

Inventing a Shared Science Diplomacy for Europe: Interdisciplinary Case Studies to Think with History, edited by Claire Mays, Léonard Laborie, & Pascal Griset, Zenodo, 2022, 274 pp., open access (eBook), <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6590097>

Luiza Brodt

Senior Lecturer in Environmental Economics | Novosibirsk State University

Science diplomacy (SD) was defined as a new concept in the 2010s by the Royal Society and the American Association of the Advancement of Science, with a theoretical connotation attempting to describe sophisticated bilateral relations between states. But what about the practical side of this concept? And can we apply the emerged “science diplomacy” concept to older diplomatic practices, when science and diplomacy have already interacted in earlier history? *Inventing a shared science diplomacy for Europe: Interdisciplinary case studies to think with history* answers those questions by providing specific case-studies to “rethink” science diplomacy practices in a modern way. In order to contribute to better understanding of present scientific diplomacy practices, this book delivers interdisciplinary twenty-eight cases, both historical and contemporary, researched by more than thirty authors—leading historians, practicing archeologists, science-technology scholars and political scientists. The editors of this volume strive to bridge the gap between theory and practice of SD by focusing on what contribution “lessons from history” can make to strategy formulation especially for the European Science Diplomacy to strengthen the EU’s place in the world.

The book is divided into seven major sections, five of which are dedicated to case studies from certain theme areas such as heritage, health, security, environment, and space. The other

*Corresponding author: brodt@g.nsu.ru

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two sections are devoted to cross-cutting themes: the issues of power revealed or leveraged with SD and the fluid identities and practices of scientific diplomats themselves. The volume does not begin with a conceptual description of what science diplomacy is and how, by whom, and where it might be applied. Obviously, the reader should be acquainted with this subject. However, the first two chapters (“Science Diplomats” and “Heritage”) may serve as a theoretical (historical?) introduction because they immerse the reader in a few centuries ago, when science diplomacy was already born in one form or another by ambassadors, researchers, and “scientific attachés” by accident or design. Although the majority of the book attempts to trace periods in the history where intersections of diplomacy and science occur, the “Health” section presents the shape of contemporary global health diplomacy in the pandemic times (vaccine diplomacy) and public health issues (blood diplomacy).

The fourth section is dedicated to “Security” and may confuse reader by too widely ranged cases: from EU border policies (“Schengen Area border security technologies” case) to atomic energy (“Nuclear Diplomacy” case, “The First Moroccan Reactor” case, “ITER and fusion science diplomacy” case) and climate security (“Security for whom? Science diplomacy and Security in EU-Africa Relations” case). Another contrast in this section is that it focuses on SD in another way, as Maria Rentetzi stated in the introduction, it “considered the scientific and technical background to negotiations, putting less emphasis on conventional roles of front-stage diplomacy conducted by professional diplomats and turning our attentions to backstage and informal diplomatic roles...” (p.141), and this is the more insightful and interesting part of the book. In fact, each case individually can develop its own separate section, considering that different questions are raised at the end of each one: questioning the notion of border security; the role of the intergovernmental organization International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in scientific cooperation; powers asymmetries in scientific relationships; can scientists foster more effective integration of scientific observations of climate change impacts into the formulation and implementation of security policies. It is also worth noting that there are no case studies on energy security in the context of sustainable fossil fuel supply chains to Europe in this chapter, as it discusses security issues in the EU. Given the current crisis, science diplomacy appears to be more crucial than ever when it comes to EU energy security concerns. It would be interesting to trace how such complicated challenges were managed in past European history during energy crises, as well as whether there were successful practices to address security issues through science diplomacy.

The “Environment” section consists of five cases which are concerned with how we understand the environment at particular times and places and what issues arise regarding knowledge production and uniqueness when we put traditional ways of knowing nature and territories into the same category as modern (western) scientific knowledge. Two case-studies are dedicated to Indigenous influence as an “alternative” science diplomacy: one is on the example of Indigenous knowledge inclusion in the knowledge-production in the Arctic Council and the second one is on the narratives articulating the theme of climate change with that of traditional knowledge, expressed at COP21. Both cases call for a place to be given to Indigenous people in the “production of future scenarios for humanity” (Indigenous climate

change diplomacy). This is undeniably a need; however, in the presented cases there were not enough examples of successful projects where such “alternative” SD has already worked by involving traditional knowledge and yielded results in current climate (in)security. This would greatly strengthen the arguments of the given cases.

The sixth section focuses on case-studies in Space Diplomacy and particularly on history of European Science Diplomacy for space cooperation. Represented space diplomacy cases give a perfect consideration of the interplay between scientists as experts and politicians as stakeholders on science and technology at national and international level. As David Burigana noted, “this interplay is essential to understand how science diplomacy is used from promoting national interest to international cooperation, to competing globally” (p.227).

Despite the title’s suggestion that this volume is about “shared science diplomacy for Europe”, the chapters cover a wide range of diplomatic practices and approaches that may be of interest to diplomats and scholars in other nations. In general, this book constitutes an excellent endeavor to provide not only a rich view into the past of SD (through historical case-studies), but also an alternative view on Science Diplomacy itself. As Claire Mays notes in her introduction chapter, this volume is “a new contribution to the field: a living, moving, endlessly complex and compelling image of historical reality in all its many dimensions and contradictions.” The book’s cases explore science diplomacy practices via centuries, continents, cultures, institutions, communities, themes, actors, crises, cooperations and even political cartoons. Specific case studies are emphasized to stimulate thought about how the examined cases can be applicable in the current reality of diplomatic services. The volume and its case-studies will be useful for scholars, politicians, diplomatic services, science diplomats and overall academics from all research fields.

■ Luiza Brodt

Luiza Brodt is a Senior Lecturer in Environmental Economics at the Novosibirsk State University, focused on energy security issues in the Arctic region. Her research interests also include Arctic science diplomacy. Luiza’s works have been published in academic journals including Arctic Yearbook, Arctic and North, Antarctic Science. Currently, she is a research analyst of “Think Arctic-Think Global” project, being implemented as part of Russia's chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2021-2023.