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# **The Digital Diplomacy Revolution: Why is Canada Lagging Behind?**

by Roland Paris  
June, 2013



# POLICY PAPER

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## **The Digital Diplomacy Revolution: Why is Canada Lagging Behind?**

by Roland Paris  
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## ► **Executive Summary**

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The practice of international diplomacy is undergoing a revolution. As activists, private and public organizations, political leaders and mass publics embrace Twitter, Facebook and other forms of social media, foreign ministries have come under increasing pressure to update their operating methods. Many countries, including the US and Britain, are now encouraging their diplomats to use social media as a regular part of their job – not simply as a virtual “listening post” to monitor political discussions, nor merely as a megaphone for broadcasting press releases, but as a forum for participating directly in these discussions. Foreign ministries that fail to adapt to the social media revolution will lose influence over time: they will forgo opportunities to shape public discussions that are increasingly channeled through social media, to correct errors of fact or interpretation in real-time, and to build networks of interlocutors and followers.

Canada is lagging far behind the US and Britain in digital diplomacy. Aside from a few recent experiments, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) has largely sat on the sidelines of this revolution. DFAIT operates few social media channels and these channels tend to have few followers, compared to our two closest allies. Further, the Conservative government’s centralized control of public communications makes it virtually impossible for Canadian diplomats to engage in real-time substantive exchanges, which is the currency of the medium. Unless DFAIT joins its American and British counterparts in embracing new channels and methods of diplomacy, Canada’s voice will progressively fade in international affairs.





The practice of international diplomacy is undergoing a revolution. As activists, private and public organizations, political leaders and mass publics embrace Twitter, Facebook and other forms of social media, foreign ministries have come under increasing pressure to update their operating methods. Many countries, including the United States and Britain, are now encouraging their diplomats to use social media as a regular part of their job – not simply as a virtual “listening post” to monitor political discussions, nor merely as a megaphone for broadcasting press releases, but as a forum for participating directly in these discussions. This new approach to public diplomacy is likely to be a permanent change. Although private, state-to-state communications will continue to be central to their work, foreign ministries that fail to adapt to the social media revolution will lose influence over time. They will forgo opportunities to shape public discussions that are increasingly channeled through social media, to correct errors of fact or interpretation in real-time, and to build networks of interlocutors and followers.

Canada is lagging far behind the US and Britain in digital diplomacy. Until very recently, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) displayed little interest or ingenuity in the use of social media. Apart from a few experiments – some of which have been undertaken at the initiative of individual diplomats, without formal approval – DFAIT has largely sat on the sidelines of the digital diplomacy revolution. The creation of an online Global Dialogue on Iran in May 2013 was a welcome exception,<sup>1</sup> but whether it signals the beginning of a new period of digital activism for Canadian diplomacy remains to be seen. To date, Canadian diplomats, including ambassadors, have been allowed little latitude to participate in real-time social media exchanges, which is the currency of the medium. Further, compared to its US and UK counterparts, DFAIT operates a small number of social media channels, and these channels tend to have relatively few followers. In short, Canada’s voice is barely audible in the fastest-growing arenas of public diplomacy.

It need not be this way. Canada has the makings of a digital diplomacy leader: a rich society with an educated, multiethnic, polyglot population; a talented diplomatic service; and access to cutting-edge communications technologies. Unless Ottawa embraces new forms of social media statecraft, including real-time engagement in online discussions by Canada’s ambassadors and diplomatic missions, Canada risks being further marginalized in international affairs.

## THE RISE OF DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

The best way to understand the rise of digital diplomacy – and particularly the increased use of social media by foreign ministries – is to listen to its pioneering practitioners.<sup>2</sup> Alec Ross, for instance, was a senior advisor for innovation to Hillary Clinton during her tenure as US Secretary of State from 2009 to early 2013. Among other things, he was responsible for promoting the use of social media in American statecraft. Although he began this work in 2009, it was the “Arab Spring” protests of 2011 that drew widespread attention to the importance of

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://theglobaldialogue.ca>. For an account of the launch, see Campbell Clark, “Ottawa Backs Using Social Media to Boost Iran's Dissidents,” *Globe and Mail*, May 21, 2011, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-backs-using-social-media-to-boost-irans-dissidents/article11847631>.

<sup>2</sup> “Digital diplomacy” denotes, in its broadest formulation, any use of digital communications for the purposes of international diplomacy, but more commonly it refers to the use of social media by diplomats and foreign ministries. I use the latter definition in this policy brief.



these new communications platforms – particularly Facebook, Twitter and YouTube – that the protesters used to rally support, coordinate actions, and communicate their views.

Ross argued that the proliferation of communications and information technology was not only transforming the means of social protest, but that it also pointed towards an emerging revolution in diplomacy:

Traditionally, diplomatic engagement consisted largely of government-to-government interactions. In some instances, it was from government to people, such as with international broadcasting in the twentieth century. With the advent of social media and the rapid increase in mobile [technology] penetration, however, this engagement now increasingly takes place from people to government and from people to people. This direct link from citizens to government allows diplomats to convene and connect with non-traditional audiences, and in turn allows citizens to influence their governments in ways that were not possible ten years ago.<sup>3</sup>

In short, rapid changes in information technology were breaking down hierarchical power structures and empowering new “networked” forms of social and political activism, which in turn were changing the context in which diplomats do their jobs. Although the core work of diplomacy – direct contact between state officials – would remain central, Ross and others in the State Department observed that diplomats could not ignore the transformed information environment. As one advisor to Hillary Clinton observed, “Our basic assumption is that we’ve lost control of the information environment – the only option is to embrace the change and work to shape it.”<sup>4</sup>

The State Department responded by launching a “21<sup>st</sup> Century Statecraft” initiative. Among other things, this initiative sought to train and encourage US diplomats in Washington and abroad “to integrate both local and global social media tools as a means to create international dialogue.”<sup>5</sup> The results were extraordinary, particularly for an organization that did not have a reputation for being particularly open to innovation. As detailed below, Twitter and Facebook have been adopted by US diplomats and diplomatic missions and into the day-to-day work of American statecraft. Consider this: by January 2012, the State Department’s combined “social media reach” on Twitter and Facebook – or the total number of Twitter “followers” and Facebook “fans” – was over eight million people: a larger direct reach than the daily subscriber base of the ten largest US-based newspapers.<sup>6</sup> But that impressive number more than *tripled* by May 2013, topping 26 million.<sup>7</sup> These initiatives have effectively transformed the State Department into “a de facto media empire” – and a global one, at that.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Alec Ross, “Digital Diplomacy and US Foreign Policy,” *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 6 (2011), p. 452.

<sup>4</sup> Ben Scott, quoted in Fergus Hanson, “Baked In and Wired: eDiplomacy@State,” Brookings Institution Foreign Policy Papers Series, no. 30, October 25, 2012, p. 5, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2012/10/25-ediplomacy-hanson>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.state.gov/statecraft/overview>, accessed on June 2, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Hanson, “Baked In and Wired,” p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> As of May 22, 2013, the total number was 26,033,254, according to a State Department official in a private communication with the author.

<sup>8</sup> Hanson, “Baked In and Wired,” p. 21.



Britain's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has also emerged as a leader in digital diplomacy. Arguably the most proficient practitioner of this craft is Tom Fletcher, the UK ambassador to Lebanon and self-proclaimed "twiplomat" who engages in Twitter exchanges with his followers, including Lebanon's prime minister.<sup>9</sup> He is not only a participant in the digital diplomacy revolution, but is also one of its chroniclers: "Social media are now indispensable to our core tasks: information harvesting; analysis; influence; promotion of English as the code for cyberspace; crisis management; commercial work," he writes. "Imagine a reception at which all your key contacts were interacting. You would not stand in the corner silently or shouting platitudes, nor delegate the event."<sup>10</sup>

The FCO's *Digital Strategy*, published in December 2012, echoes many of Fletcher's points.<sup>11</sup> It describes the multiple uses of social media for British diplomacy, including:

- **Following and predicting developments:** for example, the FCO used social media to listen to and identify key voices during the Libya crisis and Arab spring, thus serving as an open-source for collecting intelligence, warning of impending developments, and "identifying key influencers";
- **Formulating foreign policy:** the FCO notes, for instance, that it consulted online for its Overseas Territories White Paper in 2011;
- **Implementing foreign policy:** following the closure of the British embassy in Tehran in 2011, the FCO used a "UK for Iranians" website and social media to continue communicating "key messages" and to circumvent media censorship within Iran;
- **Influencing and identifying who to influence:** as an example, the FCO refers to Fletcher's exchanges with "key influencers" in Lebanon and elsewhere.
- **Communicating and engaging on foreign policy:** for instance, the UK foreign secretary regularly hosts online question-and-answer sessions on specific foreign policy issues.

Like the State Department, moreover, the FCO not only provides training and support for its staff to conduct digital diplomacy, but expects them to use social media channels, such as Twitter and Facebook, as "a core part of the toolkit of modern diplomacy."<sup>12</sup>

However, because these are still early days for social media statecraft, it remains a domain of experimentation. Diplomats and foreign ministries are learning by doing.<sup>13</sup> Many also seek the

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<sup>9</sup> Matthias Lüfkens, "The Digital Diplomat: Connected and on Twitter," OpenCanada website, October 17, 2012, <http://opencanada.org/features/the-think-tank/essays/the-digital-diplomat-connected-and-on-Twitter>, accessed on June 2, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Tom Fletcher, "Our Man in Beirut Strips Down to 140 Characters," *World Today* 68:11 (December 2012), <http://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/twt/archive/view/187839>.

<sup>11</sup> FCO, "The FCO Digital Strategy," (December 2012), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-fco-digital-strategy>, accessed on June 2, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> FCO, "Social Media Policy Guide for FCO Staff," <http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/digitaldiplomacy/social-media-policy>, accessed on June 2, 2013.



guidance of “seasoned” practitioners such as Fletcher, who offers the following advice on using social media effectively:

Twiplomacy comes down to authenticity, engagement and purpose. Twitter is more raw, more human than normal diplomatic interaction: people are more likely to stick around to read your press releases if they know something about you as a person. We need to interact, not transmit. We need to be about action not reportage, about purpose not platitudes.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, this advice comes up regularly in expert discussions of digital diplomacy. To be effective, digital diplomacy requires direct engagement and dialogue, not simply the outward transmission of press releases or key messages. At a conference on the future of public diplomacy in November 2012, for example, three former senior US administration officials and one US Senate staffer reportedly reached a consensus that “engagement and relationships trump one-way messaging” in digital diplomacy.<sup>15</sup> Former Australian prime minister Kevin Rudd has offered similar advice to a senior Australian diplomat: “Rule 1: throw out DFAT Twitter manual which I approved or tweets will be dead boring.”<sup>16</sup> Rudd’s suggestion – which, tellingly, was delivered in the form of a tweet – captured the need for diplomats to build an audience through lively first-person exchanges. Twitter channels or Facebook pages that rely solely on one-way broadcasts tend to be “boring,” as Rudd put it, and consequently have little ability to gain a following. Without a following, messages risk disappearing into the ether, without being seen or read.

Yet, because rapid exchanges are less formal than traditional diplomatic communications, they also introduce an element of risk for foreign ministries, as the case of the US Embassy in Cairo illustrates. At the cutting edge of twiplomacy, the embassy has “engaged Egyptians of all stripes” on important and sensitive issues such as democracy and human rights in Egypt.<sup>17</sup> It has been extraordinarily successful at injecting US government views into public discourse in Egypt, but it has, on occasion, caused diplomatic tensions and political controversy, both in Egypt and in the US.

In September 2012, for example, in the midst of unrest caused by the viral spread of an anti-Muslim video that had been produced by a private US-based group, the embassy tweeted a message condemning the efforts of some to “hurt the religious feelings of Muslims.” Faced with criticism from some within the US that this message failed to stand up for free speech principles, the White House announced that the embassy tweet “was not cleared by Washington and does not reflect the views of the United States government.”<sup>18</sup> In a separate incident in April 2013, the US embassy sent out a tweet that included a link to a segment on the Jon Stewart’s “Daily

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<sup>13</sup> As Philip Seib writes, “a maturation process is underway, with Twiplomats (a terrible word) still learning how to maximize the value of social media.” <http://opencanada.org/features/the-think-tank/comments/twiplomacy-worth-praising-but-with-caution/>

<sup>14</sup> Fletcher, “Our Man in Beirut Strips Down to 140 Characters.”

<sup>15</sup> Conference summary: <http://takefiveblog.org/2012/11/26/expert-views-on-public-diplomacy-the-next-four-years/>

<sup>16</sup> Kevin Rudd, in a tweet on his Twitter account (@KRuddMP) on May 3, 2013, <https://Twitter.com/KRuddMP/status/330198114927525888>.

<sup>17</sup> P.J. Crowley, “Digital Diplomacy’s Reach and Risk,” Take Five Blog, April 8, 2013, <http://takefiveblog.org/2013/04/08/digital-diplomacys-reach-and-risk>, accessed on June 2, 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Senior US administration official, quoted in “White House Repudiates US Embassy Apology to Rioting Muslims in Cairo,” Politico website, <http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2012/09/11/white-house-repudiates-u-s-embassy-apology-to-rioting-islamists-in-cairo>, accessed on June 2, 2013.



Show” in which Stewart criticized, in his satirical style, the Egyptian government’s arrest of an Egyptian political satirist, Bassem Youssef. Egyptian government authorities were not amused, and responded by protesting the embassy’s “negative political propaganda.”<sup>19</sup> At that point, the embassy took down its Twitter account and removed the link before restoring the feed online, and the US ambassador to Egypt issued a formal apology.

These episodes illustrate “both the potential and the risk” of digital diplomacy, notes P. J. Crowley, former US Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs.<sup>20</sup> The embassy’s Twitter feed is “engaging, candid and direct,” which is both the foundation of its success and the source of the risk.<sup>21</sup> To date, however, both the US and the UK have tolerated and even encouraged a considerable degree of risk-taking by their social media diplomacy practitioners. The FCO’s policy guide for staff acknowledges as much: “In making full use of social media, mistakes will occasionally happen.”<sup>22</sup> Alec Ross, for his part, believes that mistakes are more likely to be ones of omission rather than commission: in other words, failing to engage energetically and proactively in social media discussions that are important to US foreign policy.<sup>23</sup> Tom Fletcher makes a similar point in a commentary published, appropriate, as a blog post on the FCO website: “We can’t put the genie back in the bottle – once non-state actors are part of the conversation, they must not be ignored.”<sup>24</sup>

## CANADA: LAGGING BEHIND

As noted above, DFAIT’s launch of the Global Dialogue in May 2013 represented an important and innovative step forward, not least because it provided the means for Iranians to circumvent their own government’s controls on free expression while protecting the identities of the people participating in the discussion. Within three weeks of being launched, the site had already logged approximately 360,000 unique users from inside Iran, as Canada’s foreign minister, John Baird, reported at a public forum in Ottawa on May 30.

Further, Baird suggested that Canada would be pursuing even more digital diplomacy: “The sky’s the limit.”<sup>25</sup> Yet his view of what counts as digital diplomacy seems strangely narrow:

I think the more we promote freedom and give people the capacity to get alternative information, create a democratic space, that’s what digital diplomacy is all about.<sup>26</sup>

Upholding Internet openness and individual free expression (particularly in countries whose governments are attempting to squelch such rights) is a worthy undertaking, but it is just one aspect of digital diplomacy. When it comes to using social media in diplomacy – which, as we

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<sup>19</sup> Cynthia Schneider, “U.S. Embassy Learns a Hard Lesson About Twitter,” CNN website, April 10, 2013, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/04/10/opinion/schneider-bassem-youssef>, accessed on June 2, 2013.

<sup>20</sup> Crowley, “Digital Diplomacy’s Reach and Risk.”

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> FCO, “Social Media Policy Guide for FCO Staff.”

<sup>23</sup> “The Future of Digital Diplomacy: An Interview With Alec Ross,” Mashable.com website, March 13, 2013, <http://mashable.com/2013/03/12/digital-diplomacy-alec-ross>, accessed on June 2, 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Tom Fletcher, “The Naked Diplomat,” <http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/tomfletcher/2012/10/02/the-naked-diplomat>, accessed on June 2, 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Remarks at the panel on “International Diplomacy in the Internet Age” during the Google Big Tent Ottawa 2013 conference, May 30, 2013.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

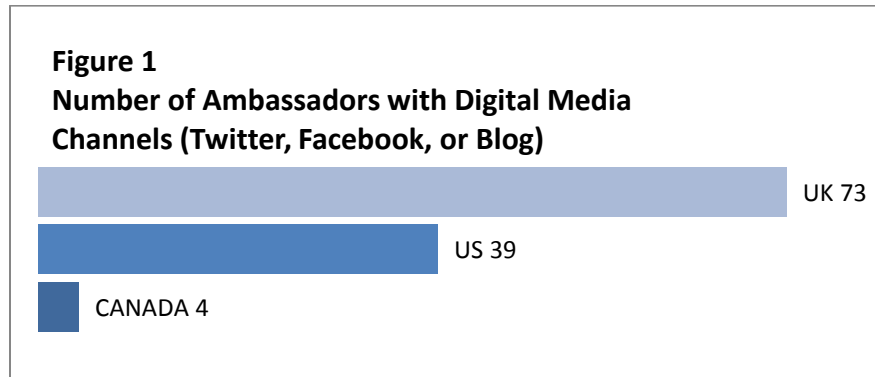




have seen, is a priority for both the US and Britain and a core of their digital statecraft strategies – Canada is lagging far behind.

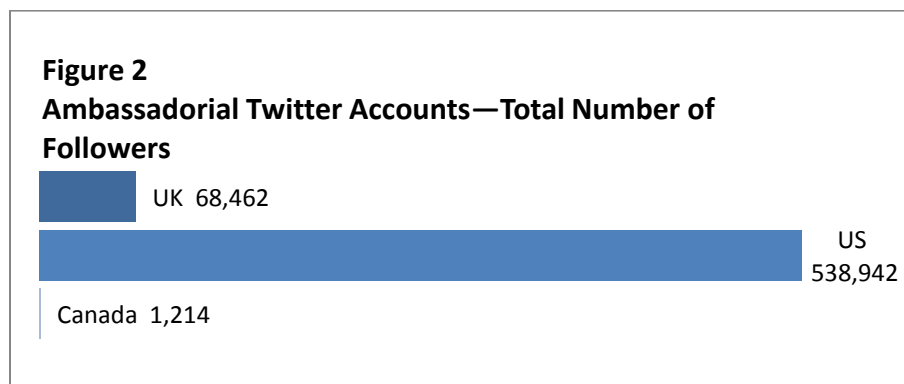
The following comparative statistics, based on data collected in April 2013, provide a glimpse of the extent of this digital diplomacy gap.

Figure 1 demonstrates that Canada’s ambassadors are largely “missing in action” in the world of digital diplomacy. Whereas a total of 39 US ambassadors and 73 British ones operate publicly accessible digital media channels in their own name (via Twitter, Facebook, or a blog), only four Canadian ambassadors do so.<sup>27</sup>



It is also unclear if all four of Canada’s ambassadorial Twitter accounts were operating with official sanction. The DFAIT webpage listed only two of these accounts.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, the total number of “followers” of Canada’s ambassadorial Twitter accounts is tiny compared with the number following British and American ambassadors, as Figure 2 illustrates. This is not surprising, given the relatively small number of Canadian accounts, but it illustrates the impact of this gap in terms of the size of the audience reached by these accounts.<sup>29</sup>



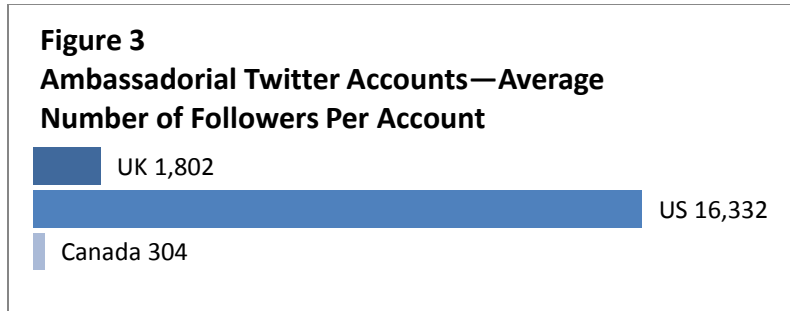
<sup>27</sup> They are: John Barrett, ambassador to Austria; Michael Grant, ambassador to Libya; Arif Lalani, ambassador to the United Arab Emirates; and James Lambert, ambassador to the Netherlands.

<sup>28</sup> Canada’s ambassadors to the Netherlands and Austria were listed; the other two were not. See [http://www.international.gc.ca/about-a\\_propos/social-media\\_medias-sociaux.aspx](http://www.international.gc.ca/about-a_propos/social-media_medias-sociaux.aspx), accessed on June 2, 2013.

<sup>29</sup> Note: the US figure is particularly high, in part, because the American ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, is an outlier with an extraordinary total of approximately 275,000 Twitter followers.



Figure 3 drills down further, displaying the average number of followers per ambassadorial Twitter account. Not only does Canada have very few tweeting ambassadors, but those who do tweet have a very small number of followers, on average, compared to their American and British counterparts.



Some might react to this data by asking if Canada’s embassies, in contrast to its ambassadors, are doing a better job of engaging in social media diplomacy, but Figure 4 demonstrates that Canada lags far behind its US and UK allies on this score, too. Only 18 Canadian embassies operate one or more digital media streams (again, either Twitter, Facebook, or a blog) in the name of the embassy, compared with 126 UK embassies and 165 US embassies.

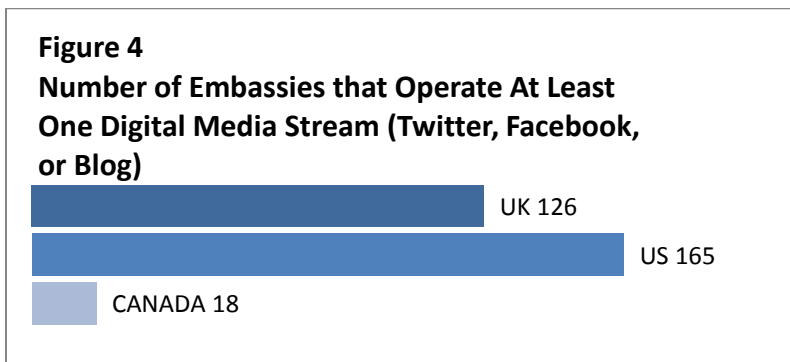


Figure 5 looks more closely at the social media reach of embassies on Twitter. It shows the relatively small total number of followers of Canadian embassy-run Twitter accounts relative to their UK and US counterparts.

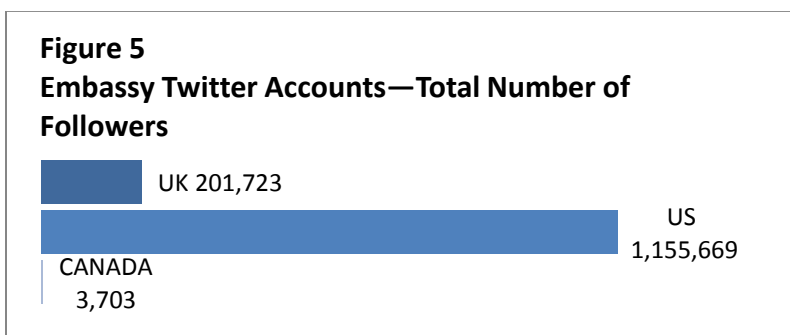
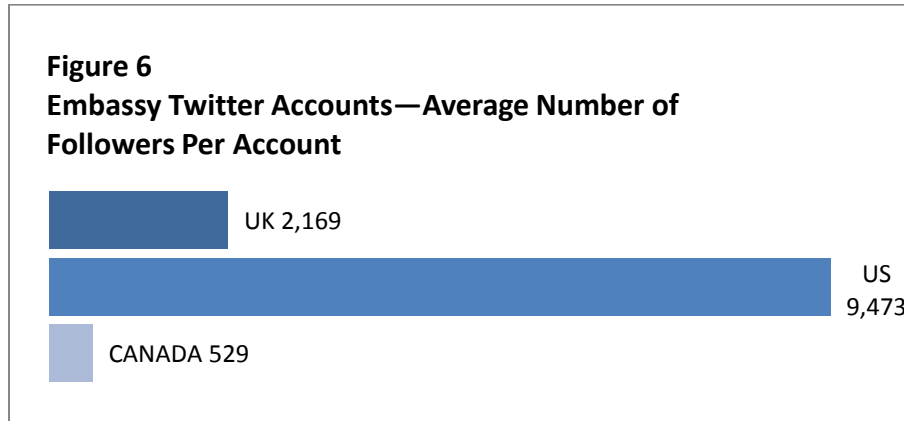
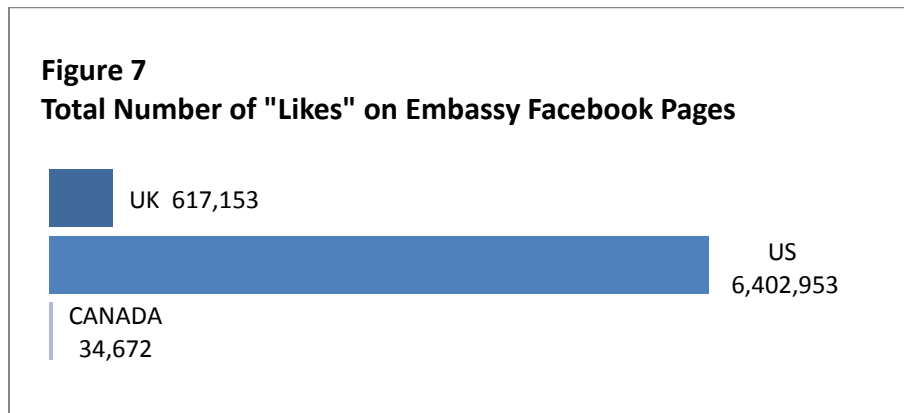




Figure 6 suggests that Canadian embassy Twitter accounts have a more limited reach not only because Canada operates fewer accounts, but because these accounts have been significantly less effective at attracting followers than those of British and US embassies.



To determine if similar patterns also apply to embassy-run Facebook pages, we need to look at the number of “likes” for these pages. (By “liking” a Facebook page, a user effectively subscribes to information posted on that page.) In Figure 7, we see that the total number of “likes” on Canadian embassy-hosted Facebook pages is a small fraction of the total number for American and British pages. This is primarily due to the smaller number of Canadian embassy Facebook pages (13) relative to the US (163) and UK (113).



It is worth noting that these statistics do not capture the activity of consular offices (below the level of embassies). Nor do they include the Canadian diplomatic presence in regional social media networks. In fact, the greatest success story in Canada’s digital diplomacy to date was the Beijing embassy’s use of the Chinese microblogging service Sina Weibo, which is similar to Twitter. When the embassy posted, in December 2011, a photo of Canadian ambassador David Mulroney’s Toyota Camry, a less expensive car than those driven by most Chinese government officials, the message stirred a vigorous debate within China on the perquisites of functionaries. In an internal DFAIT report, the embassy official who ran Canada’s Weibo account concluded that the incident “influenced the policy discussion by disseminating Canadian best practices



about good governance.”<sup>30</sup> The official continued: “Having a microblog in the Chinese context is more important than issuing press releases and in fact more important than having a website ever was in this media market.”

However, DFAIT’s use of regional social media networks other than Weibo in China appears to be limited.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, there seems to be little encouragement from Ottawa to prioritize this type of public diplomacy. On the contrary, the requirement that Canadian ambassadors and other diplomats must gain formal approval before making public comments has represented a significant barrier to their effective use of social media. Tellingly, the Beijing embassy did not seek or obtain authorization from Ottawa before setting up its Weibo account, a step that could have been regarded as contravening the department’s communications protocols. The fact that the experiment turned out well in the end was fortuitous for the diplomats who had taken the personal initiative, and assumed professional risk, by establishing the account.

## CANADA CAN – AND MUST – BE A LEADER IN DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

The fragmentation of mass communications is a symptom of more profound change that is taking place in the structure of power. It is diffusing not only from rich to rising states, or from North to South or West to East, but also from states to non-state groups and individuals – and at the most fundamental level, from hierarchies to decentralized networks.<sup>32</sup> For foreign ministries to operate effectively in a world of increasingly fragmented and diffused power, they will need to master the art of cultivating and managing diverse networks of public and private actors that have influence, or potential influence, over matters that are important to the foreign ministry and the country it serves. Social media are critical to this task because they are useful not only for identifying members of such networks, but more importantly for shaping the evolution of existing networks and for building new ones.

Canada has all the ingredients to be a global leader in digital diplomacy; indeed, we have a comparative advantage. First, Canada has an educated, multiethnic, polyglot population whose language skills and cultural familiarity make them natural participants in global “open source” issue networks. If DFAIT were to pursue a more deliberate and energetic outreach campaign, based in part on establishing Canadian leadership of informal global networks in areas of particular importance to Ottawa, the department might soon discover that its greatest resource, still largely untapped, is the many Canadians who are already part of these networks.

Second, Canada is rich. Unlike many other countries, we have the money to invest in the long-term success of our foreign policy, including both the human skills (more foreign service officers who are adept at new forms of diplomacy) and the technological capacities to conduct the world’s most sophisticated, wide-ranging and energetic digital diplomacy.

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<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Rick Westhead, “Social Media a Powerful Diplomatic Tool, Canadian Diplomatic Papers Reveal,” *Toronto Star*, March 22, 2013,

[http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2013/03/22/social\\_media\\_a\\_powerful\\_diplomatic\\_tool\\_canadian\\_diplomatic\\_papers\\_reveal.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2013/03/22/social_media_a_powerful_diplomatic_tool_canadian_diplomatic_papers_reveal.html), accessed on June 2, 2013.

<sup>31</sup> The Canadian embassy in Vietnam maintains an account on the regional social media network Zing.me (<http://me.zing.vn/b/canada.vietnam>).

<sup>32</sup> See Mosés Naím, *The End of Power: From Boardrooms to Battlefields and Churches to States, Why Being In Charge Isn’t What It Used to Be* (New York: Basic Books, 2013).



However, accomplishing these goals will require new methods of communicating. Canada should follow the lead of Britain and the United States by encouraging and enabling its diplomats to make regular, real-time, substantive interaction on social media a central part of their job. This will require the Conservative government to loosen the grip of its extraordinarily strict “message control” regime, which requires most public statements by diplomats and federal public servants to be vetted through a centralized communications approval system, often resulting in flat denials.<sup>33</sup>

There is no other way to pursue digital diplomacy effectively except through loosening these reins of control. In the words of Alec Ross, “The 21<sup>st</sup> century is a terrible time to be a control freak.”<sup>34</sup> Users of social media who do not engage in substantive, real-time exchanges are unlikely to make their voices heard. Successful twiplomats, such as Sweden’s foreign minister, Carl Bildt (who has 204,340 Twitter followers as compared to John Baird’s 13,276) seem to understand this intuitively.<sup>35</sup>

There is no time to lose. In a world of steadily diffusing and fragmenting power, Canada will increasingly become a bystander in international affairs if Ottawa does not adapt to the social media revolution in diplomacy. Baird has stated that “Canada is standing at the forefront” of digital diplomacy,<sup>36</sup> but this is largely untrue. Yes, promoting Internet freedom is important. But unless DFAIT joins its American and British counterparts in embracing new channels and methods of diplomacy, Canada’s voice will progressively fade in global affairs. “Diplomacy,” writes Tom Fletcher, “has always been Darwinian: we have to evolve or die.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Mike Blanchfield and Jim Bronskill, “Documents Expose Harper's Obsession with Control,” Canadian Press, June 6, 2010,

[http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2010/06/06/documents\\_expose\\_harpers\\_obsession\\_with\\_control.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2010/06/06/documents_expose_harpers_obsession_with_control.html), accessed on June 2, 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Alec Ross, “How Connective Tech Boosts Political Change,” CNN website, June 20, 2012,

<http://edition.cnn.com/2012/06/20/opinion/opinion-alec-ross-tech-politics>, accessed on June 7, 2013.

<sup>35</sup> These figures were current on June 3, 2013.

<sup>36</sup> Remarks at the panel on “International Diplomacy in the Internet Age.”

<sup>37</sup> Fletcher, “Our Man in Beirut Strips Down to 140 Characters.”

## ► About the Author

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**Roland Paris** is University Research Chair in International Security and Governance at the University of Ottawa. He is also founding Director of the [Centre for International Policy Studies](#) and Associate Professor in the [Graduate School of Public and International Affairs](#). His research interests are in the fields of international security, international governance and foreign policy.

Before joining the University of Ottawa in 2006, Prof. Paris was Director of Research at the Conference Board of Canada, the country's largest think tank; foreign policy advisor in the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Privy Council Office of the Canadian government; Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Colorado-Boulder; and Visiting Researcher at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C. He has won two awards for public service and four awards for teaching.

Prof. Paris' writings have appeared in leading academic journals including *International Security* and *International Studies Quarterly*. His research has earned international distinctions and citations, including the Grawemeyer Award for Ideas Improving World Order, which he received for *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict* (Cambridge University Press, 2004). He has co-edited two other books on peacebuilding, and is the co-editor of the *Security & Governance* book series at Routledge.

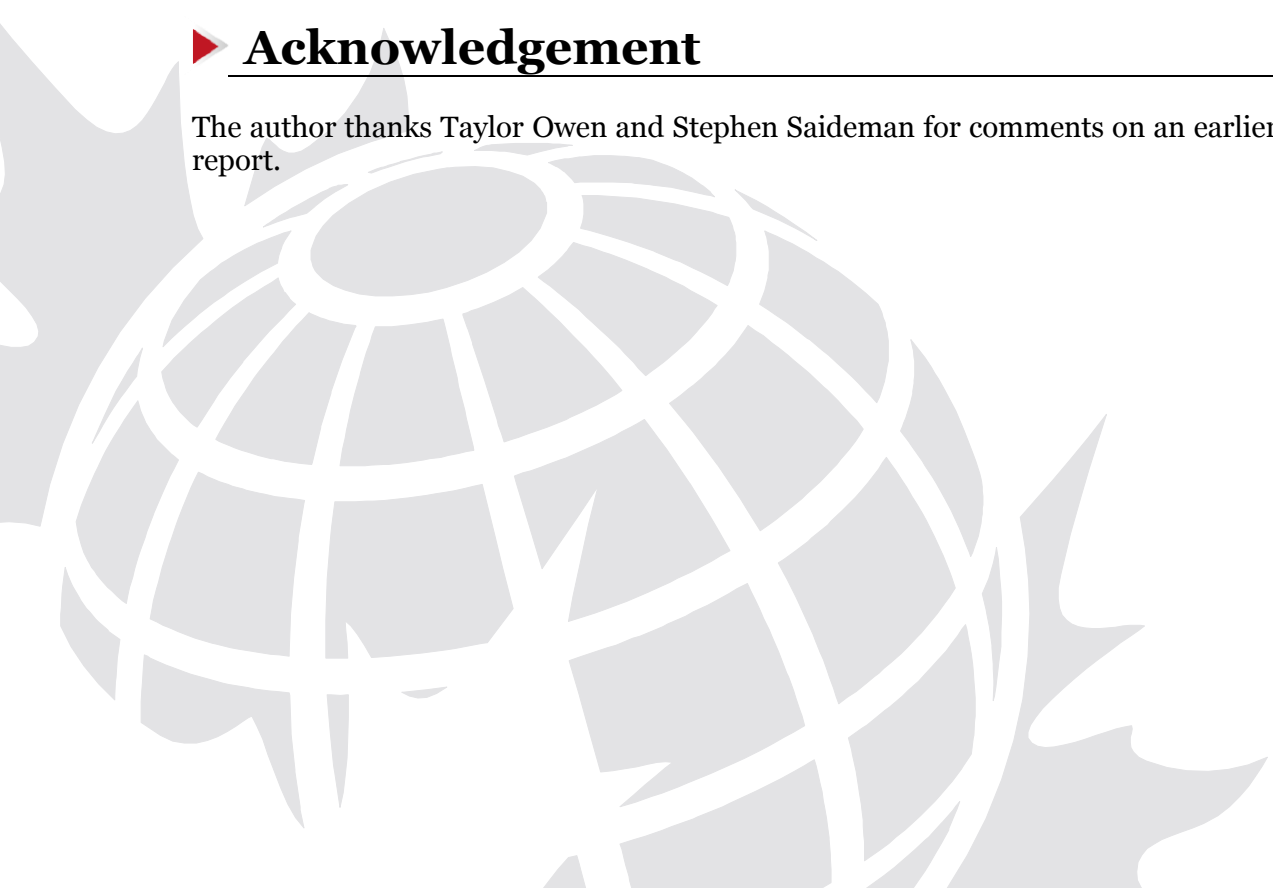
In 2012, Prof. Paris was appointed a Global Ethics Fellow by the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs in New York. He is a member of the board of directors of the World University Service of Canada, and serves on the editorial boards of several academic journals. He lectures around the world and is a regular commentator on international affairs in traditional and new media.

He holds a Ph.D. from Yale University, an M.Phil. from Cambridge University, and a B.A. from the University of Toronto.

## ► Acknowledgement

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## ► **Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute**

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