. In addition to individual accomplishments, one of the most valuable assets is his professional and personal network of actors, public figures and influential individuals, from Hollywood stars to world leaders. He does not shy away from using them internationally beyond what is generally expected from an actor: for representation, advocacy and diplomatic purposes. He does this in two main capacities: as a (former) United Nations’ Messenger of Peace (2008-2014) with a focus on Africa and particularly on the Darfur conflict in Sudan; as a founding member of the Clooney Foundation for Justice (2016-present), an organisation that advocates for justice in courtrooms, classrooms and communities around the world ([www.cfj.org](http://www.cfj.org)). Clooney’s reputation as a serious actor in international human rights activism received several boosts, both formal (the 2007 Summit Peace Award) and informal (his connections to the Obama White House, his marriage to Amal Alamuddin, a human rights lawyer).

##### *Tools*

While Clooney's activity as a citizen diplomat is extensive, it is in his capacity as United Nations' Messenger of Peace that he acts as a go-between diplomat by taking on a diplomatic, representational role between a supra-national actor (the United Nations) vested with an interest in an international issue (the Darfur conflict in Sudan) and the state actors that could have an impact. In Nye's terms, Clooney uses the second and third circles of (public) diplomacy. He has an excellent internal coherence and stability in his actions and messages, which he correlates with tools from traditional diplomacy (meetings with state officials – the Indian Defence Secretary, the US President, Barack Obama; diplomatic tours of UN peacekeeping missions, state dinners), as well as from citizen diplomacy (public and media events – an interview from the White House lawn; citizen activism support; speeches in public forums – UN Security Council; open letters to state officials – to German Chancellor Angela Merkel; civil disobedience – a staged protest leading to his arrest; informal meetings; publications; charity development), tools which are informed by his understanding of the power that celebrities can have on international leaders and contexts.

Given his long term commitment to humanitarian international work, George Clooney can wear different diplomatic hats. However, we can see a clear differentiation of tactics when he acts as a go-between citizen diplomat on behalf of the UN. Most of his actions replicate those of a traditional diplomat and he no longer targets primarily public opinion, but rather selected individuals in a position to exert not only soft, but also hard power. However, he brings an activist nuance into this approach through civil disobedience acts or by offering support to charities, therefore fostering hybridity as one of the defining traits of its go-between citizen diplomacy.

#### *Conversion skills*

George Clooney's extensive and long term activity as a celebrity citizen diplomat firmly anchors his credibility, to various degrees, in the four pillars of our model. His expertise level is low (he is, after all, a movie star, not a lawyer or a social worker), but he compensates by an active interest in listening manifested in his China visit or his African tour (Hindustan Times, 2008), one of the chief dimensions of public diplomacy according to Cull (2008). During his time as Messenger of Peace, Clooney conducted public diplomacy for the UN in addition to acting as a go-between citizen diplomat (securing Indian troops in Sudan or pushing for a US full-time envoy in the region).

Another dimension of the transformation process of star power into diplomatic power is Clooney's consistency of message, suffering no variation across communication channels, target audiences or tools employed to engage them and acting as a strategic backbone to his diplomatic activity. The consistency of his message in time, focused on human rights and justice, represents a strong indicator of soft power and a source of credibility for the actor. Clooney employed this capital of trust in his activity as a UN go-between citizen diplomat; his interest in the Darfur conflict was not challenged while acting in a diplomatic capacity as it was consistent with his activities before the UN nomination and, to his credit, it continues to be even after giving up his representational role.

A third strategic dimension of Clooney's conversion skills is his ability to transform his symbolic capital as Hollywood A-lister (professional success and recognition, physical attractiveness, personal charisma) into political and diplomatic clout by cultivating relationships not only with other influential actors and public figures, but also with politicians, both foreign and domestic, the most visible being his support for and connection to the Obama administration. As a go-between citizen diplomat for the UN, access to this multi-layered, intricate and partially diplomatic network with the ability to frame and amplify any message on a global scale enabled Clooney to create a level of diplomatic attractiveness that granted him access to meetings and consultations usually reserved for traditional diplomacy.

*Target response and Outcome*

Although his activity targeted both direct (government) and indirect (publics - government) effects, in his representation role as go-between citizen diplomat for the UN Clooney primarily addressed high level diplomats and individuals with access to power structures. The target response was generally positive, the actor being granted access that was denied to other individuals with a representational role, but without the celebrity status.

However, in terms of outcomes, the results were mixed. On the one hand, at the moment of Clooney's retirement from the UN Messenger of Peace appointment, the conflict was ongoing and a volatile peace agreement was signed only in 2020, which included the retirement from Sudan of the UN peacekeeping missions in 2021 (United Nations, 2020). A material published by The Guardian (Shearlaw, 2014) shows no real local impact of Clooney's work on the daily life of the civilians, as well as on the core issues afflicting the region. The positive outcomes of Clooney's involvement reside in the awareness he created around the issue, in putting Darfur on the world stage, in creating media visibility and interest in the situation while also developing organisations, programmes and raising funds. In addition, partially as a result of Clooney's meeting with Barack Obama and Joe Biden, an envoy was appointed to Sudan, reporting directly to the White House.

In terms of raising awareness and putting Sudan and the Darfur conflict on the map, Clooney was successful. However, genocide is not solved by publicity, but through sustainable conflict resolution processes; because of their role in raising awareness and the ensuing association, the role of celebrities in these processes is overestimated (Rudincova, 2020) and steals away from the need of a hard power commitment from the international community. George Clooney is not an exception; and, while his actions and involvement are commendable, he was not efficient as a go-between diplomat, lacking the actual power and connection to policy, two components that can be compensated by star power up to a point, but cannot be emulated. His success came during the UN period from his hybridity, from his media stunts, actions and interactions, events and documentaries, from the star attraction he lent to the issue, but even so his success should be interpreted only from the perspective of those he targeted (a Westernized, international public), not of those in Sudan he (re?)presented, who saw him as "just another visiting *khawaga*, a local

term for a westerner or white person who did not have much to offer the suffering people” (Shearlaw, 2014).

### **3.2. Ashton Kutcher, a Citizen Diplomat for Technology**

A second conception of citizen diplomat, according to Sharp (2001), is *the citizen diplomat acting as a representative for sectoral, regional, or local economic interest*. We will analyse as it follows a specific situation in which the actor Ashton Kutcher performed as citizen diplomat for technological sectoral interests.

#### *Resources*

Ashton Kutcher is an American actor (That '70s Show, The Butterfly Effect, Punk'd, Two and a Half Men, Jobs), technological entrepreneur (A Plus, A Grade) and NGO founder (Thorn) who, in December 2020, used his high-level of visibility to take public stance and influence public opinion, at a transnational level, about granting tech giants a reprieve from new EU privacy rules that would prohibit the use of automatic detection tools to combat child pornography. According to CNN (Frater, 2020), The European Electronic Communications Code, which came into effect on December 21, aimed to rein in the broad powers that tech companies have to scan private digital communication.

The “Ashton Kutcher situation” might be considered, at a first glance, as a classic example of advocacy, Kutcher converting his acquired symbolic capital as a celebrity to generate awareness towards a sectoral issue. However, the difference between a citizen diplomat representing the interests of an industry and the citizen diplomat as an advocate for an issue lies in Kutcher’s previous symbolic capital acquired as an investor and entrepreneur in the technological sector. Kutcher’s beginnings in the technological sector started in 2009, when, according to Brands Minds (Uță, 2018), he first co-founded Thorn: Digital Defenders of Children, an international anti-human trafficking organisation that works to address the sexual exploitation of children by building technology to defend them from sexual abuse. Henceforth, his first dimension of brand positioning in the technological industry was as a philanthropist and advocate. A year later, Kutcher co-founded the venture-capital firm A-Grade Investments, investing in tech companies such as Skype, Spotify, Airbnb, Uber, and Foursquare. In 2015, he co-founded Sound Ventures, a venture capital firm specialising in early stage to growth and late-stage venture investments in financial technology and technology companies.

#### *Conversion skills*

Taking into account his profile and interests, we cannot consider Kutcher an advocate who employs diplomacy mechanisms, but a celebrity and technological entrepreneur who uses the symbolic capital acquired in both social and technological fields to influence public opinion and decision-makers. These types of conversion that Kutcher’s case study surface do legitimise Driessens’ (2013) argument that celebrity capital works like other fungible capitals and can move across different fields as well. They also point to the dominant dimensions of Kutcher’s credibility: trustworthiness (previous interest in the topic of child digital protection with a focus on

digital child sexual abuse and exploitation) and expertise (relevant previous activity in digital entrepreneurship).

#### *Tools*

If we were to singularly review news outlets articles, we could only identify the December 2020 media event of Kutcher's public statements, using his owned media channels (Instagram post "A question for EU legislators", November 2020) or news outlets (CNN, Politico.eu, Telegraph.co.uk, etc.). The European Commission published on its website an online article on the 10th of June 2020 summarising the key points of a webinar on "Preventing and Combating Sexual Abuse and Exploitation: Towards an EU response" whose aim was to discuss the measures to take at EU level to combat child sexual abuse and exploitation. The webinar featured a number of high-level speakers, including Ashton Kutcher, along with the Minister of Justice and Security of the Netherlands, the Executive Director of Europol, the CEO of the US National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), the Director of the Italian Polizia Postale, and the Global Digital Safety Advocate at Microsoft. This webinar is a normal stage in a policy change process, as it shows the engagement with relevant stakeholders. Our main observation here is the fact that Kutcher had been active in relation to the piece of legislation we already mentioned prior to the media event in December and that he had been invited, as a relevant stakeholder, to participate in the public debate initiated by the European Commission. We can therefore identify both Direct and Indirect Causal Models (Nye, 2011, p. 95), used in two different stages of the policy. In the first stage, Kutcher's actions highlight the direct causal model, when the citizen diplomat engages directly with decision-makers to advance his/her agenda. At a later date, when the proposed regulation change was to be approved, his actions reflect the indirect causal model, creating a media event, in order to generate positive public opinion in order to pressure the legislator to adopt its stance on the respective issue.

#### *Target Response and Outcome*

Kutcher's diplomatic actions to represent the technological sectoral interests were aligned with other stakeholders' interests. Transnational security institutions (Europol), national security institutions (Italian Polizia Postale) and other corporate actors (Microsoft) have also publicly supported the regulation proposal made by EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson. As a result of these public interventions, the European Commission has drafted a broader legislative initiative to fight child sexual abuse which is presently being publicly debated. The interim proposal for which Kutcher publicly intervened is being discussed by the European Parliament and the Council (European Commission, February 2021).

### **2.3. Malala Yousafzai, the Citizen Diplomat for Girls' Education**

Malala Yousafzai exemplifies the third type of Citizen Diplomat identified by Sharp (2001), which is *the lobbyist or the advocate for a particular cause*. On 9 October 2012, the young Pakistani blogger and educational activist, Malala Yousafzai, was shot in the head at close range by the Taliban (Peer, 2012). After

months of treatment and rehabilitation, she made a miraculous recovery and continued her activism. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014.

#### *Resources*

Malala's becoming a public figure is tightly connected to her personal life. Her status as a refugee in the UK and the personal incident which transformed her into a widely renowned figure are the catalyst aspects of her visibility. Her main resource, as other studies have pointed out (Douglas, 2017), is her life writing. The production of life writing texts has been impressive and it does represent the main resource Malala constantly cultivated. Her activism stems from this: the pseudonymous blog that she wrote for the BBC in 2009; two print memoirs: *I Am Malala* in 2013, followed by a 'young readers' edition' in 2016. As Douglas (2017) points out, Malala's life writing has been punctuated by biographical materials about her life: the 2009 short documentary *Class Dismissed* and the 2015 documentary film *He Named Me Malala*. Collectively these texts represent a collaborative archive: a cumulative series of life narrative texts authored by Malala and others which have become authoritative narratives in circulating Malala's life story.

Malala Yousafzai's actions are sourced in a type of social license to operate (Raufflet et al., 2013), as she considers herself as representing a highly under-represented and largely ignored social category. Her narrative built through storytelling (in media interviews, her books, online content, etc.) is highly inclusive, as Malala always refers to girl refugees as "us" ("We are displaced: My journey and stories from Refugee Girls around the World", 2019). Her story, rooted in her personal life, is fundamental to the establishment of her personal brand.

In 2014, after joining her family in the UK as a political refugee, Malala founded, with her father, a former teacher and educational activist, the Malala Fund, an advocacy NGO for girls' right to education. The NGO gave her an organisational status and the possibility to develop specific advocacy actions. Malala became the spokesperson of the organisation, deploying tactics such as supporting a transnational network of grassroots activists, meeting with world leaders and amplifying girls' voices through the NGO's publications. The Fund has been endorsed by Angelina Jolie, in her capacity as UNICEF ambassador, and co-opted Google's vice-president on the board.

The fact that her trajectory and actions as a citizen diplomat have an obvious strategic dimension is being validated by the fact that starting with November 2012, the consulting firm Edelman began work for Malala Yousafzai on a pro bono basis, which according to the firm "involves providing a press office function for Malala". The office employs five people, and is headed by speechwriter Jamie Lundie. McKinsey also provides assistance to Yousafzai.

#### *Tools*

Malala Yousafzai's activity as a citizen diplomat is extensive. Her advocacy body of work is established at a supra-national level and validated by the relevant institutional forums. Her main tool of building wide recognition and an advocacy platform has been represented by speeches. So far, she delivered six speeches, with the occasion of different high-profile international affairs events: the 2013 United

Nations conference speech, delivered with the occasion of her 16th birthday, the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, the 2017 speech in front of the Canadian government, the 2017 speech to Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, the 2019 speech at the World Assembly of Women and the 2019 G7 Education and Development Ministers Meeting. Her speeches are documented on the Fund's website and they are all supporting the life narrative she builds about her own becoming as an advocate for refugee girls' right to education.

Another advocacy tool she strategically deployed is represented by her public appearances at entertainment shows. The immersion in popular culture has been proved to be very effective, as Malala used it to co-opt other audiences, but, at the same time, to change the existent negative public perceptions of refugees. The two appearances at "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart" and the longer interview she had with David Letterman in 2018 also amplified her voice and message.

The online content is another tool by which Malala Yousafzai builds and supports her life writing. Through the Malala Fund website, the Fund's and Malala's Facebook pages, the Twitter accounts, Instagram and YouTube channels, her story (Malala.org, 2020) is intertwined with the Fund's activity.

#### *Conversion Skills*

Malala Yousafzai's extensive and passionate advocacy body of work as a citizen diplomat anchors his credibility, in various forms of manifestation and to various degrees, in the four pillars of our theoretical model. Malala's expertise stems from her own personal experience and was built progressively through her advocacy work, but also through the university studies she pursued at University of Oxford in Philosophy, Politics and Economics. The numerous awards she received represented a form of validation of her expertise in the cause she is advocating for, and therefore a resource she converted into diplomatic power, enabling her access to people and institutions, as well as raising her visibility level.

Malala's consistency of message, suffering no variation or divergence across communication channels, as we previously showed, is one of the strategic dimensions of her diplomatic activity. Malala's message, supported by the appropriate tools and mediums (books, popular culture genres, the intersection with celebrity culture, etc.), focused on human rights, being validated by the multiplicity of national, regional and transnational political institutions.

Another strategic dimension of Malala's conversion skill is her capacity of capitalising the public credibility, the institutional validation and the political expertise she gained. The foundation of her own organisation, which acts as an operational structure supporting Malala's cause, was a strategic move which allowed her to develop and cultivate relationships with public leaders from the corporate world and highly visible celebrities. As an advocate type of citizen diplomat, Malala Yousafzai incorporates the discursive format of diplomacy.

#### *Target Response and Outcome*

Malala Yousafzai's citizen diplomatic activity has targeted both direct (government, corporations and transnational organisations) and indirect (publics - government) effects. Her early citizen diplomatic endeavours in Pakistan have been

validated by the Pakistani government; in 2011, she was awarded Pakistan's first National Youth Peace Prize and the prime-minister also directed the authorities to set up an IT campus in the Swat Degree College for Women at Yousafzai's request. Also, as a consequence of the tragic event which made her known at a supra-national level, over 2 million people signed the Right to Education campaign's petition, which led to ratification of the first Right to Education Bill in Pakistan.

For all these reasons, the reactions of the target audiences have been overwhelmingly positive, manifested through signatures of petitions, number of followers on her own social media channels, the large number of copies sold from her books etc. A more qualitative approach on the impact of Malala's citizen diplomatic actions would refer to her status as a public figure (intellectual, advocate and generational icon): "Malala Yousafzai is politically aware, educated, eloquent and extremely brave, having knowingly risked her life to fight for her own rights and the rights of girls around her. In every way she challenges Western depictions of the "average third world woman" (Walters, 2016, p. 652).

### **3.4. Greta Thunberg, a Citizen Diplomat for Earth**

The fourth conception of citizen diplomat in Sharp's view is the one of an *individual acting as a subverter or transformer of existing policies and/or political arrangements, domestic and/or international*. We consider that Greta Thunberg's actions, as an advocate and citizen diplomat, have constantly tried to subvert the traditional models of social movement, politics and diplomacy in order to fundamentally change the international action on the climate crisis issue.

#### *Resources*

Greta Thunberg is a self-made brand. Her main resources for acquiring symbolic capital are represented by her culture of origin, Sweden, and her individual differences (age, disability, etc.). As many studies (Swedish Institute, 2018; Global Innovation Index, 2020; European Innovation Scoreboard, 2020, etc.) investigating Sweden's country image point out, common perceptions of global audiences about Sweden can be summarised as "Sweden is a development-oriented country in which people and the environment take precedence". Also, as Dryzek et al. (2011) mention, climate change discourses revolve around tropes such as being responsible and the urgency of acting for future generations. As Greta is a member of the future generations, her voice is therefore even more relevant than others'. In addition, she represents the eponym of future generations by framing her distinct characteristics (her age, being diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, OCD and selective mutism) as her "superpowers". Her story which makes her an international celebrity emphasises her differences and values them positively; from having been bullied in school and the way she conducts her life or the consumption choices she makes, to her learning disabilities, the motivation to initiate the protests, everything positions her as an exceptional individual.

#### *Tools*

Greta Thunberg's main tools of action have been protests, speeches, and public associations with political leaders. The main approach can be diagnosed as savvy

strategic communication. Protests have gained her a wide recognition and awareness, at the level of wide transnational audiences that she, then, mobilised for the purpose of pressuring world leaders. Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg started her Skolstrejk för Klimatet on 20 August 2018 at the Mynttorget in her hometown Stockholm. Greta Thunberg's Skolstrejk för Klimatet then inspired the weekly demonstrations of Fridays for Future which started in Hague and became a mass movement in Germany and elsewhere.

Greta Thunberg then used this gained visibility and credibility to pressure the world leaders. Since the beginning of the social movement, she delivered 23 speeches, all between 2018 and 2019. Initially delivered at protests inspired by her actions and, later, at the invitation of transnational and national institutions, we can affirm that the main catalyst to her rise in the public consciousness have been the highly media covered speeches.

A third type of tool Greta Thunberg uses for strategic purposes, to amplify her message, is represented by public associations with political figures. She met with well-renowned politicians for sharing the same goals, such as US President Barack Obama and Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. In the same time, Greta Thunberg has used Twitter to respond in an intelligent manner to US President Donald Trump's derogatory tweets. Greta Thunberg does use social media channels she owns (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) for amplifying her messages and actions, to reach to wider audiences.

#### *Conversion skills*

The first element which we consider to be relevant for Greta Thunberg's public credibility was the conversion of her public visibility into scientific expertise. The validation which came from the scientific community was a very important aspect in building her own public credibility as an expert in climate change. The program Scientists for Future, founded in March 2019, publicly supported Greta Thunberg's actions and rallied for the same objectives (Scientists for Future, 2019).

Another form of validation came from those forums and institutions which reward the work of advocacy. Her 2019 nomination for Nobel Peace Prize, the 2019 honorary doctorate from the University of Mons (Belgium), the 2019 Ambassador of Conscience Award from Amnesty International and the 2019 Geddes Environment Medal from the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, are all forms of public recognition and validation which built her symbolic capital.

During 2020-2021, Greta Thunberg's advocacy activities have been directed towards building her own foundation: the Greta Thunberg Foundation promotes ecological and social sustainability, as well as mental health issues, donating €150,000 to the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Oil Change International, and Solar Sister for their work supporting people on the frontlines of the climate crisis in Africa.

Referring to our adapted Source-Credibility Model of citizen diplomats, we can observe how Greta Thunberg used her resources and implemented specific promotional tools which helped her acquire conversion skills. Her attractiveness (created through personal branding and storytelling techniques) was built on the

foundational goodwill and her positioning herself as a generational leader. Then, she built an expertise in climate change, being validated by scientists and academic forums. She soon became a trustworthy person, and this trustworthiness is still being employed for goodwill purposes.

*Target Response and Outcomes*

From the beginning, Greta targeted decision-makers for addressing the emergency of climate change. However, in order to enact changes and raise awareness among world leaders, she initially built a social movement which had multiple replicas in other social areas (science, academia, etc.). The validation she received from global institutions built her credibility which she then used to target leaders of international institutions who can enact definitive changes: World Economic Forum, European Parliament, British Parliament, and United Nations. We therefore can distinguish between direct and indirect publics. It is also relevant to mention the fact that her rhetoric has always focused on the vilification of a collective 'you' (national decision-makers, international organisations, wealthiest business leaders, etc.) and the responsibility of a collective 'we' ('us, the citizens of this world').

In Greta Thunberg's case as citizen diplomat, the global and wide positive reaction she obtained from her audiences and publics can be considered as a social license to operate (Raufflet et al., 2013). The validation which came from global publics can be seen through the number of followers Greta Thunberg's social media accounts, the online communities built and hashtag activist campaigns. Also, despite the negative media coverage she had in traditional media, her message reached global and transnational audiences. Firstly, "The Greta Thunberg effect", as it has been called by many media outlets, manifested at the level of the large public. The indirect effect on its publics and mobilizing them to support political parties with environmental policies is also recognised by political analysts (Blake, 2019); for instance, the European Green Party is one of the main beneficiaries of advertising the strikes and protests of the climate movement. In Germany, the Greens obtained 20.5% of the votes in the 2019 European elections with 33% of the votes of those under 30. Indirect effects, such as growing awareness of climate change urgency, educating large segments of the population to become environmentally literate and to get involved in environmental activism, at national levels, are all attributed to Greta Thunberg's actions (Sabherwal, van der Linden, & Swim, 2021).

The decision-makers she targeted for addressing the emergency of climate change and enacting immediate changes responded positively in a symbolic way. Institutions such as the European Parliament, World Economic Forum, United Nations or national governments (UK, Austria, France, US, etc.) have publicly stated their support with Fridays for Future protests and they all invited Greta Thunberg to address, through speeches, the urgency of climate change. However, social commentators point out the fact that, at the level of policy change, there is no noticeable impact. Bock (2019) points to the reduced resources allocated to the environment and to the lack of real measures that would indeed lead to a climate-neutral economy by 2050, despite European Commission's new programme "A Clean Planet for All".

### 3.5. Bill Gates, an autonomous citizen diplomat for global issues

#### *Resources*

If you were the richest person in the world, what would you do, what would your path be? Some would try to become richer, others would try to terraform Mars. In 2008, Bill Gates left Microsoft in order to focus on what he calls “catalytic philanthropy” (Gates, 2014): supporting innovation that has the potential to generate fundamental changes and improvements in areas that states and businesses do not invest in because of a lack of vision, interest, national relevance or financial returns. Therefore, Gates defines on his own the role he wants to play; he does not represent a state or a company, but is rather focused on his own agenda built on societal priorities and on acting globally. This “catalytic philanthropist” is *a citizen diplomat acting as an autonomous agent in international relations* (Sharp, 2001, p. 141). His main resource for this? His wealth. Until the ascension of Amazon’s Jeff Bezos and Tesla’s Elon Musk, Gates had been for two decades the wealthiest man in the world. For this type of citizen diplomat the financial resources are paramount in obtaining access to diplomatic actors, even if a moral behaviour can arguably act in a similar fashion (Sharp, 2001, pp. 141-142). However, in the case of Bill Gates, it is his immense wealth that allows him to have a voice and influence where regular citizens would not even have access – high level state-led diplomacy – or would not have the resources to intervene – global public sphere. In addition, economic capital gives Gates a level of independence of action and flexibility of mandate which traditional diplomats are not able to enjoy.

A second resource that he employs in advancing his philanthropic and diplomatic agenda is his symbolic capital. Gates is one of the major global figures in technology, business and philanthropy, recognised and validated through awards, nominations and favourable rankings: one of TIME Magazine’s 100 Persons of the Century, (TIME Magazine, 1998); Honorary Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (BBC, 2005); the US Presidential Medal of Freedom (2016).

#### *Tools*

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation plays a central role in the management of capital, both financial and symbolic. It is the formal tool Gates uses to carry out his philanthropic initiatives; however, he maintains a strong profile independent from the organisation, but this profile is increasingly synchronized with that of the organisation.

Bill Gates is a very active citizen diplomat, engaging multiple actors in order to advance his humanitarian agenda. In Nye’s terms, the main level on which he acts is the third circle, developing long term relationships with individuals relevant to his agenda. However, due to his financial power, the people he engages are heads of state, multimillionaires and billionaires, global high level diplomats, all individuals rarely accessible to regular citizens. In his interactions with them, the philanthropist becomes the diplomat and employs diplomacy as a tool to reach his objectives, using both traditional diplomacy tools such as meetings with state officials and heads of state, as well as citizen diplomacy tools such as engaging and speaking

at international forums (he is a regular speaker at the World Economic Forum and the UN Climate Change Conferences).

Gates' diplomacy has a set of very specific traits:

- The willingness to engage with countries that have a problematic human rights track record: he met with the Saudi crown prince to discuss Saudi Vision 2030, a programme through which Saudi Arabia explores ways to move away from oil dependency (Al Arabiya, 2018), he teamed up with China to fund a series of revolutionary agricultural and biotech initiatives that would tackle world hunger (Ungerleider, 2011). This approach is common in international relations, where states often put aside the problematic behaviour of other states in order to reach agreements, and Gates does this in order to reach his humanitarian goals.

- The involvement in large scale, international projects based on economic and politic powers working together on issues that are somewhat ignored: he spear-headed Mission Innovation, in which 20 national governments pledged to double their spending on research and development for carbon-free energy over five years, as well as Breakthrough Energy, a group of investors who agreed to fund high-risk start-ups in clean energy technologies.

- The continuous mobilisation of the ultra-rich in order to become more engaged in philanthropy: in 2010 he initiated, alongside Warren Buffet, the Giving Pledge, committing to donate half of their fortune to charity. To this end, Gates acts as an international recruiter of the rich for philanthropic purposes.

#### *Conversion skills*

Gates has one primary conversion skill: expertise. This is not only technological expertise, but also business and management. His legendary status in the tech industry and the success of Microsoft put him in a position to be accepted as an international expert in development and innovation, a position that he is amply aware of and uses without refrain in meeting his philanthropic objectives. Gates has managed to convert his economic power into diplomatic power by representing societal issues and acting on a global scale, just as he acted when he transformed Microsoft into the giant that it is today, representing corporate issues and interests.

#### *Target response and Outcome*

However, the reach of Gates' influence generated, particularly in the last decade, a decreasing level of trust from the public. He is increasingly being demonised, particularly in the COVID-19 era, by part of the international public and is a target of conspiracy theories, not unlike George Soros. This trend led to his goodwill and intentions being increasingly questioned in the public sphere. However, Bill Gates has one particular advantage over state diplomats: he does not need to answer to states and, therefore, to citizens; his humanitarian agenda does not follow a state strategy and not even a public diplomacy strategy: he is autonomous and, based on his financial situation, will continue to be.

Taking into account these case studies, we can propose the following answers to our research questions.

Q1. *If citizens aspire to a diplomatic power similar to that of state-led diplomacy, how can they approach the conversion process of their soft power resources in order to achieve this outcome: diplomatic influence and impact at policy level?*

**The symbolic access to diplomatic power**

Citizen diplomats use their capital as the main source of soft power, though the nature of the capital may vary – cultural capital for George Clooney and Ashton Kutcher, social capital for Malala Yousafzai and Greta Thunberg, economic capital for Bill Gates. In converting their original capital to symbolic capital, they often use promotional techniques, media relations, social media, as well as organisational development and association.

Having acquired symbolic capital, citizen activists and advocates can convert it into diplomatic access and exert pressure on the actors they find in this arena. Nye's concentric circles of public diplomacy (2011, pp. 105-106) offer a glimpse into how citizen diplomats can organize in order to address both the public and the state, as we can see from our case studies:

- *Constant communication and a rapid response capability* – Ashton Kutcher, Malala Yousafzai and Greta Thunberg all use social media in their advocacy efforts and include referenced to their diplomatic activities, underlining their “advocate first, diplomat second” approach. The use of social media not only allows them to stay in constant contact with their public and have a dialogic approach to communication (to various degrees), but also to offer fast replies when they are necessary, such as in the case of Greta Thunberg's Twitter exchange with Donald Trump. Bill Gates is also online, although less dialogically engaged: he aggregated his online presence around the Gates Notes website/personal blog and its social media ecosystem. George Clooney decided against social media, relying on the media for his communication.

- *Strategic communication* – this is a level that all five citizen diplomats use effectively, either by design or naturally, delivering a coherent and steadfast message through their messages and actions. They use promotional techniques that are in line with their personal brand and all understand the importance of performance in high visibility contexts, attending and speaking in international forums and events. They create networks that can support, amplify, or validate their personal brand and employ the various awards they receive as legitimation tools.

- *Development of lasting relationships with key individuals over a long period of time* – Bill Gates' involvement of Warren Buffet and other mega-rich individuals in the Giving Pledge is an example of the consolidation of his economic capital, the foundation of his diplomatic success; George Clooney organically developed, through his personal charisma, a network of celebrities and public figures that play a major role in the branding exercise he includes in his diplomatic actions; one of the ways in which Malala Yousafzai developed the Malala Fund was by inviting high visibility and impactful individuals to join the charity in different capacities.

The conversion process needs to be carried out by skilled individuals, and the results coming from the cultivation of these skills represent the original capital. Therefore, employing them for diplomatic purposes means adapting them to

interactions with high-level state officials in an international setting. The skill set is in direct correlation with individual credibility, while the source of credibility can vary: personal experience, professional expertise, personality, financial power, fame, industry/institutional validation, etc. However, there is one element that stands out: the consistency of the message in time, manifested through a variety of actions, preferably even before engaging in diplomatic endeavours.

Therefore, in order to obtain diplomatic power, citizen diplomats must construct a relevant type of capital and transform it into symbolic capital through a combination of promotional techniques and organisational development strategies, targeting at international level both government elites and general publics. Symbolic capital is not the only soft power resource, but in our research it is the most salient. However, when looking at the conversion of soft power resources and, particularly, at target response and outcomes, we see that diplomatic power takes the form of access to high level diplomatic actors and an increased level of awareness on various topics among publics and government elites; it rarely takes the form of policy and actual change. George Clooney put the Sudan conflict on the international map and managed to get the Obama administration to name a full-time envoy, but had no visible impact on the conflict resolution process; Ashton Kutcher appears to be involved in a legislative process that might be successful, but he was not the driving force behind it, rather the amplifying voice; Malala Yousafzai was successful in getting ratified the first Right to Education Bill in Pakistan, but other initiatives, although visible, fell short: the UN recommitted to the Millennium Development Goal 2, a goal to which it failed to properly commit the first time and failed to reach the second; Greta Thunberg, although generated an indirect election push for the European Greens and an increased activism and awareness level for climate change, has had no substantial policy impact according to her own evaluation. The exception to this string of outcomes that lack impact is Bill Gates, who constantly creates partnerships with democratic and undemocratic countries around the world in order to develop his humanitarian projects; in his case, the symbolic capital generated access, but the economic capital generated impact in terms of foreign government actions. It surpassed in relevance all the goodwill, trustworthiness and attractiveness of the other citizen diplomats we examined; in fact, he is the least trusted and appealing of the lot, challenging the relevance of credibility and conversion skills. We may consider that Bill Gates is the most successful among the citizen diplomats we examined because he is the most similar in approach and behaviour to a state that has its own agenda and economic power / hard power.

Therefore, in the case of citizen diplomats, as long as their soft power is not doubled by hard power (as a general trait, how could it?) or state-level economic power, as it happens with Gates, it appears that their direct impact is practically non-existent, while their indirect impact is reduced or occasional. When replicating traditional diplomacy, citizen diplomats lack the fundamental advantage of state diplomats: the hard power behind their representation function; when replicating state-led public diplomacy, citizen-led public diplomacy finds success in raising awareness and, from the perspective of policy making, when its agenda is aligned or at

least not in contradiction with that of the state. And, while it might appear as a dark or cynic evaluation of the prospect citizen diplomats have when it comes to gaining impactful diplomatic power, we must not forget that the *longue durée* advanced in favour of the individual and that a strong networked power approach could deliver where individuals could not.

Q2. *When discussing citizen diplomats, what is their nature in terms of license to operate, nature of their power, personal brand, and the presence or absence of a strategic communication approach?*

#### **The hybrid and multilevel nature of the citizen diplomat**

Our study revealed a hybrid nature of the contemporary citizen diplomat, one directly connected to their representational role, both in terms of who or what is being represented and to whom (the two dimensions of Sharp's taxonomy). We observed this hybridity on multiple levels:

- *Identity* – citizen diplomats act on numerous levels, both personal and professional; furthermore, their multifaceted identity is part of their appeal and a main component of their personal brand, essential in advancing their agenda: they communicate and engage their publics based on this identity. This approach enables citizen diplomats not only to address multiple public spheres, but also to obtain or reinforce their legitimacy and social licence to engage with or on behalf of these spheres: Malala Yousafzai is a girl, a refugee, an international advocate for education, Greta Thunberg is a student on strike, a teenager with autism, the inspiration for a movement, Ashton Kutcher is an actor and a tech entrepreneur, George Clooney is the epitome of Hollywood A-listers, a UN Messenger of Peace and an advocate for Darfur peace, Bill Gates is the founder of Microsoft, the richest man in the world and the ultimate philanthropist. When performing their diplomatic functions, these citizens bring forth a blend of their existing identities, while also developing others as part of their personal brand; in contrast, diplomats can develop multiple interests or approaches and address multiple targets only if this reflects the foreign policy of their country.

- *Representational role* – all five citizen diplomats act as lobbyists and advocates for a cause (Sharp's taxonomy); however, they have different approaches and this leads to a multiplication of the categories they can be included in: George Clooney acts as a go-between, Greta Thunberg asks for a fundamental change of approach and is in a subversive opposition to major diplomatic players, Ashton Kutcher brings together tech interests and child protection, while Bill Gates has the economic power to circumvent states and have an instrumentalisation approach to them.

- *Organisational autonomy/dependence* – all citizen diplomats, sooner or later, identified the need for organisational support in order to coagulate, develop, and amplify their voice, as well as to reinforce the strategic dimension of their actions. However, they preserve their autonomous identity and primarily act in their own name, not as representatives of their charities/foundations/funds, but they depend on these organisational structures in terms of operational, legal and financial

mobility; in time, the individual and the organisational agendas and discourses can become more and more synchronized, thus strengthening the strategic (communication) approach to their (joint) diplomatic actions. At the intersection of citizen diplomacy and organisational diplomacy carried out by CSOs we find civic diplomacy (see Anton, in this book). It should be noted that citizen diplomats have this level of autonomy from the organisations they are part of only insofar they are the founder, therefore have the capital (whatever its nature) to initiate such a structure; when they do not enjoy this status, they adhere to the agenda and discourse of the organisation they represent, thus becoming organisational diplomats first and foremost.

- *Interest in target public* – in state-led diplomacy, traditional diplomats target the state officials and diplomatic corps of other countries, while public diplomats target foreign publics. In citizen-led diplomacy, citizen diplomats should target both government elites and publics; this is discussed by Nye (2011, p. 95) in the context of soft power as direct and indirect causal effects. Therefore, in order to obtain diplomatic power, citizen diplomats should not only engage foreign state officials and diplomats, but also (foreign) publics in order to exert pressure on the government elites. We can observe this in the actions of the citizen diplomats we analysed: most of them employed diplomatic tools such as visits and formal/informal meetings with state officials, speeches in high level international forums, participation in legislative processes, as well as advocacy tools such as protests, petitions, media events and civil disobedience.

The hybrid nature is a relevant trait for citizen diplomats as it is:

1. a contrast to the monolithic representational nature of the traditional diplomat, who is legally bound to represent only his/her state and employ his/her identity without putting it centre stage,
2. an adaptation response to the fragmentation of the public sphere, either traditional or digital.

## CONCLUSIONS

Several key findings can be highlighted. Firstly, all the citizen diplomats we analysed employed indirect effects model in a strategic way; the global do-gooding has to be validated by global audiences which can, strategically, be then mobilized to support the citizen diplomat's agenda and actions. Through owned media channels and / or traditional media coverage, all our citizen diplomats aggregate transnational publics and build communities which validate their actions and provide them with social legitimacy. For all of them, the soft power model is a relevant pathway (if not the most relevant) to achieve their objectives. Secondly, all the citizen diplomats convert their previous capital (social, cultural or economic) into symbolic capital, overlapping different and various fields. George Clooney used his symbolic capital acquired as an actor to compensate up to a point and partially build an expertise in the field of diplomacy. Ashton Kutcher employed his symbolic capital as actor and expertise as technological entrepreneur to convert them into credibility and expertise in supra-national representation, targeting the European

Commission. Malala Yousafzai employed her cultural capital (her father's advocacy experience, her advocacy expertise as blogger for BBC or her studies in Philosophy and Politics at Oxford University) to build symbolic capital as a global and transnational public persona (public intellectual, advocate, generational icon). Greta Thunberg used her country's image key features, her own personal features to build a considerable symbolic capital, in such a way that today, her foundation supports other grassroots organizations which fight climate change. Bill Gates employed his acquired economic capital (his wealth), social capital (networks of partners, stakeholders, etc.) and cultural capital (his knowledge in business and management) to convert them into symbolic capital valuable for citizen diplomacy.

This chapter also invites to rethink institutionalized concepts or ideas in diplomacy. Firstly, in the case of highly visible non-state representatives or citizen diplomats, the traditional distinction between subnational, supranational and transnational representation seems revoluted. Our case studies reflect a constant overlapping of these arenas of power; the work with national governments or the changes enacted in the national legislation (Malala Yousafzai), the supra-national representational work with European Commission / Parliament and the transnational reach by founding their own NGOs (Greta Thunberg Foundation, Malala Fund, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Ashton Kutcher's Thorn, George Clooney's Foundation for Justice) or supporting existent NGOs.

A second necessary reconfiguration is vital when we discuss the function of a citizen diplomat. Sharp's taxonomy (2001) needs to be revisited in the context of the rise and expansion of the social license to operate (Raufflet et al., 2013); sourced in an individual responsibility towards societal issues (girls' education, climate change, peace, online security from sexual abusers, innovation, etc.), the social license to operate is what lies at the heart of all our citizen diplomats' actions. The validation they received from the general public at the level of a global public sphere also provided their actions with a social legitimacy.

At the same time, our chapter opens the path for future lines of inquiry. An aspect which can be further addressed is represented by the implications of North-South or West-East dynamics. All our citizen diplomats are highly visible; this visibility fuelled our research with relevant data. However, we have to interrogate the domination of Western/North citizen diplomacy (celebrity/non-celebrity based) in mediation, representation and advocacy. As Richey and Budabin (2016) point out, celebrities are elite actors who operate in various and complex ways between these symbolically delimited regions. Another line of research originated in the fact that all our citizen diplomats have intersected with non-profit organisations; further knowledge on the intersections between citizen diplomacy and CSO (civil society organisations) diplomacy becomes stringent in the context of contemporary diplomacy. Another future direction of research which would merit closer investigation is the exploration of processes of legitimation and de-legitimation of citizen diplomats; as we also noticed, the actions of citizen diplomats are legitimated by different entities (state, publics, sector, etc.), at different stages and with different effects. A deeper understanding of these aspects would enrich the existent literature on citizen

diplomacy. Lastly, we constantly observed the overlapping with celebrity culture, as all our citizen diplomats have used celebrity symbolic capital to build an expertise in a different field, to amplify their voice, to fund grassroots activism or to develop diplomatic connections. Further research is needed in exploring the most recent intersections between celebrity symbolic capital and other forms of diplomacy.

There are, of course, limitations to the research. One comes from the qualitative approach: it allowed us to go in depth, but the number of case studies limited the diversity of conversion processes that could be analysed. Another limit comes from the focus on policy impact as a measure of successful citizen diplomacy; however, this approach can be used as a foundation and springboard for future research.

## REFERENCES

- Al Arabiya. (2018, March 31). Saudi Crown Prince and Bill Gates review joint development projects. *Al Arabiya*. Retrieved from <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/gulf/2018/03/31/Saudi-Crown-Prince-and-Bill-Gates-review-cooperation-on-joint-development-projects>
- BBC. (2005, March 2). Knighthood for Microsoft's Gates. *BBC News*. Retrieved from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/3428673.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/3428673.stm)
- Bjola, C. (2017). *Adapting Diplomacy to the Digital Age: Managing the Organisational Culture of Ministries of Foreign Affairs*. Berlin: German Institute for International and Security Affairs. Retrieved from <https://www.qeh.ox.ac.uk/sites/www.odid.ox.ac.uk/files/DigDiploROxWP1.pdf>
- Blake, S. (2019, November 4). Who's afraid of Greta Thunberg? *Opendemocracy.net*. Retrieved from <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraci-aabiarta/qui%C3%A9n-le-teme-a-greta-thunberg-en/>
- Bock, N. (2019, April 24) Fridays for Future - when politics fail. *The new federalist.eu*. Retrieved from <https://www.thenewfederalist.eu/fridays-for-future-when-politics-fail?lang=fr>
- Bolewski, W. (2007). Citizen diplomats and public relations diplomacy: popularization of diplomacy. In W. Bolewski, *Diplomacy and International Law in Globalized Relations* (pp. 69-72). Berlin, Heidelberg, New York: Springer.
- Bourdieu, P. (1989). *La noblesse d'Etat. Grandes écoles et esprit de corps*. Paris: Minuit.
- Conley, M., & Beyerinck, C. (2016). Citizen Diplomacy. In C. Constantinou, P. Kerr, & P. Sharp (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy* (pp. 521-529). London: SAGE Publications.
- Cooper, A. F. (2007). Beyond Hollywood and the Boardroom: Celebrity Diplomacy. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 8(2), 125-132. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43133740>
- Cull, N. (2008). Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616(1), 31-54. DOI: 10.1177/0002716207311952
- Cull, N. (2011). WikiLeaks, public diplomacy 2.0 and the state of digital public diplomacy. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* (7), 1-8. DOI: 10.1057/pb.2011.2

Davis, A. (2013). *Promotional Cultures: The Rise and Spread of Advertising, Public Relations, Marketing and Branding*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Douglas, K. (2017). Malala Yousafzai, Life Narrative and the Collaborative Archive. *Life Writing*, 14(3), 297-311. DOI: [10.1080/14484528.2017.1328299](https://doi.org/10.1080/14484528.2017.1328299)

Driessens, O. (2013). The celebritization of society and culture: Understanding the structural dynamics of celebrity culture. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 16(6), 641-657. DOI: 10.1177/1367877912459140

Dryzek, J., Norgaard, R. & Schlosberg, D. (2011). *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

European Commission. (2020, June 10). The EU comes together to fight Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/news/20200610\\_eu-comes-together-fight-child-sexual-abuse-exploitation\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/news/20200610_eu-comes-together-fight-child-sexual-abuse-exploitation_en)

European Commission. (2021, February). Fighting child abuse: have your say!. *Ec.europa.eu*. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/news/fighting-child-sexual-abuse-have-your-say\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/news/fighting-child-sexual-abuse-have-your-say_en)

Frater, J. (2020, December 9). Ashton Kutcher urges EU to allow tech giants to keep tracking online child abuses. *CNN.com*. Retrieved from <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/12/07/tech/europe-privacy-law-child-abuse-intl/index.html>

Fulda, A. (2019). The Emergence of Citizen Diplomacy in European Union–China Relations: Principles, Pillars, Pioneers, Paradoxes. *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 30(1), 188-216. DOI: 10.1080/09592296.2019.1557419

Gass, R. H., & Seiter, J. S. (2009). Credibility and Public Diplomacy. in N. Snow, & P. M. Taylor (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* (ed. 1, pp. 154-165). New York, London: Routledge.

Gates, B. (2014, March 27). Catalytic philanthropy: Innovating where markets won't and governments can't. *Gates Notes*. Retrieved from <https://www.gatesnotes.com/About-Bill-Gates/Catalytic-Philanthropy-Innovating-Where-Markets-Wont>

Hindustan Times. (2008, January 29). George Clooney in Delhi, visits South Block. *Hindustan Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/george-clooney-in-delhi-visits-south-block/story-UT-wlcGJnC4YTdwfBGB1xzH.html>

Huang, Q. (2020). Facebook Not Statebook: Defining SNS Diplomacy with Four Modes of Online Diplomatic Participation. *International Journal of Communication*, 3885-3902.

Langhorne, R. (2007). Current developments in diplomacy: Who are the diplomats now? *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 8(2), 1-15. DOI: 10.1080/09592299708406040

Malala Fund. (2020). Malala's Story. *Malala.org*. Retrieved from <https://malala.org/malalas-story>

Manor, I. (2019). *The Digitalization of Public Diplomacy*. Palgrave Macmillan. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-030-04405-3

Melissen, J., & Caesar-Gordon, M. (2016). "Digital diplomacy" and the securing of nationals in a citizen-centric world. *Global Affairs*, 2(3), 321-330. DOI: 10.1080/23340460.2016.1239381

Nye, J. S. (2008, March). Public Diplomacy and Soft Power. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616, 94-109. DOI: 10.1177/0002716207311699

Nye, J. S. (2011). *The Future of Power*. New York: Public Affairs.

Payne, G., Sevin, E. & Bruya, S. (2011). Grassroots 2.0: Public Diplomacy in the Digital Age. *Comunicação Pública*, 6(10), 45-70. DOI: [10.4000/cp.422](https://doi.org/10.4000/cp.422)

Peer, B. (2012, October 10). The Girl Who Wanted To Go To School. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-girl-who-wanted-to-go-to-school>

Raufflet, E., Baba, S., Perras, C., Delannon, N. (2013). Social License. In Idowu, S.O., Capaldi, N., Zu L., Gupta, A.D. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Corporate Social Responsibility* (pp. 82-101). Berlin, Heidelberg, New York: Springer. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-642-28036-8\_77

Richey, L. A. & Budabin, A. (2016). Celebrities in International Affairs. *Political Science, International Relations, Political Theory*. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935307.013.3

Rudincova, K. (2020). Celebrities' Role in the Conflict Resolution Processes: George Clooney in South Sudan. *Modern Africa Politics History and Society*, 8(2), 91-124. DOI: 10.26806/modafr.v8i2.304

Sabherwal, A., van der Linden, S., & Swim, J. K. (2021, March 10). The Greta Thunberg effect: people familiar with Thunberg are more likely to act. *The Society for Personality and Social Psychology*. Retrieved from <https://www.spsp.org/news-center/blog/sabherwal-van-der-linden-swim-greta-thunberg-effect>

Samuel-Azran, T., Ilvici, B., Zari, I. & Geduuld, O. (2019). Practicing citizen diplomacy 2.0: "The Hot Dudes and Hummus - Israel's Yummiest" Campaign for Israel's Branding. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 15, 38-49. DOI: 10.1057/s41254-018-00111-5

Scientists for Future. (2019, March). Statement of scientists and scholars concerning the protests for more climate protection. *Scientists4future.org*. Retrieved from <https://de.scientists4future.org/initial-statement/>

Sharp, P. (2001). Making Sense of Citizen Diplomats: The People of Duluth, Minnesota, as International Actors. *International Studies Perspectives*, 2(2), 131-150. DOI: 10.1111/1528-3577.00045

Shearlaw, M. (2014, December 11). What happened to Darfur after George Clooney came to town? *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/11/sp-george-cloony-darfur-what-next>

Stanzel, V. (Ed.). (2018). *New Realities in Foreign Affairs: Diplomacy in the 21st Century*. German Institute for International and Security Affairs. Retrieved from [https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research\\_papers/2018RP11\\_sze.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2018RP11_sze.pdf)

TIME Magazine. (1998, December 7). TIME 100 Persons of The Century. *TIME Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,26473,00.html>

Ungerleider, N. (2011, October 31). Bill Gates And The Chinese Government Want To Take On World Hunger. *Fast Company*. Retrieved from

<https://www.fastcompany.com/1791617/bill-gates-and-chinese-government-want-take-world-hunger>

United Nations. (1961, April 18). Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Vienna. Retrieved from [https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9\\_1\\_1961.pdf](https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9_1_1961.pdf)

United Nations. (2020, December 30). UN confirms closure of Darfur peace-keeping mission. *UN News*. Retrieved from <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1081122>

Uță, I. C. (2018, June 26). How did Ashton Kutcher turn \$30 million into \$250 million? *Brand Minds*. Retrieved from <https://brandminds.live/how-did-ashton-kutcher-turn-30-million-into-250-million/>

Walters, R. (2016). 'Shot Pakistani girl': The limitations of girls education discourses in UK newspaper coverage of Malala Yousafzai, *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 18(3), 650-670. DOI: 10.1177/1369148116631274

Wiedmann, K.-P., & von Mettenheim, W. (2020). Attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise – social influencers' winning formula? *Journal of Product & Brand Management, ahead-of-print*, 1-19. DOI: 10.1108/JPBM-06-2019-2442

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6 ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Yun, S.-H., & Toth, E. L. (2009). Future Sociological Public Diplomacy and the Role of Public Relations: Evolution of Public Diplomacy. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 53(4), 493-503. DOI: [10.1177/0002764209347626](https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764209347626)