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A RENEWED INTEREST IN SCIENCE DIPLOMACY AND THE ARCTIC

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Abstract:

Science diplomacy can be defined as building scientific collaborations among states to deal with common problems as well as addressing global challenges. This term also involves building constructive partnerships globally owing to the fact that both science and diplomacy is associated with open-ended negotiations based upon peaceful processes. After the end of the Cold War, there has been a remarkable interest in science diplomacy especially in the UK, United States, Japan and China more recently. On the other hand the Arctic region, which is perceived as a unique zone of peace and scientific collaboration, has been undergoing substantial transformation due to human induced climate change. Therefore, variety of emerging actors has accelerated both scientific and social cooperation across the region which determines the nexus between science diplomacy and geopolitics as well. This process has also transformed the structure of the Arctic Council and non-Arctic states are accepted as observers. Consequently, a more complicated and many-sided diplomatic system has emerged involving scientific institutions, non-governmental organizations, media and the network of regulators alongside governments. The aim of this study is to examine the role of science diplomacy in Arctic affairs. The role of emergent actors in the region is also discussed.

Key words: Arctic; Arctic Council; Arctic Governance; Governance; Science Diplomacy.

1. Introduction

Science and technology have been recognized as strategic assets to foster innovation and economic prosperity in today's highly interconnected and yet competitive world. Integrating science into foreign diplomacy as a key dimension has potential to advance national interests as well as to tackle global challenges effectively. That's why science diplomacy has become an efficient tool for bilateral and multilateral relationships among countries. Following the end of the Cold War, there has been a remarkable interest in science diplomacy especially in the UK, United States, Japan and China more recently. The Arctic region, which is perceived as a unique zone of peace, has become one of the prominent examples of supranational scientific collaboration. Based upon science diplomacy, this process has also transformed the structure of governing bodies in the Arctic. Consequently, a more complicated and many-sided diplomatic system has emerged involving scientific institutions, non-governmental organizations, media and the network of regulators alongside governments. The aim of this study is to examine the role of science diplomacy in Arctic affairs. The role of emergent actors in the region is also discussed.



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2. The Definition of Science Diplomacy

In literature, science diplomacy is explained as “the use of scientific interactions among nations to address the common problems facing humanity and to build constructive, knowledge based international partnerships”[1]. This definition emphasizes the importance of cooperation based upon science while addressing the global challenges. In a more recent report published by the European Commission, science diplomacy is defined as “the use of science to prevent conflicts and crises, underpin policy making, and improve international relations in conflict areas where the universal language of science can open new channels of communication and build trust”[2]. This report, in which the term is explained with a more comprehensive approach, contains the broadest science diplomacy vision of the Union.

Since science and diplomacy interact at different levels, science diplomacy aims to achieve foreign policy goals by applying three approaches: the use of science in diplomacy, diplomacy for science, and science for diplomacy. The use of science in diplomacy can be explained as providing scientific consultancy and using science when making foreign policy decisions. Diplomacy for science means the use of diplomacy to establish new scientific partnerships and facilitate international scientific collaborations. What is meant by science for diplomacy is using science to establish stable and lasting relations with the international community through scientific and technological partnerships[3].

Aforementioned interactions can be seen in Figure 1 given below.

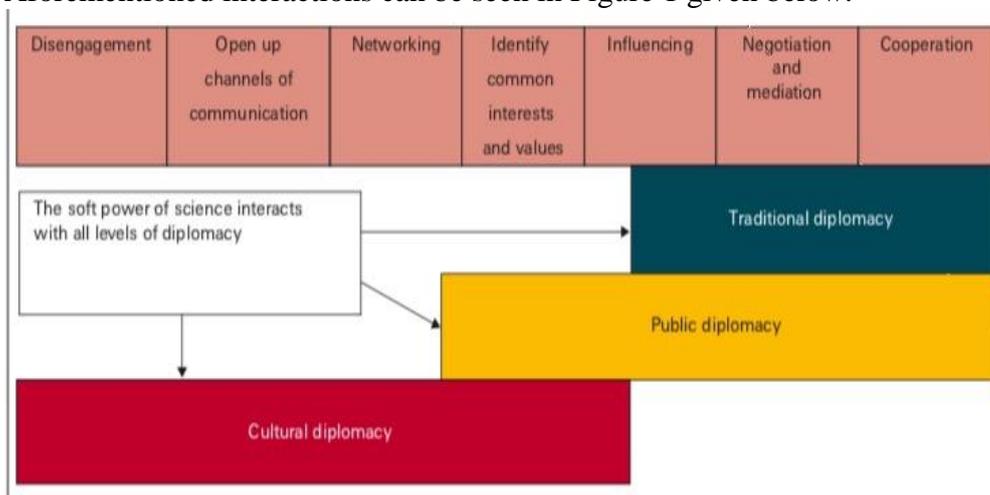


Figure 1. The Soft Power of Science [4]

The next session explains the renewed interest in science diplomacy in detail.

3.A Renewed Interest in Science Diplomacy

The definition and applications of science diplomacy have expanded substantially in recent years. In 2009, 200 delegates from twenty countries including Middle East, Africa, Asia, North and South America and Europe attended a meeting titled as “New Frontiers in Science Diplomacy” which was organized by the Royal Society. This meeting is especially significant because it highlights the renewed interest in science diplomacy.



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Pursuant to recognition by the Western world, other countries such as South Korea, India and China have also adopted science diplomacy and they have incorporated into academic discussion as well as policy making. At that point, especially China has become a prominent actor which has contributed to the transformation of Arctic Council. Consequently, an international discussion has sparked about China’s hidden purposes rather than merely scientific ones in the Arctic. The large-scale investments of China, which is seeking for alternative solutions to the increasing external resource dependency especially in the field of energy in parallel with the economic growth volume, has brought various discussions with its large-scale investments in the processing of natural resources in the Arctic region[5]. Despite not being located in the Arctic, China’s "Near Arctic State" declaration and formalizing its interest with the "Polar Silk Road" project as well as accelerating its scientific activities within the region has resulted in major controversies[6].

The next section explains science diplomacy process in the Arctic region in detail.

4.Science Diplomacy and the Arctic

It is a well known fact that the Arctic has been undergoing a major transformation due to post-Cold War geopolitics, climate change and globalization/power transition. As the access to natural gas and oil reserves increases, the importance of the Arctic also rises on the geopolitical stage. Eight countries have claimed interest in the Arctic in addition to its indigenous residents. At that point diplomacy has become essential among parties and the Arctic incentivizes cooperation by means of science diplomacy. Research infrastructures which are established throughout the region (both military and non-military observation and monitoring networks) have opened access and data to all countries. While countries sustain and build new research bases in addition to search and rescue stations, these developments have attracted non-Arctic actors such as China and the European Union.

As the Arctic has been warming twice fast compared to any other place, environmental protection of the region and addressing the climate change successfully necessitates an efficient science diplomacy process[7]. There have been several efforts to promote “greater scientific expertise within the Foreign Service and the State Departments” and institutionalize channels for science diplomacy[8]. And yet, the capacity of science diplomacy in the Arctic is required to be expanded to promote supranational scientific collaborations.

5.Conclusion

The significance of science diplomacy has begun to be recognized by the world and there are several countries which have established official positions of Science and Technology Advisors for Foreign Ministries (i.e. Japan, New Zealand and the United Kingdom). On the other hand, human induced climate change has become one of the urgent global challenges which carries the issue of Arctic to the front line. It could be concluded that the foundation of science diplomacy is established within the region. In order to improve science diplomacy, partnerships between not only the government, but also actors from the private sector, universities, research institutes, NGOs, media, and the youth organizations are recommended to be developed. Science



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diplomacy will continue to enhance if active participation from Arctic states as well as other actors is ensured.

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