PUBLIC DIPLOMACY:

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

Since its much publicized deployment in the wake of the September 11th attacks and during the subsequent so-called "War on Terror," public diplomacy has generated a substantial body of critical discourse emanating from both the professional and academic spheres. These analyses, however, have been for the most part empirical studies, aimed at strengthening the efficiency of the practice by identifying potential flaws or weaknesses in its current conception or application and offering possible correctives. Significant enquiries into the conceptual origins and evolution of the practice, on the other hand, have generally been rare and limited. This thesis proposes to remedy, in part, this lack by situating public diplomacy within a broader and deeper conceptual context.

The term "public diplomacy" only entered the lexicon of political and international affairs in the Cold War environment of the mid-1960s. It could however be argued that the essence of the practice –government communication with foreign publics— is as old as history itself. The primary purpose of this dissertation is to argue that public diplomacy, as the *specific* form taken by the practice of government communication with a foreign audience in the latter half of the twentieth century, is a distinctive product of the development and ultimate intersection of several discrete though somehow connected concepts in social and political thought. We shall seek to substantiate this claim by identifying three fundamental concepts that lie at the heart of the idea of public diplomacy –public opinion, civil society and the information age-- and charting their historical trajectory and various points of interaction.

The main body of the dissertation will therefore be divided into three genealogical chapters, one for each of the elected concepts cited above. Throughout, and increasingly as the thesis progresses, these various evolutional paths will be correlated, their points of convergence highlighted, so as to gradually situate the birth of public diplomacy at the intersection of their trajectories. The conclusion will offer further reflections on the continued influence of this collection of notions on the more recent development of public diplomacy, and the implications these might entail for its future.

RÉSUMÉ

La notion de "diplomatie publique" a inspiré un nombre considérable d'études critiques, aussi bien professionnelles qu'académiques, suite à sa mise en pratique particulièrement publicisée durant la "guerre contre le terrorisme" déclarée par l'administration Bush. Ces analyses, cependant, semblent s'être principalement cantonnées à des considérations empiriques et prescriptives, cherchant surtout à identifier les faiblesses et mésinterprétations qui marqueraient l'application actuelle de la "diplomatie publique", et à proposer certaines mesures correctives. Les recherches substantielles quant aux origines conceptuelles de la pratique, en revanche, ont été, d'une manière générale, rares ou du moins limitées. Cette thèse tente de remédier à cette lacune en cherchant à placer l'idée de "diplomatie publique" dans un contexte conceptuel plus étendu et approfondi.

Si la diplomatie traditionnelle exprime l'effort d'un état pour rallier à sa cause un ou plusieurs autres états, la "diplomatie publique", elle, consiste pour un état à faire passer son point de vue, non parmi ses homologues sur la scène internationale, mais au sein de la *population* de ces derniers. Bien que l'essence de la pratique ne soit pas nécessairement récente, l'appellation "diplomatie publique" (qui manque à ce jour d'équivalent exact en français) est relativement jeune, ayant fait son entrée dans le lexique de la politique internationale aux Etats-Unis dans les années soixante, en pleine Guerre Froide. L'objectif principal de cette thèse est de démontrer que la "diplomatie publique," comme forme singulièrement contemporaine de communication entre un gouvernement et un public étranger, est le produit distinct du développement et des entrecroisements de plusieurs concepts fondamentaux de la pensée politique et sociale.

Afin de justifier cette proposition, nous identifierons trois concepts essentiels à l'idée de "diplomatie publique" –l'opinion publique, la société civile, et "l'âge de l'information"-- et soumettrons chacune de ses notions à une étude généalogique détaillée. Au fur et à mesure que la thèse avancera, ces différents cheminements conceptuels seront corrélés, leurs points de convergence mis en évidence, de manière à progressivement situer la genèse de la "diplomatie publique" à l'intersection de leurs trajectoires. S'appuyant sur ces observations, la conclusion ouvrira un nouveau champ de réflexion en examinant leurs retombées possibles sur le futur de la pratique.

To J. G. H., in memoriam

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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<u>PREFACE</u>

As genealogical considerations will be central to this dissertation, it is perhaps fitting to begin with a few words about its own genesis. In the spring of 2004, one year after the invasion of Iraq by the US-led coalition and having just completed my PhD course work, I was offered a post at an institutional communications firm based in Beirut.

The company operated throughout the Middle East and, during the final interview, my future boss, whose demeanour still bore traces of his former incarnation as an advertising mogul, proudly unveiled a slide show of some of his most successful recent campaigns. It was an eclectic and extremely polished reel that ranged from the image makeovers of local politicians to "nation branding" exercises for the governments of Jordan or Morocco. There were efforts to quell corruption and promote transparency in the region, sponsored by international NGOs, and calls for increased freedom of press and decreased religious fundamentalism signed by indigenous civil society groups. There were also adverts showcasing Americans and Arabs joined in a common battle against fundamentalism and images of a stable and thriving future Iraq. "As you can see," he said wrapping up, "you will be dealing primarily with public diplomacy operations and international public relations."

The job description felt familiar and topical. "Public diplomacy," a term that had for a while fallen into relative disuse, had recently become a buzzword again in Washington in the wake of the 9/11 events. One could hardly open a North American paper in those days without coming across some mention of it and of its urgent necessity in the battle for Arab and Muslim "hearts and minds" (itself a rather infelicitous choice of

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words as the Vietnam slogan that was never quite fulfilled[1]). I knew the phrase had been

coined during the Cold War and the practice was chiefly one of governments

communicating with foreign publics through a variety of means and channels. Yet the

mission also felt curiously obscure. I realized that as public diplomacy's goal was in

essence one of persuasion or seduction, a certain kinship with advertising was somewhat

expected. The State Department's appointment of Charlotte Beers, a high-profile

advertising executive, as Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public

Affairs in October 2001 had made that linkage rather explicit. But as the glossy images

sponsored by a variety of actors and manufactured by a private company I had just been

shown still whirled in my mind, I suddenly was not quite sure what public diplomacy

exactly meant or entailed anymore. Was it still a purely governmental activity, a

circumscribed instrument of statecraft? What was at the heart of its "communicative"

mission: some form of propaganda or dialogic exchange? Were polished marketing and

branding techniques being employed to complement or supplant the cultural and

educational dimensions that had been so central to the practice during the Cold War?

More fundamentally, what sort of guiding philosophy infused it? Was it Machiavellian

pragmatism or Kantian idealism, or to paraphrase Wolfers, "the optimistic hunch of a

Locke...or the pessimistic hunch of a Hobbes?"[2] It managed to come across as both naive

and cynical, and in the end, as has been generally acknowledged since, also proved

largely unsuccessful.

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[1] For concise overview of the evolution and connotations of the "hearts and minds" catchphrase see
Dickinson. (2009).

[2] Wolfers. (1962) p. 238

By the time I left the job, in 2008, the precise contours of what constitutes public diplomacy had hardly become clearer. I became increasingly interested in the conceptual foundations of this blend of international affairs and public relations that combined critical concerns with at times arguably frivolous practices and seemed both inherently natural and oddly misguided. How had it come to be? For sure, the general notion of addressing foreign publics, particularly in times of conflict, is not particularly new in and of itself. Both "the sword and the word" have long governed relations between nations. However, "public diplomacy," as it was conceived when the term was originally coined in the mid-1960s, aimed to be a unified and concerted process with a broader applicability and a more long-term outlook than previous war-time propaganda or crisis management exercises. Could it possibly have been a mere *ad hoc* construction born out of Cold War necessity? It was more likely the conceptual product of intersecting historical developments in political or social thought and practice. Building on that note, did the recent transformations the practice of public diplomacy had undergone since the end of the Cold War then signal, as was often suggested, the advent of a fundamentally "new public diplomacy" symptomatic of a much-touted "New World Order," or did they simply reflect the latest evolutions and mutations of those very same converging notional elements that gave rise to it in the first place? These various hunches and hypotheses invariably led back to one underlying question: what were the *conceptual* roots of public diplomacy?

My research on the topic, though tremendously enriching and stimulating at a variety of levels, seemed reluctant to yield a wholly satisfying answer to this elemental

issue. Since its highly mediatized revival as the Bush administration embarked on a "War on Terror," the notion of public diplomacy has generated a substantial body of scholarship. However, it has by and large confined itself to the empirical and the normative, focusing primarily on analyzing the reasons for public diplomacy's disappointing performance in this more recent context (in contrast to its Cold War deployment where it is generally credited as having been "essential"[3] to the eventual victory of the U.S.) and on suggesting ways to update and improve the practice. Dire indictments of the Bush administration's use of public diplomacy have become so common, and prescriptive calls for "new public diplomacy" or a "public diplomacy 2.0"[4] so plentiful that certain thinkers have even mentioned a certain "report fatigue"[5] on the subject, a weariness of sorts developing in reaction to what Fitzpatrick describes as "the post-trauma infatuation with public diplomacy."[6] Meanwhile, however, significant conceptual enquiries into the origins and evolution of the practice have remained scarce throughout.

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[3] See Nye. (2008) p. 95

[4] See for instance Arsenault. (2009) or Seib, ed. (2009).

[5] Gregory. (2005) Examples of such studies and reports include The Heritage Foundation's "How to Reinvigorate Public Diplomacy" (2003), the Council on Foreign Relations' "Finding America's Voice: A Strategy for Reinvigorating U.S. Public Diplomacy" (2003), the Department of Defense's "Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communications" (2004), Charles Wolf & Brian Rosen's "Public diplomacy: How to Think About and Improve It" for the RAND Corporation (2004), the Public Diplomacy Council's "A Call for Action on Public Diplomacy" (2005). More recently, a series of books and anthologies on the topic have also appeared (See Seib, ed. (2009), Fitzpatrick. (2010), Zaharna. (2010)).

[6] Fitzpatrick. (2010) p. 4

One of the few exceptions is of course the link between public diplomacy and "soft power," a term originally coined by political theorist and international relations scholar Joseph Nye in 1990. Given its introduction into the political lexicon decades after that of "public diplomacy," however, "soft power" cannot, strictly speaking, be viewed as a theoretical force behind the *emergence* of public diplomacy. The conceptual affinities and practical linkages between the notion of soft power and the practice of public diplomacy are nevertheless undeniable. But while soft power is almost inevitably mentioned in studies of public diplomacy, deeper investigation into how both soft power and public diplomacy fit within theories of governance and international relations has been generally confined, perhaps not surprisingly, to the realm of political theory. Curiously, the field of communications and cultural studies, in spite of its preoccupation with issues of power (particularly in the Foucauldian sense), citizenship and identity -- and notwithstanding its alleged "political turn"-- has shown little inclination to tackle public diplomacy from that perspective. Bringing together political science, international relations, communications and media studies, public diplomacy may well be, as Gilboa remarks, "one of the most multidisciplinary areas in modern scholarship,"[7] but this multi-facetedness, while inherent in the actual practice, has yet to truly materialize at the theoretical level.

This dissertation is a modest and dual attempt therefore, to contribute to the study of public diplomacy by situating it within a wider and deeper conceptual canvas, and hopefully, in so doing, to weave certain threads of political theory back into the heart of

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[7] Gilboa. (1998) p. 56

communications and cultural studies. And because conceptual histories, as James Farr is keen on reminding us, can "form a genre in the sister disciplines of political theory and the history of discourse," a genealogical approach seemed uniquely suited to the task.

CHAPTER I – AN INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

*Nations now stand in such constructed relations to one another that
none can stand any weakening of its culture without losing power
and influence in relation to the others.*

Immanuel Kant*, Idea for a Universal History with a
Cosmopolitan Intent (1784)*

I- PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Born in the mid-1960s, "public diplomacy" is a relatively new addition to the

political lexicon. As John Ehrenberg points out, however, "seemingly new and hastily

used concepts sometimes turn out to have revealing and instructive genealogies."[1] It may

equally be argued, however, that public diplomacy is also, at its core, a very old idea. Is

"public diplomacy" then merely the "old wine [of communicating with foreign publics]

in new bottles,"[2] a sheer lexical mutation, or does it embody a perhaps related but

nevertheless sufficiently novel and distinct set of notions and practices to be granted

relative autonomy as a concept?

There is always, for sure, a certain degree "of change within continuity and

continuity within change"[3] in the life of concepts. At a very concrete level though, the

practice of public diplomacy, particularly in our information technology-driven and

media-saturated times, is evidently and fundamentally different from, say, the

communicative efforts between warring Greek city states in the 5th century B.C., or, to

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[1] Ehrenberg. (1999) p. x

[2] Melissen. p.3

[3] Ball, Farr & Hanson. (1989) p. 3

use Vlahos' comparative examples, "the persuasion strategies" of Napoleonic France or Showa Japan.[4] In less plainly apparent terms too, however, the *concepts* that infuse modern-day public diplomacy are arguably quite distinct from those that underlay these forerunning efforts at international communication. In fact, this dissertation's primary purpose is to argue that public diplomacy, as the specific *form* taken by the practice of government communication with a foreign audience in the latter half of the twentieth century, is the distinctive product of the development and ultimate intersection of several discrete though somehow connected social and political concepts. Moreover, and somewhat naturally, the evolution of the notion of public diplomacy itself in the few decades since its "official" inception has continued to be influenced by the further evolution of these very conceptual notions. This dissertation will seek to confirm this two-fold premise, therefore, by identifying these shifting and interrelated concepts and charting their historical trajectory and various points of interaction.

This will not be, therefore, so much a genealogical examination of public diplomacy strictly speaking, as one of public diplomacy's conceptual *lineage*. Its primary goal is not to chart the actual evolution of public diplomacy in discourse and practice over its few decades of existence, nor to attempt to inscribe it in a long historical line of more or less propagandistic governmental endeavours, but rather, to explore the historical emergence of a particular socio-political *conceptual* framework that provided the conditions of possibility for the imagination of the practice. This does not mean, however, that our concerns will be purely theoretical, let alone etymological. A

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[4] See Vlahos. (2009)

genealogy of conceptual context is not necessarily antithetical to empirical concerns. Its

purpose is *not* to provide a history of shifting semantics wholly divorced from application

and use. As Gellner writes, in "Concepts and Society," "concepts and beliefs are

themselves, in a sense, institutions amongst others; for they provide a kind of...frame, as

do other institutions...within which individual *conduct* takes place."[5] Ball, Farr and

Hanson emphasize this point too when, drawing on moral and political philosopher

MacIntyre's argument that no behaviour can be identified that is entirely independent

from historical setting and conceptual belief,[6] they note that "conceptual change is

therefore itself a species of political innovation."[7] However, concepts not only inform

beliefs and practices, they are also, in turn, affected by them. The constitutiveness --or, at

the very least, the influence-- is reciprocal and continuous. As Farr points out:

> ...concepts never fully constitute political practices because political
> practices have unintended and even unconceptualized consequences.
> Over the long term, these consequences may even come to be seen as
> contradicting the practice, and this will generally lead to its
> *re*conceptualization.[8]

Conceptualizations and reconceptualizations need not, however, solely be the fruit

of these "unintended" consequences of action Farr mentions. Giddens, for instance,

deems a singular focus on *unintended* consequences of action too narrowly functionalist

in outlook. He elaborates on that specific point in his attempt to formulate a theory of

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[5] Gellner. (2003) p. 18 (emphasis added)

[6] See MacIntyre. (1966)

[7] Ball, Farr & Hanson. (1989) p. 2

[8] Farr. (1989) p. 28

"structuration" that would accord equal weight to both structure and agency in *The Constitution of Society*:

> Functionalism has strongly emphasized the significance of *unintended* consequences of action... [and they] have been quite right to promote this emphasis... [But] the designation of just what is unintentional in regard to the consequences of action can be adequately grasped empirically only if the *intentional* aspects of action are identified, and this again means operating with an interpretation of agency more sophisticated than is normally held by those inclined towards functionalist premises.[9]

In fact the evolution of concepts, the mutation of their significance, is often, as Foucault was eager to highlight, the product of very deliberate --though not necessarily overt-- competing attempts to shape and control meaning and belief. In seeking to uncover the genesis of a particular situation, Foucault was an especially committed advocate of "genealogy" as a method to reveal the various societal forces and other forms of influence at play in the production and evolution of concepts and their often stealthy normalization as "truths."[10] Indeed, the contemporary sense of the term as a method of enquiry in social thought and cultural studies, which was inspired for him by Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*, is one of his many legacies. A genealogy in the Foucauldian sense is not a search for origin constructed as a linear and inevitable development, but quite the reverse, for there is no such thing as inevitability or absolute historical necessity in his view. The genealogical method is therefore, as Flyvbjerg describes, a means of excavating a plural, conflicted and at time even contradictory past.[11]

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[9] Giddens. (1984) p. xxxi (emphasis addded)

[10] The notion of the link between power and knowledge being central to most of Foucault's oeuvre, it would seem inadequate to single out one or a handful of references. See Foucault (1997) for a selectively concise anthology on the theme.

[11] Flyvbjerg. (1998) p. 225

The sway of action, of tangible events, and of the various power plays underlying them, over the evolution of concepts is often most strikingly witnessed in times of social turmoil or political transformation, and in that sense, it is perhaps no coincidence that the notion of "public diplomacy" itself arose as the U.S. grappled with the emergence of the somewhat novel kind of conflict that was the Cold War. The historian Eric Hobsbawm illustrates the link between social upheaval and conceptual innovation particularly eloquently at the beginning of *The Age of Revolution*, 1789-1848:

> Let us consider a few English words which were invented, or gained their modern meanings, substantially in the period of sixty years with which this volume deals. They include such words as "industry"..."middle class," "capitalism," and "socialism." They include "aristocracy" s well as..."liberal" and "conservative" as political terms, "nationality," "scientist"...and (economic) "crisis." "Utilitarian" and "statistics," "sociology"..."journalism" and "ideology" are all coinages or adaptations of this period.[12]

In other words, "our concept and beliefs and action and practices go together and change together."[13] The relationship between concept and practice is thus no simple linear equation, and it is further complicated by the fact that "concepts are never held or used in isolation, but in constellations which make up entire schemes or belief systems."[14] Concepts are therefore linked, more or less directly and more or less interactively, to other concepts which are themselves also necessarily evolving. In this respect, and to borrow Gellner's words, "clear and distinct concepts...are historically a rarity."[15] A relative measure of cross-fertilization is always at play.

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[12] Hobsbawm. (1962) p. 1 (also partially qtd. in Farr. (1989) pp. 30-31)

[13] Farr. (1989) p. 24

[14] *Ibid*. p. 33

[15] Gellner. (2003) p. 18

As should be clear by now, our inquiry into the historical trajectory of a body of concepts (and their relation with certain practices and institutions) embedded in the notion of public diplomacy, shall therefore be very much indebted, both in spirit and in method, to the exposition of contextual contingencies, interests and power struggles that characterize the "genealogical" work of Foucault. It is equally inspired by Raymond Williams' studies in the life of ideas (be it the seminal *Culture*, or more playful *Keywords*) whose inter-disciplinary quality appears naturally suited to the overlap of fields of study or expertise (political science, public relations, media studies, psychology etc.) that characterizes public diplomacy, and to our wish to reflect this mutli-facetedness in a conceptual framework that could unite political theory with cultural studies and communications. In his introduction to the 1983 edition of *Keywords*, Williams acknowledged that "it was not easy...to describe this work in terms of a particular academic subject:"

> This may at times be embarrassing, or even difficult, but academic subjects are not eternal categories, and the fact is that, wishing to put certain general questions in certain specific ways, I found that the connections I was making, and the area of concern which I was attempting to describe, were in practice experienced and shared by many other people, to whom the particular study spoke.[16]

Having described the kind of genealogical investigation this dissertation aims to pursue, it remains for us to justify this choice, to clarify "the why." In practical terms, the benefits of examining the historical evolution of concepts are perhaps quite modest. As Williams noted:

> I do not share the optimism...that clarification of difficult words would help in the resolution of disputes conducted in their terms and

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[16] Williams, R. (1983) pp. 13-14

often evidently confused by them. I believe that to understand the complexities of the meanings of *class* contributes very little to the resolution of actual class disputes and class struggles.[17]

Exploring the historical construction of public diplomacy's conceptual framework is unlikely therefore to offer a quick fix to the various aspects of contemporary public diplomacy –particularly U.S. public diplomacy—that have been deemed "broken" of late, and in sterner assessments, "perhaps beyond repair."[18] It remains nevertheless in our opinion a necessary task to undertake. One of the primary reasons why it may be of value --that is aside from the intellectual rewards of the exercise itself—is the definitional haziness that continues to plague the term. "Public diplomacy has entered the lexicon of twenty-first century diplomacy without clear definition of what it is or how the tools it offers might best be used,"[19] writes Lane, echoing a repeatedly-noted, quasi-consensual feeling. "The truth...is that the state of U.S. public diplomacy today may be attributed to many factors –including the seeming inability of those who study and practice public diplomacy to adequately explain what public diplomacy is,"[20] reckons Fitzpatrick. As Carnes Lord explains:

> Because there is no official accepted doctrine governing public diplomacy operations, the term has been used in a variety of ways...It coexists uneasily with other, similarly vague terms such as "international information," or "international communication." Toward the harder edge of the spectrum, it competes with terms such as "psychological operations," "psychological warfare," and "political warfare." Very recently, the term "strategic communication" has gained traction within the Department of

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[17] *Ibid*. p. 24

[18] See Fitzpatrick. (2010) p. 43

[19] Lane, A. (2006) p. 2

[20] Fitzpatrick.   (2010) p. 79

Defense as an umbrella label embracing public affairs, public
diplomacy, and military psychological operation ("PSYOP").[21]

A principal cause of this noticeable difficulty in delineating clearly what public

diplomacy is remains, as Entman points out, the fact that "[t]he literature on public

diplomacy lacks a theoretical infrastructure."[22] Although he does not actually have public

diplomacy in mind, Ehrenberg makes a similar argument –and further reinforces our

purpose-- in his observation that when "antecedents have not been adequately explored" a

concept is often condemned to be "deployed in a thin, undertheorized, and confusing

fashion."[23] These various observations all seem to indicate therefore a definite need to

investigate the conceptual framework of public diplomacy as a pre-requisite to a

meaningful further rethinking of its application. A genealogy of public diplomacy's

essential conceptual roots will perhaps not succeed at fully rescuing the concept from

variation, contradiction and ambiguity, but such is not necessarily its purpose. The

tensions and versatility that underlie the contemporary understanding of public diplomacy

may contribute to the relative confusion surrounding it, but they are also what confers,

upon the concept and its practice, dynamism, controversy, and topicality. As Zaharna

points out, "public diplomacy...is enriched by multiple perspectives."[24] In embarking on a

conceptual journey into its origins, our aim is not, therefore, to entirely disambiguate

public diplomacy, or as Mandaville expresses it, "to recover lost trajectories and grand

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[21] Lord. (2006) p. 7

[22] Entman. (2008) p. 87

[23] Ehrenberg. (1999) p. x

[24] Zaharna. (2010) p. 138

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normative narratives,"[25] but on the contrary, to enhance our appreciation of its present-day multiplicity and indeterminacy. In charting the fluctuating history of the conceptual influences that have helped shape public diplomacy, we seek, as Hallberg and Wittrock would put it, "to trace [its] opacity...in order to think it anew."[26]

We realize of course that the sheer intricacy of the process of conceptual genesis and evolution –let alone the fact that "[there is] a future history (yet) to tell... [and] the past is hardly as fixed as it (sometimes) seems"[27]-- render the idea of an *exhaustive* genealogy of the array of concepts found to converge in the notion of public diplomacy unfeasible. For this reason, among others, we have chosen to limit our analysis to the investigation of three fundamental notions underlying public diplomacy. They are "public opinion," "civil society," and "the information age."

The relevance of these three notions to the concept of public diplomacy has not been wholly overlooked in public diplomacy theorizing. The concept of public opinion is inherent to public diplomacy's professed mission to seduce, influence or engage foreign publics and, as we shall observe in the latter part of this chapter, civil society and the information age are in fact repeatedly brought up as factors to be taken into account in the formulation of a "new public diplomacy" adapted to our times. But while mention of these three notions in the context of discussing public diplomacy is frequent, it is generally limited to an invocation of them as "givens" of sorts, that is, as an

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[25] See Mandaville & Williams. (2003) p. 168

[26] Hallberg & Wittrock. (2006) p. 29

[27] Farr. (1989) p. 39

acknowledgement of the way they stand today and the implications that may have for the *future* of public diplomacy. What often appears to be lacking –and what we hence seek to call attention to-- is an awareness of the complex and at times overlapping historical trajectories of public opinion, civil society and the information age, as well as an appreciation of their long-standing entwinement with the notion of public diplomacy going back to the very inception of the practice. It goes without saying, however, that public opinion, civil society and the many-faceted notion of an "information age" do not cover the *entirety* of public diplomacy's conceptual derivation. However, they do form, to our mind, the fundamental conceptual backdrop to its emergence and evolution. They also happen to be a particularly appropriate choice in light of our interest in drawing together political theory, communication and cultural studies. Moreover, since, as discussed earlier, concepts do not evolve in hermetic bubbles but in shifting and interactive constellations, we will, in analyzing these notions, inevitably touch upon others, particularly from the field of political vocabulary, ranging from the Enlightenment articulation of "the state" and "democracy" to the early 1990s coinage of the idea of "soft power."

The mention of soft power inevitably raises the question of its non-inclusion among the fundamental concepts we have chosen to explore in relation to public diplomacy. There is after all no question that, even if the phrase "soft power" itself arose some thirty-five years after "public diplomacy," the model of influence represented by it is central to the development of public diplomacy. Certainly, no conceptual appraisal of public diplomacy would be complete without reference to soft power --or, at least, to the

special way of exerting influence, of "co-opting [others], so that they want what you want,"[28] that it denotes-- and we shall indeed consider the notion of soft power and its link to public diplomacy in the following section, when we examine public diplomacy itself in greater detail, before delving into its theoretical roots and inspirations. Our reasons for opting to exclude soft power from our ultimate selection of underlying concepts to be genealogically investigated, however, are twofold.

The first reason may be cast as a counterbalancing measure to the sheer ubiquity of the notion in analyses of public diplomacy. Most of the current literature on public diplomacy mentions soft power, and the rarer attempts to tackle public diplomacy in more conceptual terms have generally confined themselves to a focus on soft power.[29] We felt somehow compelled, therefore, to offer a counterpoint to the primacy of soft power in analyses of public diplomacy, to spotlight other areas of conceptual influence. This is not to imply that there is nothing left to say about soft power. The topic is rich and controversial enough to nourish debate and reinterpretation for years to come. In fact, Joseph Nye, who coined the term, has since then continuously rearticulated and honed the notion.[30] Nor is this to indicate that soft power will be wholly overlooked in this dissertation as a result. The notion shall not only be addressed in the preparatory overview of public diplomacy which follows these introductory remarks, but will also, as we shall see, be pertinent to the evolutional paths of the three conceptual fields we have

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[28] Nye. "Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics." Books for Breakfast program. Carnegie Council, New York. 13 Apr. 2004. Transcript. http://www.cceia.org/resources/transcripts/4466.html.

[29] See Nye. (2008, 2010); Rugh. (2009); Fitzpatrick. (2010); Ronfeldt & Arquilla. (2009).

[30] See for example Nye. (2004, 2006, 2008, 2010)

selected –public opinion, civil society and the information age. Indeed, insofar as public diplomacy may be regarded as an instrument of soft power, it should be no surprise that the conceptual developments that fostered the rise of one also promoted the ascendency of the other.

The second motivation behind our selection arises from our wish to downplay, in the context of this dissertation, the sort of practical concerns that are inherently tied to the study of power in general, and in all its forms from "hard" to "soft". Reflections on power, no matter how abstract, usually lead back to an interest in matters of efficiency, success, or results. While eminently pertinent and intriguing, the recurring emphasis on soft power in discussions of public diplomacy contributes therefore to reinforcing the empirical bent of public diplomacy studies, hampering to a certain extent other less instrumental forms of conceptual investigation. And it is precisely on these somewhat more neglected conceptual features of public diplomacy that we have opted to focus instead.

We should also acknowledge at the outset that our genealogical work, bound as it is to the classical Greek origins of many political concepts, and to the emergence of the foundations of modern political theory during the Enlightenment, will focus primarily on the history of Western thought. As for our discussion of public diplomacy *per se*, it will concentrate on American public diplomacy. It goes without saying that public diplomacy is not by any means a uniquely American phenomenon. America may have coined the term, but the practice is widespread. Most states today engage in it to a degree or other. That being said, the American experience does offer a particularly rich (be it through its

successes or failures) and, above all, well-documented canvas of study. As Melissen points out, "the origins of contemporary public diplomacy, and the current debate on the need for more public diplomacy, are dominated by the US experience."[31] Our overriding interest remains nevertheless more conceptual than applied, and hence does not reside in the "American-ness" of public diplomacy in particular. In that respect too, the study of the American model offers a certain advantage insofar as it may be argued that the U.S.' central role in the information technology (IT) revolution of the early 1990s, and arguably therefore in speeding up the process of globalization (a theme which will be explored in Chapter IV) combined with its status on the world scene, endow the American experience of public diplomacy with a certain global relevance, a relatively general significance.

The remainder of this chapter will offer an overview of the emergence and evolution of the concept and practice of public diplomacy, and of its link with the theme of soft power, as well as a review of the academic literature that has developed around it, so as to consolidate our grasp of the notion before probing into its conceptual origins.

The main body of the dissertation will then be divided into three genealogical chapters, one for each of the elected concepts cited above. Chapter II will chart the development of the concept of public opinion. Chapter III will focus on that of civil society. Chapter IV will tackle the constellation of notions associated what we have chose to term "the information age." Throughout, and increasingly as the thesis progresses, these various evolutional paths will be correlated, their points of convergence

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[31] Melissen. (2005) p. 6

highlighted, so as to gradually situate the birth of public diplomacy at the intersection of their trajectories.

Rather than reiterating what will hopefully by then have become explicit, the conclusion will offer further reflections on the continued influence of this collection of notions on the more recent development of public diplomacy, and the implications these might entail for its future.

But before investigating the lineage, let us first examine the "offspring" itself and take a closer look at the notion of public diplomacy, the progress of the practice, and that of the theory surrounding it, in its short but eventful five decades of explicit existence.

II- PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: AN OVERVIEW

i- Definitional Variations and One Core Duality of Purpose

The somewhat blurry term "public diplomacy" entered the lexicon of foreign affairs in the 1960s to describe aspects of international relations other than traditional diplomacy. Whereas conventional diplomacy is limited to more or less overt contacts *between governments* –be they in the form of direct communication between leaders, or through official representatives of the administrations involved-- public diplomacy, in contrast, designates the exchanges that take place between the government of one country, and the wider public –from opinion leaders to the mass audience[32]—of another. The first use of the term in its more or less contemporary sense is attributed to Edmund

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[32] For a classification and hierarchization of the target audiences for public diplomacy, see, for example, Potter. (2009) pp. 48-49.

Gullion, a retired foreign service officer and dean of the Fletcher School of law and

Diplomacy at Tufts University, when he established the Edward R. Murrow Center of

Public Diplomacy in 1965[33]. Nicholas Cull, in his essay "'Public Diplomacy' before

Gullion, The Evolution of a Phrase," quotes an early brochure from the Murrow Center

summarizing Gullion's concept:

> Public diplomacy… deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications.

Gullion and the Murrow Center may have been the first to use the term "Public

Diplomacy," but they were not the last to attempt to define it. Today still, in spite of the

term's pervasive use –not to mention its having generated dozens of institutes and

"centers"- no one single unanimously-accepted definition exists. The USC Center on

Public Diplomacy, for instance, distances itself from narrower interpretations of the term,

and officially acknowledges public diplomacy's role as an instrument of "soft power"

when it writes:

> Traditional definitions of public diplomacy include government-sponsored cultural, educational and informational programs, citizen exchanges and broadcasts used to promote the national interest of a country through understanding, informing, and influencing foreign audiences...
> The USC Center on Public Diplomacy views the field much more broadly. In addition to government sponsored programs, the Center is equally concerned with aspects of what CPD board member, Joseph Nye, has labelled "soft power." The Center studies the impact of

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[33] There exist some prior recorded uses of "public diplomacy," but carrying different and not entirely relevant meanings. One of the earliest uses of the phrase, for instance, appears in *The Times* of London, in a piece criticizing President Franklin Pierce, but it is employed as a mere synonym for "civility". (see Cull)

private activities - from popular culture to fashion to sports to news to the Internet - that inevitably, if not purposefully, have an impact on foreign policy and national security as well as on trade, tourism and other national interests. Moreover, the Center's points of inquiry are not limited to U.S. governmental activities, but examine public diplomacy as it pertains to a wide range of institutions and governments around the globe.[34]

It does then go on to acknowledge that, the study of public diplomacy being a new and expanding field, "no single agreed upon definition of the term" exists yet.

The US Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy appears to have had an even "broader" definition for it in its 1991 Report, one that seems in fact so open-ended it verges on meaninglessness: "Public Diplomacy –the open exchange of ideas and information—is an inherent characteristic of democratic societies. Its global mission is central to...foreign policy." More recently, the U.S. Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World summarized public diplomacy somewhat more pragmatically –and unilaterally-- as "the promotion of the national interest by informing, engaging, and influencing people around the world."[35] Former Ambassador Christopher Ross also distils it to its instrumental essence when he sums up public diplomacy as government efforts "to shape mindsets abroad."[36]

This sample of definitions is a good indicator of the variety of interpretations of the term. There are of course the nuances as to the scope of what counts as public diplomacy and the sanctioned means for achieving it. The more fundamental divide

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[34] From USC Center on Public Diplomacy website (http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/index.php/about/whatis_pd)

[35] United States. Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World. "Changing Minds, Winning Peace." Washington DC. 1 Oct. 2003. p. 13
http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/24882.pdf

[36] Ross, Christopher. (2003) http://hir.harvard.edu/index.php?page=article&id=1117

between them, however, lies in an instrumental notion of public diplomacy as a tool of

power, a means of influence, set against a more idealist view of it as an *exchange* of ideas,

a reciprocal process. This essential divergence in outlook underlies in fact the majority of

discussions of public diplomacy today and we shall elaborate on it in our discussion of the

"new public diplomacy" later on in the chapter. In the end, however, the multitude of

attempts to define public diplomacy –of which we have examined but a small sample-- all

share a central essence: that public diplomacy refers to the practice of communicating

with foreign publics, be it to influence or to merely engage them. In that respect, the

practice of public diplomacy, even when not explicitly invoked by name, has become

increasingly central to the professed mission of the U.S. State Department, and in fact, of

the U.S. government in general.

Although the growing incorporation of public diplomacy into the workings of

government has been underway, as we shall see, for decades – even throughout the

allegedly "dormant" days of public diplomacy in the 1990s-- the 9/11 attacks and their

aftermath gave the practice a degree of visibility and prominence among the wider public

which it had lacked during its perhaps no less dynamic but also somehow less overt Cold

War operation. The exceptional conspicuousness of public diplomacy in political

discourse and process in the early 2000s, in turn, fostered a sharp surge in academic

interest in the practice which had been relatively absent until then. Since this more recent

deployment of public diplomacy encapsulates rather vividly the major conceptual themes

and debates surrounding the notion and its application --and as it remains generally the

starting point of the majority of analytical endeavours on the subject-- it is perhaps fitting,

therefore, rather than proceeding immediately with a chronological account of its emergence, to begin with a review of public diplomacy in the current post 9/11 context, so as to solidify our grasp of its principal conceptual contours and sources of disagreement.

ii- The Recent Context

"9/11 was good for diplomacy," writes Fitzpatrick, "[it] illustrated with striking clarity the need for a robust public diplomacy operation to address ideological conflicts that could harm national interests."[37] Within a month of the attacks, the State Department had appointed the high-profile advertising executive Charlotte Beers as Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs to oversee a "Muslim Global Outreach" campaign. The White House followed suit, in 2002, creating a new Office of Global Communications to coordinate the administration's efforts to quell anti-American currents in world public opinion (and also, as it turned out, justify –rather unsuccessfully—the invasion of Iraq.)[38] After years of relative absence from the headlines, public diplomacy was taking center stage. The September 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS), for example, confirmed its renewed relevance, highlighting the importance of waging "a war of ideas to win the battle against international terrorism... [by] using effective public

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[37] Fitzpatrick. (2010) p.1

[38] For a more comprehensive account of the variety of governmental departments dedicated to international communication in general and public diplomacy in particular created by the US government in the wake of 9/11, see Fitzpatrick. (2010) pp. 37-62; Lord. (2006) pp. 37-56.

diplomacy to promote the free flow of information and ideas to kindle the hopes and aspirations of freedom in those societies ruled by the sponsors of global terrorism."[39]

A few years later, in 2006, the US State Department, under the helm of Secretary Condoleezza Rice, launched the new banner concept of "transformational diplomacy" which somehow sought to fuse traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy into a single integrated effort. Indeed, although "public diplomacy" was only mentioned explicitly twice in the 1300-word definition of "transformational diplomacy," its essence appeared to permeate the whole enterprise with its promise "to take America's story directly to the people and regional...media in real time and in the appropriate language" and "to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture."[40]

The State Department and the White House were not alone in intensifying their public diplomacy efforts. By the end of October 2001, the Department of Defense too had created the Office of Strategic Influence (OSI) to carry out an aggressive international communication program. Although the OSS soon met a rather infamous end, being forced to close down within months of its creation when its intent to use "disinformation" campaigns with foreign media was leaked to the American press, which portrayed it as an Orwellian nightmare of coordinated propaganda thereby causing an uproar, the Pentagon remained keenly interested in the use of communication and "softer" forms of power as

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[39] See United States. "National Security Strategy" September 2002. p. 6
http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ library/policy/national/nss-020920.pdf

[40] The full text defining "transformational diplomacy" may be consulted in the Press Releases section of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs on the US Department of State website at
http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/59339.htm

strategic resource and officially incorporated it into its general military strategy. In a 2007 address at Kansas State University, Defense Secretary Robert Gates unequivocally made the case "for strengthening our capacity to use 'soft power' and for better integrating it with 'hard' power."[41]

In fact, as early as 2003, the Pentagon even began enlisting the help of cultural anthropologists, historians and psychologists to improve the military's grasp of the cultural contexts in which they were deployed by developing a "Human Terrain System" (HTS). The HTS program, run by the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, has been staunchly supported by the current Commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (and former Commander of U.S. Central Command) David Petraeus who sees the need to understand, exploit and dominate the "human terrain" as crucial to a winning military strategy.[42] The endeavour exemplifies Gates' recommendation for an incorporation of soft power instruments within military strategy. As Nye reminds us, soft power is "a two-way process... [that] depends, first and foremost, on *understanding the minds of others*."[43] The HTS' eventual goal, however, transcends purely military objectives. As the program website states, "in the long-term, HTS hopes to assist the U.S. government in understanding foreign countries and regions prior to an engagement."[44] The HTS' employment of academics for military purposes, though not necessarily a novel arrangement if one recalls, for instance, the number of

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[41] Gates. (2007)

[42] See Motlagh. (2010)

[43] Nye. (2010) p. 31 (emphasis added)

[44] See http://hts.army.mil/

mathematicians and linguists enlisted in the war effort in Britain during World War II as cryptanalysts, has proved extremely contentious, particularly in the academic community. The controversy was further fanned when the American Anthropological Association concluded, in its December 2009 report, that because the research carried out by their members working for the HTS has to conform to the goals of a military mission, it "can no longer be considered a legitimate professional exercise of anthropology."[45]

Although the Defense Department rarely refers to its international communication work as "public diplomacy," preferring instead more martial terms such as "strategic influence," "psychological operations" or "information warfare," the developments noted above do raise significant issues about public diplomacy's role and scope. The first question one needs to address is whether such tactical, military communication efforts actually qualify as public diplomacy, or whether public diplomacy should be restricted to the international communication efforts of *civilian* agencies, which are, it must be said, the only ones to explicitly employ the term. Abiodun Williams makes a strong case for the former[46], for instance, while Fitzpatrick urges for a move "from wielding soft power to managing mutual benefit," in other words, a distancing of public diplomacy from matters of warfare, overt wielding of power and the crude pursuit of self-interest in favour of a "relational model" of public diplomacy anchored in genuine "engagement."[47] The matter is unlikely to be categorically resolved, however, given the endemic blurriness that

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[45] Qtd. in Motlagh. (2010)

[46] See Williams, A. (2009) pp. 217-237

[47] See Fitzpatrick. (2010), particularly pp. 98-127

accompanies the definition of public diplomacy. Fitzpatrick's own review of over one hundred and fifty definitional statements of public diplomacy formulated by both scholars and practitioners recognized "six functional categories, which represent distinct ways of thinking about and practicing public diplomacy." Warfare/propaganda was of course present among them; alongside the following and "not mutually exclusive" categories: "1) advocacy/influence, 2) communication/ information, 3) relational, 4) promotional...and 6) political."[48]

More significantly, if the "strategic communication" endeavours undertaken by the military are indeed a form of public diplomacy, as we believe they are (public diplomacy is after all a product of the Cold War, a primarily ideological war no doubt, but a war nonetheless), does this then reinforce a narrow view of public diplomacy as an instrument of warfare, a tool of power, incompatible with the vehicle for *dialogue* many scholars and practitioners would prefer it to be?[49] Or does it indicate instead an evolution in military conduct itself, the adaptation of defense policy, to quote the Obama administration's 2010 National Security Strategy, to the "fluidity within the international system...in an age of interconnection" and the need hence for "the effective use and integration of different elements of American power" to enhance the military's "capacity to defeat asymmetric threats?"[50]

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[48] *Ibid.* p. 89

[49] For arguments in favour of a more "dialogue-based" public diplomacy, one of cultural exchange and of "listening" as well as "communicating," see Nye. "The New Public Diplomacy," (2010); Castells. (2008); Cowan & Arsenault, (2008); Fitzpatrick. (2010); Zaharna. (2010); Riordan. (2003, 2005); Gilboa. (2008).

[50] See "U.S. National Security Strategy 2010" http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rssviewer/national_security_strategy.pdf

The assumptions associated with the latter hypothesis (i.e. the fluidity and interdependence of the international scene) will be addressed in greater depth in Chapter IV, being of particular relevance to our investigation of "the information age." Returning to the divisive issue of the relationship between public diplomacy and the military, it should be noted that the concern to distance the exercise of public diplomacy from –or at least widen its scope beyond-- the context of warfare and the taint of propaganda is no novel development. From its very inception, public diplomacy had to struggle to dispel the notion that it was little more than a "euphemism for propaganda,"[51] even if that propaganda was allegedly "good" and "true." Senator J. William Fulbright (the godfather of the eponymous Scholarship which, through the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961, came under the jurisdiction of the United States Information Agency (USIA), the U.S. government's principal organ of public diplomacy at the time) illustrated this struggle when he declared, in his 1961 statement to the US Senate: "...there is no room and there must not be any room, for an interpretation of these programs as propaganda, even recognizing that the term covers some very worthwhile activities."[52] The debate targeting public diplomacy's more propagandistic aspects has accompanied the practice throughout its still few but eventful decades of existence. As Fitzpatrick notes, "public diplomacy has long suffered from its historical association with propaganda."[53] The issue did somewhat recede, however, during the relatively peaceful 1990s. Little controversy arose, for

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[51] See Poole. (2006); also Brown, J. (2008)

[52] See Brown, J. (2002)

[53] Fitzpatrick. (2010) p. 151

example, about the public diplomacy efforts concerning the First Gulf War, which Cull

highlights as a shining "example of what well-organized public diplomacy could

achieve":

> In retrospect the First Gulf War now seems like a miracle of wise
> management: its limited goals; its attention to international law; its
> keen eye for alliance politics. U.S. public diplomacy was an
> important part of this. USIA experts were on hand to counsel the
> president in his decision-making and to fight enemy narratives in the
> field.[54]

In the aftermath of the Bush administration's variously failed campaigns to

"seduce" the Muslim world or "sell" the Second Iraq War, however, concerns about

public diplomacy's relationship with propaganda have resurged. These concerns have

been not only ethical but also, in light of public diplomacy's manifest inefficiency during

the War on Terror, pragmatic in nature. "Skeptics who treat the term "public diplomacy"

as a mere euphemism for propaganda miss the point," writes Nye, "[I]f it degenerates into

propaganda, public diplomacy not only fails to convince but can undercut soft power."[55]

Meanwhile, the events of 9/11, whose significance for American foreign policy

and the deployment of public diplomacy in the first years of the twenty-first century was,

to quote Magstadt, "difficult to exaggerate,"[56] are now close to a decade old and the

perceived bellicosity of the Bush administration has been replaced by a seeming –or at

least publicly declared—interest of the Obama government in genuine international

engagement. At first glance, this may signal the beginning of a conceptual and perhaps

even institutional transformation in the practice of public diplomacy. It could indeed, to

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[54] Cull. (2009) p. 34

[55] Nye. (2010) p. 31

[56] Magstadt. (2004) p. 221

return to the notion of public diplomacy's "core duality" of purpose identified earlier, indicate a shift of emphasis in favour of its more dialogic and reciprocated dimension. Yet, while such a change of direction --away from propagandism-- has been increasingly advocated in the various reassessments of public diplomacy provided by the "raft of studies and reports over the last few years by a variety of official, semi-official, and independent bodies from across the political spectrum,"[57] it may yet be too soon to announce with certainty the future substance of public diplomacy. It is interesting to note, however, that while the Obama administration has visibly striven to *engage* foreign publics –particularly in highly-charged symbolic gestures such as the President's live address to the Arab world from Cairo in June 2009-- it has also, perhaps in a conscious wish to distance itself from the phrasings of the previous government and the possible taint these may have acquired, seemingly avoided overt mention of the actual term "public diplomacy." While "public diplomacy" figured prominently, for instance, in the Bush administration's 2002 "U.S. National Security Strategy", it is never mentioned in name in the Obama administration's recent 2010 report which repeatedly refers instead to "strategic communications."[58] This tendency, on the administration's part, to sidestep the term, at least in public discourse, does not necessarily spell its demise however, as the office in charge of "communications with international audiences, cultural programming, academic grants, educational exchanges, international visitor programs, and U.S.

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[57] Lord. (2006) p. 5

[58] The full text of the 2002 U.S. "National Security Strategy" may be consulted at http://www.global security.org/military/library/policy/national/nss-020920.pdf. The 2010 U.S. "National Security Strategy" is available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf

Government efforts to confront ideological support for terrorism"[59] remains to date that of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.

Whether or not public diplomacy will eventually come to fully sever its association with propaganda and conflict, as advocated by the proponents of a "new public diplomacy,"[60] the fact remains that the history of public diplomacy is intimately linked to that of war-time communication. "Public diplomacy has historically been an instrument of foreign policy to meet wartime needs,"[61] note Nelson and Izadi. Fitzpatrick, despite her wish to rescue public diplomacy from the context of war, also acknowledges that "[i]n times of war, public diplomacy has blossomed."[62] Preventing conflicts or nurturing relationships with foreign publics with no immediate purpose in mind has not been, traditionally, a significant part of public diplomacy's mission. As Melissen observes, "most successful public diplomacy initiatives were born out of necessity. They were reactive and not the product of forward-looking foreign services caring about relationships with foreign audiences."[63] In this respect, the twentieth century offered public diplomacy a wealth of opportunities to develop and hone these "reactive" skills.

iii- World Wars, Cold War, & "Peace"

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[59] From the State Department Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs website http://www.state.gov/r/

[60] See Arsenault. (2009); Melissen. (2005); Riordan. (2005); Fitzptrick. (2010); Zaharna. (2010); Nelson & Izadi. (2009).

[61] Nelso & Izadi. (2009) p. 334

[62] Fitzpatrick. (2010) p. 3

[63] Melissen. (2005) p. 9

In fact public diplomacy, as a distinctive late twentieth-century form of systematized government communication with foreign audiences, was not only born out of the Cold War but is also a direct descendent of the government communication practices and institutions developed during World War I and World War II. Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt may not have been able to label their actions "public diplomacy" –the term having yet to be coined—but the Committee on Public Information (CPI) established by Wilson in 1917 and the Office of War Information (OWI) created by Roosevelt in 1942 were clear models in the development of the USIA, which was to become "the primary institutional home of American public diplomacy"[64] until its closure in 1999.

Although the CPI's mission was in large part domestic (the mobilization of national support for participation in World War I), it was also, as Cull describes it, "a structure to tell the world exactly what America stood for... [that] included a network of bureaus, a new agency, film distribution, and even cultural centers to address foreign publics."[65] Its legendary chairman, George Creel, who later published his memoirs under the title *How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe,* is often credited today, in retrospect, as the godfather of American public diplomacy. Roosevelt's Office of War Information further expanded the CPI's initial forays into organized international communication with the launch of the Voice of

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[64] Lord. (2006) p.2

[65] Cull. (2009) p. 26

America (VOA) radio broadcast and the first appointment of "cultural attachés" to strategic locations. The OWI was also in direct collaboration with the army, as "the military occupation teams who moved into liberated territories deployed a host of media and educational operations to rebuild these areas in America's image."[66]

It was not, of course, the first time that strategic communicative measures had been adopted by a government caught up in armed conflict. Such measures had already been deployed for example, in the U.S. case, during the Revolution and the Civil War, notes Cull who labels these antecedents "the prehistory of public diplomacy."[67] However, what set the CPI and the OWI apart from previous war-time propaganda/communication efforts –and what therefore positions them as direct prefigurements of what in the mid 1960s would come to be labeled as "public diplomacy"—was the magnitude and systematization of their operations which were in large part enabled, as Nelson and Izadi point out, by the advances in communication technology and, more particularly, in *mass* communication throughout the first half of the twentieth century.[68] The correlation between the evolution of public diplomacy and that of information and communication technology cannot be overstressed, both in practical and conceptual terms. We shall not elaborate on the issue of the rise of mass media --and the more recent changes brought about by the advent of digital communication-- at this point, however, as it will figure

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[66] *Ibid.* p. 27

[67] *Ibid.* p. 25

[68] Nelson & Izadi. (2009) p. 334

prominently both in our discussion of the evolution of the concept of public opinion in the next chapter, and in our exploration of "the information age" in Chapter IV.

Although elements of their structure did live on (the VOA program, and the "cultural attaché" posts, for instance) neither the CPI nor the OWI survived beyond their war-time mandate. The CPI's domestic activities stopped as soon as the Armistice was signed in November 1918 and President Wilson abolished the entire organization by executive decree a few months later. Roosevelt too shut down the OWI within months of the Allied victory in September 1945. The international communication efforts of the U.S. government were to be left without a centralized institutional home until the creation of the USIA by Eisenhower in 1953.

This lack of a coordinating inter-agency structure in the post-war decade, however, does not indicate that the state's interest in international communication was ebbing. If anything it was being sharpened in challenging novel ways by the emergence of a new conflict, qualitatively different in form from outright armed combat: the Cold War. In this sense, Cull is right to contend that:

> ...the real founder of American postwar public diplomacy was Josef Stalin...The scale of the international propaganda effort emanating from his Kremlin forced even the most isolationist American officials accept that something had to be done to give America a voice to respond.[69]

While the security agencies were encouraged to intensify the deployment of covert "psychological operations", several key measures were introduced to govern the more overt dissemination of information to foreign publics. As early as 1946, Truman signed the Fulbright Act, authorizing the funds from the sales of surplus war materials to be used

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[69] Cull. (2009) p. 27

to finance student and teacher exchange programs. Two years later, Congress passed the

Smith-Mundt Act, more formally known as the United States Information and Educational

Exchange Act (Public Law 402), which set forth the guidelines for the official

dissemination of information about the United States and its policies at home and abroad.

Its declared mission was "to enable the Government of the United States to promote a

better understanding of the United States in other countries, and to increase mutual

understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other

countries."[70] In practical terms, as Nelson and Izadi view it, it effectively "legalized peace

time propaganda."[71] The Smith-Mundt continues to this day to "set the parameters of

American efforts to engage, inform and influence key international audiences."[72] Even its

notoriously controversial provision prohibiting the *domestic* dissemination of information

specifically aimed at *international* audiences, although it has been challenged in court,

remains technically in effect even if it has become increasingly difficult to enforce, and,

as Snyder puts it, "obsolete" in the Internet Age.[73]

In ultimately "institutionaliz[ing] cultural transfer,"[74] *independently* of wartime

necessity, the Smith Mundt Act essentially paved the way for the development of public

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[70] Information and Educational Exchange Act. Sec. 1431. Congressional Declaration of Objectives.
http://vlex.com/vid/congressional-declaration-objectives-19201023

[71] Nelson & Izadi. (2009) p. 335

[72] Armstrong, M. (2008) http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2008/07/rethinking-smithmundt/

[73] For further discussion of the Smith-Mundt act "domestic ban" issue, particularly the ethical legitimacy of seeking to shield Americans from their own government's informational activities abroad and the growing inapplicability of the law in today's media context, see Arsenault. (2009); Armstrong, M. (2008); Snyder, A. (2008).

[74] Nelson & Izadi. (2009) p. 335

diplomacy as we understand it today. Eisenhower's creation of the USIA in 1953 as the centralized home for government international communication projects reinforced further the general institutionalization of government information work. Although the Cold War would eventually mobilize most of the agency's resources, its official mission "to understand, inform, and influence foreign publics in promotion of the national interest, and to broaden the dialogue between Americans and U.S. institutions, and their counterparts abroad" [75] went beyond the narrow confines of a specific conflict. Although "public diplomacy" was, strictly speaking, an instrument developed during the Cold War, the practice did not, therefore, necessarily need to end with it. However, the collapse of a unified enemy in the form of the Soviet Bloc in 1989, coinciding as it did with the electronic information revolution and the expansion of the phenomenon of globalization, could not fail to have an impact on its mission and strategy.

The conventional view holds that the 1990s saw the gradual decline of U.S. public diplomacy. Although public diplomacy was duly acknowledged in government circles for its part in helping bring about the political changes of 1989, many deemed its purpose completed and its utility therefore expired, confirming Melissen's criticism of American public diplomacy as a generally "reactive" practice. With the disappearance of the Soviet threat, support for the continued funding of the USIA began to wane in Washington. Not even the contribution of USIA efforts to the success of the First Gulf War campaign could "counter a growing sense in key quarters that the era of state-funded public diplomacy had

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[75] From the archival website of the USIA, as it stood in before its closure in September 1999, available at http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/usia/

passed."[76] Parallel developments in the media landscape at the time reinforced that view, encouraging the view that public diplomacy need not be, perhaps, the province of governments alone. As Cull argues, "the true victors of the First Gulf War were Ted Turner and CNN, and USIA's paymasters on Capitol Hill now wondered why they needed to provide a parallel service."[77] In 1999, after a decade of struggling for its own survival and in what Lord views as "a major if little noted bureaucratic reorganization,"[78] the USIA was finally closed down and most of its activities folded into a section of the State department to be headed by the newly created office of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. From this perspective, the events of 9/11 acted as a catalyst for the *renaissance* of public diplomacy.

There is however an alternate way to interpret the 1990s trajectory of American public diplomacy, not so much as one of regression and neglect, but instead, as one of discernible, though perhaps unsuccessful, progression from "the backwater of USIA into the mainstream of U.S. foreign relations."[79] The Clinton administration's decision to abolish the USIA was not, in principle at least, predicated on a wish to do away with public diplomacy altogether, but rather on the perceived necessity of adapting the practice to a new international environment. Viewed from this angle, the vigorous deployment of public diplomacy in the aftermath of 9/11 becomes not so much the revival of a moribund

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[76] Cull. (2009) p. 34

[77] *Ibid*. (2009) p. 35

[78] Lord. (2006) p. 2

[79] Cull. (2009) p. 36

practice as a regression, a reverting to its old Cold War form, which may in part account for its ineffectiveness.

The results of the Clinton administration's endeavour to assimilate public diplomacy into the activities of the State Department may not have proved immediately visible. The reorganization was beset with internal tensions and the transition plagued therefore by competing self interest. But, as James Rubin, Clinton's Assistant secretary of State for Public Affairs, justified it at the time, the integration of the USIA into a "reinvented State Department" was meant to offer "a new streamlined structure...capable of meeting the new challenges of the twenty-first century."[80] This vision was echoed in Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's statement that in an Information age "public diplomacy is not simply nice to have. It must be a core element in our foreign policy."[81] Both these statements addressed, on the surface at least, the concerns voiced by the Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy in their 1996 annual report which called for a "new public diplomacy" that reflected the practical changes brought about by "the information revolution...the growing power of foreign publics...the globalization of issues and the rapidly expanding reach of NGOs[82] --observations which not coincidentally invoke the very the notions of public opinion, civil society and the information age which we have chose to focus on in this dissertation.

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[80] Rubin. "Reinventing and Integrating the Foreign Affairs Agencies." (memo) 27 Mar. 1997. Qtd. in Cull, N. (2009) p. 35

[81] Qtd. in Pendergrast. (2000) http://www.publicdiplomacy.org/3.htm

[82] U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy. "A New Diplomacy for the Information Age." (1996) p. 4

The Advisory Commission's notion of a "new public diplomacy" did not immediately generate much tangible interest however. As Matthew Lauer, the former executive director of the Commission, notes, before 9/11 "no more than two people showed up" to the annual meetings.[83] But discussions of a "new public diplomacy" do appear to have been gaining traction in recent years, perhaps as a result of the general wave of introspection that overtook the field following the various public diplomacy debacles during the first years of the War on Terror.

From Melissen's 2005 collection of essays, *The New Public Diplomacy,* to Seib's 2009 *Toward a New Public Diplomacy,* the issues initially identified by the Commission in 1996 –globalization, information and communication technology, the growing role of non-state actors- have remained at the forefront of thinkers' preoccupations. Another recurring concern in these various proposals for a restructured public diplomacy has been the fundamental duality of purpose at the core of the practice which we summarized earlier as the tension between "influence" and "exchange." Schemes for a reformed public diplomacy have been striving to purge public diplomacy of its "lingering association with psychological-political warfare,"[84] increasingly calling for a shift toward two-way dialogue and "symmetric exchange," a move "from battles to bridges"[85] as Zaharna terms it. Castells recommends using public diplomacy to encourage "sharing meaning and

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[83] Qtd. in Fitzpatrick. (2010) p. 29

[84] Lord. (2003) p. 190

[85] Zaharna. (2010)

understanding." "The aim of the practice," he adds, "is not to convince but to communicate, not to declare but to listen."[86]

Reciprocal transnational understanding is no doubt a noble aim. Whether or not this ideal can be reconciled with the more pragmatic state concerns with power, gain, and security to which public diplomacy as a governmental activity is inevitably bound is another matter. As Glassman underlines, public diplomacy's duty remains after all "the achievement of the national interest."[87] Nye, for one, believes that genuine exchange is not only compatible but in fact necessary to the furthering of the national interest through soft power. Public diplomacy is not "merely a public-relations campaign," he writes, "[it] also involves building long-term relationships that create an enabling environment for government policies."[88] Fitzpatrick, on the other hand, seeks to distance the new public diplomacy not only from its war-related past, but from the exercise of power –no matter how soft—in general, arguing that "the adoption of the 'soft power' concept has confused rather than clarified public diplomacy's fundamental purpose."[89] "While political power may be a by-product of successful public diplomacy, "she pursues, "it is an inappropriate conceptual basis for the conduct of ethical and effective public diplomacy."[90] Hocking too suggests a "need to re-examine "soft power argumentation with which much of the public

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[86] Castells. (2008) p. 91

[87] Glassman. (2008) http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english /2008 /July/ 20080702123054 xjsnommis0.3188745 .html

[88] Nye. (2010) p. 31

[89] Fitzptrick. (2010) p. 11

[90] *Ibid*. p. 101

diplomacy debate has become entwined."[91] As we noted earlier, public diplomacy has generally been identified primarily as a soft power resource. As attempts to question this established association begin to emerge, we should perhaps therefore take a closer look at the notion of soft power.

iv- Soft Power

Nye introduces soft power in the 1990 *Bound to Lead* as an "indirect way to exercise power"[92] that stands in contrast to the "commanding method of exercising power...[that] rests on inducements ("carrots") or threats ("sticks")."[93] It seeks to gain support through attraction rather than force. "Hard" command power aims to get others to *do* what you want. Soft power's goal is more subtle; it is to get others to *want* what you want. In that sense, it is somewhat akin to Galbraith's notion of "conditioned power" (the result of persuasion which may or may not be explicit) which he contrasts with both "compensatory" and "condign" forms of power in *The Anatomy of Power*.[94] Soft power is therefore a less coercive, less tangible form of power; one whose results are also perhaps less ascertainable, but for all these reasons too, potentially all the more powerful when successful for it does not carry the stigma of pressure or intimidation.

If hard power relies on concrete traditional instruments like military threats and economic incentives, soft power has a much wider, but also more elusive, array of

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[91] Hocking. (2005) p. 28

[92] Nye. (1990) p. 31

[93] *Ibid*.

[94] See Galbraith. (1983)

resources at its disposal. In Nye's view, "The soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority.)"[95] The essence of soft power lies therefore, as per Nye, in compelling communications skills, the use of multilateral institutions, and the effective "manipulation of interdependence."[96] This has led some, such as the historian Niall Ferguson, to accuse soft power of being somewhat vague and a little too "soft,"[97] a criticism Nye himself has repeatedly addressed by arguing that it arises from a misguided tendency to "equate soft power behaviour with the cultural resources that *sometimes* help produce it:"

> They confuse the cultural resources with the behavior of attraction. For example, the historian Niall Ferguson describes soft power as "non-traditional forces such as cultural and commercial goods" and then dismisses it on the grounds "that it's, well, soft." Of course, Coke and Big Macs do not necessarily attract people in the Islamic world to love the United States. The North Korean dictator Kim Jong Il is alleged to like pizza and American videos, but that does not affect his nuclear programs. Excellent wines and cheeses do not guarantee attraction to France, nor does the popularity of Pokémon games assure that Japan will get the policy outcomes it wishes.[98]

This does not mean that popular culture cannot be an instrument of soft power -- it often is, in fact-- only that "the effectiveness of any [soft] power resource depends on the context,"[99] and in the case of soft power, this involves "the existence of willing

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[95] Nye. (2004) p. 11

[96] Nye. (1990) p. 180

[97] Ferguson, N. (2003) p. 18

[98] Nye. (2004) pp. 11-12

[99] *Ibid*.

interpreters and receivers."[100] Moreover, "culture," as a soft power resource, need neither be necessarily "popular," nor transmitted commercially. It may take the form, as Nye stresses, of personal contacts, visits, and, not insignificantly, educational exchange programs.

Because at the end of the day soft power is primarily a communications skill, and as such is contingent not merely upon the strength of the message, but also upon the talent of the transmitter and the disposition of the receiver, it is a more volatile tool than traditional hard power, and its effects are harder to predict or quantify. It is more effective at "creating general influence rather than at producing an easily observable specific action."[101] To use the distinction first made by *realpolitiker* Arnold Wolfers (a founder of the Institute of International Studies at Yale in the 1930s), soft power is much more suited to the pursuit of "milieu goals" (i.e. creating desirable environments conducive to one's ultimate purposes), than to that of specific "possession goals" (i.e. specific pursuits, aimed at defending or increasing tangible assets) which remain the domain of harder forms of power.[102] In "The Goals of Foreign Policy" (1961) where he introduces the distinction, Wolfers goes on to make an interesting observation about milieu goals, which may be particularly relevant to our analysis at a later stage:

> If it were not for the existence of such goals, peace could never become an objective of national policy. By its very nature, peace cannot be the possession of any one nation; it takes at least two to make and have peace. Similarly, efforts to promote international law or establish international organizations...are addressed to the milieu

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[100] *Ibid*. p. 16

[101] *Ibid*.

[102] Wolfers. (1962) p. 86

in which nations operate and indeed such efforts make sense only if nations have reason to concern themselves with things other than their own possessions.[103]

The acknowledged degree of imprecision and uncontrollability inherent to soft power, has spurred some to criticize the concept on the grounds that it is "impossible to wield in an organized and coordinated fashion."[104] There is no denying the centrality of the issues arising from the difficulty in measuring the efficacy of soft power's deployment, and similarly, the dearth of tangible means for evaluating public diplomacy's effectiveness. As Pahlavi contends, "It is not only the future of public diplomacy that depends upon the question of its evaluation –so does the very theoretical conception of power and influence in foreign relations."[105] On the other hand, its opposition to the tangibility and measurability of hard power is also precisely what *defines* soft power. Moreover, the lack of precise tools of measure and control may prevent an accurate demonstration of soft power's effectiveness, but it also, by the very same token, precludes an assured assessment of its *ineffectiveness*. On the other hand, these considerations do raise another issue, described by Galbraith as the growing phenomenon of the "illusion of power" in his analysis of "the great modern role of *conditioned* power," that form of power "which is principally effective because we are so extensively innocent of its exercise" [106] and which, as we noted earlier, is not dissimilar to the notion of soft power:

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[103] *Ibid*. p. 74

[104] See Fan. (2008)

[105] Pahlavi. (2007) p. 280

[106] Galbraith. (1983) p. 188 (emphasis added)

> [the illusion of power]...has been greatly enhanced by the modern reliance on social conditioning. Since the submission won by any exercise of conditioned power is subjective and relatively invisible – in contrast with the far more objective results of the exercise of condign or compensatory power—there is, as already mentioned, a strong tendency for the submission to be taken for granted.[107]

"Soft power" may be a relatively recent coinage, but the general notion it embodies is not particularly new. Hints of it already emerge in Thucydides "Melian Dialogue," as the Melians attempt (though ultimately fail) to convince the Athenians not to subjugate them through bare force.[108] No less a cynical pragmatist than Machiavelli himself could not help noting that successful conquest should include "the seduction of the masses along with the exercise of military and economic power."[109] In fact, the very history of international relations is one of relative oscillation between these two opposite though not necessarily conflicting views on the securing of power: seduction and force. The novel element then, is not so much the concept of soft power itself, but as Nye stresses, its enhanced importance and particular suitability to present landscape of international politics where "modern technology and growth have added new elements of...interdependence to the age-old dilemma."[110] Nye's argument for the accrued significance of soft power on the contemporary international scene is not without its

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[107] *Ibid*. p. 158

[108] "The Melian Dialogue" or "Melian Conference" is a passage in Chapter XVII of Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian War*. It remains a classic text in the study of international relations as one of the first debates between realism and a more liberal form of idealism (though in this case it is the hard-nosed realism of the Athenians that prevails) in the conduct of foreign affairs.

[109] Qtd. in Pahlavi. (2005) pp. 22-23 (For more, see Machiavelli, N. *The Prince*. Chapt. IX "The Civil Principality")

[110] Nye. (1990) p. 178

skeptics who insist, like Fouad Ajami, that "no amount of soft power will do"[111] and generally bemoan what they see, mistakenly or not, as the reframing of "international affairs as popularity contest."[112] In a sense, the debate is not new and Nye is well aware of it, describing it as "merely the latest oscillation of a recurring argument between realists and liberals over international relations"[113] --where the realists tend to focus on pragmatic hard power and military force, while the liberals, or idealists, prefer to stress the impact of societal contacts and interdependence. It is a debate Arnold Wolfers (who is deemed to be more of a "realist") articulated particularly eloquently in his 1951 essay "The Pole of Power and the Pole of Indifference," as the battle between two "patron saints" in international relations: Machiavelli and Woodrow Wilson.[114] Uncannily anticipating much-debated present-day developments which will be central to our discussion of civil society in Chapter III, Wolfers goes on to portray the idealist view as one whose "basic propositions deal not with states, but with individuals, with people, with mankind...looking out not on a multistate system with its separate national entities, but on a *nascent world community*."[115]

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[111] Qtd. in Hazbun. (2008) p. 12

[112] See Rubin. (2009) http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2Fshow Full&cid=1235410694225

[113] Nye. (1990) p. 177

[114] Wilson of course did not invent idealism in international relations. Its philosophical roots can be found in the writings of Locke, Kant, Bentham, or Sully, to name but a few of its most illustrious proponents. But as Wolfers points out, "not until Woodrow Wilson set out to transform utopia into morality did it become a political issue of the first magnitude." (1962. p. 81)

[115] Wolfers. (1962) p. 86 (emphasis added)

Meanwhile the present landscape of heightened global interdependence, while at first glance particularly suitable to the exercise of soft power, as Nye notes, also produces serious challenges to it, essentially because the multiplicity of voices it encourages makes dominance more difficult to achieve.[116] We will of course return to this central issue in contemporary communication at several points in the dissertation. It will figure prominently in the discussion of the information age in Chapter IV, but also in the analysis of public opinion in the next chapter.

To conclude this brief outline of a rich notion, it must be reckoned that the imprecise nature of soft power, the intangibility of its goals, do foster multiple ambiguities surrounding both the concept and its application. However, in the context of an analysis of public diplomacy, the term remains, as Carnes Lord points out, remarkably "useful if only to underline the essential unity –and increasing interdependence—of a variety of bureaucratic disciplines that in the past have too often had little to do with one another, when not actively engaging in warfare over turf or resources."[117]

v- Principal Academic Debates Surrounding Public Diplomacy

The recent literature on public diplomacy, though abundant, is, as we have noted before, for the greater part dedicated to analyzing its application --and alleged failure-- in the "war against terror," and offering corrective recommendations. A sharp increase in more conceptual analyses can be observed, however, in the past few years. Melissen's 2005 anthology *The New Public Diplomacy*, or Snow and Taylor's *Routledge Handbook*

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[116] See Mislan. (2007); Gupta. (2007)

[117] Lord. (2006) p. 8

of Public Diplomacy, for instance, are expressly-stated attempts to reclaim public diplomacy from "the perfunctory opinion editorials and discourse from a narrowcast of retired generals and diplomats"[118] and place it within a more conceptual and academic framework.

A primary concern of such recent endeavours has been, as we mentioned before, to reconceptualize public diplomacy in the context of an increasingly globalized and interconnected setting. The twentieth century notion of public diplomacy grew out of two world wars and was predominantly structured by a binary Cold War and an information scene dominated by the mass media. Public diplomacy today, on the other hand, finds itself deployed in an environment characterized by "fractal globalization...information and communication technologies that shrink time and distance, and the rise of global non-state actors...that challenge state-driven policy and discourse on the subject."[119] Civil society and the information age, two concepts we will be exploring in depth, have therefore been at the forefront of the effort to articulate a "new public diplomacy."

In "Public Diplomacy 2.0," Arsenault notes that "national reputations are increasingly negotiated across multiple media and information platforms...converging into one porous, information rich, and chaotic global information sphere."[120] Consequently, the theory and practice of public diplomacy today must reckon with "the technological convergence of communications networks...related problems of information delivery and

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[118] Snow & Taylor. (2009) p. ix

[119] *Ibid*.

[120] Arsenault. (2009) pp. 136-137

visibility...and an incorporation of participatory and collaborative models of interaction."[121] While these observations reflect a quasi-unanimous view of the contemporary information scene, the conclusions drawn from them -- the evaluation of the benefits and drawbacks they offer—are, as we shall see in Chapter IV, varied and conflicted as the dynamism and freedom they arguably foster can be counterbalanced by disorder and fragmentation. One key challenge to the practice of public diplomacy in "the global information age" arises from what Nye identifies as the "paradox of plenty," the notion that "when information is plentiful, the scarce resource is attention."[122] In the same way, the availability of an abundance of competing viewpoints makes persuasion more difficult to achieve. More generally, as James Carey puts it, improvements in communications can make communication more difficult.[123] The intricacy of interconnectedness of the contemporary landscape, while offering substantial potential rewards, also intensely complicates the design and implementation of a systematized communications strategy. It also heightens the uncertainty of its effect.

"We have forgotten that foreign audiences have emotions more complex than the electrical wiring in modern munitions" remarks cognitive anthropologist Robert Deutsch in "The Droning of Strategic Communications and Public Diplomacy."[124] Just as reading does not ensure understanding, so public diplomacy, no matter how strong its message or how well-equipped with advertising tactics, does not guarantee seduction. In his book

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[121] *Ibid*. p. 136

[122] Nye. (2010) p. 31. See also (2005) p. 89

[123] Carey. p.48

[124] Deutsch. p. 124

Islam and the West in the Mass Media, which predates the events of 9/11 and the ensuing

concern with winning "the hearts and minds" of the Arab and Islamic world, Kai Hafez

already observed what many are only concluding today:

> Whereas increasing the quantity of communication can remove
> misunderstandings and improve the relations between states and
> other international forces, inadequate communication can add new
> problems and tensions to international relations.[125]

It should be noted, however, that the issue of the relative unpredictability of

communicative activities in general has long been a central concern of communication

theory. In that respect, public diplomacy theorizing intersects –although this intersection

remains insufficiently explored to date-- with communication reception theory and the

work of thinkers such as Lazarsfeld, Hall, Gitlin or Curran whom we shall survey in the

next chapter on public opinion.

The inescapable unpredictability of audience responses to the exercise of public

diplomacy leads some to conclude, not particularly helpfully but perhaps rightly, that "it

is all trial, error, and experience."[126] Others, like Goodall, Trethewey and McDonald, take

inspiration in Eric Eisenberg's theory of "strategic ambiguity,"[127] and advocate a move

away from "message-control" and "meaning-control," arguing instead for a focus on

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[125] Hafez. p.14

[126] Olins. p.179

[127] The notion, in this instance, is wholly unrelated to the common and derogatory use of the term to refer to an administration's unwillingness to adopt a clear unambiguous stance on a particular issue, as in the US stance towards Taiwan's independence from China. Eisenberg developed the notion in a 1984 monograph "Ambiguity as Strategy in Organizational Communication," drawing from research about "building resilient organizations in turbulent environments under conditions of uncertainty." It offers an alternative schema to the "control" organizing model for communication which is deemed too dependent on shared assumptions. Instead, strategic ambiguity is meant to allow for rapid dissemination of information and flexibility.

shared goals (as opposed to shared meanings) and the cultivation of multiple meanings,

resulting in a 'unified diversity' based on global cooperation instead of a 'focused

wrongness' based on sheer dominance and power." [128] The need for enhanced cooperation

fostered by heightened interconnectivity has led to increased calls for public diplomacy to

move away from a one-way information flows, beyond even dialogue, towards a more

comprehensive form of engagement and partnership.[129] If at its inception public

diplomacy was largely predicated on the use of mass media, Arsenault remarks, "forty

years later, a "new diplomacy" based on one-way radio and television communications

appears both outmoded and naive."[130] Fitzpatrick advocates therefore the adoption of a

"relational model" for public diplomacy aiming for an ideal "two-way symmetric"

exchange inspired by Grunig and Hunt's public relations theory.[131] Her overarching

concern, however, is not merely to adapt public diplomacy to the "participatory dynamics

of the digital world,"[132] but to redefine its guiding mission so that it may become less of

"an instrument of power used by a government to benefit itself" and more of "a means of

enhancing human relations between sovereign states and people to achieve mutual

understanding and benefits."[133] While such a virtuous cause may seem perhaps too

idealistic for what remains after all a practice tied to the pragmatic exigencies of

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[128] See Goodall, Trethewey & McDonald. p.10

[129] See Melissen. (2005); Riordan. (2005); Cowan and Arsenault. (2008); Zaharna. (2010); Fitzpatrick. (2010)

[130] Arsenault, A. (2009) p. 135

[131] See Fitzpatrick. (2010) pp. 110-127

[132] Arsenault. (2009) p. 145

[133] Fitzpatrick. (2010) p. 120

international *politics*, the debate as to whether public diplomacy should be primarily

concerned with, as an Aspen Institute 2006 report puts it, "managing images" or "building

relationships" has in fact become a fundamental issue among both theorists and

practitioners. The issue, however, need not necessarily be resolved categorically. As

Zaharna points out, "the assumption that public diplomacy needs to be either/or to be

effective may be a faulty and limiting premise," suggesting instead a recognition of "the

need for both the information and relational frameworks." [134] Arsenault makes a similar

point when she remarks that "Social media and other 2.0 technologies have not replaced

Web 1.0; just as public diplomacy 2.0 will not supplant the need for more traditional

forms of engagement."[135] It is important to appreciate, however, that such concerns, while

amplified by the surge in interactivity and interconnection fostered by the new

information and communication technologies (ICTs), are not entirely new in public

diplomacy thinking. As we will see in the next chapter, the development of governmental

transnational communications throughout the twentieth century has been intimately linked

to the emergence and evolution of public relations and early theorists such as Bernays --a

pioneer in both fields and in their blending—already noted the necessity to acknowledge

both as *reciprocal* processes.[136] And although this reciprocity has yet to be actualized and

institutionalized in the conduct of public diplomacy –if it indeed *can* be so-- efforts have

been made in that direction before, most notably during the Carter administration which

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[134] Zaharna. (2010) p. 138, p. 155

[135] Arsenault. (2009) p. 145

[136] See Bernays. (1963)

introduced the notion of public diplomacy's "second mandate" or its duty to also carry information *from* the world *to* the U.S.[137]

The growing concern that international audiences may not simply be treated as fairly passive and massed recipients is not only due to the advances in ICT. As noted earlier, the rise of non-state actors on the contemporary scene –arguably itself abetted by those same technological developments—is also viewed as another major reason for the need to rearticulate the notion of public diplomacy. As Melissen notes, public diplomacy is not anymore "a *uniquely* stately activity," but one where "large and small non-state actors, and supranational and subnational players" can and do play an important role. [138] The issue is largely the product of the evolution of civil society into a "third sector" that will be the focus of Chapter III. Non-state actors, however, do not only indicate NGOs and other civil society associations, but can also be individuals or corporations, thereby introducing the added matter of "privatization" to contemporary public diplomacy theorizing. The debate around the legitimacy of involving the private sector in public diplomacy initiatives has intensified significantly in recent years as hybrid public/private diplomatic ventures have proliferated, whether by choice (e.g. the Bush administration's outsourcing of campaigns to private and often foreign companies) or as an inevitable result of the world's growing interconnectedness

The expanding role of non-state actors on the international scene has important implications for the practice of public diplomacy as it increasingly finds itself "operative

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[137] See Cull. (2009) p. 33

[138] Melissen. (2005) p. 12 (emphasis added)

in a network environment rather than the hierarchical state-centric model of international

relations."[139] More critically, it offers a potential challenge to the very essence of public

diplomacy both as a *government* activity and as "the conduct of relations between

nations."[140] There is no denying the growing weight of the private or non-governmental

sector in public diplomacy initiatives both at the producing and the receiving end (from

the contracting of private public relations firms to design campaigns to the reliance on

civil society groups to mobilize foreign publics). The State Department itself officially

acknowledged it with the hosting of "The Private Sector Summit on Public Diplomacy"

in 2007 where then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced the creation of the

"Benjamin Franklin Awards for Public Diplomacy" in recognition of the fact that "all

sectors of American society –individuals, schools, foundations, associations, and

corporations – actively contribute to advancing America's ideals through public

diplomacy."[141] Yet it may also be too soon, to quote Verkuil, to speak of an outright

"outsourcing of sovereignty."[142] To begin with, Gregory observes, "public diplomacy

could not function without private sector partnerships."[143] Gullion himself, in his

inceptive definition of the term quoted earlier, had in fact explicitly included "the

interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another." As Cull notes,

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[139] *Ibid*.

[140] Fitzpatrick. (2009) p. 168 (emphasis added)

[141] See U.S. Department of State. Media Note. 8 Apr. 2008. http://www.sfcg.org/resources /updates/franklin _award_state.pdf

[142] Verkuil. (2007)

[143] Gregory. (2008)

throughout the twentieth century, commercial forces, missionary organizations and philanthropic foundations such as the Rockefeller Foundation headed multiple initiatives in international cultural exchange and "the diplomacy of the deed."[144]

In more general and elemental terms, as Hocking remarks, viewing the mounting role of non-state actors in contemporary public diplomacy purely in terms of "privatization" could be "misleading and simplistic... [and] fails to recognize the significant role that agents of the state continue to play in the context of the emergent structures of global governance."[145] The argument about the alleged contemporary erosion versus the resilience of the nation state will be taken up again in both Chapter III and Chapter IV.

When discussing the growing role of non-state actors in contemporary diplomacy, it is impossible of course to ignore the media. It is important however to maintain a conceptual distinction between media diplomacy and public diplomacy, for the former is all too frequently and mistakenly confused as part of the latter, in spite of the fact that their roles may at times intersect, and that public diplomacy does make extensive use of media channels. Eytan Gilboa offers a clear analysis of the relationship between the two practices, all the while highlighting their differences:

> Media diplomacy is pursued in the context of negotiations, whereas public diplomacy is conducted in the context of ideological confrontation. Usually media diplomacy aims at short-range results, whereas public diplomacy aims at long-range outcomes. Media diplomacy is more specific than public diplomacy. Whereas the latter is designed to create a friendly climate within a foreign society toward fundamental political and social issues, such as capitalism

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[144] Cull. (2009) p. 26

[145] Hocking. (2004) p. 151

versus communism or human rights, the former is designed to create a favourable climate for a particular diplomatic process at a particular time and in a particular context. Public diplomacy primarily involves the use of propaganda or public relations designed to foster an image, and media diplomacy primarily entails a serious appeal for conflict resolution. Finally, public diplomacy is conducted through multiple channels [which include the media], and media diplomacy is conducted exclusively through the mass media.[146]

Underlying the various issues reviewed above is the elemental question of whether public diplomacy today has been fundamentally revolutionized as a concept and practice, or whether sufficient essential continuities persist that outweigh the changes. Melissen, for one, argues that the change is fundamental:

Traditional diplomatic culture is slowly eroding and sits rather uneasily with the demands of public diplomacy...the rise of soft power in international relations is testing diplomats' flexibility to the full. Public diplomacy cannot be practised successfully without accepting that the game that nations play has fundamentally changed.[147]

Yet though some measure of change is undeniable, not everyone agrees with Melissen. In his attempt to "conceptualize diplomacy as an institution... and explore the IT-effects [on it] from an institutional perspective," Jozef Batora concludes it is still too early, at this stage, to speak of a true revolution in the practice of diplomacy for many patterns of institutional resilience remain in evidence, although he does concede, echoing Nye and Kamarck, that the current situation is that of "a path-dependent adaptation leading to the renewal of diplomacy."[148] Others, like Lord, maintain that while international communications have been revolutionized at the technological level, the

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[146] Gilboa. p. 62

[147] Melissen. (2005) p 24. See also Pahlavi. (2005)

[148] Batora. (2008) p. 223 See also Nye & Kamarck. (2002)

problem of a country communicating effectively with foreign publics has changed very little.[149]

Approaching public diplomacy from another, equally fundamental though less explored angle, some, like Fan, call into question the very assumption, underlying the majority of US soft power and public diplomacy endeavours, that "there is a link between attractiveness and the ability to influence others."[150] However, while the critique may be worth pondering, it also has its limitations. Attractiveness may not necessarily result in "seduction," but it is hard to conceive of unattractiveness achieving better results. It is however interesting to note that Fan actually links this assumption to a certain form of ethnocentricity on the part of the US, and although he does not directly cite Riesman's classic *The Lonely Crowd: The Story of the Changing American Character*, one cannot help wondering the extent to which Riesman's concept of "other-directedness," with its focus on approval and wanting "to be loved rather than esteemed,"[151] does indeed infuse the contemporary practice of public diplomacy. That being said, judging "attractiveness" purely in terms of "likeability" may be somewhat reductive. As both Nye and Galbraith mention, inspiring respect, admiration, or even, to quote Machiavelli's famous maxim, fear may prove equally "attractive" and effective.[152] In the post 9/11 phase, public diplomacy may have come to be primarily associated –in lay discourse at least—with nation branding and "selling America overseas", but its overarching mission remains if

[149] Lord. (2006) p. ix

[150] Fan. (2008) p. 147

[151] See Riesman. (1969)

[152] See Nye. (1990); Galbraith. (1983)

not loftier at least somewhat more complex than mere advertisement for "niceness." The Obama administration's 2010 "National Security Strategy" illustrates this point in its recommendation to "strengthen the power of our example...not just when it is easy, but when it's hard."[153] In practice, more starkly pragmatic considerations even come into play as in Kiesling's observation that:

> the realistic goal of public diplomacy is not to make America loved...the attainable goal of public diplomacy is to foster a US image that is tolerable enough to ordinary, conventional human beings that foreign governments, whether fundamentalist tyrannies or liberal democracies, can easily afford the political cost of cooperating with the American superpower.[154]

As we noted early on in our introduction of the notion, in spite of the increasingly significant body of work on of public diplomacy and the many attempts at identifying and delineating the concept, no single definition has yet managed to gain authoritative acceptance. As a result, Lord notes, there is to date "no official accepted doctrine governing public diplomacy operations."[155] Consequently, the term is used in a variety of ways, coexisting sometimes uneasily with other similarly vague terms as "international communications," "information operations," and "strategic influence." In the March 2003 special issue of the *Journal of Information Warfare* --entirely dedicated to the topic of "perception management"—for example, Dearth endeavours to present a taxonomy of perception management which identifies public diplomacy as one of its 5 principal sub-elements, alongside public affairs, psychological operations, deception, and covert

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[153] U.S. "National Security Strategy." May 2010. p. 36 http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/ files/rss_viewer /national_security_strategy.pdf

[154] Kiesling. (2006) p.154

[155] Lord. (2006) p. 7

action.[156] Lord, alternately, views it as part of a more general complex of disciplines he calls "psychological-political warfare," which is itself a subset of "strategic influence," "a still more comprehensive term that combine psychological-political warfare with elements of diplomacy and international assistance."[157] Gregory, on the other hand, proposes to assimilate the term under the more general label "strategic communication" defined as "a variety of instruments used by governments...to *understand* global attitudes...*engage* in a dialogue of ideas between people and institutions...and *influence* attitudes and behaviors through communication strategies."[158] This may just be an issue of labels or semantics. After all, in what could appear like a coming full circle, Lord himself goes on to describe "strategic influence" as "essentially synonymous with the term 'soft power,'"[159] Still there is no denying that the failure to develop an agreed vocabulary, while taking nothing away from the magnitude of the notion, may contribute to a sense of conceptual confusion and some level of practical dysfunction in its application. On the other hand, the plethora of terms attests to both the pervasiveness and the topicality of the concept in our contemporary world, and this sifting through it in fits and starts could be the first step towards what Gregory calls the "sunrise of an academic field."[160] The term "public diplomacy" may or may not ultimately survive the ongoing contest of labels. As we noted earlier, for instance, whereas it had become somewhat ubiquitous during the Bush

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[156] Dearth. (2003) p.1

[157] Lord. (2006) p. 8

[158] See Gregory. (2006)

[159] *Ibid*.

[160] See Gregory. "Public Diplomacy: Sunrise of an Academic Field."

presidency, the Obama administration currently seems to favour referring to its communication ventures with foreign publics as "strategic communication." Melissen however argues there is "great merit" in keeping the phrase "public diplomacy" for it explicitly acknowledges the "public" as "part of the wider process by which states *and others* represent themselves and their interests to one another" and the fact that "the connections between diplomacy and society are getting closer."[161] The recognition of the centrality of the *public* to the notion of public diplomacy and its practice leads us rather fittingly to the topic of the next chapter: public opinion.

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[161] Melissen. (2006) p. 5 http://www.nbiz.nl/publications/2006/20061200_cdsp_paper_melissen.pdf (emphasis added)

CHAPTER II – PUBLIC OPINION

> *The pressure of the public for admittance to the mysteries of foreign affairs is being felt. None of us begins to understand the consequences, but it is no daring prophecy to say that the knowledge of how to create consent will alter every political premise.*
>
> Edward Bernays, *Crystallizing Public Opinion*[1]

> *I realize that it might fairly be argued by any one of you that in undertaking to explain our foreign policy in terms of our public opinion I would be offering to explain one mystery in terms of another.*
>
> Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion and Foreign Policy in the United States*[2]

> *There is no such thing as public opinion. There is only published opinion.*
>
> Winston Churchill

I- INTRODUCTION

One core concept underlies the growing attention given to the idea of soft power and the deployment of public diplomacy in international affairs. It is the notion of public opinion. More specifically, it is the threefold premise that public opinion does indeed exist (a statement which may appear self-evident, but is still to this day the object of philosophical argument), that it may be shaped or at the very least influenced, and finally, that it does matter and should therefore be taken into account by statesmen. Nelson and Izadi explicitly affirm the linkage between the notion of public opinion and the development of public diplomacy in their assertion that the "supplementing [of]

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[1] Bernays. (1923) p. 37

[2] Lippmann. (1952) p. 9

traditional diplomatic efforts with more overt and continuous communications directed at residents in other countries...became largely feasible because of the growing importance of public opinion on government decision-making."[3]

These three assumptions however, though seemingly taken for granted by the majority of democratic governments today, are in fact relatively recent principles whose development remains inextricably linked with the evolution of political life and particularly of democracy in the West since the Enlightenment. They are also, as we shall see in this chapter, intimately connected to the conceptual and methodological transformations which accompanied the rise of the social sciences at the turn of the past century. At a more concrete level, these general principles regarding the status of public opinion in governmental practice have been fostered as well by the advancements in communication technologies. However, while the seemingly ever-increasing incorporation of these assumptions (i.e. the existence, manipulability and effective role of public opinion) into the everyday workings of government may attest to their general acceptance in practical terms, they remain far from undisputed at the theoretical level where they continue to generate much debate.

Needless to say this chapter does not –could not, in fact—propose to resolve, in any conclusive manner, these perennial issues as to the nature and value of public opinion. Its principal aim, rather, is to explore the origin and development of the concept and the fundamental disputes surrounding it, chart its fulgurant trajectory in the past century, and, at a more concrete level, examine its verifiable achievements –and

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[3] Nelson & Izadi. (2009) p. 334

failures—in order to assess with hopefully greater clarity, the actual nature of its role in contemporary democratic government, particularly, since that is our topic, in the field of international relations.

Before we delve into the genealogy of the concept of public opinion, however, it is important to have a reliable grasp of its contemporary substance. Unfortunately in this case, the search for a single, agreed-upon definition of the concept proves fruitless. In a 1968 entry on public opinion research for the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, W. Phillips Davidson noted that there is "no generally accepted definition of the term."[4] The absence is far from reflecting a lack of effort. As Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann points out nearly twenty years later in her seminal book on the topic *The Spiral of Silence*: "Generations of philosophers, jurists, historians, political theorists, and journalism scholars have torn their hair in the attempt to provide a clear definition."[5] In fact, as Slavko Splichal observes in his essay "Defining Public Opinion in History," the increasing number of discussions of public opinion in the past century may have actually "enhanced controversies over what exactly constitutes the object of discussion."[6]

Perhaps the best working definition of public opinion remains therefore that of Edward Bernays', one of the pioneers in the field of American public relations and the theory and practice of public opinion manipulation (also, anecdotally, Freud's nephew), who, as early as 1923, in *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, wrote: "Public opinion is a term

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[4] Davidson. (1968) p. 188

[5] Noelle-Neumann. (1984) p. 58

[6] Splichal. (2000) p. 12

describing an ill-defined, mercurial and changeable group of individual judgements."[7] On the other hand, while Bernays' may do justice to the semantic haziness of the term, it is unfortunately not particularly helpful in clarifying it. Yet as Splichal notes, "If we do not want to relinquish the idea of public opinion, we have to reconcile ourselves to the fact that a *universal* definition of the public and public opinion cannot be attained."[8]

The reason, he adds, lies not so much, in fact, in the existence of too many differing definitions preventing the formulation of an "average definition," but is merely the reflection of contradictions inherent in the very concept of public opinion.[9] We shall examine later some of these more fundamental conceptual contradictions, but it is interesting to note, for instance, that at a very basic level, the terms "opinion" and "public" carry with them multiple and not necessarily compatible meanings. As Price points out, "opinion" is used to refer both to rational/cognitive processes and to irrational impulsive ones. "Public" too can have a similar dual, in fact triple usage:

> To follow the famous words of Abraham Lincoln, the word public originally meant both "*of* the people" (when referring to common access) and "*for* the people" (when referring to the common good). It only came to mean "*by* the people" (that is, carried out by common people, the sense in which we often think of the term today) much later.[10]

Other factors also come into play. Splichal suggests, for instance, that the semantic heterogeneity of the notion might be fostered by its "frequent use in the most

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[7] Bernays. (1923) p. 61

[8] Splichal. (2000) p. 13

[9] *Ibid*.

[10] Price. (1992) p. 8

diverse theories"[11] across a wide spectrum of disciplines, not to mention that too often, given its functional implications, attempts at defining it might be tainted by political interests.

All these contradictions and ambiguities may be ground enough for some thinkers to adopt Bourdieu's famous slogan that "Public Opinion does not Exist."[12] However, Bourdieu's essay itself, despite its provocative title, does not literally argue that public opinion "does not exist," but rather, as this chapter will endeavour to clarify, that it is a laboriously constructed phenomenon, "a pure and simple *artefact* whose function is to dissimulate the fact that the state of the opinion at a given moment is a system of forces, of tensions."[13]

Still, while an "average definition" may still elude us, a common –albeit vague-- denominator does emerge from all the debates. Scholars and practitioners, critics and idealists alike, all agree on the fact that public opinion, given its close connection with processes of discussion, debate, and collective decision-making –and whether viewed in philosophical, political, sociological or psychological terms-- is fundamentally a communications concept. Furthermore, the reciprocity –which, depending on the context, may be more or less symmetrical-- of its relationship with the various forces of government that attempt to manipulate it and which it, in turn, seeks to affect also characterize public opinion as an essentially interactive phenomenon.[14]

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[11] *Ibid*. p. 14

[12] See Bourdieu. (1972)

[13] *Ibid*. p. 224

[14] See Price (1992) p. 91. Also Splichal. (2000) p. 30

The debate surrounding the polysemy, ambiguities, and potential meaninglessness of the concept of public opinion is no doubt a rich and stimulating one. In the end, however, and in order not to stray unduly away from the overarching topic of this dissertation, the opacity of the concept remains insufficient reason to renounce the notion of public opinion; not merely, as Bernays once suggested, because of "how powerful the impact of abstract terms can be and how meaningless,"[15] but more concretely, quoting Splichal, due to the fact that:

> ...despite the lack of a clear, unambiguous definition, public opinion was...institutionalized in modern societies, essentially in three distinctive nationwide forms, although none of them genuinely represented an ideally defined public. In operation.al terms at least, public opinion is expressed and/or (re)presented in, or by, parliaments, mass media, and polling.[16]

In other words, governments in our age, visibly behave under the assumption that there is such a thing as public opinion and that it –to a variable extent—matters. This holds true not only for democratic states, which purport to reflect "the will of the people," but even for authoritarian regimes which, by their very efforts to stifle public opinion, acknowledge its actual existence. Whether public opinion is in fact a "phantom", as Walter Lippmann[17] once put it, an artificial construct, or a verifiably real entity, whether it truly reflects a spontaneous collective will or is the product of surreptitious framing, or even malignant conditioning, it has undeniably been given a role to play in the conduct of state affairs in our age. Advances in communication technology, coupled with an

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[15] Bernays. (1952) p. 337 (See also Wittgenstein. *Philosophical Investigations*, and Hayakawa. *Language in Action* whom Bernays in fact refers to in this context.)

[16] Splichal. (2000) p. 16

[17] See Lippmann. (1925)

intensification of globalization processes have made this true not only in national

contexts, but also on the international scene where, as Riordan notes, "public opinion has

firmly entered foreign-policy calculations."[18] Our ultimate concern in this chapter,

however, is not so much to determine the exact nature of that role --and the degree to

which it may be exaggerated or, alternately, underrated in contemporary political

practice-- but rather to investigate the process by which public opinion has come to

assume the general sense and value it holds today in political discourse, and highlight

how this process, in turn, relates to the emergence of public diplomacy and its subsequent

evolution.

II- ORIGIN(S) & DEVELOPMENTS

In many ways, the *idea* of public opinion --if not the actual term-- is, to

paraphrase Bernays, "practically as old as society."[19] For instance, he argues, even the

ancient and despotic cultures of Babylonia and Persia must have had a sense of it since

"most of what we know about the rulers of ancient Egypt, Sumeria, Babylonia and Persia

comes to us from what is left of their own attempts to mold public opinion through art

and literature."[20] These embryonic acknowledgements of public opinion maintained a

largely passive view of it, however, as they denoted essentially the notion of a population

to be pacified or made proud rather than an actively engaged citizenry. There is no

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[18] Riordan. (2003) p. 4

[19] Bernays. (1952) p. 12

[20] *Ibid*. p. 13

denying however, that public opinion –even if that "public" was extremely restricted, being as it was exclusive of women, aliens and slaves-- became an important and operative factor in public life in Ancient Greece, with its focus on individualism and the nascent idea of democracy.

The development of democracy in fifth century BC Athens has indeed been a central and enduring source of inspiration for modern political thought.[21] Its corollary ideals of citizen equality and participation, liberty and respect for the law, however, were by no means accepted uncritically by the thinkers of the day. Plato, who favoured "philosopher kings," was particularly severe towards democracy in *The Republic*, arguing that its treating "of all men as equal, whether they are equal or not"[22] would overshadow superior political judgement, enslave leadership to popular demand and lead society to sink to the lowest common denominator. Aristotle also examined democracy at length in his *Politics*, and although he remained circumspect in his final assessment (seemingly favouring a "mixed state" combining elements of monarchy and democracy; thereby anticipating, according to Held, positions later developed by Renaissance republicans[23]), he remained a strong advocate of citizen participation "in giving judgement and holding office."[24]

It should be noted, however, that Aristotle conceived of public opinion not so much as a collective attitude towards a *particular* issue, but rather as the general values,

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[21] See Held. (1987). Also Finley. (1983)

[22] Plato. (1974) p. 375

[23] Held. (1987) p. 26

[24] Aristotle. (1981) p. 169

norms, and taste of a society, what Robert Merton, borrowing a phrase from Glanvill later popularized by Alfred Whitehead, would term the "climate of opinion."[25] As Minar clarifies, "Aristotelian political philosophy seems to suggest that public opinion may be regarded as the vehicle of the spirit and continuity of the life of the community."[26] These ancient philosophers' divergent probings into the shortfalls of democratic theory and the limitations of its practice prefigure and continue to inform the majority of modern debates on democracy and the role of public opinion.

Ancient Rome too, particularly in its republican stage, had some notion of public opinion in mind when it coined terms such as *vox populi* and *res publicae* (literally, "the voice of the people" and "public affairs.") Articulated in the context of a republic, however, the Roman idea of citizenship was far less participatory than in Athenian democracy. Aside from having notably proclaimed "*Sic est vulgus; ex veritate pauce, ex opinione multa aestimat*" ("This is the way of the crowd; its judgements seldom founded on truth, mostly on opinion")[27] Cicero, for instance expounds on the notion of *populus* in *De Republica*, specifying that it should be understood in a restrictive sense, referring not to the entire population of a state but to those who *accept* the law and "live in the service of its observance."[28] The distinction between this Roman notion of "acceptance" and the Greek ideal of "participation" is echoed by Peters and Hölscher who argue that, whereas the ancient Greek conception of the public was a socio-political one designating the body

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[25] Merton. (1968) p. 189 & p. 524

[26] See Minar. (1960)

[27] Cicero. (1930) p. 29

[28] Cicero. (2008) §39

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of citizens *actively* involved in the government of the *polis,* the Roman one was of a more "visual-intellectual"[29] character, denoting rather an *audience* to whom objects may be shown or information imparted. The Roman view would prevail in Europe throughout the Middle Ages, remarks Peters, as "the medieval public sphere involved the display of prestige, not criticism; spectacle, not debate; appearance before the people, not on their behalf."[30] While the Greek conception, on the other hand, appears closer in spirit to our contemporary and democratic *political* understanding of the public, the tension between these two competing classical conceptualizations of it –as participating force vs. as an audience to be conquered-- has accompanied the concept, never entirely resolved, to the present day.

Leaving aside these "anticipations and approximations of modern theorizing"[31] about the public and its opinion, the explicitly propounded concept of public opinion is largely a product of the Enlightenment. It is then, argues that Gunn, that "awareness of the sentiments of others matured into a formula similar to our modern notion."[32] It was certainly fostered by the process of urbanization and, as Habermas definitively demonstrated, the emergence of a critically reasoning *public sphere* (which he actually describes as a space where "something approaching public opinion can be formed."[33]) As such, the notion is also closely connected to the emerging liberal political theories of the

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[29] Peters. (1995) p. 7

[30] Peters. (2001) p. 86. See also Habermas. (1995) p. 8

[31] Palmer. (1936) p. 231

[32] Gunn. (1989) p. 247

[33] Habermas. (1989) p. 351

late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries put forward by philosophers such as Locke, Rousseau, Kant, and later Bentham. As a result, the idea of public opinion as we generally employ it today, namely as referring to "collective judgements outside the sphere of government that affect political decision making,"[34] is intrinsically linked to the ideals of democracy and the rule of law.

Who first coined the actual term remains a matter of dissensus among historians. Was it the English, as Gunn insists, or the French as Habermas and Noelle-Neumann argue? This particular point may not matter so much. Montaigne, for instance, undeniably used the term "*l'opinion publique*" twice in the 1588 edition of his *Essais*,[35] yet, as Noelle-Neumann points out, the concept itself only became truly established a century and a half later.[36] Gunn himself acknowledges that the French *opinion commune* or *opinion publique* "carries the strongest credentials as direct ancestor of the modern expression and meaning." However, he also remarks on the "formidable difficulties in rendering Renaissance 'opinion' as public opinion. For the *opinio* of the Latin humanists was a philosophical term to describe a product of the imagination to be contrasted with the more reliable judgements derived from reason."[37] What is more significant to note is that by the late eighteenth century, writers on either side of the Channel were extensively using the term to refer to an increasingly *political* rather than a merely philosophical phenomenon. The concept of public opinion as a participant –direct or indirect—in the

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[34] Price. (1992) p. 8

[35] Noelle-Neumann. (1984) p. 66-67

[36] *Ibid*. p. 69

[37] Gunn. (1989) pp. 247-248

political decision-making process, and therefore as a bestower of legitimacy upon laws and policies, was gradually establishing itself.

The fact that these early modern efforts to articulate a political notion of public opinion emerged primarily from England and France is not entirely fortuitous, Gunn pursues, for there did exist, in both countries, a national and "recognized public" even if "its exact contours and the justness of its mind were much disputed."[38] On the other hand, the fact that the two countries also had, for the major part of the eighteenth century, radically contrasted political systems fostered somewhat different treatments of the notion. Whereas Britain already had a relatively representative parliament, France was still ruled by an absolute monarchy. With "no electorate to consult, no legislature at which to express indignation," French thinkers (Rousseau of course, but also Sacy, Voltaire, d'Alembert), in Gunn's view, developed therefore a tendency to "reify the public" and to treat public opinion as a more abstract impersonal force than their British counterparts who were already able to witness public opinion applied to the political process.[39] A paradoxical consequence emerged from this contrast: *theorizing* on the concept of public opinion thrived in France throughout the eighteenth century, while in England, efforts focused instead on *integrating* it into political life so that "institutions flourished...[but] concepts rested."[40] Although public opinion was not to remain an entirely abstract notion in France for much longer (the French Revolution would exhibit

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[38] *Ibid*. p. 249

[39] *Ibid*. p. 251, 259.

[40] *Ibid*. p. 257

an extraordinary outbreak of public feeling), this fundamental inceptive contrast in the

modern elaboration of the concept of public opinion between the inclination to idealize

the notion and the drive to operationalize it has accompanied the evolution of the concept

to this day, although, as we shall see by the end of this genealogy, Gunn may perhaps be

right to proclaim that the Anglo-Saxon tradition's more functional approach "has

triumphed...in our modern understanding of public opinion."[41]

It is also no coincidence that the concept of public opinion began to take hold in

Europe during an eighteenth century that was marked by a gradual dissipation of absolute

authority, both at the religious and state level, amid, as Price calls it, a "crisis of

absolutism."[42] Ferdinand Tönnies argues that "Public opinion strolls on a path prepared

by religion," in the sense that is came to assume the social functions which had been left

somewhat orphaned by the wane of religion during the Enlightenment.[43] In other words,

"where premodern states legitimized their origins and developments by insisting on the

divine will, modern democracies largely refer to public opinion."[44] In his examination of

French political culture in the years leading up to the Revolution, "Public Opinion as

Political Invention," Keith Baker argues that public opinion materialized as a political

concept as the French crown and its opponents, together, "invented and appealed to a

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[41] *Ibid*. p. 263

[42] Price. (1992) p. 12

[43] See Tönnies. (2000) pp. 165-169. Although he ascribes them analogous functions, Tönnies does stress major differences between religion and public opinion, insisting that while the former remains a product of irrational belief, public opinion results from rational thought. The "rationality" of public opinion, however, remains a debated issue.

[44] Tönnies. (2000) p. 30

principle of legitimacy beyond the [existing] system in order to press their competing claims."[45]

Yet while public opinion, by the end of the eighteenth century, had come to provide an implicit new system of legitimacy and authority, the concept itself, as Baker points out, remained vague in many respects. It was linked to discussion in salons and coffee houses, to an increasingly free flow of information. It was argued to reflect the common good, and presented as a new and powerful tribunal for checking the actions of the state. But the precise mechanisms through which it were to achieve that role and impact governmental affairs were left nebulous, except perhaps, as Gunn noted, in Britain where a parliamentary form of democracy was noticeably developing.[46] More importantly, Baker adds, the "public" remained "a political or ideological construct without any clear sociological referent,"[47] a problem which in many ways --and in spite of the myriad of attempts undertaken since then to apprehend or delineate what, exactly, the term "public" refers to-- remains somewhat unresolved, as Peters argues, to this day.[48] Although most would agree that the notion of a wholly inclusive and entirely free public opinion remains an impracticable ideal, (as Francis Wilson says, "Probably only the anarchists can say that they really believe in a completely free opinion."[49]) the exact composition of that "public," the extent of its inclusiveness, of its representativeness, and

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[45] Baker, K. (1990) p. 171

[46] See Gunn. (1989)

[47] Baker, K. p. 186.

[48] See Peters. (2001)

[49] Wilson, F. (1962) p. 5

in fact the question of whether there is in fact a single unique public, or rather a variety of publics in which people participate in varying degrees, is far from being settled.

By the nineteenth century, however, the role of public opinion in government was being spelled out in a much more prescribed way, cast in legislative and electoral terms, owing in large part to the works of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, whose utilitarian concerns with achieving the greatest good for the greatest number of people, Robert Minar argues, paved the way for the adoption of majority rule. Public opinion, in this emerging majoritarian view, thus became "the agglomerate interests of the men of the community,"[50] and the state, ironically enough, "was to have the role of umpire or referee over individuals and groups vying to maximize their interests."[51]

The development of this utilitarian majoritarian philosophy, according to Price, involved two principal shifts in the conception of public opinion.[52] The first, illustrating Minar's remarks above, is a move away from an earlier, somewhat elevated, Rousseauian notion of public opinion as representative of the "common good" or "general will," and what Spilchal and Tönnies see as its overtones of moral authority[53] (which, as we mentioned earlier, had dominated discussions of the concept, particularly in France), towards the more pragmatic notion of "the most commonly held idea." The second mutation involves the appreciation of the public itself, which had previously seemed to vaguely encompass "those members of the learned classes who frequented the coffee

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[50] Minar. (1960) p. 36

[51] Price. (1992) p. 13

[52] *Ibid*.

[53] Splichal. (2000) p. 20. Tönnies. (2000) p. 202

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houses and salons,"[54] and becomes now identified explicitly with the eligible electorate.

These shifts marked the beginning of a "practical turn" in the literature on public opinion

that would increasingly undermine the reified view of the public –and of its will—as an

indissociable idealized unit, fostering instead the idea of "multiple and shifting

majorities" which had already been introduced by James Madison, the "Father of the U.S.

Constitution," in the late 1700s. [55]

Echoing Gunn's earlier remarks, Minar argues that the rise of this Anglo-Saxon,

utilitarian, and somehow more concretely democratic, conceptualization of public opinion

that emerged in the nineteenth century decisively shaped the subsequent trajectory of the

concept, essentially underlying twentieth century efforts to measure, quantify, and control

it that have gone unabated to this day.[56] Despite these emerging changes, theorizing on

public opinion while perhaps less abstract, nevertheless remained largely normative in

nature until the mid-nineteenth century, an adjunct to studies in political theory, rather

than the focus of methodical, operational study. This begins to change toward the close of

the century, in response to the rise of systematized empirical analysis in the social

sciences and the emergence of more efficient means of mass communications. Thus

begins what Splichal calls the phase of "sociologization" of public opinion,[57] which will

come to cement irrevocably –at least for the time being-- the move away from political

theory and philosophical considerations towards plainly functional concerns.

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[54] Price. (1992) p. 14

[55] Qtd. in Gunn. (1989) p. 260

[56] Minar. (1960) p. 38

[57] Splichal. (1999) p. 72

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, as the level of literacy and education began to increase, in countries such as France, England and the United States, the notion of "masses," or "the crowd" (*la foule*), gained significance in conceptualizations of public opinion. This is not to say that it was undisputedly embraced. Le Bon, for example, unambiguously promoting the line of thought which began with Plato, regarded crowds as "only powerful for destruction," endowed with a reasoning "of such an inferior kind that it is only by way of analogy that they can be described as reasoning."[58] In *L'Opinion et la Foule*, Tarde, on the other hand, insisted on a distinction between the "public" and the "crowd," arguing that while crowds could be seen as one of the oldest forms of human association, the notion of "public," as a forum for *critical* discussion, was the product of specific societal and technological developments, and as such a distinctly modern form of social life.[59]

The emergent awareness of the masses, combined with the concomitant expansion of statistics as an instrument of social knowledge, laid the foundations for the modern form of empirical opinion research which would go on to thrive in the twentieth century, as methods of polling and surveying would become ever more sophisticated. [60]

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[58] LeBon. (1930) p. 73

[59] See Tarde. (1901). It is interesting to note that Tarde's work, long neglected, has been experiencing a revival of sorts since the 1990s and is being 'rediscovered' as having anticipated several subsequent developments in modern and postmodern social theories. As David Toews argues, his influence is particularly traceable in the works of Deleuze and Guattari and Latour (see Toews. 2003.) Everett Rogers' model of innovation in *The Diffusion of Innovations*, which will surface later in our discussion, is also often regarded as an extension of Tarde's 1890 *Les Lois de l'Imitation*.

[60] See Oberschall. (2008) pp. 83-86

Although a thorough account of the rise of statistics is beyond the scope of this chapter, we should note Mitchell's observation that opinion research grew in close connection with the development of two forms of statistics. On the one hand, it was a continuation of the already quite widespread custom of moral --or social-- statistics which had emerged in Europe in the seventeenth century and introduced the practice of systematic gathering of social data (social surveys) for governmental or administrative purposes.[61] More significantly however, it was the advances made in mathematical statistics which truly transformed the social sciences and reconfigured public opinion research. [62] As Blalock elucidates, it was the nineteenth-century developments in probability theory in particular (such as the British logician John Venn's 1866 treatise *The Logic of Chance* which formulated the "first systematic account of the frequency approach to probabilities"[63]), that allowed statistics to move beyond its merely descriptive function of "summing up large quantities of information in order to make them conceivable"[64] (with percentages, averages etc.), by endowing it with new inductive powers of generalization and prediction of mass phenomena on the basis of a limited quantity of information. The further development of increasingly refined statistical methods of attitude measurement in the first decades of the twentieth century

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[61] Stuart Woolf (1989) traces the earliest "mathematically sophisticated" use of statistics to the "seventeenth-century actuarial life-tables...developed in England as a direct by-product of the insurance trade." He also cites the Swedish literacy statistics whose compilation from the 1620s onwards was instigated by the Lutheran Church's concern that people be able to read the Bible.

[62] Mitchell, D. (1968) p. 100

[63] Hendricks, Pedersen & Jørgensen. (2001) p. 4

[64] Blalock. (1960) p. 5

(notably the development of *psychometrics* as a theory and method of psychological measurement, spearheaded in the United States by Thurstone, who championed the idea that "attitudes can be measured")[65] helped establish the primacy of empirical public opinion research, and the sidelining of alternative conceptions of public opinion which could not supported by the available measurement methods.

Splichal also stresses the influential role of American pragmatism, during the initial phase of "sociologization" of public opinion theories in the first decades of the twentieth century, in reconceptualizing public opinion primarily as communicative and interactive phenomenon. Indeed, Dewey' view of communications as a "prerequisite" of society,[66] or Cooley's declaration that "In politics communication makes possible public opinion, which, when organized, is democracy"[67] illustrate this rather eloquently.

By the second decade of the twentieth century, interest in public opinion had decisively shifted to what Robert Binkley, writing in 1928, noted as "the question of the function and powers of public opinion in society, the means by which it can be modified or controlled, and the relative importance of emotional and intellectual factors in its formulation."[68] In other words, the public was becoming, to quote Gouldner, "a condition of organized action, to be instrumentally managed."[69] As Price notes, this redirected the

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[65] See Thurstone. (1928)

[66] Dewey. (1991) p. 152

[67] Cooley. (1962) p. 84

[68] Binkley. (1928) p. 393

[69] Gouldner. (1976) pp. 139-140

study of public opinion into new academic fields such as social psychology, opinion research, propaganda analysis, and mass communications research.[70]

The 1920s were an exceptionally fertile era in the development of public opinion theories, offering what could well have been "the largest concentration of the most diverse ideas on the subject."[71] Concern with the notion of public opinion was particularly palpable in the Unites States, most notably in the work of thinkers such as Walter Lippmann who brought out his seminal opus on the topic, *Public Opinion,* in 1922 and John Dewey (whose notorious debate with Lippmann on the role of citizens in democracy we will allude to in the next section), but also practitioners in the field like Edward Bernays and Ivy Lee. The sociologization of the field pursued its course, increasingly moving from theoretical considerations and social criticism to practical concerns and specific problems.

Although the notions of political publicity and, as Bernays calls it, "that vaguely defined evil"[72] propaganda were not necessarily new in and of themselves, they had been deployed on an unprecedented scale during World War I at the behest of Woodrow Wilson to sell the war aims and ideals both at home and abroad as well as to deflate the morale of enemy countries. "Ideas and their dissemination became weapons and words became bullets"[73] recalls Bernays, who along with Lippmann served as advisor to Wilson in the creation, in 1917, of the legendary Committee on Public information (CPI) chaired

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[70] Price. (1992) p. 15

[71] Splichal. (2000) p. 11

[72] Bernays. (1923) p. 11

[73] Bernays. (1952) p. 71

by George Creel, whose mission was to influence domestic and foreign public opinion towards supporting US intervention in the war (and whose achievements are often seen as having laid the groundwork for the subsequent emergence of the public relations industry.) The arguably visible success of these concentrated wartime publicity efforts (which have been documented in detail in such works as Creel's *How We Advertised America*, Mock and Larsen's *Words that Won the War*, and Lasswell's *Propaganda Technique in World War I*) ushered in a conscious expansion of the field in the post-war period. Combined with developments in psychological sciences, this led to increased focus on the methods for influencing the public mind, and the birth of modern public relations largely credited to the work of Bernays, Creel and Lee.

Meanwhile, the pragmatic recognition of a plurality and diversity of opinions progressively dominated and replaced the philosophical ideal of "the unity of the public" in conceptualizations of public opinion. Cooley's view of public opinion as "no mere aggregate of individual opinions, but a genuine social product"[74] was largely abandoned in favor of a more practical "summing of equal or at least similar opinion expressions of citizens inquired by ballot or opinion polls."[75] Accordingly, and in keeping with the advance of statistical methods in the social sciences we examined earlier, research predominantly favored empirical and quantitative study. The development of public opinion polling in the 1930s, its rising function in the electoral, and more generally political, process cemented that direction.

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[74] Cooley. (1962) p. 121

[75] Bauer. (1963) p. 671

As Splichal writes, "The previously close relationship between public opinion, political democracy, and freedom of the press was replaced by a close empirical linkage between public opinion polling, analysis of (particularly international) propaganda, and the development of public relations,"[76]a trend that has continued, unabated, to the present day.

The relationship between polling and public opinion is in fact itself another problematic one. Indeed, insofar as, as Habermas points out, "Political opinion polls provide a certain reflection of 'public opinion' only if they have been preceded by a focused public debate and a corresponding opinion-formation in a mobilized public sphere,"[77] polling conceptually precludes –except in those rare, if not unattainable cases, of absolute unanimity—the notion of public opinion as an existing unified entity. Instead, it becomes an empirical measure of individual -- and to a large and ironic extent "private," as Lippmann was one of the first to note—attitudes. Moreover, polling serves not only as an instrument of *representation* –no matter how flawed—of public opinion, but also assists to a certain degree in its *construction*. This "constructive" aspect of polling is at play not just in the crafting of questions which highlight certain issues while neglecting others and frame the parameters of debate, but also, as Hardt and Negri note, in the fundamental fact that:

> There is, of course, something strangely circular in the notion that opinion polls tell us what we think. At the very least, opinion polls have a centripetal psychological effect, encouraging all to conform to the view of the majority.[78]

[76] Splichal. (2000) p. 36

[77] Habermas. (1983) p. 362

[78] Hardt & Negri. (2004) p. 262

Today, as opinion polling seems to ceaselessly expand and invade every aspect of social –and private—life, it is worth recalling the initially futurist but ultimately prophetic words of Carl Schmitt who in his 1928 *Verfassungslehre* (*Constitutional Theory*) predicted that someday "without leaving his apartment, every man could continuously express his opinions on political questions through an apparatus, and all these opinions will be automatically recorded in the head office."[79]

With public opinion now somewhat reduced to a calculable consensual majority, where does that leave the relationship between public opinion and democracy? Although inextricably entwined, the relationship has always been beset with theoretical contradiction in at least two fundamental ways. The first involves, to paraphrase Tocqueville, the potential "tyranny of the majority" which he vituperates at length in *Democracy in America*:

> Freedom of opinion does not exist in America. The Inquisition has never been able to prevent a vast number of anti-religious books from circulating in Spain. The empire of the majority succeeds much better in the United States, since it actually removes any wish to publish them.[80]

The second problem in the relationship between public opinion and democracy involves the fact that although the notion of public opinion is theoretically related to representation and participation in the political process, it has never been *practically*

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[79] Qtd. in Tönnies. (2000) p. 35

[80] See Tocqueville. (1945) p. 275 (It is interesting to note that the matter of the possible domination of the majority has become further complicated since then, at least in many Western democracies, by the very measures that have been adopted to curb it, namely the increased attention paid to so-called "minority rights," and a general climate, on the surface at least, of cultural relativism and political correctness, which have conversely introduced the reverse fear of a "tyranny of the minority." Recent examples of the phenomenon include the heated issues of the wearing of the Islamic veil in France, and the legality of *shari'a* courts in Canada and the UK.)

understood as *direct* participant in the *execution* of political power, but primarily as an evaluator and legitimator of it, a conception best summed up by Valdimer Key as "a consensus on fundamentals that permits and limits rather than directs certain governmental actions."[81] In other words, to quote Splichal, public opinion, as it has come to develop, is not an "organized, active opinion directly entangled in political discussions... [but instead] a judgement about public affairs that is formed and entertained by those who constitute the public/s....[and] may be activated if organized by a specific (political) actor (e.g. an interest group, a political party, or the media.)"[82] Public opinion has therefore a significant "constructed" aspect. This construction may be understood in part in the Benedict Anderson sense of it being an "imagined" notion (which, Anderson insists, does not imply "falsity" or inexistence.)[83] More relevantly here, perhaps, it also arises, as Peters notes, from the plain fact that insofar as public opinion in modern society "is not centered on a single place where the people can assemble as a single body, the expression of the people's voice(s) will always be inseparable from various techniques of representation."[84]

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[81] Key. (1967) p. 67

[82] Splichal. (2000) p. 14

[83] Anderson, B. (1989) p. 15 Anderson's *Imagined* Communities, focuses specifically on the rise of the notion of nationalism. In this respect, it is interesting to note that modern public opinion is often, as a matter of fact, conceptualized as a phenomenon closely linked with the nation state. This is particularly emphasized, for instance, by public opinion polling in which respondents are selected from the population of *citizens* (although the questions asked may naturally transcend national boundaries). Other forms of public opinion do nevertheless exist involving both smaller less institutionalized groups and, with the recent growth of *world opinion*, larger transnational ones.

[84] Peters. (1995) p. 8

Public opinion may eventually impact the direction of governmental conduct –

though in what fashion and to what extent remains to be determined—but it is therefore

bound to do so in an *indirect* manner. Polling, for instance, may allow the will of the

majority of citizens to be ascertainable at a particular time, but that manifest will still

needs to make its way through various bodies of representatives in order to result in

concrete action. In this respect, Lippmann's observations in *The Phantom Public* hold

true after nearly a century:

> In governing the work of other men by votes or by the expression of
> opinion they [people] can only reward or punish a result, accept or
> reject alternatives presented to them...they cannot create, administer
> and actually perform the act they have in mind...The role of public
> opinion is determined by the fact that its relation to a problem is
> external. The opinion affects an opinion, but does not itself control
> the executive act...They count only if they influence the course of
> affairs. They influence it, however, only if they influence an actor in
> the affair. And it is precisely in this secondary, indirect relationship
> between public opinion and public affairs that we have the clue to the
> limits and the possibilities of public opinion.[85]

Public opinion is therefore appreciably subject to construction and representation,

and hence a significantly *mediated* phenomenon, a doubly mediated phenomenon in fact,

for, as we shall examine in the remainder of this chapter, external forces must intervene

both in the process of its formation and in that of its expression. As such, public opinion,

along with the more general notion of "the public" which is intrinsic to it, remains

intimately linked not just to concerns of a political character, but also, to significant

themes in communication theory. Peters conveys this particularly eloquently in his

conclusion to "Realism in Social Representation and the Fate of the Public:"

> Whether figured as the masses, the great unwashed, the audience
> invisible, the silent majority, the implosion of the social, the voice of

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[85] Lippmann. (1925) pp. 52 & 55-56

> the people, a demographic segment, or a phantom, the public
> partakes of all the chief troubles of communication in twentieth-
> century life: simulation, mediation, distance, self-reflexivity, and
> representation.[86]

To conclude this summarizing genealogy of the concept, we must note that the

more recent conceptualizations of public opinion (e.g. Habermas, Thompson; Mayhew;

Peters), informed as they tend to be by the evolution and amplified use of information

and communications technologies, have been particularly concerned with the mediation

processes highlighted above. However, while most contemporary analyses of the concept

of public opinion do seem to regard the changed nature of communication and media –

particularly since the emergence of the Internet-- as having altered the processes by

which public opinion may be formed, assessed, or asserted, their appraisals of the

implications of these alterations differ widely. For instance Habermas, to whom we shall

return later in the chapter, mentions concerns about a certain regression of the public

sphere in our age to "a field for the competition of interests" increasingly dominated by

large organizations and penetrated by political authorities,[87] and the fear therefore of an

increasingly passive "refeudalized"[88] public. Thompson on the contrary suggests that:

> The development of mass communication has created new
> opportunities for the production and diffusion of images and
> messages, opportunities which exist on a scale and are executed in a
> manner that precludes any serious comparison with the theatrical
> practices of feudal courts.[89]

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[86] Peters. (2001) p. 100

[87] Habermas. (1974) p. 54

[88] Habermas. (1995) p. 201

[89] Thompson. (1990) p. 115

While there has been an undeniable "mediatization of politics" –to use Thompson's term—in the past fifty years, the more optimistic thinkers argue that although new communication technologies may have increased tremendously the visibility and reach of political leaders, they have also, conversely, severely limited their control of information flow and encouraged, therefore, autonomy and engagement in audiences. These considerations are of direct consequence to the conceptualization of public diplomacy. In "Public Opinion and Power," Wyne maintains, for example, that since the 1970s, the rise of globalization and the communications revolution have "empowered the global public to analyze...policy independently and conclusively."[90] From this standpoint, contemporary public diplomacy efforts would not just indicate, therefore, a desire to decisively mould foreign public opinion, but also, and more significantly, an acknowledgement of the international public as a rising force, as in Patrick Tyler's somewhat hyperbolic declaration in the New York Times that "there may still be two superpowers on the planet: The United States and world public opinion."[91] It is a viewpoint that is not, needless to say, without its many critics who warn of the potential dilution of people's power in the fragmented diversity of new media, the replacement of meaningful two-way discussion based on argument by a "rhetoric of presentation" that relies on "profoundly anti-discursive techniques that devalue high levels of information as confusing and dangerous,"[92] and the increasingly surreptitious –

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[90] See Wyne. (2009) p. 40

[91] Tyler. (2003) p. A1

[92] Mayhew. (1997) p. 269

and therefore less apt to be resisted—methods of elite domination. In Mayhew and

Ginsberg's view, "the new public" is then, more than ever, a "captive public."[93] In this

context, it must be noted that the debate about public opinion interlocks with theories of

the "information age". These conflicting stances as to the consequences of technological

advances in communication on the public –and hence, on public opinion-- will be

analyzed therefore in greater depth in Chapter IV. Enthusiastic and alarmist

contemporary discourses on the issue both, however, appear to converge to cast public

opinion not just as a form of representation –be it accurate or flawed, unified or

fragmented, statistical or normative—but, as Hardt and Negri put it, as "a *field of conflict*

defined by relations of power,"[94] in which a variety of players intervene.

III- THE FUNCTION OF PUBLIC OPINION IN POLITICAL AFFAIRS: AN ENDURING DEBATE

A fundamental debate has accompanied the notion of public opinion from its very

inception, namely the issue of whether -and to what extent- the mass public should in fact

have a role in the affairs of government. It is an issue that the mere adoption of

democracy does not entirely settle, for, as we discussed earlier, while in theory and

etymology a "government by the people," democracy remains, in its application, a

necessarily and variously incomplete – sometimes even, as Held notes, simply reduced to

"a vote on periodic occasions"--phenomenon. The matter is essentially a normative one,

and therefore not of primary relevance to our overarching topic which is more concerned

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[93] See Ginsberg. (1986); Mayhew. (1997).

[94] Hardt & Negri. (2004) p. 263

with the function public opinion does actually hold in contemporary political affairs rather than the one it *ought* to have. Yet, while adjudicating this question is not a concern of this thesis, the general debate remains an essential facet of the study of public opinion that is too elemental to be entirely overlooked, particularly as it also somewhat parallels the ongoing debate about the role of contemporary public diplomacy (as an instrument of influence vs. a means of exchange) which we analysed in the previous chapter.

The fundamentals of the debate have barely shifted since Plato and Aristotle first reflected upon it. Splichal sums it up succinctly when he notes, "Within public opinion, two different strands are ceaselessly interwoven: public usage and the authority of reason, and contingency, ignorance, and faulty reasoning."[95] As we shall not probe too deeply the nuances and intricacies of the argument since antiquity, it might be suitably expedient to distil the debate, as Sherry Ferguson does, into three major viewpoints: the optimistic, the pessimistic, and the pragmatic.[96]

The "optimists," who could be said to follow in Aristotle's lineage, have strong faith in the ability of people to participate in government. They may not all go as far as Rousseau in defining the "general will" of the people as "always right and [tending] always to the public advantage,"[97] they might even, as Dewey did, bemoan the public's frequent lack of sufficient resources to communicate effectively and meaningfully, but they do see public opinion as having a critical role to play in political life, be it at the

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[95] Splichal. (1999) p. 22

[96] Ferguson, S. E. (2000) p. 6

[97] Rousseau. (1968) p. 124

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national or, as is the case with considerations of public diplomacy, the international level. In the latter case, this perspective is clearly echoed by the proponents of a "new public diplomacy" of engagement and reciprocity which we examined earlier.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the "pessimists" (Plato, Hobbes, Tocqueville, Lippmann, to name but a few historical examples) exhibit strong misgivings about the potential of the average citizen to contribute profitably to the affairs of state. This could arguably lead them to dismiss therefore at the outset the very utility of the concept of public diplomacy. Their reservations, however, arise from very different considerations. For Hobbes for instance, public opinion –had the actual term existed in his day-- would be little more than selfish opinion. Although he does concede in *Leviathan* that some form of public consent is a prerequisite to the "social contract" that legitimates the *initial* handing of power to a sovereign authority, its role, he seems to imply, should end at that. Hobbes' view of humanity as essentially self-seeking calls for absolute political dominion to restrain the basic impulses of citizens and ensure peace.[98] Tocqueville, on the other hand, exposes what he views as the dangers of the "tyranny of the majority" and of its oppressive effects.[99] Lippmann, not unlike Plato in *The Republic*, prefers to insist on the public's inherent ignorance, its lack of competence, arguing that the political world is "out of reach, out of sight, out of mind"[100] to the "bewildered herd"[101] of average citizens

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[98] See Hobbes. (2008)

[99] See Tocqueville. (1863)

[100] Lippmann. (1960) p. 29

[101] Lippmann . (1925) p. 155

who are therefore condemned to form inevitably misleading ideas from sorely incomplete accounts, filtering all they see and hear through their own prejudices and fears.

Lippmann's unenthusiastic view of citizen participation prompted a famous debate with John Dewey in 1922 in the wake of the publication of Lippmann's *Public Opinion* which Dewey called "perhaps the most effective indictment of democracy ever penned."[102] Their argument may in fact be conceived as a modern rendering of the classical debate offered by Plato's and Aristotle's writings, with Lippmann closer in spirit to the former, and Dewey defending the more hopeful Aristotelian stance. In his response to Lippmann, first in a review in the *New Republic*, and later in his book *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey insisted that it was essential democracy not be confined to "enlightened administrators" or insiders, lest it become hostage to private interests. And though he recognized the public's need for better organization and education, he maintained great faith in the its capacity to learn to govern himself: "it is not necessary that the many should have the knowledge and skill to carry on the needed investigations; what is required is that they have the ability to judge the bearing of the knowledge supplied by others upon common concerns."[103]

In his declaration that "The making of one general will out of a multitude of general wishes is not an Hegelian mystery...but an art well known to leaders, politicians,

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[102] Qtd. in Alterman. (1999) See http://facstaff.uww.edu/mohanp/357week4.html

[103] Dewey. (1991) p. 365

and steering committees,"[104] Lippmann is also concerned about the public's susceptibility to persuasion:

> The creation of consent is not a new art. It is a very old one which was supposed to have died out with the appearance of democracy. But it has not died out. It has, in fact, improved enormously in technic...Persuasion has become a self-conscious art and a regular organ of popular government.[105]

Another continuing cause for concern about public opinion goes beyond qualms about persuasion efforts emanating from government and opinion makers –which still leave marginal room for a potential two-way exchange— focusing instead on what Ginsberg calls "the domestication of mass belief," the increased passivity of the public caused by its surreptitious domination by the dominant interests of the political, economic, or media elites. Herman and Chomsky, who famously stated that instead of producing consensus, the media merely yield "consent," have perhaps brought this issue to light most prominently. These concerns have been particularly heightened in a contemporary political environment dominated by the media, new information technologies, and what Mayhew sees as "the rationalization of public persuasion and its consequent domination professional communicators" (an issue that will be taken up in the next section of this chapter,) As a result, he argues, "public opinion loses its social moorings; it becomes less organized by social groups that create and transmit public views and more affected by what market research determines to be hot-button appeals."[106] Habermas reaches similar conclusions when he examines the mechanisms of

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[104] Lippmann. (1925) p. 47

[105] Lippmann. (1960) p. 248

[106] Mayhew. (1997) p. 4

political consensus formation in modern democratic nations, such as polling and electoral

campaigns, and argues that though they may ensure a modicum of pressure on

governments, they ultimately do not promote, and may even suppress, the rational

popular discussion characteristic of a true public sphere.[107] Ginsberg echoes these

observations as he contends that electoral democracy has turned the traditionally

challenging relationship between the people and their government into one of

dependence:

> With the development of electoral institutions, the expression of
> mass opinion becomes less disruptive; when citizens began to see
> governments as a source of benefits, opinion became fundamentally
> less hostile to central authority...in short, western regimes converted
> mass opinion from a hostile, unpredictable, and often disruptive force
> into a less dangerous and more tractable phenomenon.[108]

It is perhaps a certain mindfulness of the variety of issues raised by the more

"pessimistic" appraisals of public opinion's ultimate value which we have here briefly

sampled, coupled with the more practical concerns of government survival in democratic

regimes, which leads some thinkers and many politicians to opt for midway stance of

sorts, between optimism and pessimism, which may be termed "pragmatic." Though not

particularly confident of the worth --or desirability-- of citizens' contribution to political

decision-making, the pragmatic outlook nevertheless reckons that elected leaders cannot

afford to ignore them. Hegel, for instance, notes that in spite of it containing "all kinds of

falsities," public opinion yields "great power"[109] that must be taken into consideration.

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[107] Habermas. (1989) p. 211-22

[108] Ginsberg. (1986) p. 58

[109] Hegel. (1952) p. 149

Citizen engagement may be viewed in this case, as Ferguson puts it, as a "necessary evil."[110] True to the spirit of Machiavelli, these "pragmatists" (who, in the 20th century, have in fact been influenced by the Pragmatism of Mead, Cooley, and once again Dewey) espouse the view that in order to stay in power, rulers must either manipulate or accommodate public opinion. It is therefore not entirely unreasonable to surmise that if, as mentioned earlier, the "optimistic" outlook can be seen to infuse much of the *theorizing* about a "new public diplomacy" predicated, as we saw Fitzpatrick arguing for in the previous chapter, on genuine engagement rather than the wielding of power, the pragmatic outlook, on the other hand, may perhaps be the one which, at the end of the day, still generally inspires the public diplomacy endeavours of governments.

IV- INFLUENCING PUBLIC OPINION

The idea of public opinion since the Enlightenment may be inextricably linked to such venerable concepts as the rule of law and democracy, but in practical terms, it is also unavoidably entwined with the more functional notion of publicity. Let us note at the outset that "publicity" should be not be understood here solely in the narrow terms of advertising with which it has come to be equated (although advertising is most certainly one of its components) but as the general array of resources aimed at gaining public attention or support. As such, it must therefore be viewed in essence as a morally neutral practice, although its applications may range from the loftily educative to the more malignantly propagandistic. It need not necessarily, therefore, be accorded the grim

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[110] Ferguson, S. D. (2000) p. 5

contemporary functions Habermas ascribes to it in *The Structural Transformation of the*

Public Sphere:

> At one time publicity had to be gained in opposition to the secret
> politics of the monarch; it sought to subject person or issue to
> rational-critical debate and to render public decisions subject to
> review at the court of public opinion. Today, on the contrary,
> publicity is achieved with the help of the secret politics of interest
> groups; it earns public prestige for a person or issue and thereby
> renders it ready for acclamatory assent in a climate of nonpublic
> opinion.[111]

Publicity can certainly be a means of anaesthetizing the vitality of public opinion.

On the other hand, it can also prove instrumental in the formation and dissemination of

oppositional discourse. As Andrew Barry notes, it is essential to distinguish "between

those forms of publicity which direct, restrict and close, and those which open up and

destabilize the space of politics, whether in a creative or destructive way."[112] Publicity is,

in other words, the mediating organ which, to quote Hegel, "stands between the

government in general on the one hand and the nation broken up into particulars on the

other."[113]

It is true that political leaders may occasionally address the public directly –in

town hall meetings or televized speeches for example. Most of the time, however, they

rely on a complex apparatus of professional intermediaries (which, in today's conditions

of increasing "technicization" [114] includes not only the media and public relations

officers, but also political consultants, campaign managers, lobbyists, and think tanks) to

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[111] Habermas. (1995) p. 201

[112] Barry. (2001) p. 179

[113] Hegel. (1952) pp. 203-204

[114] Mayhew. (1997) p. 118

communicate with the public, and more importantly, to influence it so as to enlist its support.

The issue of influence in the formation of public opinion intersects with the general theme of political power –an intersection which is, needless to say, very much the origin of the idea of soft power. In this respect, governments have three principal ways to tame public opinion and cultivate supportive cohesion amongst their citizens (or, in the case of public diplomacy, those of another country). The first two are, obviously enough, to quote Lippmann, "patronage and pork" (i.e. inducement by reward or payment) and "government by terror and obedience"[115] (i.e. coercion by threat). They mirror Galbraith's classification in *The Anatomy of Power*, when he refers to "compensatory" and "condign"[116] power. They are by and large direct forms of power, necessitating no mediating organ, and though inevitably employed, remain, in essence, at odds with the ideals of democracy, and hence of lesser importance to this study. It is in the third and more indirect form of power, generally referred to as "influence" and particularly associated with modern democracies, that publicity comes to assume a prominent role.

"Influence," in this context, refers to affecting the actions of others by means of persuasion. Galbraith calls it "conditioned"[117] power. Lippmann describes it as "government based on such a highly developed system of information, analysis and self-consciousness that the knowledge of national circumstances and reasons of state becomes

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[115] Lippmann. (1960) p. 292

[116] Galbraith. (1983) pp. 4-6 & 14-24

[117] *Ibid*. pp. 24-37

evident to all men"[118]. It is important to note that this persuasion need not necessarily be based on rational argument. Mayhew points out that influence, "which once meant swaying by persuasive argument or by invoking trust"[119] now aspires to more than particular acts of persuasion, aiming to build, instead, a "*generalized* capacity to persuade,"[120] somewhat akin in that sense to Wolfers' idea of a "milieu goal"[121] mentioned in the previous chapter.

An examination of the principal means of government influence on public opinion must necessarily take into account the elemental question of the manipulability of public opinion, the extent of the public's passivity and activity. There is wide divergence on the matter, and while it is unlikely to be resolved in any definitive way, it is probably safe – and sufficient for our immediate purposes—to assume that the answer lies, as Bernays phrased it, in some "middle ground between the hypothesis that the public is stubborn and the hypothesis that the public is malleable,"[122] or, as Hardt and Negri more recently put it, "between the naive utopianism of objective information and rational individual expression and the cynical apocalypticism of mass social control."[123]

In their attempt to sway public opinion, governments today rely on two chief organs: the complex of public communication professionals and the media. In fact, as

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[118] Lippmann. (1960) p. 293

[119] Mayhew. (1997) p. 51

[120] Mayhew. (1997) p. 18

[121] Wolfers. (1962) p. 86

[122] Bernays. (1923) p. 87

[123] Hardt & Negri. (2004) p. 263

public communication professionals rely to a large extent -- though not exclusively-- on the use of media channels in their work, they may generally be seen as mediating agents of sorts between the administration and the media. This is not to say that the media –at least in an environment endowed with a modicum of press freedom— solely exits as a vehicle of government opinion. There is, as Entman notes, strong journalistic motivation to include "oppositional readings" of state policy and therefore attempt to influence public opinion in a direction that is at odds with, or at least independent from, the administration's.[124] Nevertheless, while the news media may not count on –or even, depending on the outlet, wish for—the government to provide content, the government, on the other hand, is largely dependent on it for the dissemination of its views. As a result, studies of government impact on the public mind, and academic debates as to its efficacy and ethicality, have focused primarily on media-effects. We will examine these in greater detail in this section. First, however, we must look at the evolution of this professional communication complex which has become, it seems, so central to political life.

Expert public communication is not a recent invention. As Lord notes, "even before the advent of mass communications or press secretaries, leaders frequently looked to others to project a desired message or image. Patronage of poets and artists might simply gratify a prince's vanity, but it also served a highly practical purpose."[125] Neither, incidentally, is the critique of the potentially unethical or disingenuous methods

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[124] Entman. (2004) p. 18

[125] Lord. (2003) p. 185

employed in such endeavours a particularly novel phenomenon. It originated, in Western

thought at least, with Socrates' recurrent attacks on the teachers of rhetoric in *The*

Republic or the *Gorgias*. Nevertheless, while evidence of the practice may be scattered

throughout history, public communication only emerged –and blossomed—in its modern,

exceptionally systematized, and professionalized form in the twentieth century.

Mayhew deems advances in advertising and market research to be "the root from

which the complex grew,"[126] at the turn of the twentieth century. By the 1920s, however,

developing specialists in the field, spearheaded by Edward Bernays and Ivy Lee, sought a

new name to professionalize their work, a label less tainted by the association with

commercial advertising than "publicity," They began to promote the term "public

relations." Bernays and Lee –who remain the two principal contenders for the title of

"founder of public relations"—were very much influenced, in their respective visions of

the future profession, by their wartime experience, the former at the CPI under Creel's

direction, and the latter working for John Rockefeller and also serving as publicity

director of the American Red Cross.[127] In 1919, Bernays and his wife, Doris Fleischman,

opened in New York what is generally agreed to be the first modern public relations firm.

The firm advertised itself as "Edward Bernays, Counsel on Public Relations." Bernays

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[126] Mayhew. (1997) p. 191

[127] Lee's experience, in fact, went back further than World War I. By 1905, he had already established, with George Parker, his own "communications" agency, Parker and Lee, whose slogan promised "Accuracy, Authenticity and Interest." As a matter of anecdote, he is also credited for creating the first modern press release. In 1906, when his client, the Pennsylvania Railroad, found itself involved in a fatal accident, Lee convinced the railroad company not only to issue a public statement, but also to provide a special train to carry reporters to the scene.

defined the "public relations counsel" as "the pleader to the public of a point of view"[128]

(It is interesting to note, in passing, the choice of the word "pleader" which connotes

reason and argument), adding :

> It is time that more people, especially group leaders and opinion
> molders, had a clear conception of the real meaning, scope, and aim of
> public relations. Public relations does not concern itself primarily with
> selling something to somebody or advertising something to someone.
> It is a field of theory and practice dealing with the relationships of
> people to the society on which they are dependent for their
> maintenance and growth.
> We live in a pluralistic society. There are many interests...But in the
> flux of a democratic society there are maladjustments between
> individuals and groups, on the one hand, and society as a whole on the
> other.
> In this society, public relations has emerged as a form of social
> statesmanship[129]

It is tempting, at first glance, to scoff at such a noble mission ascribed to public

relations. Lippmann too, for instance, argued for the need to manage the chaotic flux of

modern society in order for individuals to make sense of it, but he maintained a pragmatic

and generally uni-directional view of its purpose, a far cry from the hyperbolic idea of it

as "social statesman." Bernays' passionate argument does however reflect, if not the

actual practice of public relations at that time, at least a genuine desire for a licensed

recognition of its activities. Despite the phenomenally rapid expansion of the field,

however, officialized professional recognition would take several few decades to

materialize. For instance, The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) --to this day

the largest organization of public relations professionals-- was only chartered in 1947. Its

British counterpart, the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) was created soon

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[128] Bernays. (1923) p. 57

[129] Bernays. (1963) p. 122-123

after in 1948, the same year as the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS). By1955, the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) had been established.

Lee's inceptive conceptualization of public relations was, in theory at least, rather idealistic in purpose. He was a self-professed advocate of honesty and full disclosure, enthused perhaps by his work during the war effort to promote the Red Cross and by the Wilsonian belief that "the state is a beneficent organ of society capable of harmonizing individual rights with public duties."[130] Bernays, on the other hand, and despite such lofty remarks on the practice as the one quoted above, was, if not entirely insincere, certainly more pragmatic. At his most mindful of ethical considerations, he reasons that "Freedom of speech and its democratic corollary, a free press, have tacitly expanded our Bill of Rights to include the right of persuasion;"[131] at his most ruthless, he is bold enough to declare that "Propaganda is the executive arm of the invisible government."[132] Still, he repeatedly insists on the fundamental difference, in principle at least, between advertising and public relations: "Publicity is a one-way-street; public relations, a two-way street."[133] Public relations emerges therefore as a threefold activity which includes information, persuasion, and ideally, the attempt to reciprocally integrate the views of the public and those of the institution on whose behalf it is employed.

The development and professionalization of public relations from the 1920s onwards marks a turning point in the history of influence. From then on, persuasion

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[130] Hiebert. (1966) pp.22-23

[131] Bernays. (1963) p. 158

[132] Bernays. (1928) p. 19

[133] Bernays. (1963) p. 5

becomes the field of increasingly specialized experts. Political advising may be "as old as politics," but contemporary political consulting and campaign management are a direct outgrowth of "the rationalization of the practice of public relations"[134] and the "technicizing of the methods of influence"[135] developed in advertising and market research. This intensified "technicizing" of the field is accompanied by a further "technologization" of it arising from the concurrent expansion of mass media, especially since the advent of television, resulting in the rise of media-based political communications.[136] The media (be it mass media, or more recently also, new media) has therefore come to be the principal vehicle of the strategies of public-opinion shaping devised by the new class of ever-more professionalized experts. Consequently, the ultimate impact of these strategies on the public remains highly contingent on the impact of the media on the audience.

In the early years of radio and film, as scholars and politicians still grappled with the implications of the new forms of mass media, the impulse was strong to conclude that the new means of mass communications had powerful, direct and predictable effects on their audience. The Payne Fund Studies --carried out between 1929 and 1932, and the first major attempt to rigorously study media effects, although the extent of that rigour was later called into question-- examined the impact of movies on children audiences and concluded that films had a direct influence on them, ranging from learning and emotional

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[134] Mayhew. (1997) p. 209

[135] *Ibid*. p. 118

[136] *Ibid*. p. 143

stimulation to behavioural change. Although, according to DeFleur and Lowery, the studies received scholarly criticism for their "lack of control groups, problems in sampling, shortcomings in measurement, and other difficulties that placed technical limitations on their conclusions,"[137] they nevertheless encouraged this initial impulse to overstress media effects. The mass hysteria provoked by the 1938 radio broadcast of Orson Welles' *War of the Worlds*, appeared to further confirm these initial inklings. Often referred to as the "hypodermic" model, this early theorizing on media effects (which as Gitlin points out was also a theory of society in its equation of "society" with "mass society") perceived mass communications as "inject[ors] of ideas, attitudes, and dispositions towards behaviour into passive, atomized, extremely vulnerable individuals."[138] This arguably naive, monolithic view of media influence has been largely revised since, and although no consensus appears near, academic views, as we shall see in the remainder of this section, have since be inclined to position themselves along a continuum which generally regards media effects as –more or less—limited, indirect and not entirely predictable.

Curiously, it was the very curiosity generated by the popular reaction to Welles' radio stunt which led to a revision of the media as "hypodermic needle" thesis and a shift to theories of *indirect* influence. In his 1940 study of audience reactions to the *War of the Worlds* broadcast, *The Invasion from Mars: A Study in the Psychology of Panic*, Hadley Cantril was one of the first to posit the hypothesis that audience reaction to media was

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[137] DeFleur & Lowery. (1995) p. 382

[138] Gitlin. (1978) p. 210

influenced by variety of contextual factors such as age, background, and education.[139] It is perhaps interesting to note, as a telling aside, that Cantril was also a founding editor, in 1937, of the journal *Public Opinion Quarterly* initially sponsored by Princeton's School of Public and International Affairs, a fact that reveals an explicit and early keenness to marry concerns about public opinion with matters of foreign affairs in a modern perspective which, decades later, would produce the notion of public diplomacy. Meanwhile it may be argued –with some degree of irony, for legend has it that the two Princeton colleagues had little respect for one another-- [140] that Cantril's findings foreshadow several of Lazarsfeld's subsequent conclusions about the power of the media.

Lazarsfeld, as the director of the Radio Project at Princeton since 1937, had also closely monitored the impact of the Welles broadcast. However, it was his 1944 investigation (for the Bureau of Applied Research in connection with Columbia University this time) into the voting patterns in Erie County during the 1940 presidential election, in which he uncovered that people mainly decided who to vote for on the basis of interpersonal influence from family or peers, which led him to develop the "two-step flow" communication hypothesis and conclude that: "Ideas often flow from radio and print to the opinion leaders and from them to the less active sections of the population."[141] *The People's Choice*, the book which resulted from the study, helped establish the specialty of political communication and ushered in a new scholarly era of

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[139] See Cantril. (1940)

[140] See Park. (2008)

[141] Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet. (1948) p. 151

the minimal effects of mass media. In his later work, Lazarsfeld sought further understanding of the two-step flow, particularly of the various interpersonal exchanges involved. In the 1955 *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications*, co-authored with Elihu Katz, he noted the two-step flow became more complex and therefore less predictable when "cross-pressures"[142] were present, that is when various group affiliations submit the individual to conflicting opinions and guidelines.

Lazarsfeld's concept of the two-step flow served as a starting point for many subsequent studies, a number of which focused on further stratification of the process. Everett Rogers' 1962 *Communication of Innovations* was instrumental in strengthening the idea of that the communication flow in fact "trickled down" through *multiple* layers of opinion makers and leaders.[143] Later, in the early 1980s, Noelle-Neumann's *The Spiral of Silence*, proposed a complementary more 'horizontal' model of inter-personal influence, acknowledgedly inspired in part by Tocqueville's early misgivings about the tyranny of the majority, arguing that people have a "quasi-statistical sense"[144] which allows them to gauge the opinions of the people around them and adjust their opinions, or at least their expressions of them, accordingly for fear of being cast aside:

> The fear of isolation seems to be the force that sets the spiral of silence
> in motion. To run with the pack is a relatively happy state of affairs;
> but if you can't, because you won't share publically in what seems to

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[142] Lazarsfeld. (1948) p. 283

[143] See Rogers. (1971)

[144] Noelle-Neumann. (1984) p. 202

be a universally acclaimed conviction, you can at least remain silent, as a second choice, so that others can put up with you.[145]

Meanwhile, the increasingly indirect view of media effects progressively reconceptualized the audience as active and involved. As early as 1948, Harold Lasswell (who, along with Lazarsfeld, is considered to be one of the founders of quantitative mass communication research) began focusing his study of media effects on people's motivations in their use of media. As this line of inquiry developed, it became known as the "uses and gratification" perspective,[146] a perspective summed up by Rubin as anchored in the dual conviction that "media selection and use is goal-directed, purposive and motivated" and that "people are typically more influential than the media in the relationship."[147]

This thesis was echoed, and pushed even further by the "revisionist" movement in media studies that emerged in Britain in the 1980s. Led by thinkers such as James Curran and David Morley (whose notable 1980 study of reactions to two *Nationwide* programs, *The Nationwide Audience*, is regarded as ushering in the movement), it argued that the audience was not just active in its seeking media to fulfil various personal uses and gratifications, but also, more crucially, as a "producer of meaning."[148] This "revisionist" approach was also influenced by Stuart Hall's seminal "Encoding/Decoding" (1973) model of mass communication which decisively rejected textual determinism and argued

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[145] Noelle-Neumann. (1984) p. 5

[146] See Rubin, A. (1994)

[147] *Ibid*. (1994) p. 420

[148] Curran. (2002) p. 115

that "decodings do not follow inevitably from encodings."[149] David Morley explicitly

acknowledged the debt by employing the model in his *Nationwide* study, although he also

insisted that he did not share the social determinist position that decoding was a direct

function of social class.[150]

It is interesting to note, however, that while this new revisionism in the study of

the relationship between media and the audience presented itself as "an emancipatory

movement that was throwing off the shackles of tradition,"[151] it was also, in fact, very

much a continuation of the tradition began in the 1940s by Cantril, Lazarsfeld and

Lasswell, of exploring the independence and autonomy of the audience. Curran who had

earlier proclaimed that "the repudiation of totalizing, explanatory frameworks, the

reconceptualization of the audience as creative and active...A sea change has occurred in

the field, and this will reshape –for better or worse—the development of media and

cultural studies in Europe,"[152] offers a serious reappraisal of that claim in the more recent

Media and Power (2002) where he acknowledges that effects research in the 1940s had in

fact developed "many of the same insights that were proclaimed afresh in 1980s

'reception' studies, even if this earlier tradition used a different technical language and

deployed a more simple understanding of meaning:"[153]

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[149] Hall, S. (1980) p. 136

[150] Morley (1980) pp. 133-134

[151] Curran. (2002) p. 107

[152] Curran. (1996) p. 272

[153] *Ibid*. p. 116

The 'effects' tradition thus prefigures revisionist arguments by documenting the multiple meanings generated by texts, the active and creative role of audiences and the ways in which different socially embedded values and beliefs influenced audience responses. In short, the research of the new revisionists is only startling and innovative from a foreshortened perspective of communications research in which the year AD begins with textual analyses of film and television programmes in the journal *Screen*, and everything before that is shrouded in the eddying mists of time...

This said, the revisionist approach taken as a whole represented at one level an advance...It offered a much richer and fuller understanding of interdiscursive processes in audience reception...But reception analysis also represented at another level a backward step in its reluctance to quantify and its over-reliance on the loose concept of 'decoding,' which some researchers in the effects tradition more usefully differentiated analytically in terms of attention, comprehension, evaluation and retention.[154]

Although they do emphasize the active involvement of the audience, Morley, Curran, and the so-called "revisionists" in general still point out that though active, the audience is not necessarily fully in control of media effects. Societal and cultural factors can predispose the audience to be more or less receptive to media content.[155] They advocate therefore a model of "selective reinforcement" of which Joseph Klapper (1960), himself a student of Lazarsfeld, was an early proponent. Though instructive, the idea of selective reinforcement should nevertheless be viewed critically, lest it becomes a model of "sterile circularity in which the media (or elements of mediated communication) and audiences are locked into a perpetual cycle of reinforcement, the outcome of which is merely the fortification of existing beliefs and patterns of behaviour."[156] How then can

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[154] Curran. (2002) pp. 118-119

[155] See Morley. (1996)

[156] Curran. (2002) p. 160

the media effect change through selective reinforcement which hinges predominantly on pre-existing attitudes and values?

In his examination of public campaigns on issues such as smoking, alcohol consumption and HIV, Perloff notes that the most successful ones were those that best understood the beliefs and needs of their audience, particularly when they targeted those "beliefs that are most susceptible to change."[157] Curran lists three principal strategies of successful persuasion within the framework of selective reinforcement: the activation of latent beliefs that may lay dormant, the "recanalization" of existing attitudes in a different direction, and, since as we noted earlier, people are more often than not subject to "cross-influences," the reinforcement of "an opposed view held simultaneously by the same person."[158]

Selective reinforcement can be placed, once again, in the continuation of Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet's initial findings about media use being primarily a source of reinforcement of pre-existing beliefs in election campaigns.[159] Excessive reliance on the idea of reinforcement can however divert attention from a significant aspect of media power which remains unaffected by it, namely, the creation of opinion on an issue where none existed before. As Klapper himself notes in a later work:

> Reinforcement and conversion can, of course, occur only where there
> is an opinion to reinforce or oppose. It cannot occur in the absence of
> opinion. Although there has been relatively little research on the
> subject, the media appear to be extremely effective in creating
> opinions on new issues....In such a situation the audiences have no

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[157] Perloff. (2008) p. 339

[158] Curran. (2002) p. 160

[159] See Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet. (1948)

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existing opinions to be guarded by the conscious or subconscious play of selective exposure, selective retention or selective perception. Their reference groups are likewise without opinion, and opinion leaders are not yet ready to lead. In short, the factors that ordinarily render mass communications an agent of reinforcement are inoperative, and the media are thus able to work directly upon their audiences.[160]

In recent times, the structural changes brought about by the advent of the Internet and the "global information era" it ushered in have forced a certain reappraisal of the possibilities and processes of media influence. Livingstone offers a succinct and effective description of the situation:

New media, and new forms and flows of information, raise new questions about the fragmentation of the hitherto mass audience, globalization of the hitherto national audience, interactivity for the hitherto passive audience.[161]

Such considerations will be central to our discussion of the information age in Chapter IV and we shall not, therefore, dwell upon them extensively at this stage. In terms of media effects and the interplay of selective reinforcements between media and audience however, the development of the Internet appears, at first glance, to have encouraged arguments about a certain increase of audience agency, at least in the sense that as a direct result of the exponential multiplication of media options, "the user plays a much greater role, and exposure is much more specialized and individualized."[162] As we shall explore more thoroughly in the following section, this alleged "scattering of the mass audience"[163] in search of personally tailored forms of media content, however, has

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[160] Klapper. (1968) p. 85

[161] Livingstone. (1998) p. 248-249

[162] McLeod, Kosicki & McLeod. (2008) p. 221

[163] *Ibid*. (2009) p. 251. See also Debatin. (2008)

consequences that may be regarded as both empowering and limiting, be it for would-be

opinion-shapers or for their addressees. It also carries the potential to significantly

undermine centralized attempts at mass opinion manipulation, including, as Arsenault

noted in the previous chapter, traditional *mass-media* based public diplomacy

endeavours. Indeed, as McLeod, Kosicki & McLeod argue, the audience's ability to

increasingly determine the kind of content it wishes to expose itself to might to a certain

extent bolster its autonomy, but will also generally prompt it to avoid diverse viewpoints

or conflicting perspectives, therefore limiting it to "narrowly focused sources of

information that is consistent with their own point of view."[164] In that respect,

reinforcement remains therefore more central than ever to the process of media influence,

but the latter's capacity to actually produce *change* in audience opinion, to convert

viewers or readers with differing viewpoints –an ability that is pivotal to the effectiveness

of public diplomacy-- could also, as a result, become severely curtailed.

In looking at the general evolution of media effects theory in the second half of

the twentieth century, there is no denying that Lazarsfeld and his –more or less faithful—

followers have come to dominate the field, focusing increasingly on the interpretative

processes of audiences while downplaying the command of media. As Roger Brown has

stressed, however, the development of mass media theory must be understood as a

historical process. The evolution of a certain theory is shaped by the theories which

preceded it and which it might aim to supersede (in this case, the initial "hypodermic"

model), and its successes in securing widespread adoption are therefore contingent on

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[164] *Ibid*. (2008) p. 222

both the existing social reality and the prevailing ideological/theoretical climate into which it is introduced. [165]

Todd Gitlin has vehemently argued that the decades of "domination" of media studies by the Lazarsfeld-inspired paradigm of "relative powerlessness of the broadcasters" reflected a more general –and in his view, critically problematic—trend towards a conception of power, inspired by behaviorism and pluralism, as "specific, measurable, short-term, individual 'effects.'"[166] As a result,

> The dominant paradigm in media sociology has highlighted the recalcitrance of audiences, their resistance to media-generated messages, and not their dependency, their acquiescence, their gullibility. It has looked to "effects of broadcast programming in a specifically behaviorist fashion, defining "effects" so narrowly, microscopically, and directly as to make it very likely that survey studies could show only slight effects at most...
> In the process of amassing its impressive bulk of empirical findings, the field of mass media research has also perforce been certifying as normal precisely what it might have been investigating as problematic, namely the vast reach and scope of the instruments of mass broadcasting.[167]

This general model of minimal media effects had not been entirely without its critics however. Noelle-Neumann notably attempted to break with this tradition in her 1973 paper "Return to the Concept of Powerful Media Effects," arguing that it failed to take into account the less directly observable, but no less powerful, ways in which media could influence public opinion, in particular its cumulative effects over time and its

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[165] See Brown, Roger. (1970)

[166] Gitlin (1978) p. 224

[167] *Ibid*. pp. 205-6

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capacity to significantly shape, perhaps not discreet opinions, but the general *climate* of opinion.[168]

Offering a corrective of sorts to the Lazarsfeld-inspired "dominant paradigm," and a counterpoint therefore to the proliferating academic literature on audience empowerment, the "social constructionist" approach has, beginning in the late 1960s, attempted to shift the pendulum of power back into the media camp, focusing its analysis not so much on media's power to tell us exactly what to think on a particular topic (an issue on which they tend to align themselves with the generally agreed-upon view that the process is a heavily negotiated one), but rather, on the far more insidious –and successful—processes through which the media creates a certain environment which, to use Bernard Cohen's words, "tells us what to think *about*."[169]

Constructionists are therefore concerned with the larger, more general, collective aspect of media impact, keen on demonstrating, to quote Livingstone, "how micro-level processes of audience reception are of importance to macro-level societal and cultural processes."[170] Consequently, they devote particular attention to the more covert mechanisms through which the media fulfils what Lippmann saw as its primordial function when he wrote that "to traverse the world men must have *maps* of the world,"[171] or what Peters defines as the reduction of "messes of empirical fact into

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[168] See Noelle-Neumann. (1973)

[169] Cohen, B. (1963) p. 4

[170] Livingstone. (1998) p. 249

[171] Lippmann. (1960) p. 11 (emphasis added)

comprehensible images:"[172] the *construction* of mediated realities. More specifically,

with regards to political life, constructionists will focus on the methods employed by

journalists and their employers "to define normal and abnormal social and political

activity, to say what is politically real and legitimate and what is not... to establish certain

political agendas for social attention and to contain, channel, and exclude others."[173] They

are especially interested, as a result, in the interconnected notions of "framing" (i.e. the

selection of content which necessarily entails the exclusion of some)[174], "agenda-setting"

(i.e. the ability of media to direct attention to certain issues, introduced by McCombs and

Shaw's study of the 1968 US Presidential election which confirmed a strong correlation

between the volume of coverage of an issue and the importance accorded to it by the

audience) and "priming" (i.e. the effects of the content of the media on people's later

behaviour and judgements related to that content, or "the process by which activated

mental constructs can influence how individuals evaluate other concepts and ideas"[175]).

 More recently, the "changes in the political, economic, ideological and

technological environments which shape globalised news culture" [176] have prompted

Brian McNair to rethink the issue of media effects from a fresh angle. In sharp contrast to

Gitlin, the chief body of critical approaches McNair seeks to enfeeble is not the one that

emphasizes the relative autonomy or resistance of audiences, but "the control

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[172] Peters. (2001) p. 87

[173] Gitlin. (1978) p. 205

[174] See Entman. (2004)

[175] Domke, Shah & Wackman. (1998) p. 51

[176] McNair. (2006) p. vii

paradigm...which views capitalist culture in general, and journalism in particular, as a monstrous apparatus bearing down on passive populations of deluded, misguided or manipulated people." He does not, however, reactively swing the pendulum of power back into the audience's camp, but rather, destabilizes it altogether by shifting "the analytic focus from the mechanisms of ideological control and domination to those of anarchy and disruption."[177] In his argument that the contemporary media flows, characterized by rising turbulence, leakiness, heterogeneity and interactivity may be more accurately appreciated by the adoption of a "chaos paradigm,"[178] McNair correlates the matter of public opinion and of its potential manipulation by the media –and therefore the practice of public diplomacy-- with significant aspects of the more current theorizing on the information age which will be the focus of Chapter IV.

This overview of general trends in media-effects research has focused mainly on social determinations and implications, rather than textual analysis. This in part reflects the general orientation of the field in recent decades towards what could be termed "audience theory,"[179] and the accompanying "post-modern" repudiation of any form of textual determinism (although some, such as Livingstone, have been calling for more "balance" between text and audience in media/audience theorizing[180]). But this exclusion was also intentional insofar as in the particular context of this study of evolving conceptualizations of the pliability of public opinion, it was the *relationship* between

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[177] *Ibid*.

[178] *Ibid*. p. 187

[179] Livingstone. (1998) p. 241

[180] Livingstone. (1998) p. 246

audience and discourse rather than the discourse itself which remained of primary relevance to us. Meanwhile, as theories of media-effects and public persuasion must still contend with a large and, as McNair argues, rising, degree of unpredictability, the counterweighing notion of potential public influence *on* political affairs –itself equally central to the idea of public diplomacy—remains to be examined.

V- PUBLIC OPINION AS POLITICAL FORCE

As we saw when we examined the genealogy of the concept, the notion of public opinion in its modern sense developed during the Enlightenment and is therefore linked, in essence, to the idea of democracy and citizen participation. Its sociologization in the twentieth century and the accompanying expansion of public opinion research (polling, surveying, media monitoring etc) attest to the growing recognition governments have been according it since as a force to be reckoned with. As Bernays wrote in 1925:

> Perhaps the most significant social, political and industrial fact about the present century is the increased attention which is paid to public opinion, not only by individuals, groups or movements that are dependent on public support for their success, but also by men and organizations which until very recently stood aloof from the general public.[181]

Yet while there is little doubt that public opinion has become, as Hardt and Negri note, "the primary form of representation in contemporary societies,"[182] the exact nature and extent of its actual influence remain to be determined. This modest sub-chapter could hardly propose to resolve the matter in any conclusive way, but can merely offer to

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[181] Bernays. (1925) p. 34

[182] Hardt & Negri. (2004) p. 258

explore the broad contours of the topic and highlight some of its more salient points of dissensus. In order to do so, however, and in the absence to date of an exact method to evaluate the actual impact of public opinion on political conduct, we shall occasionally stray from a purely genealogical format, supplementing it with concrete examples drawn from recent current events against which some of the examined theoretical considerations may be weighed.

Even a skeptic such as Lippmann, who had little esteem for the thoughts of the general public, acknowledged that public opinion could exert authority. In his view, however, this authority was restricted by the fact that members of the public could only ever be "the spectators of action."[183] Public opinion, he argued, was not an unprompted expression of opinions so much as an "alignment for or against a proposal"[184] --joining in that sense Bentham's idea of public opinion as a "tribunal"--[185] its power therefore not only indirect but also limited to a preordained debate.

Recent studies on framing and agenda-setting processes have no doubt corroborated and deepened Lippmann's early idea of a "predetermined debate." But is this sufficient grounds to affirm that the power of public opinion remains today as limited –even if limited by different means—as Lippmann observed it to be in 1922?

As we observed earlier, the consequences of the recent revolution in information technology on audience empowerment remain a source of wide disagreement. A certain

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[183] Lippmann. (1925) p. 103

[184] Lippmann. (1925) p. 61

[185] Bentham. (1989) p. 283

increase in audience autonomy may be undeniable, as we argued, in one aspect, from the standpoint of *exposure* to information that is. However, it is also accompanied, as Debatin notes, by a fragmentation of what once was, in an age of more concentrated media offerings, a more monolithic mass audience and a more contained set of issues.[186] The consequences of this fragmentation on the rallying and influencing powers of public opinion have yet to be fully grasped and several of the themes raised below will resurface in our discussion of the information age in Chapter IV.

The latest modernizing processes in information and technology may have heightened the ability of individuals to interpret the world around them, but as Beck and Giddens contend, this gain in control of sorts is offset by conditions of proliferating pluralism and uncertainty.[187] As far as the autonomy of the public is concerned, this situation carries with it prospects both for emancipation and regression. Alarmists argue that the fragmentation may in fact slowly depoliticize audiences, preclude any form of meaningful two-way discourse between individuals and institutions, and weaken the public's ability to join forces on the ground in an influential way.[188] Echoing Postman, Ginsberg for example concludes that the apparent emancipation of the audience in the new "information society" is merely an illusion allowing citizens to "proudly and cheerfully wave their own chains."[189] In their examination of the restructuration of public opinion in contemporary political systems characterized by a "de-centring of ideas and

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[186] Debatin. (2008) pp. 67-68

[187] See Giddens (1990), Beck (1997 & 2005)

[188] See Ginsberg. (1986); May. (2003); Mayhew. (1997); Postman. (1986); Splichal. (1999; 2000).

[189] Ginsberg. (1986) p. 232

outputs about authentic forms of publicness"[190] which they label "postmodern populism,"Axford and Huggins eloquently summarize these cautionary arguments:

> Deluged with reports, figures and predictions, dazed by the welter of leaks, "prebuttals" and rebuttals, and romanced by vague promises of "empowerment," the public is either rendered supine, or capable only of playing back a mirror image of the official line. At best, even where some kind of deliberation is involved, the public are only "judicious spectators"; at worst, public opinion is just an "echo chamber," as V.O. Key, Jr., put it. In either case the democratic process and the quality of democratic life suffer as a result.[191]

A first empirical glance at recent events may appear to belie these pessimistic claims. The successful mobilization of tens of thousands of demonstrators (increasingly through mobile phone messaging and Internet social networking sites) in Teheran in support of the opposition during the June 2009 elections, in Beirut during the 2005 "Cedar Revolution" or in the streets of London, New York and Paris in protest against the looming Iraq War in 2003, seems to point to an organized public opinion of unprecedented strength and a coordination fostered, rather than hampered, by the new and allegedly "fragmenting" technologies. Yet, all these instances also turned out to be striking examples of what Stearns calls "public opinion aborted."[192] The Iranian opposition was crushed. The Lebanese Revolution eventually failed (just as the other so-called "colour-coded revolutions" of the period, the bulk of which occurred in ex-Soviet states such as Ukraine and Georgia). And the Iraq war happened. The impressive weight of public opinion failed to translate into direct influence.

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[190] Axford & Huggins. (1997) p. 5

[191] Axford & Huggins. (2001) pp. 193-4

[192] Stearns. (2005) p. 4

It might however be premature to write off these efforts as "public opinion aborted." Turning once again to recent news events to confront this hypothesis, one might reason that in the case of Iran, Lebanon, and the former Soviet republics, the application of democratic ideals has a chequered history. In the case of the opposition to the Iraq war in the Western democracies, however, one could possibly argue that public opinion did eventually have a certain impact, even if a partial and delayed one, as several of the world leaders who most strongly advocated it (Jose Maria Aznar, Tony Blair, and George W. Bush) eventually lost elections (or in the case of Blair, stepped down in pre-emption to public pressure) in large part due to their association with it. This impact –which though observable is still, to some extent, conjectural insofar as other factors aside from public opinion pressures may also have determined these turn of events-- remains nevertheless incomplete insofar as these countries' involvement in the war has not entirely ended. When it comes to assessing the actual effect of public opinion on the conduct of political affairs, these various examples serve therefore above all to remind us of the array of competing interpretations that may be drawn. The concrete bearing of public opinion on these various events cannot be truly established, but neither, ultimately, can its absolute lack of influence be verified.

It may therefore be a long way before public opinion becomes the world's "new superpower"[193] the *New York Times* proclaimed it to be a few years ago, but it is also much too soon to dismiss it as entirely irrelevant. In fact, as Stearns observes in his study of the impact of world opinion (the transnational form of public opinion) on

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[193] See Tyler. (2003)

contemporary history, in the two hundred or so years since it has come to "matter," public opinion has succeeded as often as it has failed. Some of its notable achievements have been, early on, the anti-slavery campaigns, and more recently its contribution to the ban on nuclear testing, the unseating of the Apartheid regime, and the raised awareness of environmental issues. It has repeatedly failed, however, Stearns notes, when coming up "against a great power resolved to carry on with an offensive policy,"[194] and more generally, and perhaps oddly, in trying to prevent or put an end to war.

Contemporary electronic media may have conceivably fostered a certain segmentation of the mass audience, but, by providing a platform for the proliferation of independent or alternative news outlets, they have also, and perhaps more noticeably, significantly splintered the *flow* of information. Before going any further, it should be noted however that in terms of their attempts at audience manipulation, the distinction between independent and official or corporate media should not be overstressed. As Barry reminds us, independent media can be equally "predictable, exploitative, understanding events only in the terms of their own predetermined 'analysis.'"[195] That being said, the sheer abundance of competing information channels, whether or not it makes for a necessarily more enlightened or empowered audience, has substantially weakened political leaders' command of information flows, threatening therefore their sense of control of the environment. In his 1976 *Unconscious Conspiracy*, Walter Bennis, who pioneered the field of leadership studies, already diagnosed a burgeoning crisis in

[194] Stearns. (2005) p. 191

[195] See Barry. (2001) pp. 187-193

leadership resulting from a fragmentation of power fostered by an increasingly

participatory democracy and the growing power of the media. "Today's leader is often

baffled or frustrated by a new kind of politics which arises from significant interaction

with various government agencies, the court, the media, the consumers, and so on. It is

the politics of maintaining institutional "inner-directedness" and mastery in times of rapid

change,"[196] he observed. Today, as Ferguson notes, the emergence of the Internet, whose

immediacy and interactive potential add a new dimension to participatory democracy, has

furthered leaders' sense of a loss of control:

> The immediacy of new media means that the masses can receive
> information at the same time, or even earlier than authorities...They
> also have access to information that may conflict with (or offer an
> alternative explanation to) "official statements...
> Media professionals detect incipient issues and disseminate discourse
> on them; therefore, the public-media interaction sets the policy
> agenda. In a world characterized by massive information exchanges
> among corporations, political systems, governments, special publics,
> and the mass public, decision making becomes incredibly
> complicated.[197]

Ferguson's claim that the media/public nexus has therefore become the real

agenda-setter on the contemporary political scene is a little too sweeping however. The

government may have lost full control of the frame, but this is far from amounting to a

complete role reversal. Robert Entman offers a more cautious –and probably more

realistic-- assessment of the general process of influence in the political sphere (ranging

from the agenda-setting stage to the policy decision one) as having become an

increasingly circular affair, arguing that the apparent impact of the public on government

policy often arises from a process "in which government official respond to the polling

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[196] Bennis. (1976) p. 155

[197] Ferguson, S. D. (2000) pp. 11-12

opinions, anticipated or perceived majorities, and priorities that many of them helped create."[198]

This acknowledgement of a reciprocal process of influence between public and authorities brings us back to the core issue stated at the beginning of this section, namely that of the actual manner in which public opinion comes to affect leaders' decision. As we discussed earlier, the public, even in the most participatory of democracies, can never be a direct enactor of executive power. In order to have an impact on decision-making, public opinion must first crystallize into an expressible form (be it numerical as in poll figures, or verbal through concentrated press coverage, petitions or slogans) and make its way through various representative bodies. Once again, the process is therefore a strongly mediated one, mirroring the converse practice we examined in the previous section, of government attempts to shape public opinion.

As Entman notes, the ideals of democratic citizenship and participation, such as citizens' ability to notice and transcend the rules and framing that limit the discourse and to engage substantive policy issues (see Dahl. 1989), "must be operationalized in terms of actual practice."[199] He argues therefore, that the principal way through which the public can achieve impact is through "the selective framing of public opinion indicators:"

> Elites would be paralyzed if they tried to act simultaneously on all available opinion data. Public opinion is therefore subject to framed interpretations that enter the fray where, just like other political communications, they may spread or fizzle depending on the motivations, strategies, and power of those playing the game.[200]

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[198] Entman. (2004) p. 142

[199] *Ibid*. p. 162

[200] *Ibid*. p. 21

Even Habermas, once one of the most optimistic theorists of democracy, observes, in *Further Reflections on the Public Sphere* that:

> Of course, these [public] opinions must be given shape in the form of decisions by democratically constituted decision-making bodies. The responsibility for practically consequential decisions must be based in an institution. Discourses do not govern. They generate communicative power that cannot take the place of administration but can only influence it. This influence is limited to the procurement and withdrawal of legitimation.[201]

Habermas's conclusion rejoins therefore Lippmann's view stated at the start of this section, that "public opinion does not make law. But by canceling lawless power it may establish the conditions under which law can be made."[202] It also brings us back somehow full circle to the original 19th century notion of public opinion as a primarily legitimating force rather than a truly executive one.

The ability to make itself acknowledged in the centers of power --through variously mediated forms-- is therefore a necessary prerequisite but by no means sufficient condition to ensure public opinion's influence. The efficacy of its power is contingent not only on the intrinsic strength of its very own message, but also on the ever increasing number of other competing forces at play – leaders' own motivations, pressure groups, elite interests, international considerations-- also trying to impose their competing agendas. At the pessimistic end of the spectrum, Jacobs and Shapiro for instance argue that "changes in political and institutional conditions since the 1970s have elevated the importance attached to policy goals above that of majority opinion"[203] leading to

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[201] Habermas. (1992) p. 452

[202] Lippmann. (1925) p. 69

[203] Jacobs & Shapiro. (2000) p. xviii

declining responsiveness to the public's policy preferences. While such assessment may be excessively dire, it is nevertheless sound to assume, in light of all the rival forces at play, that the effective power of public opinion is destined to be, as William Riker, the forefather of public choice theory, puts it, indirect and intermittent.[204]

While the idea that public opinion may be gaining commanding power over political affairs remains vehemently denied by adamant skeptics (see Jacobs & Shapiro, Ginsberg, Mayhew, Chomsky), the fact that governments in our age mobilize such an array of resources to attempt to gauge public opinion (be it through polls and other surveying devices or media-monitoring) indicates that it must exert some form of influence, if only, as Habermas and Lippmann noted, of a legitimating kind. Determining the actual impact of the public on the conduct of the state is no straightforward matter however. Entman argues that public opinion finds itself entangled in what he describes as a relatively hierarchical system of influence that includes, in descending order, "the administration, other elites, news organizations, the texts they produce, and the public," and is governed by an intricate process of "cascading activation:"

> The metaphor of the cascade was chosen in part to emphasize that the ability to promote the spread of frames is stratified; some actors have more power than others to push ideas along....[however] each level in the metaphorical cascade also makes its own contribution to the mix and flow (of ideas). Each can be thought of as a network of individuals and organizations, jostling to influence the political environment, and being affected by it in turn. [205]

The relationship between public opinion and government action –the very essence of public diplomacy-- Entman therefore concludes, "incorporate[s] so many simultaneous

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[204] See Riker. (1986) p. 241

[205]Entman. (2004) pp. 9-11

interactions among leaders, media, and citizens that determining who influences whom remains a large intellectual challenge;"[206] a challenge that the proliferation of information channels, the increased porousness of national borders, and the growing networks of non-state actors which will be examined in the remainder of this dissertation, can only serve to intensify. Meanwhile, the very notion of public opinion as a possibly *active* force leads us rather suitably to the topic of the next chapter: civil society.

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[206]*Ibid*. p. 156

CHAPTER III – CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil Society is the creation of the Modern World

G. W. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*

I- INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, we argued that the evolution of the notion of public opinion as a force to be reckoned with by governments and states, and as such inextricably intertwined with theories of democracy, lies very much at the *conceptual* heart of the development of the idea of public diplomacy. The evolution of the *practice* of public diplomacy however, has been significantly shaped, particularly in the last twenty years, by the rearticulation of the concept of civil society as a key terrain of strategic social action. As Michael Edwards notes, "concepts of civil society have a rich history, but it is only in the last fifteen years that they have moved to the center of the international stage."[1] As we shall see, many factors fostered the sudden emergence of civil society as a focal notion on the global scene, but the synergetic combination of the fall of communism (and the democratic opportunities that arose in its wake) with the growing spread of information technology which began in the early 1990s was no doubt its principal motor.

While there appears to be general agreement –both at the scholarly and professional levels-- about a decisive shift in the conceptualization of civil society since the mid-1980s, the exact current meaning of the term –more often, the precise limits

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[1] Edwards. (2004) p. 2

where civil society begins and ends--remains contested. The competing contemporary

notions of civil society do however share a common, if vague, consensual basis that marks

civil society as a "third sector between market and state,"[2] defined as:

> An intermediate associational realm between state and family
> populated by organizations which are separate from the state, enjoy
> autonomy in relation to the state and are formed voluntarily by
> members of the society to protect or extend their interests or values.[3]

The nature of this voluntary associational character may range widely, from

neighbourhood volunteer gardening service or bowling league to national advocacy

institution and international non-governmental organization. In light of the seemingly

countless forms that associational structures may take, this general understanding of civil

society, while fostering a multi-layered appreciation of the notion, also raises further

definitional challenges such as, Edwards points out, the thorny question as to whether or

not illegal or 'immoral' groups –for instance the Mafia or terrorist organizations—may be

classified as civil society groups.[4] Thought-provoking as such particular considerations

may be, we shall have to refrain from exploring them much further so as not stray unduly

away from the subject of public diplomacy. It should be noted, however, that as Keane

remarks, "the rebirth of civil society is always riddled with dangers since it gives freedom

to despots and democrats alike."[5] This observation does raise the broader issue of the

moral aspect of civil society and of whether or not it ought to be treated as a normative

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[2] See "What is Civil Society?" The Centre for Civil Society. London School of Economics.
http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what_is_civil_society.htm

[3] White, G. (1994) p. 379

[4] Edwards. (2004) pp. 51-54

[5] Keane. (1998) p. 45

concept –a subject to which we shall return later in the chapter. The associational and

uncoerced view of civil society, on the other hand, also links it directly to the issue(s) of

democracy. As John Dewey once wrote: "Democracy is more than a form of government.

It is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience."[6] This

general notion of civil society as associational life also relates the concept closely to that

of public opinion, for the thriving of civil society thus defined presupposes the existence

of a "public" in the sense of "a whole polity that cares about the common good and has

the capacity to deliberate about it democratically."[7]

The contemporary understanding of civil society emerged in the mid 1980s,

initially as a way of describing the non-state actors and movements that began to form in

opposition to the communist regimes in what were then satellite Soviet states. It is now

generally agreed –with the acumen of hindsight—that its very starting point was the

Solidarity movement that arose in Poland in 1980. After an initial period of buoyant and

hopeful success, the movement, which literally described itself as a "fight for a civil

society," was eventually crushed by the authorities. Nevertheless, as Jeffrey Alexander

points out, "it marked the first chapter of a democratic narrative that has continued to this

day."[8] Solidarity may have failed initially, but the seeds had been sown for the

subsequent --and eventually successful-- movements which formed in its wake behind the

Iron Curtain, and are today credited for having played a central role in the bringing down

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[6] Dewey. (1966) p. 87

[7] Edwards. (2004) p. 63

[8] Alexander. (2006) p. 14. For a comprehensive study of Solidarity as a social movement, see Touraine et al. (1984).

the Soviet Bloc. These events helped revitalize the idea of civil society as a sphere of political influence and a vehicle for social action. Civil society thereby became the new powerful nexus of social change, placing it at the very center of the complex issue of public opinion and democracy which we explored in the preceding chapter, and which underlies the development of public diplomacy.

In the aftermath of the collapse of communism, the explosion of non-governmental organizations and new social movements on a global scale witnessed in the 1990s gradually reshaped civil society into an increasingly formalized structure of influence which helped to reinforce its anointment as the 'third sector.' This growing professionalization of associational life, however, has also raised concerns among certain scholars that the increased "NGOization" of civil society might translate into a gradual distancing of associations from their participant base. Thinkers such as Skopcol or Putnam, for example, decry what they see as civil society's move "from membership to management,"[9] at the expense of more locally-rooted and actively participatory membership associations. On the other hand, the ascendance of NGOs, combined with their ever more trans-national nature, while perhaps rendering the link between associations and their members more abstract, has also given rise to the possibility of the notion of a *global* civil society. As Giddens points out in *The Third Way and Its Critics*, "an infrastructure of global society is being built by these changes. It can be indexed by the growing number of transnational non-governmental organizations. In 1950, there were

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[9] See Skocpol. (2003)

some 200-300. Today, there are more than 10,000 and the trend is still sharply upwards."[10]

The concept of global civil society is currently, in fact, one of the fastest growing areas of enquiry for theorists of civil society, and as we shall appreciate, a topic particularly rich in debate. [11] This is not to say, however, that more conventional, *national* studies of civil society have receded into the background --far from it—though these generally tend to be more empirical analyses of concrete geographically-rooted civil society movements. The notion of the emergence of a global civil society, and its accompanying reconceptualization of the world as a "network,"[12] does also link up with important aspects of recent information age theory which will be examined in Chapter IV and we shall therefore reflect upon it further at the end of this chapter. It is of particular relevance, as well, to the analysis of the recent evolution of public diplomacy.

If we recall, public diplomacy was born in a binary Cold War context in which its principal goal was to affect foreign audiences so that they could, in turn, if not put direct pressure on their own governments, at least gradually reduce their support for them. In the contemporary context of ever growing interconnectedness, however, where the "blocs" of the second half of the twentieth century appear to have been replaced by a complex ecosystem of interdependences, public diplomacy cannot have the same clarity of

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[10] Giddens (2000) p. 123 (Note that the figures he uses are from 2000. Some place the number of transnational NGOs today as high as 40,000. The numbers for national NGOs are even more staggering. For example, Russia alone is said to have more than 250,000 and India is estimated to have between one and two million.)

[11] See Keane. (2003); Anheir & Kaldor, eds. (2005, 2006, 2008); Anheir & Katz. (2005); Kaldor. (2003); Giddens. (2000); Eberly. (2008); Anderson & Rieff. (2005).

[12] See Castells, (1996); Barry, (2001); Edwards, (2004); Anheier & Katz (2005).

purpose. The alleged materialization of a global civil society –albeit still at an embryonic stage— could potentially destabilize concepts, such as the nation state, sovereignty and borders, which formed the basis of modern international relations. At the same time however, while the prospect of an influential global civil society --set against the backdrop of more general economic and cultural globalization processes-- may complicate the formulation of precise and isolated goals in the practice of public diplomacy, it also offers a powerful new framework not only for the dissemination of public diplomacy campaigns, but also for the potential implementation of the social changes they might advocate.

It should be noted, however, that claims about a putative decline of the nation-state remain heavily disputed in academic and non-academic circles alike. We will consider the issue in greater detail when we broaden our discussion of global civil society. At this general introductory stage, we merely wish to point out that while there does appear to be some degree of consensus about the fact that the spatio-temporal accelerations and entanglements of globalization are modifying the notion of state sovereignty, the precise nature and degree of this transformation are far from clear. This could in part be due to the fact that the restructuring of the international order is still an ongoing process, making it particularly difficult to draw definitive conclusions about international political life at this historical juncture. On the other hand, as R. B. J. Walker suggests, this might simply reflect the fact that the primary structure of international politics at present is neither the states-system, nor a more inclusive global economy, but precisely a *tension* between the

two.[13] The fact remains, however, that state sovereignty remains for now a deeply entrenched discourse –even if under attack—and one which, paradoxically, provided the structure for the elaboration of the very notions of globalization and internationalism which today threaten it.[14]

Discourse on civil society (both in its national and global forms) has been particularly abundant in the past twenty years, in scholarly and professional spheres as well as in the general media. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, as the "binary oppositions"[15] of the Cold War era gave way to what was generally viewed at the time as increased globalization,[16] against the backdrop of the information revolution and utopian hopes about the "end of history,"[17] civil society suddenly became the catchphrase solution, cited by conservatives and liberals alike, for most social, political and economic dilemmas plaguing the world. "A term that was scarcely used within the aid community ten years ago has become a ubiquitous concept in discussions and documents about democracy promotion worldwide,"[18] remarked Carothers and Ottaway in 2000. Giddens, in *The Third Way*, argued that the strengthening of civil society would complement the inadequacies of state and market and ensure the success of social democracy. Politicians,

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[13] Walker. (1993) p. 102

[14] See Walker (1993), Görg & Hirsch (1998), Wainwright (2005), Anderson & Rieff (2005).

[15] See Latour. (1993) pp. 8-9

[16] The initial assessment of a sweeping generalized globalization have been much refined since and even challenged at times, as counter currents of increased particularism (be it at the local, national or regional level) were identified in parallel, and the notion of a "clash of civilizations" (Huntington, 1996; Barber, 1996) gained renewed credence, particularly in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks.

[17] See Fukuyama. (1992)

[18] Ottaway & Carothers. (2000) p. 3

aid workers, UN officials and scholars alike all seemed to agree that civil society --and its hazily defined chief product "social capital-" was "the new analytic key that will unlock the mysteries of the social order."[19]

As Edwards points out in the preface to the latest edition of *Civil Society*, it was "probably impossible for any idea to survive this amount of attention, adulation and manipulation."[20] Exaggerated expectations could only lead to some measure of disappointment, and so, in the past few years, the concept has been subjected to more rigorous critique. The idealism and fervour which marked the early years of the revival of the concept have been tempered by empirical realism, thereby offering a much needed opportunity for a more meticulous analysis of civil society both at the theoretical and at the practical level. This has encouraged efforts not only to clarify its definition and potential as a vehicle for social change, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to examine the many contradictions and conflations of meaning arising from the various uses of the term, which had been somewhat muddled in the initial effervescence.

As we mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, the concept of civil society, despite its ubiquity in political and social discourse, still lacks a cohesive and precise definition. As was the case for public opinion, this lack of precision is due in part to the existence of a multiplicity of distinct but not necessarily incompatible meanings, but also, to the presence of fundamental contradictions in their interpretation.

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[19] Edwards. (2004) p. 3

[20] *Ibid*. (2004) p. vi

When the leaders of Solidarity fought "for a civil society", what they were calling for was a normative notion of an ideal social order, what Edwards calls "the good society" (its dominant interpretation currently being the ideals of liberal democracy.)[21] On the other hand, when sociologists such a Beck and Giddens comment upon the rise of civil society as a potential challenge to state sovereignty, their use of the term indicates a vehicle for social action, a channel of agency rather than an end product. Finally, when international institutions dedicated to democracy and governance talk about the importance of "civil society building,"[22] they are primarily referring to a civil *sphere*, a setting that fosters "the capacity for social criticism and democratic integration."[23] Civil society appears therefore to be, to quote Edwards, "simultaneously a goal to aim for, a means to achieve it, and a framework for engaging with each other about end and means."[24]

These three broad understandings of civil society identified by Edwards are not antagonistic. They are actually closely connected, complementing one another in the pursuit of a seemingly common purpose (provided, of course, that consensus can be reached on what in fact constitutes the ideal of "the good society.") In fact, all three aspects are equally fundamental to a comprehensive conception of civil society. The issue is not, therefore, which of these interpretations ought to take precedence over the others, but rather an appreciation of the multi-layered character of the notion of civil of society.

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[21] See Edwards. (2004) pp. 45-63

[22] See Salamon (1999); also Ottaway & Carothers (2000)

[23] Alexander. (2006) p. 4

[24] Edwards. (2004) p. 123

More pointedly, this multiplicity of connotations reveals civil society as a rare territory in contemporary social sciences where, as Alexander points out, "the normative and empirical sciences meet."[25] Hann and Dunn take this point one fervent notch further, arguing that civil society "leads us to a renewed awareness of the fusion of the moral, the social and the political in the constitution of all human communities."[26]

One need not look far and deep to detect the presence of a normative/ethical component in the concept of civil society. From Chris Hann's critique "In the Church of Civil Society" to Ottaway and Carothers' *Funding Virtue*, references to a moral dimension are frequent and explicit. While on the one hand this appears to illustrate Carl Schmitt's conviction that "all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts,"[27] (a view that brings to mind Tönnies' comments on public opinion cited in the previous chapter) it also adds a controversial facet both to the analytical study of civil society and to its concrete deployment, particularly in the global context. At the theoretical level, it is met with the reticence evolving from the fact that, as Alexander notes, "the idea that there can be a secular faith has been anathema to modern social sciences, which has [falsely] equated being modern with being beyond belief."[28] At the practical level, the underlying current of moral righteousness that imbues certain analytical approaches to civil society carries the risk of running counter to notions of

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[25] Alexander. (2006) p. 3

[26] Hann & Dunn. (1996) p. 3

[27] Schmitt. (1985) p. 36

[28] Alexander. (2006) p. 4

cultural pluralism, liberty and equality (ironically the very notions civil society actually upholds in principle) thereby undermining the possibility of a truly global civil society.[29]

Civil society is not only a multi-faceted concept; it is also susceptible to contradictory interpretations. For instance, is its foremost mission to *challenge* power as the radical conception of it maintains, or, as the more neo-liberal understanding suggests, to complement it through "regulated cooperation?"[30] Interestingly, and perhaps quite naturally, the notion of civil society as a rampart against state abuses of power, and hence as a bulwark of democracy, tends to take precedence in conceptions of civil society at the national level, while the view of it as a "service-providing not-for-profit sector"[31] often dominates transnational studies due to their focus on foreign aid and NGOs. These two outlooks, however, come head to head in theories of global civil society where the prominence of international NGOs on the ground must be reconciled with the challenge of developing a viable framework and institutions for a truly universal democracy. [32] As we shall see when we analyse the notion of global civil society in greater depth, the challenge is no small feat, leading several scholars such as Anderson, Rieff, Görg and Hirsh to dismiss global civil society as an impracticable ideal.

The tension between the radical and neoliberal articulations of civil society also leads back to the competing appraisals of public opinion, which we discussed in Chapter II, and which involved primarily the contrast between an actually executive role and a

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[29] See Anderson & Rieff. (2005) pp. 26-38

[30] Görg & Hirsch. (1998) p. 604

[31] Edwards. (2004) p. viii

[32] See Keane (2003), Görg & Hirsh (1998), Anderson & Rieff (2005)

merely legitimating function. Similarly, interpretations of civil society find themselves divided between conceptions of it as an effectively influencing agent and more modest assessments that view its authority as limited to the provision --or withdrawal-- of legitimacy to government action.

The issue of power, in turn, directs us to another fundamental tension underlying theories of civil society, perhaps best epitomized by what has come to be known as the Habermas-Foucault debate. The "debate," in fact, was never truly one in the strict sense of the word, as it involves mostly rival evaluations of the two thinkers' views on power (and the consequences of these viewpoints on matters of ethics, democracy, and social action) by their respective adherents.[33] Habermas and Foucault never actually argued these issues directly with one another, although they were considering doing so, in a public and formal discussion, shortly before Foucault's death in 1984. Applying the broad lines of the debate to the analysis of civil society, we might say that Habermas's supporters tend to see in civil society the possibility to realize his ideal of a sphere of "communicative rationality" conceived as a "noncoercively unifying, consensus-building force of discourse in which the participants overcome their at first subjectively based views in favour of a rationally motivated agreement."[34] In this sense, Habermas can be seen as the godfather of the more optimistic discourse that tends to inspire theories of global civil society. Those with a more "realist" inclination, on the other hand --who may be viewed as Foucault's heirs in this particular context—are wary of such lofty ideals. They identify

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[33] See Kelly, M. ed. (1994); Ingram. (1994)

[34] Habermas. (1987) p. 294

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civil society's power, instead, in its potential to yield social change, not through the fostering of reasoned consensus, but rather in its providing a platform for conflict and disagreement which Foucault believed to be necessary to "criticise the workings of institutions...in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked."[35] This account of the Foucault-Habermas debate is of course a little reductionist, particularly in its portrayal of Habermas's stance, and will be developed more comprehensively later in the chapter. The simplification, however, remains deliberate at this stage, its main purpose being to introduce the notion, stressed by Edwards, that "civility" need not mean politeness, and that "civil society," therefore, should not be automatically equated with consensus.[36]

Having outlined the major themes this chapter will seek to explore, the time has come to scratch beyond the surface of civil society. And if the notion of civil society lies indeed, as Schecter echoing Hegel argues, "at the origins of modern political theory,"[37] then it is only logical, once again, to engage in a genealogy of the concept, in order to clarify the "various strands of the conceptual web that is 'civil society.'"[38]

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[35] Chomsky & Foucault. (1974) p. 171

[36] Edwards. (2004) p. 77

[37] See Schecter. (1999) p. 25

[38] Hallberg & Wittrock. (2001) p. 29

II- HISTORICAL EVOLUTION & MUTATIONS

As was the case for the concept of public opinion, our current understanding of civil society is a distinctly modern one whose roots lie in Enlightenment philosophy and the development of democratic theory. The origins of the term itself, however, are once again to be found in classical antiquity.

Although Plato must have had some form of ideal –and decidedly normative-- "civil society" in mind when describing, in *The Republic*, the "just society" as one where the private interests and passions of individuals were brought under control[39], it is in Aristotle's *Politics* that one finds the earliest vocabulary and articulation of civil society theorizing. As Hallberg and Wittrock establish, the genesis of the expression is to be found in "[Aristotle's] invocation of *koinonìa politikè*, subsequently translated into Latin as *societas civilis* and into vernacular languages as..."société civile" and "civil society."[40] As we discussed earlier, in tracing the classical beginnings of public opinion, Aristotle was a strong advocate of citizen participation in the administration of the *polis*.[41] His vision of civil society, as Kaldor notes, was therefore directly associated with a political community based on public reasoning and deliberation.[42]

In this sense, Edwards is right to point out that civil society and the state were somewhat "indistinguishable" in classical thought, as Aristotle's *polis* was ultimately "a type of political association...that enabled citizens (or those few individuals that qualified)

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[39] See Plato, *The Republic*. For further commentary, see also DeLue & Dale (2009) pp. 24-40.

[40] Hallberg & Wittrock. (2001) p. 28. See also Riedel (1984) pp. 131-133

[41] Aristotle. (1981) Refer also to previous chapter, section II.

[42] Kaldor. (2003) p. 23

to share in the virtuous tasks of ruling and being ruled."[43] At the same time, however, in

attempting to emphasize the difference between classical notions of civil society and

subsequent articulations of it, Edwards' choice of words also highlights two aspects of

Aristotle's view of civil society which have remained fundamental to its conception

throughout its complex and shifting history.

First, Edwards' reference to the "*virtuous* tasks of ruling and being ruled" –for

Aristotle, though less idealistic than Plato, still believed citizens should rule with a

constant concern for the common good--[44] underlines the moral facet of civil society

which, as we argued in the introduction, accompanies a significant number of

interpretations of the notion to this day. Second, and perhaps more importantly –or at least

less controversially— although Aristotle's *polis* may be viewed as inextricably entwined

with the practice of government and therefore incompatible with the modern conception

of civil society as a sphere distinct from the state, his essential appreciation of it as a

participatory association of citizens remains the one undisputed constitutive attribute of

civil society throughout its historical permutations. In this respect, Aristotle, who believed

that forming communities was a fundamentally human inclination and even wrote that "he

who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself,

must be either a beast or a god: he is no part of a state [or *polis*],"[45] can be seen, not only

as the inventor of an original expression which later went on to assume different

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[43] Edwards. (2004) p. 6

[44] See Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*.

[45] Aristotle. (1996) pp. 26-29

meanings, but also –and in spite of the historical specificity of his thought-- as the spiritual forefather of the notion of civil society.

Roman thought on the matter, inspired by a political life which was quite different from the democratic principles governing the Greek *polis*, offered a decidedly less participatory approach to civil society. As Anthony Black notes, the Roman notion of *societas civilis* derived from Cicero's definition of the state (*civitas*) as a partnership with citizens in law (*societas*), and was therefore a "generic term for a secular legal and political order."[46] Reflecting once again the opposition between the Greek view of the "public" as interactive force and the Roman interpretation of it as audience, Roman thinkers exhibited little interest in the potential power of citizen associations. It is in fact interesting to note, as Hallberg and Wittrock point out, that the Latin term *societas civilis*, although occasionally employed by Cicero, only entered into common use in the fifteenth century, following the Florentine humanist Leonardo Bruni's popular translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.[47] This may be seen, therefore, as both a confirmation of the essentially Greek origin of the modern understanding of civil society, and an explanation for its relative neglect in medieval political thinking as ancient Greek philosophy fell out of favour in the Catholic West.

Indeed, it was the law-abiding and one could say "benign" conception of civil society offered by the Romans that shaped the way civil society was understood for many centuries. In this respect, it denoted more generally the sphere of *horizontal* relations

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[46] Black. (2001) p. 33

[47] Hallberg & Wittrock. p. 33

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between people living under a common dominion, as opposed to the vertical ones between the state and the people. As Ehrenberg points out, medieval thought equated civil society by and large with "politically organized commonwealths,"[48] or, as Hobbes would later define them, a type of society distinct from the "state of nature," and little consideration was accorded to the role citizens could play in it.

The first major rearticulation of civil society came about with the Enlightenment, developing, like public opinion, alongside the creation of modern states and the burgeoning ideals of democracy and the rule of law. Ehrenberg succinctly summarizes the elements at play in this transformation:

> As the forces of modernity began to undermine the embedded economies and universal knowledge of the Middle Ages, the gradual formation of national market and national states gave rise to a second tradition that began to conceptualize civil society as a civilization made possible by production, individual interest, competition and need. For some thinkers, the Enlightenment opened unprecedented opportunities for freedom in a secular world of commerce, science and culture. For others, civil society's disorder, inequality and conflict falsified its emancipatory potential and required a measure of public supervision. However society was perceived, it was clear that the world could no longer be understood as a system of fused commonwealths.[49]

Hobbes' *Leviathan* marks a turning point in European political philosophy with its introduction of the concept of *social contracts* which established the groundwork of modern political theory. For Hobbes, the "state of nature" was one of "war, as if of every man against every man,"[50] characterized by mutual fear and distrust (a vision which, fittingly enough in the context of our overarching interest in the use public diplomacy in

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[48] Ehrenberg. (1999) p. x

[49] Ehrenberg. (1999) p. xi

[50] See Hobbes. *Leviathan*. Chapt. XIII

international affairs, is often used by international relations theorists to describe the contemporary international system of states.) This condition of belligerent, selfish anarchy was inevitable as long as "men live without a common power to keep them all in awe."[51] The only alternative in his view was therefore the establishment, by mutual contract, of some form of coercive authority. Civil society was therefore characterized, as Kaldor notes, by the rule of law enforced by a political authority.[52] However, the notion that this rule of law should be based on certain equally-distributed fundamental rights for citizens, and that the authorities in power shall also be subject to it did not yet fully figure in this early modern equation.

Although Hobbes may be credited with a provision for citizen consent and a concern for the protection of individual freedom, his political vision nonetheless still called for some form of absolute power. It is with Locke's *Second Treatise on Government* –not coincidentally fully entitled *An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent and End of Civil Government*-- that the matter of citizens' *rights* and government limitations manifestly enters political discourse.

Published in 1690, in the wake of England's "Glorious Revolution" and the subsequent passing of the English Bill of Rights which greatly circumscribed the powers of the monarchy –and which Locke strongly supported-- the *Second Treatise* was perhaps the first explicit and systematic treatment of civil society of the Enlightenment. In it, Locke refers at length to "civil society" as a society of free men, equal under the rule of

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[51] *Ibid*.

[52] Kaldor. (2003) p. 17

law, united by a shared respect for each other's inalienable rights.[53] Although it does mark a definite evolution of the notion and presages its major transformation in the nineteenth century, Locke's conception of civil society does not however fully break with the premodern tradition. One reason for this is the strong current of Christian belief that infuses Locke's political thinking –the idea for example, that natural rights are granted to individuals by *God*-- and which prompts scholars such as Dunn to classify him as a "theocentric thinker for whom the truth of the Christian Religion...was an indispensable premise of a scheme of practical reason."[54] More generally, Locke's "civil society" continued to denote a *form* of society *including* government rather than a *part* of society *distinct* from the leadership, keeping it in line, therefore -- in spite of some of its progressive suggestions-- with both the classical and the medieval traditions.

From the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, however, the breakdown of absolute political authority brought about by the French and American revolutions, the decline of religion's stronghold on the social order, the Industrial Revolution and the growth of market economies fostered the emergence of "public spheres" as areas of civic engagement and "informed and critical discourse by the people,"[55] progressively laying the ground for the reformulation of civil society as a sphere distinct from the state, a *social space* "in which democratic polity is enacted."[56]

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[53] Gray. (1986) p. 12

[54] Dunn. (2001) p. 41

[55] Habermas. (1995) p. xi

[56] Berezin. (1997) p. 365

In this respect, Kant's philosophy, although more anchored in epistemology and morals than purely political theory (with the exception of his reflections on the international order and "cosmopolitanism"[57] which we shall examine later, in our discussion of global civil society) played an important normative role in formalizing the necessity of "the public use of reason" for society's "progress in general enlightenment."[58] "With Kant, the modern age is inaugurated," writes Habermas[59] in discussing the significance of Kant's effort to provide a universal and rational foundation for social and political life. Indeed, Kant's vision of one of the Enlightenment's principal goals as fostering the ability "to use one's understanding without guidance from another"[60] calls for critically thinking individuals. His notion of *practical reason* also entails socially active subjects who employ rational means to determine the principles which should guide behaviour in social –and by extension political—settings.[61] The use of practical reason, however, should always be infused, in Kant's view, with an awareness of his central moral concept, the Categorical Imperative.

The third formulation of the Categorical Imperative is the one generally favoured in discussions about civil society and the public sphere, for it is in it that the social dimension of Kantian morality is made most explicit: "Therefore, every rational being must act as if he were by his maxims at all time a lawgiving member of the universal

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[57] See Kant. (1991, 2005)

[58] Kant. (1957) p. 7. See Also O'Neill. (1986) pp. 533-34

[59] Habermas. (1987) p. 260

[60] Kant. (1957) p. 6

[61] See Kant. (1956)

kingdom of ends."[62] Kant further explains that this principle emanates from his concept of (ideal) society, or "kingdom of ends," as "a systematic union of rational beings through common objective laws."[63] The implicit idea behind this particular formulation of the Imperative is therefore a fundamental obligation to act solely on principles which would be acceptable to a community of fully rational agents each of whom has an equal opportunity to participate in the formulation of these principles. From this standpoint, and although he never addresses overtly the notion of civil society, Kant's philosophy has proved remarkably influential on subsequent reflections about the civil sphere. The eminently rational, normative and moral nature of his thought offers in many ways the foundations for the more "idealistic" tradition in civil society thinking, most notably epitomized, in the twentieth century, by thinkers such as Rawls or Habermas in their emphasis on the redemptive powers of unconstrained rational public discourse.

Seligman argues that the modern idea of civil society relies upon the existence of a firmly held division between public and private, and in this respect, has its roots in the Scottish Enlightenment, particularly in the philosophy of Adam Smith.[64] Indeed, Smith's reasoning, in *The Wealth of Nations,* that the private interests of individuals, guided by the "invisible hand" of the market, would yield maximum prosperity for society as a whole[65] offers, as Ehrenberg notes, "the first distinctively bourgeois sense that civil society is a market-organized sphere of production and competition driven by the private strivings of

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[62] Kant. (1998) p. 45

[63] Kant. (1998) p. 41

[64] See Seligman. (1992)

[65] See Smith, A. (1948)

self-interested proprietors."[66] Naturally, Smith's case for the unhindered self-regulation of markets could only be realized in a society which ensured civil and political liberties. As Gray observes, economic and political liberty became, from this point on, indivisible both in the classical liberal tradition, and in its contemporary neo-liberal incarnation.[67] Smith's efforts to "integrate economic activity and market processes into a more general understanding of the anatomy of civilized life"[68] constitute an important rupture in the conceptual evolution of civil society by introducing an understanding of civil society as the market society. This version of civil society, upholding the idea of a "two-sector world...[with] the market or economy on the one hand, and the state or government on the other"[69] will dominate the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries before gradually falling into disuse in the 20th century.

The acknowledgement of the market as a second sector distinct from the state represented a major shift in its perception of society as a functioning compound system rather than the monolithic and fusional whole it had generally been viewed as until then. The notion of civil society, however, was still mainly employed by thinkers in a normative and often ethical sense to refer to the *entire* –even if now dual—social structure. As Riedel points out, "political" and "civil" were still somewhat synonymous at

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[66] Ehrenberg. (1999) p. xiii. A more detailed analysis of Smith's contribution to the emergence of "bourgeois civil society" is taken up in chapter 4. pp. 96-107

[67] Gray. (1986) p. 25

[68] Ehrenberg. (1999) p. 96

[69] See "What is Civil Society?" The Centre for Civil Society. London School of Economics. http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what_is_civil_society.htm

that point, and "civil society" remained a general term for a sovereign political entity.[70] It had yet to become "the now-familiar sphere of intermediate associations that serves liberty and limits the power of central institutions."[71]

The explicit conceptual separation of the state and civil society was first made by Hegel in *The Philosophy of Right* published in 1821. Pelczynski argues that Hegel's distinction was perhaps one of "the boldest innovations in the language of political philosophy since Bodin introduced the concept of sovereignty and Rousseau the idea of the general will,"[72] echoing the thoughts of Riedel who believes Hegel's alteration of the traditional usage was a revolutionary and decidedly modern conceptual rupture:

> [In The Philosophy of Right] the concept of citizen, emancipated from its politcal-legal meaning, and the equally emancipated concept of society, are joined together. Their political substance...is dissolved into the social functions which were assigned to both 'citizen' and 'society' in the European break with tradition at the end of the eighteenth century which was precipitated by the Industrial Revolution. It is only then that the citizen as bourgeois becomes the central problem of political philosophy.[73]

Not only was Hegel the first to establish civil society as a sphere clearly distinct from the state, he also, in his conception of it as "a battlefield where everyone's individual private interests meet everyone else's"[74] introduced the possibility of it being *antagonistic* to the state. Although later interpretations of civil society will view this potential opposition as a key attribute in its role as bulwark against abuses of power (be it from a

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[70] Riedel. (1984) pp. 131-133

[71] Ehrenberg. (1999) p. xii

[72] Pelczynski. (1984) p. 4

[73] Riedel. (1984) p. 140

[74] Hegel. (1952) p. 189 (para. 289)

Foucauldian perspective of civil society as an arena of conflict, or a more Habermasian

prospect for it as a milieu conducive to communicative rationality), Hegel, however, did

not endorse it.

In Hegel's view, civil society may be "the achievement of the modern world,"[75]

but it remains primarily an area of social life in which individuals relate to one another

through their needs and selfish interests, the majority of these being negotiated in the

market. As Dhanagare suggests, Hegel held that civil society had emerged largely in

response to the spread of capitalism, its principal concern being therefore to promote

individual rights and private property.[76] Left to its own devices, without the restraining

powers of institutions, civil society could easily become, therefore, a Hobbesian field of

"war of all against all." It is the state's mission, hence, to overcome the destructive

potential of these tendencies towards self-interest by ensuring the climate of public reason

and respect necessary for civil society to fulfil its promise as "a sphere of recognition

enabling the possibility of identifications and connections of mutuality between

individuals."[77]

It is important to note, however, that while Hegel's conception of civil society as a

sphere independent from government proved to be innovatively modern, his thoughts on

the state as an autonomous agency teleologically committed to the promotion of reason,

truth and "the higher good"[78] were far from furthering the ideals of participatory

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[75] Kaldor. (2003) p. 27

[76] Dhanagare. (2005) p. 169

[77] Khilnani. (2001) p. 24

[78] Hegel. (1952) p. 157 (para. 258)

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democracy. Indeed, one need only look at his famous remark that "to be independent of public opinion is the first formal condition of achieving anything great or rational whether in life or in science,"[79] to realize that he is quite averse to predicating the authority of the state on the consent of those whom he ultimately deems to be self-interested citizens often devoid of the rational principles which should inform public decisions about public matters.[80] Hegel's theory of the state, in fact, though concerned with the preservation of citizens' *rights*, places him at odds with the growing provision for citizens' *participation* in eighteenth and nineteenth century political thought. In this sense –and this sense only-- one could almost view Hobbes' model of state authority, nearly two centuries earlier, as more participative, for though absolute, its establishment nevertheless required some form of mutual contract.

Hegel's determining articulation of civil society as a sphere independent from the state, and hence as an alternative terrain of social action, brings the concept noticeably closer to our contemporary understanding of it. In the context of his distinctive view of the state, however, it also, as Riedel mentions, significantly depoliticizes civil society[81], and, therefore, somewhat severs its fundamental link with democracy, taking it farther away from the role it appears to be endowed with today. Pelczynski notes that Hegel conceives of civil society as "the private sphere" in opposition to "the public sphere 'der

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[79] *Ibid*. p. 205 (para. 318)

[80] *Ibid*. p. 156 (para. 258) & p. 204 (para. 316-317)

[81] Riedel. (1984) p. 140

Staat' or, as he sometimes put it, 'the strictly political state' *as if to emphasize even more strongly the conceptual contrast between the 'civil' and the 'political.'*"[82]

A few thinkers, notably Tocqueville and Mill, will subsequently attempt to reverse this depoliticization process instigated by Hegel and argue for a conception of civil society that lessens the all-determining impact of the market and calls for an active participatory role for citizens in politics and society. In *Considerations on Representative Government*, Mill sees citizen engagement as necessary and possible both in the "direct" context of local government and juries, but also, equally, through a separate sphere of voluntary groups engaged, for instance in philanthropic activities.[83] Mill's acknowledgement of the benefit of a civilian associative sphere in honing the skills of active citizenship and deliberation reaffirms Tocqueville's keen observations on the importance of associative life to a vibrant political community some thirty years prior in *Democracy in America*, which we quote here at length for the visionary role they are today credited with in the late twentieth century revival of the notion of civil society as associational life we mentioned at the beginning of the chapter:

> Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions, constantly form associations. They have not only commercial and manufacturing companies, in which all take part, but associations of a thousand other kinds –religious, moral, serious, futile, general or restricted, enormous or diminutive...I have often admired the extreme skill with which the inhabitants of the United States succeed in proposing a common object to the exertions of a great many men, and in inducing them voluntarily to pursue it...
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> Thus, the most democratic country on the face of the earth is that in which men have, in our time, carried to the highest perfection the art

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[82] Pelczynski. (1984) p. 5 (emphasis added)

[83] Mill. (1962) p. 312

of pursuing in common the object of their common desires, and have applied this new science to the greatest number of purposes...

Nothing, in my opinion, is more deserving of our attention than the intellectual and moral associations of America...In democratic countries, the science of association is the mother of science; the progress of all the rest depends upon the progress it has made.[84]

Tocqueville was perhaps the first to articulate so vividly and with such eagerness the notion of a dynamic civil sphere (he did not actually use the term "civil society") as "a diffuse, umbrella-like concept referring to a plethora of institutions outside the state,"[85] endowed with political *and* ethical force, which so closely resembles our contemporary grasp of it. (Edwards describes him as "probably the most famous civil society enthusiast of them all.")[86] As Alexander points out, however, he was also the last (save perhaps for Mill) to do so for a very long time, arguably until civil society's next fundamental shift in conceptual trajectory in the 1980s which we hall soon examine.[87] In the mean time, it was Hegel's view of civil society as a product of the market, later reworked by Marx in a particularly exclusive way, that came to dominate, and eventually cripple, civil society discourse.

Hegel uses the term "bürgerliche Gesellschaft" to denote civil society, which in German also means "bourgeois society."[88] In and of itself, this is not necessarily problematic. It appears natural in the context of his view of it as a distinctive social

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[84] Tocqueville. (1863) p. 129-134

[85] Alexander. (2006) p. 24

[86] Edwards. (2004) p. 7

[87] *Ibid*.

[88] Pelcczynski. (1984) pp. 4-5

formation produced by the rise of capitalism and market economies, an outlook instigated most notably perhaps by Adam Smith –whom Hegel keenly read-[89] and upheld by many later thinkers (though, as we shall see, to serve a variety of conclusions.) It is no coincidence, after all, if Habermas gave his seminal study on the rise of the public sphere the subtitle *An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. This conflation of notions, however, though justified at length in Hegel's own writings, made "civil society" particularly vulnerable to subsequent highjackings by more narrowly motivated political thinkers; most prominently of course by Marx, who, to quote Pelczynski, "decomposed the Hegelian civil society, which was a highly complex, structured concept, and reduced civil society virtually to the economic sphere of labour, production and exchange."[90]

Marx's highly selective appropriation of Hegel's civil society and of his state/civil society distinction dramatically restricted the scope of the concept.[91] "Shorn of its cooperative, democratic, associative, and public ties," Alexander writes, "civil society came to be pejoratively associated with market capitalism alone."[92] More critically, Marx did not merely narrow the meaning of civil society; he also stripped it of any vitality. Civil society became little more than yet another element in the larger structure in place to reinforce the interests of the dominant class under capitalism. As Cohen observes in her critique of Marx' theory of civil society, "social, political, private, and legal institutions were treated as the environment of the capitalist system, to be transformed by its logic but

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[89] *Ibid*.

[90] Pelczynski. (1984) p. 2

[91] See Cohen, Jean. (1982). Pelczynski. (1984). Foley & Hodgkinson (2002). Keane (2003).

[92] Alexander. (2006) p. 26

without a dynamism of their own."[93] Framed as a secondary symptom of capitalism, civil

society lost most, if not all, of it social significance. Marx's drastically reductive view of

civil society proved particularly catching, however, and did not remain confined to the

Marxist left, a fact which Alexander argues is not surprising in the context of the social

and intellectual situation of the late-nineteenth century which was overtaken by "the

ravages of early industrial capitalism."[94] But it did, nevertheless, have the regrettable and

enduring effect of eroding considerably the significance of public life, a condition

lamented by a range of twentieth century thinkers from Lippmann and Dewey to

Habermas –and more recently Putnam and Skocpol—who have viewed the disappearance

of meaningful deliberative public discourse as one of the mot regrettable consequences of

twentieth century modernity.[95]

Somewhat paradoxically, it was a Marxist, Gramsci, who would eventually rescue

civil society from its economistic stultification in Marxist orthodoxy. Foley and

Hodgkinson go so far as to consider him "single-handedly responsible for the revival of

the term civil society in the post-World War II period."[96] Although he agreed with Marx

that civil society could be a conduit for the reinforcement of capitalist domination,

Gramsci argued it could also be a decisive site of rebellion against hegemony.[97] In fact, as

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[93] Cohen, Jean. (1982) p. 24

[94] Alexander, Jeffrey. (2006) p. 27

[95] See Lippmann (1925, 1960), Dewey (1991), Habermas (1987, 1995), Putnam (1993, 2000), Skocpol (1999, 2003), *passim*.

[96] Foley & Hodgkinson. (2002) p. xix

[97] Gramsci. (1971) chapt. 2, sec. 3.

Pelczynski and Femia note, Gramsci's revolutionary strategy relied significantly on civil society, whose conquest by the working classes he saw as a necessary intermediate step, and the ideal "springboard for the final conquest of political power in the state."[98] Alexander, however, argues that while Gramsci did challenge Marx's thinking in allowing civil society to be an arena of counter-hegemonic contest, he still viewed it as an inherently capitalist --and in his revolutionary eyes therefore non-democratic-- phenomenon, an offshoot of Lenin's "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie." It was a space "that could be entered into but not redefined" and would eventually therefore "have to be overthrown."[99] Nevertheless, though perhaps limited by certain ideological confines, Gramsci's specific characterization of civil society as an *intermediary zone* of political, cultural and public life situated *between* economic relations and political power,[100] and its implicit move away from a strictly two-tiered view of society (as state and market) constitutes yet another crucial shift in the historical trajectory of the concept. The roots of our contemporary understanding of civil society as "the third sector" and as an arena for contestation can be traced directly back to it.

Gramsci's general idea of civil society as a space from which to challenge the dominant forces of the day resonated well beyond Marxist and neo-Marxist thought. In the United States, several influential thinkers turned their attention to the "civil sphere" and endeavoured to reclaim it as a space of rational discussion and engagement and as a

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[98] Pelczynski (1984) p. 3. For a thorough assesment of Gramsci's concept of civil society and its role in the revolutionary process, see Femia (1981).

[99] Alexander. (2006) p. 29

[100] Gramsci. (1971) pp. 12-13, 234, 263-268.

force of social change essential to democracy. It should however be noted, as Foley and Hodgkinson point out, that the actual *term* "civil society" had somewhat fallen into disuse at that point.[101] We shall continue to employ the term, nevertheless, (along with the notions, more or less synonymous at that time, of "civil" or "public" sphere) for the concept itself, on the other hand, as in the notion of a civil realm structured somehow autonomously from the state and the economy remained very much alive as social thought became increasingly concerned with the "associational complexity of modern society"[102] and with the reconfiguration of "the public" in mass society. Interestingly, one could view in the latter issue another point of convergence in the trajectories of the concepts of "civil society" and "public opinion." However, while public opinion will increasingly become the domain of empirical and statistical research, civil society will retain its ethical dimension and continue to encourage reflections of a more normative nature.

Arendt's critique of modern mass society, for example, called for the revitalization of the classical Greek *koinonìa politikè*, and its principles of participation and deliberation. Her theory of political action was predicated on the existence of a vigorous public sphere.[103] John Dewey, who held democracy to be above all a "conjoint communicated experience",[104] was also an ardent believer in the necessity of a strong and

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[101] Foley & Hodgkinson. (2003) p. xv

[102] *Ibid.*

[103] Arendt. (1958) passim. For a discussion of Arendt's critique of modern civil society, see Cohen & Arato. (1992) chapt. 4

[104] Dewey. (1966) p. 87

informed civil sphere, as we saw earlier in discussing his contribution to the concept of public opinion. Several passages from *Democracy and Education* prefigure to a certain extent Habermas's central notion of "communicative action:"

> Men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common. What they must have in common in order to form a community or society are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge--a common understanding--like-mindedness as the sociologists say. Such things cannot be passed physically from one to another, like bricks; they cannot be shared as persons would share a pie by dividing it into physical pieces. The communication which ensures participation in a common understanding is one which secures similar emotional and intellectual dispositions.[105]

Separated from both market and state, and reclaimed not only as an energetic political force against the status quo, but also as a normative concept essential to a "good and just" society and an eminently human associational realm, the notion of civil society was gradually becoming the multi-faceted "intermediary sphere of the social,"[106] which has become familiar –and at times confusing—to us today.

Although Dewey's commitment to a deliberative form of democracy clearly highlighted the centrality of communication, it was Jürgen Habermas who, starting in 1960s, articulated the now prevalent idea of the public sphere –and by extension, of civil society--as a primarily communicative space most definitively

As Charles Taylor writes, with Habermas, "society is to be explained by referring to the structures of discourse."[107] The particular form of discourse Habermas seems most concerned with, however, is the one rooted in the Kantian ideals of reason and

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[105] Dewey. (1966) p. 3

[106] Cohen & Arato. (1992) p. 178

[107] Taylor, C. (1991) p. 23

universality, "the unconstrained, unifying, consensus-bringing force of argumentative speech," [108] which he deems most threatened in contemporary society. The public sphere is of course the primary setting for citizens to engage in free and rational deliberation and thereby, ideally –for that is indeed one of the principal shortcomings Habermas detects in the increasingly "commodified" modern-day public sphere[109]--"resist the encroachment of the state and the economy on their private lives."[110] In his now quasi-canonical *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas speaks of the "literary public sphere" and "the political public sphere," arguing that the former paved the way for the latter:

> The process in which the state-governed public sphere was appropriated by the public of private people making use of their reason and was established as a sphere of criticism of public authority was one of functionally converting the public sphere in the world of letters already equipped with institutions of the public and with forums for discussion.[111]

Habermas sees an authentically autonomous, dynamic and critical political public sphere as vital to a healthy society, for in his view, the legitimacy of democracy depends not merely on the constitutional processes of enacting laws, but above all, as White puts it, on "the discursive quality of the full processes of deliberation leading up to such a result."[112] This "discursive quality," in Habermas's normative assessment, should ensure

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[108] See Habermas (1983) p. 10

[109] See Habermas (1992), passim.

[110] Hohendahl. (1997) p. viii

[111] Habermas. (1995) p. 51

[112] White, S. (1995) p. 12

validity and truth, which he defines as consensus reached without the use of external force:[113]

> Argumentation ensures that all concerned in principle take part, freely and equally, in a cooperative search for truth, where nothing coerces anyone except the force of the better argument.[114]

In Habermas's model, therefore, active citizenship is first and foremost discursive participation. As he clarifies in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, the first step involves his central notion of *interpretation* which, he explains, "refers in the first instance to negotiating definitions of the situation which admit of consensus."[115] As he is keen to stress, however, "communicative action is *not exhausted* by the act of reaching understanding in an interpretative manner." Common agreement is ultimately "a mechanism for *coordinating* action."[116] For Habermas, therefore, "communicative action," which he distinguishes from "instrumental" or "strategic" action, offers the possibility of power through consensus and cooperation rather than the "egocentric calculations [of participants]... primarily oriented to their own individual successes."[117]

Habermas's theory of social action is eminently normative and procedural; unduly so in the eyes of some. "Civil society as such is weak," argues Mayhew, "It is arena for sorting issues, floating and testing ideas, and organizing 'counterknowledge,' but it cannot

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[113] Habermas. (1990) p. 93

[114] *Ibid*. p. 198

[115] Habermas. (1983) p. 86

[116] *Ibid*. p. 101

[117] *Ibid*. p. 286

steer society."[118] In his view, even Habermas's subsequent attempt, in *Between Fact and Norms*, to work out the political implications of his theory of communicative action and develop a somewhat more empirical understanding of civil society, fails to present a convincing model of civil society as a forceful vehicle for social change. Habermas's suggestion that civil society can, under certain conditions, compel social and political change "through its own public opinions"[119] offers at most, in Mayhew's view, a rather diffuse "system of influence," which he points out, could paradoxically be likened to the free market:

> Pure market economies are also decentralized and not dominated by political power, their circulation of goods governed by equilibrating forces of supply and demand, which represent willingness to offer and to purchase goods. Ironically, the disbursed conversations in Habermas's civil society, for all their earnest truth-seeking, reach conclusions parallel to systematic market forces. People either are or are not willing to "buy" arguments, pleas, and calls to action according to the balance of receptivity and resistance that affect their choices.[120]

Flyvbjerg, on the other hand, opts for the line of critique most frequently directed at Habermas –and one which Habermas himself ackowledges a cetain vulnerability to--[121] arguing that "the basic weakness of Habermas's project is its lack of agreement between ideal and reality, between intentions and their implementation."[122] Although Habermas recognizes that "Discourses do not govern. They generate communicative power that

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[118] Mayhew. (1997) p. 145

[119] Habermas. (1996) p. 373

[120] Mayhew. (1997) p. 146

[121] Habermas openly admits, for instance, in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987) that "It is not so simple to counter the suspicion that with the concept of action oriented to validity claims, the *idealism* of a pure, non-situated reason slips in again." (p. 322. emphasis added)

[122] Flyvbjerg. (1998) p. 215

cannot take the place of administration but can only influence it,"[123] Flyvbjerg maintains

that in the end, "discourse about discourse ethics is all Habermas has to offer."[124] Despite

his vision of the public sphere as a site of critique of authority and steerer of social and

political change, Flyvbjerg concludes, "Habermas lacks the kind of concrete

understanding of relations of power that is needed for political change."[125]

Rorty, who believes "the demand for a theory which unifies the public and

private,"[126] is not only idealistic but even potentially stultifying, criticizes Habermas for

conferring upon communicative rationality an unrealistic "healing and unifying power

which will do the work once done by God."[127] He further argues that "the vocabulary of

Enlightenment rationalism, although it was essential to the beginning of liberal

democracy, has become an impediment to the preservation and progress of democratic

societies."[128] While Rorty approves of the initial struggle of Enlightenment philosophers

to break the stranglehold of religion, he fears that in the end, they may simply have

succeeded in replacing a deistic religion with a rational one.

Rorty, who describes himself as a "liberal ironist," (using "ironist" in the sense of

one "who faces up to the contingency of his or her own most central beliefs"[129]) contends

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[123] Habermas. (1992) p. 452

[124] Flyvbjerg. (1998) p. 215

[125] *Ibid*. pp. 215-216

[126] Rorty. (1989) p. xv

[127] *Ibid.* p. 68

[128] *Ibid*. p. 44

[129] *Ibid*. p. xiv

that universal philosophical foundations for political action are unnecessary and even

harmful, and admonishes:

> [Those who] think that liberal political freedoms require some
> consensus about what it universally human. We ironists who are also
> liberals think that such freedoms require no consensus on any topic
> more basic than their own desirability.[130]

These considerations lead us inevitably to Foucault, whose long-running

divergence of opinion with Habermas as to how the nature of power in society ought to be

apprehended and critiqued –known as the Habermas/Foucault debate-- highlights the

essential tension in social thought between the normative and the practical.[131] It is a

tension that lies at the heart of civil society thinking and is perhaps most succinctly

summarized by Flyvbjerg as one "between consensus and conflict."[132]

Despite their unconcealed (though always mutually respectful) divergence of

opinion and method, it should nevertheless be stressed that a central concern with

exposing the misuses and abuses of power lies at the core of both Habermas's and

Foucault's thought. Furthermore, Foucault himself, although fiercely opposed to ideals of

any kind and repeatedly insisting that "nothing is fundamental,"[133] openly acknowledged

that he agreed with Habermas insofar as "if one abandons the work of Kant...one runs the

risk of lapsing into irrationality."[134] His appreciation for the Enlightenment's appeal to

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[130] *Ibid*. p. 84

[131] For a thorough study of the debate, see Kelly. For greater focus on its implications at the practical
political level, see Flyvbjerg (1998, 2000).

[132] Flyvbjerg. (1998) p. 211

[133] Foucault. (1984) p. 247

[134] Foucault. (1984) p. 248

reason, however, was tempered by the consciousness that like any social "truth," it too

was necessarily the product of normalizing processes of control.[135] As Rajchman puts it,

for Foucault, "to respect rationalism as an ideal should never constitute a blackmail to

prevent the analysis of the rationalities really at work."[136] Foucault can therefore be seen

as epitomizing the "liberal irony" advocated by Rorty when he writes:

> [The liberal ironist is] someone sufficiently historicist and nominalist
> to have abandoned the idea that those central beliefs and desires refer
> back to something beyond the reach of time and chance. Liberal
> ironists are people who include among these *ungroundable* desires
> their own hope that suffering will be diminished, that the humiliation
> of human beings by other human beings may cease.[137]

Rorty's definition of the "liberal ironist" captures with eloquent economy

Foucault's deep mistrust of universalism of any kind all the while countering the charges

of relativism often put forward by his critics, Habermas amongst them.[138] Foucault's

rejection of normative totalizations, particularly when they purport to represent "the

greater good," is not therefore a call for a normless world, an anarchic Hobbesian "state of

nature," but an appeal for an ever-renewed vigilance towards the particular historical

context and underlying motivations which suffuse *all* norms and which, in his eyes,

constitutes true freedom.[139] As Flyvbjerg notes, in Foucault's view, "Freedom is a

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[135] The fundamental theme of the normalization of "truth" infuses Foucault's thinking. For his particular mention of it in relation to Enlightenment rationalism, see "Space, Knowledge and Power" (1984) pp. 248-249. See also the "Postface" to *L'Impossible Prison* (1980)

[136] Rajchman. (1988) p. 170

[137] Rorty. (1989) p. xv (emphasis added)

[138] See Habermas. (1987) p. 276

[139] See Foucault. (1984) p. 46

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practice, and its ideal is not a utopian *absence* of power"[140] but an active awareness and

continuous resistance to the powers at play. These considerations lie at the core of

Foucault's concept of genealogy which he acknowledges was inspired to him by

Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morality*.[141] Nietzsche was of course famously condemning of

the "expression of morality" in the social and political institutions of democracy,[142] and

Foucault echoes that feeling when he says "the search for a form of morality acceptable

by everyone in the sense that everyone would have to submit to it, seem catastrophic to

me."[143] It goes without saying that in the Foucaultdian outlook, civil society, which is

itself so closely linked to democracy and susceptible to normative theorizing, should be

no exception to the rule. Nevertheless, the idea that power and its manoeuvrings might

pervade the civil sphere remains insufficient ground to write off civil society as a potential

source of positive social change or a challenger of the more overt form of power that is

state authority. In order to achieve this, however, as Flyvbjerg explains, civil society must

abandon the stultifying ideal of consensus and promote, instead, conflict and debate, not

only externally –directed at the state or the market—but also within its own confines.[144]

Insofar as Foucault, like Habermas, would hope for the civil sphere to be a terrain

of lucid critique of official power --all the while being mindful of potential abuses of

power within that very sphere-- it is relevant to examine briefly his conception of state

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[140] Flyvbjerg. (1998) p. 223 (emphasis added)

[141] See Foucault. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." (1984) pp. 76-100

[142] Nietzsche. (1973) p. 125, Sect. 202.

[143] Qtd. in Dreyfus & Rabinow. (1986) p. 119

[144] Flyvbjerg. (1998) p.

authority. As Colin Gordon explains, in his essay "Governmental Rationality: An Introduction,"[145] Foucault applies the same style of analysis to study practices addressed to individuals and those aimed at groups or even entire populations. "There [is] no methodological or material discontinuity between three, respective, microphysical and macrophysical approaches to the study of power."[146] This has allowed some critics to argue he does not effectively provide a "theory of state," (i.e. one that ascribes to the state essential properties which can explain the activities of government.) The criticism, however, is misplaced. It's not that Foucault fails to ascribe essential properties to the state, but that, in his eyes, the state has no essence. It is a locus of struggle, "un lieu que l'on cède."[147] A noteworthy corollary of this conception of the state as a site of continual *rapport de forces* is that it grants civil society a far greater possibility of influence as a social/political player in practical terms.

We mentioned earlier that from the 1920s onwards, the actual term "civil society" had somewhat been cast aside in favour of closely related (if not entirely synonymous) expressions involving the "public" or the "community." This reflected in large part, as we saw in the previous chapter, the growing interest in the social sciences at the time for the notion of "public" and their effort to apprehend it in empirical and measurable ways. As we mentioned earlier though, while the "public" proper became an increasingly statistical construct, considerations of the public sphere remained largely normative and

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[145] See. pp. 1-51

[146] See Burchell, Gordon & Miller. (1991) p. 4

[147] Foucault. (1997) p. 14

philosophical in nature. The revival of "civil society" in the 1980s, however, initially

prompted by the social movements that emerged in Eastern Europe and their fight for

"democracy", gave not only renewed life to the term, but also fresh impetus to a more

empirical approach to the concept.

The 1988 publication of John Keane's collection on *Civil Society and the State* –

which included contributions by several Eastern European authors, including Vaclav

Havel-- is often regarded as a defining moment in the capture and formalization of the

spirit of civil society as it came to be understood in the late 1980s.[148] The unravelling of

the Communist Bloc a year later not only confirmed many of the book's insights but

suddenly propelled civil society to the forefront of social and political discussion.

Habermas himself remarked at the time, "The contemporary relevance bestowed on the

structural change of the public sphere by the long-delayed revolution occurring before our

eyes in central and eastern Europe."[149] Ernest Gellner, an early enthusiast of the dissident

movements of Eastern Europe, saw great promise in the fact that what had by and large

become a forgotten concept variously employed by eminent thinkers of the past had, "all

of a sudden...been taken out and thoroughly dusted, and has become a shining

emblem."[150] The sudden revival and popularity of civil society, in his eyes, was not a

simply a fleeting symptom of euphoric relief celebrating the end of decades of

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[148] This is not to say that all of the book's insights were entirely novel. Jean Cohen, for instance, had anticipated several of its observations in her 1982 *Class and Civil Society: The Limit of Marxian Critical Theory*. Moreover, the events in Eastern Europe had been closely watched in the West since the rise –and fall—of Solidarity in Poland. Civil society had therefore been what Raymond Williams (1976) would have termed a very present "structure of feeling" since the begining of the decade.

[149] Habermas. (1992) p. 421

[150] Gellner. (1994) p. 1

Communist abuses, but the confirmation of the failure of Marxist theory, and as such, the reflection of a paradigmal shift in political thought. "One way of summarizing the central intuition of Marxism," he wrote, "is to say: Civil Society is a fraud."[151] Complementing this view is Keane's vision of contemporary democracies as "long-term experiments in the capacity of citizens to live without secure foundations,"[152] which also evokes Beck and Giddens's notion of "risk society."[153] Cohen and Arato echoed these feelings in their argument that the void left by "the demise of the most important radical-democratic and socialist utopia of our time, Marxism"[154] called for a reformulation of democratic theory that would take into account the fundamental relevance of modern civil society in "the project of the institutionalization of discourses."[155] However, while this reformulation, in their eyes, still required the elaboration of a new set of ideals in order to ensure "motivation to maintain [and]...expand existing rights, democratic institutions, social solidarity or justice," [156] it could not afford to be solely ideological. Without a complementary social-scientific understanding of the organization and dynamics of contemporary society, there would be "no way of evaluating the generality of a given identity or the global constraints operating behind the back of social actors."[157] Mayhew

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[151] *Ibid.*

[152] The quote is from an unpublished book proposal cited in Edwards, (2004), p. 70.

[153] See Beck (1992, 1996, 2007). Giddens (1990, 1999)

[154] Cohen & Arato. (1992) p. xi

[155] *Ibid.* p. xvi.

[156]*Ibid.* p. xi

[157] *Ibid.* p. xvi

sees these pragmatic considerations in the urge for a political theory adapted to changed circumstances as having led "to a shift in the master term of the project from "the public sphere" to "civil society."[158]

Until this latest articulation, the evolution of the concept of civil society had always originated in theory, and had often remained at that level too, as an ideal of how thing ought to be, unperturbed by how they actually were. Its late 1980s reinvention reversed that process for the first time. This novel anchoring of the notion of civil society in practical experience allowed it to move --almost a hundred years later than the notion public opinion-- from the rarefied strata of moral philosophy and political theory into the social sciences proper. Alexander depicts this process particularly expressively at the beginning of The Civil Sphere:

> Vital concepts enter social science by a striking process of intellectual secularization. An idea emerges first in practical experiences, from the often overwhelming pressures of moral, economic, and political conflict. Only later does it move into the intellectual world of conceptual disputation, paradigm conflict, research program, and empirical debate. Even after they have made this transition, vital concepts retain significant moral and political associations, and they remain highly disputed. What changes is the terrain on which they are discussed, compromised, and struggled over.[159]

As Alexander hints at, however, although the concept of civil society is now a much more empirical construct, dominated by analyses of its role as socio-political force in specific contexts, it continues to carry political and moral connotations. The long history of the notion has left its residual marks on our contemporary appreciation of it. Edwards illustrates this point at length in his dissection of contemporary society as the

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[158] Mayhew. (1997) p. 144

[159] Alexander. (2006) p. 23

amalgam of three interconnected strands: the associational life, the good society, and the public sphere.[160] Civil society as associational life is no doubt the understanding most conducive to social scientific study and has therefore, as Edwards notes, become the dominant conception. But the normative concerns elicited by the notion of "the good society" (which, if we recall, was what the leaders of Solidarity in Poland were initially pleading for when they first revived the term) and the discursive considerations tied to the public sphere continue to infuse appreciably current civil society debates.

In the contemporary formulation of the concept, aided and abetted at first by the events in the former Soviet Bloc, civil society retains its essence as a sphere of social contact, but its scope is now widened to include not only all forms of associations and public communication, but also "self-constituted and self-mobilized" social movements.[161] Implicit in this inclusion is a shift in focus, in keeping with the "pragmatic turn," beyond its discursive capacities, to its social and political transformative powers on the ground. In other words, civil society is now more than a sphere of *interaction* which may or may not have repercussions on the social order; it has become an autonomous vehicle for social *action*. This is made plainly obvious, for instance, in the very first line of the Centre for Civil Society (CCS) at the London School of Economics' definition of civil society: "Civil society refers to the arena of uncoerced collective *action* around

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[160] See Edwards. (2004) passim.

[161] See also Cohen and Arato's definition of "modern civil society." (1992) p. ix. See also the Centre for Civil Society at the London School of Economics' introductory remarks at http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/introduction/default.htm#generated-subheading6.

shared interests, purposes and values."[162] It is in fact this understanding of civil society as an active social force –in addition of course to its instrumentality in shaping and disseminating public opinion-- that makes it particularly relevant to the underlying logic of contemporary public diplomacy, whose efforts to sway the opinion of foreign publics would be of little use, after all, were they not backed by the hope that this rallying of opinion could result in effective change. The alleged "autonomy" of civil society, however, is a somewhat more complex affair.

If the "public" or "civic" sphere were once the favoured ways of referring to the notion of civil society, the term "third sector" (or even more explicitly, the "non-governmental" or non-profit" sector) has gained precedence today, particularly in the social-scientific context. It is often defined, somewhat residually, as the field regrouping "those activities in which neither formal coercion nor the profit-oriented exchange of goods and services is the dominant principle."[163] In this specific interpretation --which as we mentioned earlier has come to dominate of late-- voluntary associational life, once so eagerly promoted by Tocqueville, becomes the constitutive characteristic of civil society. As Armony remarks however, this model of society may prove unduly simplistic for it relies on "the assumption that each sector operates according to a single principle that distinguishes its activities, namely, coercion in the state, profitability in the market, and

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[162] See http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what_is_civil_society.htm (emphasis added). Tellingly, in light of our discussion of the "sociologization" of sorts of civil society in the 1990s, the Centre explains that it "operates with a definition that captures the multi-faceted nature of the concept, whilst also being empirically and analytically useful."

[163] Wuthnow. (1991) p. 7

voluntarism in the third sector."[164] These considerations set aside, the fact remains that

while civil society's status as a sector distinct from the state and the economy is generally

unchallenged today, the extent of its actual independence from either remains heavily

questioned. This is not just a matter of noting civil society's evident interaction with both

state and market --a rather straightforward observation which also figures in the CCS's

very "neutral" definition: "in theory, [civil society'] institutional forms are distinct from

those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state,

civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated."[165]

While the idea of civil society *interacting* with government forces seems rather

unproblematic (inherent, in fact, to the notion that civil society can affect social and

political conditions), the suggestion of a possibly developing rapport of *interdependence*,

on the other hand, does raise significant concerns, particularly with regards to a traditional

conception of civil society as an agent of critique of official authority. Edwards, for

example, identifies a definite tension between the time-honoured "radical" interpretation

of civil society as "the ground from which to challenge the status quo" and the more

recent neo-liberal idea of it as a service-providing sector often of "indispensable support

for government reformers."[166] Although not entirely identical, this tension is somewhat

homologous to the one between conservative and progressive approaches to civil society:

the former seeing in civil society a conduit to nurture traditional moral values[167] while the

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[164] Armony. (2004) p. 30

[165] *Ibid*.

[166] Edwards. p. viii & p. 4.

[167] See Putnam, Skocpol, Wuthnow.

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latter entertain the hope of reimagining the social order through it.[168] This tension is further complicated, Edwards adds, by the noticeably growing intrusion of the market into areas long seen as "the preserve of civil society:"

> Today, "philanthrocapitalism" –the belief that business and the market can solve social problems as well as create economic surplus—is as "big an idea" a civil society, perhaps even bigger. It remains to be seen whether the global financial crisis of 2008 dampens enthusiasm for this new trend.[169]

Another challenge to civil society's "independence and its ability to judge and pressure governments (and corporations) has arisen from what was perhaps perceived by the latter, in the wake of civil society's Eastern European exploits, as its threatening success. Western "liberal" governments have therefore increasingly sought to develop constructive relationships with civil society groups as "an essential 'pre-defence' against attacks from the same sector."[170] Increased receptivity and cooperation between governments and civil society need not necessarily imply a diminution of civil society's significance. So long as the line between amicability and submission is not crossed, collaboration with the state could in fact fortify civil society's powers of influence. It does, however, introduce the danger of an eventual co-optation of civil society by the very forces to which it ought to remain impartial if it is to retain any legitimacy or substance as the third sector. This danger is one of the reasons, though not the only one, that prompts certain thinkers to cast some skepticism upon the notion that the third sector and democracy are symbiotic partners by nature. In *The Dubious Link*, for example, Ariel

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[168] See for example Gellner. (1994); Giddens. (1998, 2000); Keane. (1998, 2003).

[169] Edwards. (2004) p. viii. See also pp. 28-30

[170] *Ibid*. p. 15. See also Edwards (2000)

Armony makes a case against what he sees as the over-emphasis on civil society to the detriment of classical economic, political, and institutional factors in discussions on the "success" of democracy since the 1990s. Drawing from the examples of Weimar Germany, post-World War II America, and 1990s Argentina, Armony argues that "civil society may or may not lead to democracy because what matters is the context in which people associate, not because association is inherently and universally positive for democracy."[171]

Cohen and Arato believe a plain three-sector schema might be too reductive to capture fully, and in an analytically useful way, the many facets of civil society today and the intricacies of its interconnectedness with the state and the economy. They offer instead an "enriched" model which distinguishes two sub-categories of civil society –political society and economic society—which act as terrains of mediation with the other two sectors:

> ...under liberal democracies, it would be a mistake to see civil society in opposition to the economy and state by definition. Our notions of economic and political society (which admittedly complicate our three-part model) refer to mediating spheres through which civil society can gain influence over political-administrative and economic processes. An antagonistic relation of civil society, or it actors, to the economy or the state arises only when these mediations fail or when the institutions of economic or political society serve to insulate decision making and decision makers from the influence of social organizations, initiatives, and forms of public discussion.[172]

Pierre Manent opts for a more radical conceptual approach when he declares: "The civil society that we know and the representative state mutually belong to one another.

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[171] Armony. (2004) p. 2

[172] Cohen & Arato. (1992) pp. x-xi

Intellectually, they were conceived together, in relation to one another."[173] This may at first glance strike us as a reasonable enough observation, almost self-evident even in the sense that that all counterbalancing concepts are by nature mutually dependent, or as Keane would put it, "negative dialectical twins."[174] Freedom would mean little in the absence of restrictions to transcend; goodness would lose all sense if it opposite, evil, did not exist. Manent, however, who cautions us to be wary of "the good favor that the idea of civil society enjoy today,"[175] has a far more troubling conclusion in mind. The relationship between civil society and representative democracy, he argues, is not one of counterbalance but of reinforcement whose origin can be traced back to the very inception of the modern state in Hobbes' notion of mutual contract:

> As soon as power is conceived as an instrument fabricated by the members of society for their service, it logically becomes infinite or unlimited. What does this mean? Simply that the member of society do not have the right to oppose what it does or wills. This is so for a simple reason. If they had this right, the representative would not truly be *their* representative.
> The radical separation of power and society, the instrumentalization and infinite extension of this power, the representation of society by a power so defined – we see here the 'common matrix' of democracy and totalitarianism.[176]

Zygmunt Bauman offers what may be viewed as a variation on the same theme in his argument that zones of voluntary civility can only emerge in a society when the means of violence and coercion are institutionalized in a separate but related sphere.[177] Civil

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[173] Manent. (1998) p. 123

[174] Keane. (2004) p. 67

[175] *Ibid*.

[176] *Ibid*. p. 122

[177] Bauman. (2005) pp. 12-18

society, in other words, is able to be "civil" on account of the threat of the deployment of state power, be it as a protective or punishing measure. Civil society and violence go hand in hand, therefore, as two sides of the same modernizing process, "typically understood," writes Keane, "as the slow but steady inculcation of shared norms."[178] The ominous conclusion Bauman is driving at, in *Modernity and the Holocaust*, is that this condition leaves dangerously large reservoirs of violence in the hands of the state which may not always remain dormant. It also implies, as Keane points out in *Violence and Democracy*, another discouraging corollary whereby civil society turn out to be little more than "a cage of powerlessness" and its agents "potentially...the playthings of sinister managers of coercion."[179]

Manent and Bauman not only offer challenging theoretical counterpoints to optimistic pronouncements on the rise of people's power, but they also expose a fundamental conundrum at the root of democratic theory in general. However, while these considerations should be kept in mind as skeptical defenses against unchecked enthusiasm (in particular, as a reminder of the inevitable limits to the effectiveness of public diplomacy) they should not serve to pre-empt discussion of civil society's nevertheless very real promise. Put another way, although Manent and Bauman may (or may not) be right to argue that civil society shall never, due to its very essence, win "the war" against the state, it can still succeed at some "battles." In this respect, the more analytically useful way to assess the relationship between civil society and the state is perhaps best

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[178] Keane. (2004) p. 66

[179] *Ibid*.

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captured, at the end of the day, by Gellner's "simplest...and intuitively obvious" description:

> Civil society is that set of diverse non-governmental institutions, which is strong enough to counterbalance the state, and, whilst not preventing the state from fulfilling it role of keeper of the peace and arbitrator between major interests, can nevertheless prevent the state from dominating and atomizing the rest of society.[180]

Walker contends that the multiplicity of conflicting accounts of the relationship between state and civil society is not solely a manifestation of the ideological struggles of the past century (graded variants on the "maximise the state or maximise the market" continuum, as he describes them) but reflects, at a deeper level, the contradictions at the root of democratic theory which may well constitute the ultimate limitations of democratic practice today. [181] He mentions, for instance, the "glib hyphenisation 'liberal democracy,'" which he points out, "obscures a complex historical convergence of ideas about the sovereignty of the state and the right to private property that were anything but democratic in their initial formulation."[182] Most of the contradictions that democracy is being asked to resolve today can therefore be traced back, in his eyes, to "those early-modern attempts to construct an account of political life in a world of autonomies and separations out of the ruins of a world of hierarchies and continuities."[183] Seen from this angle, even the technological and other contextual changes we may be tempted to regard

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[180] Gellner. (1995) p. 32

[181] Walker. (1993) pp. 149-151

[182] *Ibid*. p. 145

[183] Ibid. p. 150

as specific to the present and increasingly fragmented age can in fact be seen as progressive exacerbations of this initial challenge.

It would be a mistake, however, to condemn --or even seek to totally remedy-- the wealth of competing notions that the idea of civil society appears to generate. The array and intensity of debate these conflicting interpretations generate testify in many ways to the dynamism and relevance of the concept and widen the possibilities of it evolution. These dialectic and salutary aspects of conflict at the conceptual level lead us back, somehow, to the Habermas/Foucault debate and the issue of consensus versus disagreement in civil society at the practical level. Without necessarily abandoning certain of Habermas's discursive ideals –which, in fact, arguably make room for a modicum of disagreement even if it is to be eventually overcome through reason and dialogue-- Flyvbjerg's assertion that "with the plurality that a contemporary concept for civil society must contain, conflict becomes an inevitable part of this concept"[184] seems difficult to refute (so long, needless to say, as the conflict remains respectful enough to avoid recourse to violence.) Albert Hirschman, with his distinctive inclination to bold pronouncements, goes even further, arguing that social conflicts guarantee diversity and may well be "the pillars of democratic market society." Cultivating them is therefore vital to enhancing the "community spirit" in liberal democracy.[185] While that may well be true, it also highlights, as Edward reminds us, the difficulty of resolving the need to reconcile the nurturing of diversity with the elaboration of common norms that remains necessary to

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[184] Flyvbjerg. (1998) p. 229

[185] See Hirschman. (1998) pp. 231-247. For a related discussion on the necessity of "opinionated opinions" in democracy, see also pp. 77-84

a functioning community.[186] This dilemma is felt with particular acuteness in the emerging concept of global civil society.

We examined at length, earlier, the significance of the 1980s dissident movements of Eastern Europe in reviving and rearticulating the concept of civil society. The collapse of communism, however, though its magnitude cannot be overstated, was not the sole factor at play in the subsequent redefinition of the concept. The so-called "information revolution" launched in the early 1990s with the rise of the Internet, which will be discussed in the following chapter, was perhaps as crucial as the demise of Marxism in shaping the latest evolution of the notion civil society. In parallel, the emergence of problems of an increasingly global nature, such as environmental issues or terrorism, and the explosion of transnational NGOs on the ground further encouraged the sense, if not of a straightforward globalization, then undeniably of a growing interconnectedness and the need, hence, for improved coordination. In civil society thinking, this combination of phenomena spurred the emergence of the concept of a global civil society which has in effect come to dominate the theoretical discussion of civil society in the first decade of the twenty first century. If the literature on national forms of civil society has increasingly favoured analytical and empirical study, the debate on global civil society, with its implicit (at times, even, overtly acknowledged) revival of the Kantian principles of a "cosmopolitan" international order and "perpetual peace,"[187] is certainly the area where

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[186] Edwards. (2004) p. 81

[187] Kant. (1991, 2005)

idealism and the normative prevail in the field. [188] European thinkers (Keane, Beck, Giddens, Anheier and Kaldor et al.) have often spearheaded the global civil society debate, inspired perhaps by their direct experience of an emerging transnational form of society in the consolidation of the European Union throughout the 1990s and early 2000s.[189]

An exhaustive survey of the concept of global civil society and its wealth of connotations would necessitate at the very least a chapter of its own. Several of its key implications will in fact be taken up in the discussion of the information society in the following chapter. We shall therefore focus, for now, in keeping with the spirit of our discussion of civil society so far, on its broader and more political ramifications. Bearing in mind our underlying concern with the notion and exercise of public diplomacy, we can note at the outset that the concept of global civil society, understood as a transnational sphere of civilian influence, visibly complicates the practice all the while multiplying the potential results to be gained from engaging the citizens of foreign countries. In this respect, two interrelated themes come to the fore. The first is the noticeable trend to reconceptualize the world as a "network,"[190] which provides, as Barry notes, "a sense...of the intricacy of relations developing between different political actors in the context of

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[188] See Keane, (2003); Eberly, (2008); Alexander, (2006); Anheier & Kaldor, eds., (2004/5, 2005/6, 2007/8). For a more succint summary of the rise of global civil society, see Edwards, (2004) pp. 96-103.

[189] This is not to say that global civil society has been ignored by American theorists who have been increasingly joining and enriching the debate. Interestingly, in America, the notion has found resonance not just amongst liberal thinkers –traditionally the natural allies of idealistic universalist discourse—but equally within the more conservative circles, albeit in somewhat differing interpretations. Don Eberly, for example, has been a prominent champion of global civil society, predominantly for its capacity to disseminate "compassion: America's most consequential export." (Eberly. (2008) p. 1)

[190] See Castells, (1996); Anheier & Katz, (2005); Barry (2001).

new forms of national and transnational governance which cannot be captured in terms of the older concepts of state power."[191] These observations lead us to the second theme at play in the notion of global civil society –and more generally in the debate about globalization-- that is, the renegotiation of the concept of the nation state.

The idea of a "network society" (be it national or transnational) was precipitated by the emergence of new spaces of circulation created by scientific and technological advances. As Castells argues, the traditional notion of a "space of places," lacked the flexibility and multi-layeredness necessary to capture the myriad of increasingly faster and deterritorialized exchanges occurring in "more or less unstable zones"[192] enabled by these developments. A new method of analysis was hence needed to apprehend and codify these exchanges, one that would be predicated on "spaces of flows" rather than physically grounded ones.[193] A similar point was made by Appadurai in the now classic "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," although he opted for the term "scapes" to refer to these dynamic and intersecting zones of flow which could variously be of a communicative, technological, financial, or good old-fashioned physical nature (as in the actual migration of individuals).[194] In the context of a network society, Gellner's notion of "modular man," characterized by his engaging in "specific-purpose, *ad hoc*, limited associations, without binding himself by some blood ritual,"[195] gains renewed relevance.

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[191] Barry. (2001) p. 86

[192] Barry. (2001) p. 41

[193] See Castells. (1996)

[194] Appadurai. (1993)

[195] Gellner. (1995) p. 42

Gellner's modern reworking of the Victorian jurist and historian Sir Henry Maine's notion

of societal progress as a "move from status to contract,"[196] is in fact central to his vision

of civil society:

> This is civil society: the forging of links which are effective even
> though they are flexible, specific, instrumental. Society is a structure,
> it is not atomized, helpless and supine, and yet the structure is readily
> adjustable and responds to rational criteria of improvement.
> The modularity of modern man was probably a precondition of the
> industrial miracle, and is certainly –by definition— a precondition of
> civil society: civil society is a cluster of institutions and associations
> strong enough to prevent tyranny, but which are, nevertheless,
> entered freely rather than imposed either by birth or by awesome
> ritual.[197]

The "network" perspective on society offers, therefore, a means of transcending

what Beck frowningly labels "methodological nationalism."[198] In doing so, however, it

also potentially disrupts the principle of the state sovereignty which has anchored the

understanding of political practice and relations since Hobbes' opening articulation of

modern political theory. The growing conceptualization of the world in term of flows,

scapes and interactive networks has engendered, as Walker tidily sums it up, an array of

arguments "about whether states are obstinate or obsolete, or whether so-called non-state

actors play a significant role in contemporary world politics, or even whether states are

becoming caught within networks of interdependence or functional regimes."[199] Although

neither of these controversies can be definitively answered at this juncture, the tension

they generate has not been limited to intellectual circles. It has been noticeably affecting

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[196] Maine. (1924)

[197] Gellner. (1995) pp. 42-43

[198] Beck. (2000, 2008)

[199] Walker. (1993) p. 7

contemporary political practice. This can be witnessed not only through civil society's own efforts to coordinate its efforts and project its visibility on a global stage as with the creation of the World Social Forum[200], but more tellingly, in the growing role direct citizen participation and transnational civil associations have been invited to play within the political establishment be it through the advance of e-democracy[201], the proposal for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly, or the extended consultative arrangements granted to NGOs at the UN in recent years (albeit generally in social and economic matters only.)[202] In Europe, the Council of Europe has gone beyond a mere consultative role for NGOs, adopting on October 1st 2009 a draft "Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the *Decision-Making* Process."[203]

Aside from indicating a possible growing role for civil society at the international and official level, these developments also highlight the growing dominance of NGOs within civil society itself, a dominance that is not without its critics. If at a local or national level, thinkers such as Putnam, Wuthnow or Skocpol deplore the replacement of directly-involving civic associations by "professionally-run advocacy organizations" for having reduced participation to an abstract and passive notion,[204] the professionalization of the field involves further complications at the international level. On the one hand,

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[200] For a detailed analysis of the creation and expansion of the WSF see Wainwright. (2005)

[201] Lam. (2005) pp. 110-111

[202] An updated account of UN measures regarding NGOs' participation is available on the website of the NGO Branch of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs at http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/

[203] The full draft Code may be viewed at http://www.coe.int/t/ngo/Source/Code_good_practice_en.pdf

[204] See Putnam, (1996, 2000, 2002); Wuthnow, (1998, 1999); Skocpol, (1999, 2003).

without the formalized mediating structure provided by international NGOs, the sheer size

of a global civil community would probably prove impossible to coordinate, let alone

move to decisive action. However, as a result of this "mediating" role, NGOs maintain an

ambiguous relationship with the transnational communities they purport to represent.

Extending Putnam and Skocpol's thoughts on the distancing effects of professionalizing

international civic engagement, Stearns argues that NGO are therefore able "to claim a

public mantle without a voice to match."[205] Anderson and Rieff are even more

condemning, asserting that "the love affair between international organisations and global

civil society was never more than a minor affair with a minor mistress."[206] The extensive

involvement of NGOs in Iraq and Afghanistan (and the equal targeting of international

organization workers and occupying allied forces by the enemy in these lands), they

argue, illustrates the dual and ever more irreconcilable allegiance of NGOs to both "the

people of the world" and established authority. Moreover, they pursue, the very fact that

the invasion of Iraq proceeded in spite of the massive opposition of "global civil society,"

suggests that

> ...NGOs, whether styling themselves as global civil society or
> anything else, appear frankly irrelevant as the grown-ups, nation-
> states, confer among themselves, sometimes with international
> organisations and sometimes not.[207]

Without necessarily opting for such a radically negative assessment, it must be

reckoned that global civil society –in its imperfect but nevertheless emerging present

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[205] Stearns. (2005) p. 58

[206] Anderson & Rieff. (2005) p. 36

[207] *Ibid*.

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form—has yet to prove its bearing on international relations, particularly when security matters are involved. Nation states may have lost a significant amount of control over their cross-border flows, but their capacity to deploy violence remains intact and, in spite of the emergence of transnational terrorist networks, unmatched as of yet.[208] Short of joining terrorist ranks, global civil society remains therefore condemned for now to a certain degree of powerlessness, which if we recall Bauman's words, may in fact also be the necessary condition of its existence. As Walker notes: "Contemporary accounts of political life –perhaps unlike contemporary accounts of social and economic life—remain impressed by the resilience of boundaries, by the sheer difficulty of imagining a politics beyond the horizons of a sovereign space."[209]

Although there is no denying the "insistent tension between the project of the modern nation-state and its ideological control over the circulation of both its citizens and its capital in diaspora,"[210] the notion of the nation state still visibly anchors the practice of international politics. In fact, one of the main conceptual obstacles to the various attempts to codify the concept of global civil society is the opaque and convoluted fabric of the international order itself. As Walker explains, "international relations is defined both by the *presence* of sovereign states as primary actors and by the *absence* of a sovereign power/authority governing the system itself."[211] Görg and Hirsch, echoing Held, describe

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[208] Görg & Hirsch. (1998) p. 602.

[209] Walker. (1993) p. 175. Michel Foucher (2007) takes Walker's point further, arguing that national borders are not only resilient but in fact resurgent in the contemporary political landscape.

[210] Mitchell, K.. (1997) p. 105

[211] Walker. (1993) p. 171 (emphasis added)

the international political stage as "a disparate collection of relatively unconnected decision-making centres and mechanisms."[212] Anderson and Goodman sum it up essentially as "structural anarchy."[213] As we have seen, civil society in its original domestic sense is fundamentally linked to the state/authority and to democracy, the three concepts mutually enabling and limiting one another. Global civil society, however, if it exits, does so in the absence of a corresponding global authority to regulate it[214] and of well-established democratic institutions to support it. (As Görg and Hirsch stress, democracy may not simply be reduced to "enlightened cooperation of all national powers vis-a-vis communal locational optimization," which have "relatively little to do with emancipation or plural control of power."[215]) In light of this "queasy nebulous confrontation between democracy and world politics,"[216] the analogical projection of the concept of civil society onto the global stage appears impracticable without a complete restructuring of the international order which might only be achieved "at the high cost of an enormous disregard for existing decision-making processes and potentials."[217]

At this particular point in time, we can only affirm the unascertainable; that nation-states may or may not be with us forever, that global civil society may remain a utopian ideal or become a powerful reality, and that civil society itself may need to scale

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[212] Görg & Hirsch. (1998) pp. 605-606. See also Held (1995)

[213] See Anderson & Goodman. (1995)

[214] Anderson & Rieff. (2005) p. 27

[215] Görg & Hirsch. (1998) p. 596

[216] Walker. (1993) p. 150.

[217] Görg & Hirsch. (1998) p. 606

down the exaggerated expectations it generated in the last decade of the twentieth century, or, who knows, go on to surpass them in the twenty-first. It could also possibly even vanish from our vocabulary or simply go by another name. It has after all fallen out of fashion numerous times in the past as we have seen. However, as Salvador Giner fittingly observes, "if the women and men of tomorrow wish to remain free citizens, capable of a decent degree of autonomy in order to carry out their own business, both public and private, they will have to continue to dwell in a universe which must be, in a fundamental sense, not dissimilar to that represented until today by civil society."[218] Likewise, though perhaps more pragmatically, if the practice of public diplomacy is to retain any sort of relevance, some form of civil society –both in the sense of a relatively self-governing public sphere and of an effective channel for action-- shall have to be present on the receiving end of its communicative efforts.

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[218] Giner. (1995) p. 323

CHAPTER IV – THE INFORMATION AGE

In times past, one would have thought of information as more of a lubricant that helped get commodities produced, or perhaps the upshot of a service like a doctor's diagnosis or a lawyer's legal opinion. And its value would not be constant...but would vary with its accuracy and applications. But these days, information is freely called product, resource, capital, currency.

Theodore Roszak, *The Cult of Information*[1]

As every man goes through life he fills in a number of forms for the record, each containing a number of questions...There are thus hundreds of little threads radiating from every man, millions of threads in all. If these threads were suddenly to become visible, the whole sky would look like a spider's web...They are not visible, they are not material, but every man is constantly aware of their existence.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Cancer Ward*[2]

I- INTRODUCTION

Our investigation of the evolution of the concepts of public opinion and civil society, both of them inextricably connected to the ideals and practice of modern democracy, has allowed us to contextualize the origin of the recent practice of public diplomacy in the mid-1960s. It goes without saying that public diplomacy is not solely the product of the sociologization of public opinion in conjunction with the development of mass media and the recognition of civil society as a mediating third sector. Its inception cannot be divorced from practical and tactical motivations at the political level, most of them related to the Cold War setting in which it was to be primarily deployed.

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[1] Roszak. (1986) p. 5

[2] Solzhenitsyn. *Cancer Ward*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 1969 p. 192. With due acknowledgements to Beniger who cites the passage in an epigraph in *The Control Revolution.*

The fact remains, nevertheless, that without a conceptualization of public opinion as a measurable, influenceable and potentially potent force, and a complementary model of civil society as an arena for public opinion to crystallize in and eventually translate into action, the idea of public diplomacy would have been, if not inconceivable, at least somewhat irrelevant. Indeed, had public opinion and civil society not been recognized as agents of social change, the notion of a state communicating with a foreign public in the absence of actual, physical and armed conflict, and in a manner thereby more akin to the practice of public relations, would have been of little strategic value. In this sense, therefore, public diplomacy can clearly be situated at a particular point of intersection in the related trajectories of the notions of public opinion and civil society. However, another crucial factor must also be taken into account in order to fully grasp the transformation of public diplomacy from its Cold War birth to its early twenty-first century incarnation: the advent of what can loosely be termed, for lack of a unanimously agreed-upon designation, "the information age."

As we have seen, the evolution of public opinion --and hence of civil society-- was itself deeply marked –for better or for worse-- by the development of the mass media in the first half of the twentieth century. The tremendous changes in the media landscape since then, particularly since the introduction of the Internet nearly two decade ago -- which in the eyes of some constitute no less than a "revolution"-- have had a significant impact on the modes of production and dissemination of information. And although, as we noted in our brief broaching of the subject earlier, the exact nature and extent of this impact on social and political life remains disputed, it has undoubtedly at the very least

altered, and perhaps even transformed, the processes of public opinion formation as well as the organization of civil society. These technologically driven changes in the configuration of the media, however, are part of an arguably wider social shift that transcends the domain of communications theory and which thinkers from a broad spectrum of disciplines --from economics and sociology to political theory and philosophy-- have been trying to harness and identify since the 1960s (once again, and perhaps not coincidentally, as public diplomacy began to coalesce into an organized practice.)

The continued efforts to define the contemporary social transformations at play have yielded a multitude of appellations. In his 1986 book, *The Control Revolution*, James Beniger identifies no less than seventy five distinct attempts at encapsulating "modern societal transformations" between 1950 (the year Riesman introduced the notion of the "lonely crowd") and 1985.[3] Needless to say, that number has kept growing steadily since then. Some of these designations, such as Bell's "post-industrial society," Martin and Butler's "information society" or more recently, Castells' "network society," have proved more successful than others at securing a place in academic --or even everyday— vocabulary and generating discourse. Others (the unfortunately named "compunications,"[4] or the perhaps too gloomy "stalled society,"[5] come to mind) barely registered a fleeting blip on the indexing radar. None of these various and often

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[3] Beniger. (1986) pp. 4-5

[4] See Oettinger. (1971)

[5] See Crozier. (1973)

overlapping terms, however, has yet managed to single-handedly garner sufficiently widespread *and* enduring support to become the definitive name of our age. Instead, they appear to have aggregated in what Barney describes as "a constellation of discourses" attempting "to articulate the definitive spirit of whatever it is that follows either the realization or the exhaustion of the modern project in the West."[6] One reason for this may simply be the inevitable difficulty of attempting to encapsulate in a totalizing manner an unfolding present that one, no matter how critical, remains a part of and can only therefore observe with inherent myopia. As Beniger points out, the abundance of efforts to engage contemporary transformations does appear to indicate that "we do seem more alert than previous generations to the possible importance of change." On the other hand, he pursues, it could also suggest that "we may be preoccupied with specific and possibly ephemeral events and trends, at the risk of overlooking what only many years from now will be seen as the fundamental dynamic of our age."[7]

Beniger's remarks in fact point to a fundamental issue underlying the multitude of often overlapping and at times competing sociological constructs which have emerged in the past fifty years in response to real or perceived transformations in economic, political and social life associated in large part with advances in information and communications technologies (ICTs): the matter of continuity versus change. Indeed, as we shall examine in the following section, not only are these various analyses of the contemporary state of things divided along the usual optimists/pessimists rift (from the utopists who proclaim

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[6] Barney. (2004) p. 4

[7] Beniger. (1986) p. 3

the dawn of a new age of unprecedented possibilities to the intransigent alarmists who perceive little more than increasingly insurmountable dangers), but the very notion of an actual societal transformation remains itself heavily disputed.

It is not so much the existence of change itself, at least in that "specific, possibly ephemeral" sense Beniger mentions, which is contested. Few of course would deny that the Internet, to name but one recent example, has transformed the dissemination of information (in terms of speed and variety at any rate) and even the way personal relationships or business transactions may be conducted. What is at issue is whether these undeniably quantitative changes are in fact also sufficiently qualitative to amount to a fundamental and all-encompassing social, economic and political shift.

Still, despite the myriad of related but nonetheless distinct appellations, the conflicting analyses, and the disputed extent of the undergoing changes, a unifying theme does emerge. As Webster notes, echoing Duff, "Whichever interpretation one takes of what it all amounts to, information and its movement (communication), are undeniably of enormous import."[8] We may or may not have witnessed an "information revolution," or live in an "information society," but even the most stringent critics of both these concepts will concede that we inhabit "a much more informationally intensive environment."[9] This is why we opted therefore for the somewhat unifying and relatively more open-ended term "information age" as a heading to this chapter. This is not to be taken narrowly as an homage to Manuel Castells' eponymous opus, nor to McLuhan's "age of information,"

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[8] Webster. (2004) p. 2 (See also Duff. 2000)

[9] *Ibid.*

but rather as a compromise of sorts. This compromise remains vulnerable to the possible

charge that ours may not be *the* information age but simply the latest form in a long

historical succession of information ages.[10] It does however allows us to circumvent the

thornier notion of "society" which is itself attacked at times, by some of the most radical

of these theories (famously and controversially once too by Margaret Thatcher[11]), as a

concept far too intertwined with distinctly modern notions of nation and sovereignty to

adequately apprehend the increasing complexity and inter-connectedness of the

contemporary scene,[12] or as Touraine once put it, "a pseudonym for fatherland... [that]

should be dropped from the analysis of social life."[13] We shall, however, inevitably come

to employ the term "society" throughout our analysis (after all, Touraine himself did),

though clearly not in a narrow "national" sense, as the most salient theories of the

information age –post-industrial society, information society, network society—do. The

notion of "age," with its potential romantic, "spiritual" or Hegelian overtones is arguably

itself too a problematic one. Nevertheless, it appears to be, for our purposes, the least

restrictive designation in both spatial and temporal terms; the one therefore most apt to

comprise a significant part of that constellation of concepts and analyses described above,

all the while highlighting the dominance of the information/communication theme which

is of course the aspect of most relevance to this dissertation.

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[10] See Hobart & Schiffmann. (1998)

[11] Thatcher famously declared in a 1987 interview, "There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and their families" as alleged grounds to defend her government's cutbacks on social spending. The statement was of course fiercely attacked by both her political opponents and academics.

[12] See Urry, (2000); Mann (1993); Laclau & Mouffe (1985)

[13] Touraine. (1988) pp.6, 8.

This chapter will provide an overview of some of the most prominent theories which may be grouped under "the information age" banner. The study does not aim to be exhaustive, but to provide a general "cartography" of sorts of the field, selectively prioritizing the social and political themes which are of most import to our conceptual analysis of public diplomacy. Unlike the previous chapters, therefore, the emphasis will not be primarily on chronological evolution, but also on tracing the connecting threads between these various concepts, highlighting their cohesion as well as their divergences. We shall particularly focus on the repercussions –witnessed or predicted-- of the heightened exploitation of information, and the growing reliance on ICTs in its collection and dissemination, on the conduct of political life at large and the practice of international relations in particular. In doing so, we will of course be returning to and expanding on several key themes previously broached in the context of public opinion and civil society, such as the future of the nation state, the public sphere and social movements. We will conclude by tying these observations back to the evolution of the ideals and practice of public diplomacy.

II- THEORIES OF THE INFORMATION AGE

As was the case with both public opinion and civil society, we are faced once again with a multi-faceted notion open to an array of interpretations, reinforced in this case by the fact that we are not just dealing with a complex yet ultimately single concept, but with a constellation of theories more or less closely connected by a somewhat common thread. This "thread," itself at times slippery and versatile, is the basic premise

that the creation, diffusion, use and manipulation of information has come to have a dominant impact on economic, political and social life. Of course, as Robins and Webster remind us, "the exploitation of information/knowledge has a considerable history."[14] In his *Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, for instance, Giddens demonstrates at length that while the emergence of both traditional and modern states is undoubtedly connected with the evolution of material production and the accumulation of wealth, it has also relied extensively on the gathering and storage of information:

> ...equally significant, and very often the main means whereby such material wealth is generated, is the collection and storage of information used to co-ordinate subject populations. Information storage is central to the role of 'authoritative resources' in the structuring of social systems spanning larger ranges of space and time than tribal cultures.[15]

The critical role of information in social life and, as Giddens suggests, its intimate connection to the exercise of political power are therefore not in and of themselves entirely novel notions. Still the rapid and successive advances in communications technology during the twentieth century, in combination with other key factors of economic or cultural origins which we shall examine shortly, and aided too by the evolution of the social sciences and the rise of statistics, have rendered the concept and use of information central to most aspects of individual and public life to a degree previously unparalleled. The variety of factors at play helps explain in part the diversity of theoretical models that the recognition of the growing weight of information in contemporary society has spawned. Webster endeavours to clarify this mosaic of

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[14] Robins & Webster. (1999) p. 102

[15] Giddens. (1987) p. 2

"informational" theories by distinguishing six major criteria infusing them. These are not mutually exclusive markers. Just like the many theories they contribute in shaping, there is a significant amount of heterogeneity and overlap. These criteria are however emphasized in varying degrees and combinations by thinkers concerned with the information age.

The first five, which Webster labels "quantitative," he lists as: technological, economic, occupational, spatial and cultural. The sixth one, deemed more marginal and "singularly qualitative" in nature, is rooted in the view "not that that there is more information today (there obviously is), but rather that the character of information is such as to have transformed how we live."[16] It is also, due to its ultimately unascertainable bias (since it can neither be proven or disproved beyond reasonable doubt and requires therefore a certain leap of conviction), the most problematic. The distinction between "quantitative" and "qualitative" approaches underlies in fact a dilemma faced by a number of theories of the information age, from Daniel Bell's to Castells', which, as skeptics like to point out, rely ultimately on quantitative observations (the amount of information in circulation, the percentage of jobs in the service or communications sectors, the flows of people, goods, capital and ideas across traditional borders, the increasing economic interdependence amongst nations) to reach qualitative conclusions (i.e. that a "revolution" is occuring, that we live in a new form of society). [17] The paradox is in fact not unique to information age theory. It is inherent to most if not all qualitative

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[16] Webster. (2002) pp. 8-9

[17] See Roszak (1986), Kumar (1995), Garnham (2001), May (2003).

theorizing. Qualitative conclusions necessarily contain an element of interpretation that is irreducible to fool-proof facts and figures. Philosophy or literature may be free to toy with them at leisure, unfettered by numbers and statistics, as they are not held accountable to "scientific" principles. The social sciences, on the other hand, are by their very nature inclined to marry modern quantitative evidence with interpretive inference, leaving them more vulnerable to the charges described above. That being said, as Roszak argues, in the case of "informational" social theories, the conflict between the quantitative and the qualitative is heightened by the very choice of the word "information."

Roszak traces the origin of our contemporary, and to his eyes misleading, use of the word to the 1948 publication, by the electronic engineer and mathematician Claude Shannon, of "A Mathematical Theory of Communication," which is generally acknowledged as having established the *scientifi*c discipline of information theory (the theory of the transmission of messages). In Roszak's view, however, the effects of Shannon's ground-breaking attribution of a purely technical definition to the term, wholly divorced from the meaning and value laden connotations of its common-sense usage, rippled far beyond the borders of esoteric science and engineering. The notion of information as "a purely quantitative measure of communicative exchanges,"[18] he argues, progressively revolutionized the way we have come to employ the term and marked the begining of information's reduction to what Machlup once described as "an all-purpose

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[18] Roszak. (1986) p. 11

weasel word"[19] progressively stripped of its semantic qualities "[F]or the information theorist," Roszak pursues, "it does not matter whether we are transmitting a fact, a judgement, a shallow cliche...a sublime truth or a nasty obscenity."[20] These observations echoe Boulding's earlier concerns on the divorce between information and its content:

> ...while it is enormously useful for the telephone engineers...for the purposes of the social system theorist we need a measure which takes account of significance and which would weight, for instance, the gossip of a teenager rather low and the communications over the hot line between Moscow and Washington rather high.[21]

This is not to say that all theories of the information age have been oblivious to the semantic attributes of information, to the nature of its content. Thinkers such as Habermas, Schiller or Postman, for example, have repeatedly focused on, and usually bemoaned, the substance of contemporary public discourse[22] and we shall return to them later in our discussion. Nevertheless, Roszak's targeted analysis of the evolution and relative "scientization"of the use of the word "information" since the late 1940s does serve to highlight, not only the acquired slipperiness of the term *per se*, but also therefore, the multiple –and potentially contradictory—conclusions that may result from contemplating the growing role of "information" at all levels of social life.

So when did the information age actually begin? Once again, interpretations differ. Roszak, as we have just seen, singles out Shannon's 1948 paper as the 'original sin' which inaugurated the information age. Coincidentally, this was also the year

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[19] Qtd. in Roszak. (1986) p. 9

[20] *Ibid*. p. 14

[21] Boulding. (1966) p. 2

[22] See Habermas (1992, 1995), Schiller (1996), Postman (1986)

Norbert Wiener completed his *Cybernetics or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*, which, amongst other things, introduced and formalized the notion of feedback, a notion which would have deep repercussions not only in the development of engineering and computer science, but also in economics, media studies, philosophy and social theory in general. Wiener himself was in fact keen to stress the importance of interdisciplinarity, affirming that "It is these boundary regions of science which offer the richest opportunities to the qualified investigator."[23] Like Shannon, whom he cites, and confirming Roszak's observations on the fundamental dissociation of information from it content, Wiener acknowledges that his theory of communication engineering was contingent upon the development of "a statistical theory of the *amount* of information."[24] This progressive dissociation, from the late 1940s onwards, between the physically-transmitted message and its semantic content –in other words, the notion that anything could qualify as information so long as somebody cared to convey it-- was undoubtedly a shift crucial to the fulgurant progress of communications technology in subsequent decades. (This dissociation might also have been encouraged, perhaps, by the fact that many of these post-war communications scientists had served as cryptographers during the war; Shannon, for instance, had been in regular contact with Turing.) The computer, let alone the Internet, would have been inconceivable without it. But do these ultimately primarily technological changes really constitute the dawn of the information age?

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[23] Wiener. (1961) p.2

[24] *Ibid*. p. 10

Several thinkers argue against such technologically deterministic interpretation and situate the roots of the information "revolution" much earlier.

Robins and Webster contend that the so-called "information revolution" is inadequately conceived, as it is conventionally, as a question of technology and technological innovation."[25] In their view, the true substance of the "information revolution" lies in "the new matrix of political cultural forces that it supports,"[26] the redefined relationship between technology, information and power. In this sense, they argue, the significant shift can be traced back to the turn of the twentieth century when Taylor introduced his doctrine of Scientific Management based on the systematized "dual articulation of information/knowledge for 'efficient' planning and for control."[27] Although principally and overtly applied at first to production processes, Scientific Management was in fact advocated by Taylor as a more universal *modus operandi* for social processes. To Robins and Webster, it is precisely the progressive encroachment of Taylorist principles from production first to consumption and eventually beyond the economic sphere to the organization of state power and political life that laid the ground for the information age:

> New information and communications technologies have most
> certainly advanced, and automated, these combined information and
> intelligence activities, but they remain essentially refinements of
> what was fundamentally a political-administrative 'revolution.'[28]

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[25] Robins and Webster. (1999) p. 89

[26] *Ibid*. p. 105

[27] *Ibid*. p. 94

[28] *Ibid*. p. 106

Robins and Webster's "wider-picture" approach, not to mention its focus on the close relationship between information and management/control, owes much to the thesis initially articulated by Beniger in his seminal *The Control Revolution*. To Beniger, recent theories of an information "age," "economy" or "society" are but subsequent corollaries of a paradigm shift which began in the 1830s (with the introduction of railroads) and really took off in the 1880s in response to the expansion of industrialization. His alternative perspective on the Industrial Revolution leads him to the conclusion that its most significant effect was that in accelerating "society's entire material processing system," it triggered a "crisis of control"[29] as the available information-processing and communications technology --both of them, Beniger argues, crucial to effective control over a system or process and all the more so as the latter grow in complexity -- were not equipped to cope with the speed of innovation in manufacturing and transportation. The response to this crisis was the beginning of a stream of innovations in the collection, storage and communication of information aimed at systematizing and optimizing economic management and political control that began with the filing cabinets of Weberian bureaucracy[30], progressively leading to the virtual databases of our day.

> With the rapid increase in bureaucratic control and a spate of innovations
> in industrial organization, telecommunications, and the mass media, the
> technological and economic response to the crisis –the Control
> Revolution—had begun to remake societies throughout the world by the
> beginning of [the twentieth] century.[31]

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[29] Beniger. (1986) p. 427

[30] Weber. (1964, 1978)

[31] *Ibid*. p. 429

Recent advances in information and communication technology are not therefore as such the cause of societal change, though in altering the execution of certain material, economic or communicative practices they may contribute to reshaping the wider social structures (and in so doing, as Winner once remarked, often beget the need for further technological innovation[32] thereby creating an endless process of self-induced technological renewal and innovation). They do not, to use Beniger's own words, "represent a new force only recently unleashed on an unprepared society but merely the most recent instalment in the continuing development of the Control Revolution."[33] And it was this revolution, in his view, which truly inaugurated the Information Age. Beniger's thesis is echoed somewhat in JoAnne Yates' *Control through Communication*. Yates' opus on business history may not tackle the issue of the advent of the information age *per se*; it does however, complement and extend several of Beniger's themes. Of particular relevance is her view that the development of systematized management techniques and communications technologies did not just make information more fundamental to the efficiency of the organizational process, it also introduced a qualitative shift in the nature of information itself, one that fostered standardization, precision and concision and found its most concrete expression in the emergence two new "genres:" the memo and the form.[34] Inspired by Yates, Guillory argues that these developments allowed the emergence of a conception of "information" situated in "the

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[32] See Winner. (1977)

[33] Beniger. (1986) p. 435

[34] Yates. (1989). Also Yates and Orlikowski, (1992).

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vast epistemic realm between fact and knowledge,"[35] and defined as "any given (datum) of our cognitive experience that can be materially encoded for the purpose of transmission or storage,"[36] a definition which confirms Roszak's observations on the qualitative transformation of the notion of information. The close entwinement with transmission and storage, though as ancient as verbal –or even pre-verbal communication itself,[37] is therefore particularly constitutive in the context of the organizational impulses and technological support which characterize this novel notion of information:

> The difference between information and fact is based on value in transmission. The selling price of a given stock at a given time is a fact that functions in certain contexts as a piece of information because this fact is what *one wants to know* in that context. Fact becomes information when it is, so to speak, value-added. Information demands to be transmitted because it has a shelf-life, a momentary value that drives the development of our information technologies in their quest to speed up, economize, and maximize the effectiveness of transmission. Missing the right moment of transmission, information must be stored to await its next opportunity.[38]

Aside from their effort to place the information revolution in the wider historical context, the views we have just examined are also keen to stress what they see as the essentially controlling –be it in a merely organizational or more threateningly authoritarian sense-- tendencies underpinning the information revolution, a theme that generally characterizes the more pessimistic assessments of the information age[39]

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[35] Guillory. (2004) p. 109

[36] *Ibid*. p. 110. For a thorough review of the historical evolution and transformation of information's defining relationship with storage and transmission see Hobart and Schiffman. (1998).

[37] See Hobart & Schiffman. (1998)

[38] *Ibid*.

[39] See Kumar (1995), Schiller (1996), Carey (1995), Garnham (2001), May (2004).

whether it be as increased government surveillance or corporate domination. This strand

of critique, warning of a society progressively engulfed in an ever-expanding network of

management and control –what Adorno and Horkheimer already deplored in the late

1940s as the ascent of an "administered world" that endangered human freedom[40]-- is

just as generally countered by more positive appraisals of its liberating, empowering and

uniquely democratic potential, at times arguably bordering on the utopian (Dyson, Gilder,

Keyworth and Toffler's "Cyberspace and the American Dream," with its opening

declaration that "The central event of the 20th century is the overthrow of matter,"[41]

inevitably comes to mind). Some of the most buoyant accounts emanate from what

Barbrook and Cameron have labelled "Californian ideology" for its characteristic

"Silicon-Valley-meets-Berkeley" mix of "techno-utopian" discourse and neo-liberal

inclinations with the anti-authoritarian idealism that typified the counter-culture

movements of the 1960s, anchored in the notion that "existing social, political and legal

power structures will wither away to be replaced by unfettered interactions between

autonomous individuals."[42] These conflicting conceptions of the implications of the

advances in communications technology and the information age they have helped

shaping –which May summarizes as the "disclosing" vs. "enclosing" views[43]-- are

perhaps but the latest manifestation of what Lewis Mumford saw as the inherent dialectic

of the history of technology: the permanent tension between "democratic" and

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[40] See Adorno & Horkheimer. (2002)

[41] Dyson, Gilder, Keyworth & Toffler. (1996) p. 295

[42] Barbrook & Cameron. (1996)

[43] May. (2000) pp. 257-261

"authoritarian" tendencies in the interaction between technologies and their social use.[44]

Mumford in fact used the specific term "technics" to refer not to precise technologies, but to the mutual relation between technologies and the social, political and economic context in which they are conceived and deployed.[45] In a sense, this fundamental tension between liberation and subjugation which underlies much of the analytical literature on the information age and its progress also parallels Polanyi's vision of capitalist development, in *The Great Transformation*, as a continual interplay between a functionally enabled "opening" of society necessary to capitalism's expansion, and the drive to "closure" this opening inevitably begets at a higher level concerned with the preservation of its command.[46] We shall return to this seemingly contradictory yet arguably simultaneous extension and restriction of freedom(s) in greater detail when examining the more concretely political repercussions of the information age later on in the chapter.

In their effort to situate the inauguration of the information age in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century, Beniger, Robins and Webster enjoyed the vision and distance enabled by hindsight. The first explicit attempts to articulate the emergence of an "information society" model *in situ* so to speak, as it unfolded, however, can be traced back to the late 1950s (not coincidentally, a decade marked by a growing awareness of the rise of white-collar society and the impact of mass organization on American society perhaps best captured by the popularity, at the time, of works such as Sloan Wilson's

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[44] See Mumford. (1971)

[45] *Ibid*. pp. 421-429. See also Mumford. (1966).

[46] See Polanyi. (1957)

novel *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* or William Whyte's defining study *The Organization Man*) and to the pioneering work of the economist Fritz Machlup. Machlup was the first to categorize "the production and distribution of knowledge"[47] as a sector distinct from "normal" industrial economic activity and set about analyzing what he perceived as its growing importance. He divided the field into five further categories: education, research and development, communications media, information machines and information services (broadly defined as any service –legal, financial etc. -- "divorced from physically handling the objects of trade.")[48] Although Machlup did not actually use the term "information society," –it is in fact generally acknowledged that the term, if not the concept, was actually coined in Japan in the mid-1960s[49]-- the empirical and statistical evidence he provided of rapid and exponential growth of the information/knowledge sector laid the ground for a new and soon-to-be prolific realm of study. It also firmly anchored it in the economic domain which, initially at least, would be the primary field of analysis.

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[47] Machlup. (1962) Unlike our earlier more epistemological discussion of the concept of "information," described by Guillory as standing "between fact and knowledge," "knowledge" in this context should be understood broadly and in economic terms as output of an essentially non-material nature, somewhat synonymous therefore with "information."

[48] *Ibid*. p. 325

[49] Morris-Suzuki (1988) argues that the Japanese concept of *joho shakai* was an ideological weapon developed in response to the industrial crisis of the mid-to-late 1960s and inspired primarily by the promise of emerging computing technology. As with all arguments for the foreign coining of a term, issues of translation inevitably arise and the Japanese phrase *joho shakai* is no exception. Moreover, the problem of literal translation set aside, the question of whether the Japanese concept of *joho shakai* can justifiably be equated with what came to be signified by "information society" remains debated, although there is no doubt that the Japanese focus on the defining implications of computing technology and the growing centrality of knowledge in the form of abstract "information" has been shared by many of the Western theorists. For a critical analysis of "the case for Japanese provenance" see Duff, (2000) pp. 3-6.

Building up on Machlup's findings, Peter Drucker went on to confirm, in the late

1960s, that "[i]n the last twenty years the base of our economy shifted from manual to

knowledge work, and the center of gravity of our social expenditure from goods to

knowledge."[50] The United States, therefore, was fast becoming a "knowledge society,"

with the systematized deployment of information its new "foundation for productive

capacity and performance."[51] Unlike Machlup however, Drucker did not base his

argument solely on economic considerations. Technology was instrumental to his account

of societal transformation:

> ...without the computer, we would not have understood that
> information, like electricity, is a form of energy. Electricity is the
> cheapest, most plentiful, and most versatile energy for mechanical
> work. But information is energy for mind work. This is indeed the
> first era when energy for mind work has been available. Information
> through the age has been all but completely lacking. At best it has
> been expensive, late, and quite unreliable...
> The impact of cheap, reliable, fast, and universally available
> information will easily be as great as was the impact of electricity.[52]

The specific emphasis on the computer's potentially revolutionary implications,

on the exceptional flexibility and efficiency it introduced in economic life and the many

promises held by a democratization of knowledge, was the focal point of the Japanese

body of thought on information society which was began emerging in the mid-1960s.

Like the majority of his Japanese counterparts, Drucker, who happens to be remembered

today as the "father of modern management," embraced the potential of these changes

and what he foresaw, with an acknowledged nod to McLuhan, as the advent of a global

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[50] Drucker. (1969) p. 287

[51] *Ibid*. p. 40

[52] *Ibid*. p 27

"community of information"[53] enabled by yet underdeveloped technologies that would

increasingly allow "information and ideas [to] travel *to* people."[54] This point of view was,

as usual, far from unanimous. Although few have ever denied technology's influential

entwinement (be it instrumental, substantive or dialectic) with modern society, many

regarded its latest advances at the outset of the information age as auguring little more

than a strengthening of Weber's "iron cage."[55] Ellul's "technological society" was one

subjected to the "totalitarianism"[56] of efficiency and conformity where " the individual

participates only to the degree that he is subordinate to the search for efficiency, to the

degree that he resists all the currents today considered secondary, such as aesthetics,

ethics, fantasy."[57] Guided by a similar pessimism, Touraine, in his 1969 *La Société Post-*

Industrielle, argued that technology, information and innovation had become the main

active motors of what he deplored as an increasingly "programmed society."[58] In these

more skeptical accounts, the massive dissemination of information, far from fostering an

enlightened and dynamic citizenry, would in fact dull individuality and curtail agency.

These initial and conflicting assessments inspired by the emerging computer technology

were but the latest articulation of the enduring debate on technology's opening and

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[53] *Ibid*. p. 80

[54] *Ibid*. p. 37 (emphasis added)

[55] Weber. (1958) p. 182. It was in fact Talcott Parsons who in his 1958 translation famously rendered Weber's "stahlhartes Gehäuse" as "iron cage." The translation has been questioned by purists who have argued for the more literal though far less catchy –and ultimately synonymous—"shell as hard as steel." (See Baehr, 2001) For a remarkable study of Weber's argument, see Scaff (1989).

[56] Ellul. (1964) p. 348

[57] *Ibid*. p. 74

[58] Touraine. (1969)

democratizing vs. limiting and authoritarian potential we mentioned earlier. Both currents

will remain equally forceful and present in the subsequent decades of information age

discourse as computer use will considerably spread and later be dramatically expanded by

the Internet. As we shall see later, when we tie public diplomacy back to information age

theory and practice, this recurrent line of debate, which could be broadly expressed, as

Masuda once put it, as "Computopia" vs. "Automated State"[59] (he, for one,

enthusiastically upheld the former) lies in fact at the dual heart of the concept of public

diplomacy.

Marc Porat's 1977 *The Information Economy*, a report commissioned by the US

Department of Commerce, pursued and refined Machlup's original endeavour to quantify

the primarily economic significance of information. Porat's calculations indicated that,

taken together, the information sectors now accounted for over half of American GNP

leading him to conclude that the US was now clearly "an information-based economy,"

and hence, an "information society." This purely quantitative statistical approach to

defining the information society as one where "the major arenas of economic activity are

the information goods and service producers, and the public and private (secondary

information sectors) bureaucracies,"[60] quickly became an axiom for many governmental -

-and naturally economic-- studies. Despite its undeniable significance, however, it

remains at best incomplete in illustrating the range of other non-economic implications of

an "information society." Moreover, the indifference of this statistical method towards

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[59] Masuda. (1981) p. 152

[60] Porat. (1978) p. 32

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the variously qualitative dimensions of the information sector can prove misleading. As Webster points out, echoing the concerns of the many who like Habermas or Postman deplore the "commoditization" of public discourse, "we could have a society in which, as measured by GNP, informational activity is of great weight, but which in terms of the springs of economic, social and political life is of little consequence. A nation of couch potatoes and Disney-style pleasure seekers consuming images night and day?"[61]

Although greatly influenced by these economic findings of a shift away from material production, Daniel Bell was perhaps the first to offer a unified sociological theory of their economic, political and cultural implications. Published in 1973, his now almost canonical *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* did not just bolster the notion of "post-industrial society" initially introduced by Touraine –which soon spread in sociological literature—but has come to be considered the cornerstone of information society theory. In fact, Bell explicitly states in the book that "The post-industrial society is an information society,"[62] and went on to substitute "information society" for "post-industrial society" in his subsequent work. Although *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* is often --due to its emphasis on the occupational structure and the growing dominance of white-collar work-- narrowly cast as a logical progression to the line of analysis initiated by Machlup and furthered by Porat,[63] the "information economy" aspect is only one of the facets explored by Bell in a book he initially chose to describe as "an

[61] Webster. (2002) p. 14

[62] Bell. (1976) p. 467

[63] See Webster. (2002) p. 14; Bannon. (1997)

essay in social forecasting."[64] In his 2000 critique *Information Society Studies*, Alistair

Duff argues that Bell's opus harbours to this day "the paramount synthesis of the

information society."[65] Duff ascribes that to Bell's effort to interweave "a doctrine of the

post-industrial workforce...with two other important strands: one concerning information

flows and an information explosion, and the other involving computers and an

information revolution."[66] In fact, the scope of Bell's work goes even beyond that in its

attempt to link transformations in the economy, technology and occupational system with

changes in the political and social realms, also hinting at implications in the cultural

sphere (allowing himself the occasional lyrical remark even, as in his mention of a

"change in cosmology" or of "society becoming a web of consciousness, a form of

imagination"[67]) often with startling foresight. Indeed, although the change from a

manufacturing to a service economy and "the pre-eminence of the professional and

technical class" form the basis of his analysis in the first part of the book, Bell then goes

on to contend that "if the major historical turn in the last quarter-century has been the

subordination of the economic function to societal goals, the political order necessarily

becomes the control system of the society."[68] In his vision of a transformed and expanded

polity, particularly with regards to the growing mobilization of citizens and the mounting

weight of public opinion in guiding policy, we encounter for the first time a clear

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[64] Bell. (1976) p. 3

[65] Duff. (2000) p. 17

[66] *Ibid*. (2000) p. 133

[67] Bell. (1976) pp. 487-488

[68] *Ibid*. (1976) p. 377

articulation of the intersection of information society theory with the concepts of public

opinion and civil society:

> A post-industrial society...is increasingly a communal society
> wherein public mechanisms rather than the market become the
> allocators of goods, and public choice, rather than individual
> demand, becomes the arbiter of services. A communal society by its
> very nature multiplies the definition of rights –the rights of children,
> of student, of the poor, of minorities—and translates them into
> claims of the community...The need for amenities, the cry for a better
> quality of life, bring government into the arena of environment,
> recreation and culture.[69]

However, if Bell foresees the need to attend to, but also regulate and control, the

demands of increasingly informed citizens taking center stage at the national level

(thereby bringing public opinion and civil society at the forefront of political life), the

international order on the other hand, he argues, will remain guided by the spread of a

world capitalist economy (which at the time of his writing, though evidently underway,

had not yet reached the level of ubiquity and interdependence which gave rise to the

"globalization" discourse of the 1990s). To Bell, the information or post-industrial

society is therefore marked by a paradoxical extension of the polity over the economy on

the national stage while the international context becomes increasingly defined by the

forces of transnational capitalism rather the political power of nations.[70]Although he

makes no mention of it at this stage, one can see in Bell's observations the seeds of the

"decline of the nation state" theme which, as we saw in the previous chapter, would

become a much debated corollary in discussions of globalization twenty years later.

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[69] *Ibid*. p. 159

[70] *Ibid*. pp. 483-486

Bell's argument for the emergence of a new kind of society is anchored in the

notion that the economic, technological and ultimately political and cultural changes

witnessed and projected reflect the emergence of a new "axial principle" guiding post-

industrial society: the centrality of knowledge, and hence information. This new societal

principle will reconfigure the power elites, as well as the ends to which their power is

applied.

> Now, knowledge has of course been necessary in the functioning of
> any society. What is distinctive about the post-industrial society is
> the change in the character of knowledge itself. What has become
> decisive for the organization of decisions and the direction of change
> is the centrality of *theoretical knowledge*...
> Every modern society now lives by innovation and the social control
> of change and tries to anticipate the future in order to plan ahead.
> This commitment to social control introduces the need for planning
> and forecasting into society. It is the altered awareness of the nature
> of innovation that makes theoretical knowledge so crucial.[71]

Although generally optimistic about the potential of these changes, Bell, as he is

keen to point out, is no utopian. He recognizes that the new order of things, while

rectifying certain imbalances of the past (a general though inevitably unequal rise in

standards of living, increased individual participation in the political arena), will also

create "new scarcities" and problems. Anticipating many of the subsequent critiques of

the information age, he notes, for instance, that while information will become

increasingly technical and ubiquitous, "more information is not complete information; if

anything it makes information more and more incomplete."[72] The vast flow of

information will also increase the need for selection and mediation, thereby necessitating

interpretation and hence fostering conflicting understandings. Bell sees these differing

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[71] *Ibid*. p. 20

[72] *Ibid*. p. 467.

insights and competing demands eventually reflected in the political arena, and in an

appraisal closer in spirit to Foucault than to Habermas's ideals of public deliberation,

ultimately offsetting the benefits of wider participation:

> ...the very increase in participation leads to a paradox: the greater the number of groups, each seeking diverse or competing ends, the more likelihood that these groups will veto one another's interests, with the consequent sense of frustration and powerlessness as such stalemates incur....Thus the problem of how to achieve consensus on political questions will become more difficult...leaving the way open to repression by one sizeable force or another.[73]

Bell's emphasis on the primacy of innovation and the need it creates to devise a

way to anticipate and control change against a backdrop of increased participation and

interaction in social and political life, multiplying conflicts as well as interdependence,

ever thickening complexity and accelerating speed, proves once again far-sighted,

prefiguring somehow, the notion of risk society championed by Giddens and Beck in the

1990s.

Despite its rapid adoption by academia and rapid propagation into the mainstream,

Bell's notion of a post-industrial/information society has not been without its detractors.

Cohen and Zysman call the concept "a myth," arguing it was a theoretical construct rather

than a reflection of economic reality. Society had not become *post*-industrial; it has

simply evolved into a different *kind* of industrial society.[74] Garnham offers a more

Marxist critique arguing that under the guise of offering "a way of understanding the

present historical moment," information society theory is in fact a "legitimating ideology

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[73] *Ibid*. p. 160

[74] Cohen & Zysman. (1987). See also Woodward. (1980)

for the dominant economic and political powerholders,"[75] echoing the many who have accused the information society, be it before or since the advent of the Internet, of being "nowhere yet in sight, except in the offices of stockbrokers, bankers, spymasters...and the headquarters of transnational companies."[76] Garnham concludes, citing Braudel on the freedom and flexibility inherent in capitalism as opposed to the more inflexible structures of material life, that the true nature of the changes in modes of production, the organization of social life and the conduct of politics are "more likely to be inscribed in the *longue durée* of capitalist development than on the Information Superhighway,"[77] just as Douglas and Gubak maintain that "If there is a revolution, then it is certainly around the hub of capitalism."[78] This line of thinking, with regards to the information society, can be traced back to the earlier observations of thinkers like Marcuse and Touraine who, in contrast to Bell's relatively optimistic view of a more prosperous, educated and democratic society warned of a stealthy exacerbation of capitalism and the "one-dimensional" reduction of man.[79]

Kumar, on the other hand, points out that "To call the information society an ideology, and to relate that ideology to the contemporary needs of capitalism, is to begin, not to end the analysis." Ideologies may begin as theoretical constructs, but they develop

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[75] Garnham. (2001) p. 129

[76] Traber. (1986) p.2. See also Hamelink. (1986)

[77] Garnham. (2001) p. 166

[78] Douglas & Gubak. (1984) p. 236

[79] See Marcuse. (2002); Touraine (1969)

into "real practices...lived realities... [with] practical consequences"[80] not all of them controllable by the initial conceivers. In the final analysis, however, he maintains that while it would be "perverse and foolhardy to deny the reality of much of what the information theorists assert," the information society has "introduced no fundamentally new principle or direction in society,"[81] but has simply, as Beniger or Robins and Webster previously contended, confirmed and heightened tendencies which whose origins lie in the rise of bureaucracy and 'social Taylorism'.

In spite of, or perhaps precisely because of, the amount of critique it generated, Bell's *Coming of Post-Industrial Society* is perhaps the defining work of what may be called the first phase (i.e. pre-Internet) of information age discourse. His synthesis of the combined rise of information and technology not only in the economic sphere but as a defining societal principle that would also alter the polity and culture encapsulates the majority of themes which would subsequently be developed with regards to the information society, at least until the late 1980s. Although by and large positive about the transformations he saw emerging, the cautiousness of his optimism, his mindfulness of the novel kinds of difficulties these transformations may also entail, and his appeal therefore, to temper utopia with realism[82] (which brings to mind Rorty's argument for the "liberal ironist"[83] we encountered earlier), also foreshadowed the principal contours of

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[80] Kumar. (1995) p. 34

[81] Kumar. (1995) p. 15, 32.

[82] Bell. (1976) pp. 488-489

[83] See Rorty. (1989).

the debates that would engage theorists over the coming decades.[84] The response to Bell's

initial arguments was of course intensified by the mounting "computerization of society"

as Minc and Nora put it[85] (Bell in fact wrote the introduction to the MIT Press English

translation of their book), but the fundamental parameters of argument –freedom vs.

control, enlightenment vs. commoditization of the public sphere, revolutionary societal

shift vs. mere technological heightening of already entrenched tendencies etc.—remained

essentially the same throughout the 1980s.

It should be noted however, as Barney and Webster point out, that information age

theorizing was also cross-fertilized to a certain extent during that period with another

related though distinct set of discourses: postmodernism.[86] Although several of

postmodernism's foremost –frequently French--thinkers (Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard etc.)

had produced major works throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, it is in the 1980s, really,

that these various philosophies were brought together and codified as a distinct body of

theory.[87] As postmodernism relates rather tangentially to our central concern with the

relationship between information age theory and the development of public diplomacy,

we shall not dwell extensively on the many intricacies of that "notoriously slippery and

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[84] See for instance, Masuda (1981), Toffler (1980), Martin (1978, 1981), Dizard (1982), Schiller (1984, 1989), Kumar (1978, 1987).

[85] Minc & Nora. (1980)

[86] Barney. (2004) p. 4, pp. 16-19. Webster. (2002) pp. 227-262.

[87] Frederic Jameson is often credited with the first attempt to offer a comprehensive theoretical model of postmodernism in a 1982 series of lectures which later became *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.*

often obscure collection of theoretical positions,"[88] which some have been tempted to summarize as "excremental culture and hyper aesthetics."[89] On a more sober note, however, as "the *cultural* logic of late capitalism"[90] –albeit arguably so— postmodernism did add another dimension to the hitherto primarily technological and economic concerns of information society theory. For example, its emphasis on the process of construction, fraught with power play, inherent to the production of all discourse opened up new approaches to critically assessing the very notion of "information." Information society naysayers used it as a tool to expose the stealthier but unshaken dominance of government and big business in the production, distribution and dissemination of information.[91] Enthusiasts, on the other hand, saw this heightened awareness of the artificiality of truth and grand narratives as an empowering weapon for the reassertion of marginalized discourses and identities as well as a source of the freedom to creatively forge new ones.[92] Postmodernism's general predilection for the notions of fragmentation, transience, complexity and artificiality (or alternately, hyper-reality, or Baudrillard's "simulacra") made it a natural conceptual adjunct to extend information society theory into the cultural sphere. It must be noted that Bell had in fact already suggested, if not fully addressed, the cultural facet in *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*. Anticipating several key postmodern claims, he argued that capitalism, through mass production and

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[88] Barney. (2004) p. 16

[89] Kroker & Cook. (1986)

[90] Jameson. (1991) (emphasis added)

[91] See Schiller (1989), Garnham (1990).

[92] See Castells (1996), Dyson, Gilder, Keyworth & Toffler. (1996)

mass consumption, had encouraged a culture of hedonism and instant gratification which was paradoxically at odds with the underlying –largely Protestant-- social structure of self-control and efficiency that had made capitalism so successful in the first place. Inspired in part by the counter-culture movements of the time, he argued that this "'disjunction' of culture and social structure is bound to widen,"[93] in the post-industrial society as the rationalizing and controlling impulses of industrial society would be fortified while the contradictory currents of "capitalist marketing hedonism" and the "exploration of fantasy [and] the search for polymorphic pleasure in the name of liberation from restraint" of cultural modernism[94] would expand.

In parallel, another central tenet of postmodernism, the transformation of the experience of space and time (the accelerated experience of time and the reduced significance of distance, "time-space compression,"[95] theories of "accelerated culture"[96] and of a new "global temporal space"[97] pioneered by Virilio, etc.) also seeped into information society discourse, thereby introducing what Webster, as we mentioned earlier, categorizes as the other principal set of criteria –aside from the technological, economic, occupational and cultural— employed in identifying an information society. As he notes, spatial conceptions of the information society inevitably link up with technology, economics and sociology, but they have "at [their] core the geographer's

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[93] Bell. (1976) p. 480

[94] *Ibid*. p. 479

[95] Harvey, D. (1989) pp. 201-307

[96] See Redhead. (2004)

[97] Virilio. (2000) p. viii

distinctive stress on space."[98] Spatial considerations will gain particular momentum in

information age discourse from the 1990s onwards. This was spurred naturally by the

launch of the Internet and the increasingly unbridled circulation of information (in all its

possible modern encodable manifestations, from everyday chatter to sensitive

intelligence), linking perhaps very physical spaces but through increasingly

dematerialized channels, it allowed. It also fed to a significant extent –the feeding was in

fact mutual-- on the concurrently emerging "globalization" discourse.

   The concept of globalization is a rich and hotly contested one and we shall not

pause to assess whether it is in fact a process fostering cooperation and cosmopolitanism,

the spread of homogenization, a "particularly virulent strain of American

imperialism,"[99] or the emergence of that "new order that envelops the entire space

of...civilization"[100] Hardt and Negri call "Empire." Its principal relevance in the context

of information society theory –and more pointedly in the latter's extension into the

analysis of space-- is in the particular weight globalization discourse gave to notions

such as the accelerated movement of capital, people, objects and information across

traditional –especially national—borders,[101] the general deterritorialization of economic,

political and social life, and, as a result, the alleged challenge to the sovereignty of the

nation state which we examined in connection with civil society in the previous chapter.

These claims of a transformation in the configuration and use of space will be particularly

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[98] Webster. (2002) p. 17

[99] Barney. (2004) p. 24

[100] Hardt & Negri. (2000) p. 11

[101] See Appadurai. (1991, 1993)

central to what may be considered the second determining and comprehensive work of information age discourse –after Bell's *Coming of Post-Industrial Society*--- and the first in the post-Internet era: Manuel Castells' *Information Age*.

Castells' trilogy, whose first volume, *The Rise of Network Society*, appeared in 1996, can be seen as both the synthesis and culmination of these various developments in information age theory since Bell's initial treatment of post-industrial society, to which we have just alluded. Castells' fundamental argument in that volume, as the title suggests, is the notion that the network has become the dominant organizational form of economic, political and social life, a view which has been adopted by many since then, notably Bauman, as well as Hardt and Negri whose concepts of "Empire" and "multitude" are built on the assumption that the "network has become a common form that tends to define our ways of understanding the world and acting in it."[102] As Barry, who is more cautious about embracing it, points out, the rapidly-achieved "pervasiveness of the network metaphor" to describe social, political, economic, or even personal or criminal life, like that of other terms such as "feedback" or "interactivity," confirms the growing predominance of "the *language* of information and communication theory....in political and intellectual life."[103]

As the network form, by its very essence, "cannot be controlled from any center,"[104] traditional hierarchical models become in many instances obsolete in a

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[102] Hardt & Negri. (2004) p. 142

[103] Barry. (2001) p. 14

[104] Castells. (2010) p. 6

network society. Instead, network society is predicated on a "new form of spatiality" which Castells conceptualizes as the *space of flows*, "the material support of simultaneous social practices communicated at a distance," [105] which we addressed in the preceding chapter. Bauman reaffirms this emphasis on fluidity with his notion of "liquid modernity," "liquid" because of its "mobility and inconstancy," its ever-changing shape, and increasingly fleeting appropriation of space.[106] So does Urry with his concept of "mobile sociology," although he does stress that all flows or *fluids* do not necessarily form networks; some "global fluids (as opposed to networks) demonstrate...no clear point of departure or arrival, just de-territorialized movement or mobility...with no necessary end-sate or purpose."[107] Mol and Law were amongst the first perhaps to formalize these observations inspired by the rise of movement and connectivity –albeit while still according a significant role to actual material space-- in their earlier argument for a "social topology" characterized by three principal conceptions of space: regions, networks and fluids.[108] Castells in fact concedes that physical space "continues to be the dominant space of experience, of everyday life, and of social and political control,"[109] however, it is increasingly challenged, he maintains, by the prevalence of the *logic* of the space of flows, thereby making social control thornier and political sovereignty more vulnerable in network society:

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[105] *Ibid*. p. xxxii

[106] Bauman. (2000, 2007)

[107] Urry. (2000)

[108] See Mol & Law (1994)

[109] Castells. (1997) p. 14

The dynamics of networks push society towards an endless escape from its own constraints and controls, towards an endless supersession and reconstruction of its values and institutions, towards a meta-social, constant rearrangement of human institutions and organizations.
Networks transform power relationships. Power in the traditional sense still exists: capitalists over workers, men over women, state apparatuses still torture bodies and silence minds around the world. Yet, there is some other order of power: the power of flows in the networks prevails over the flows of power.[110]

Information technology plays a central role in Castells' argument, the Internet above all, which, in a vivid illustration of how the *space of flows* may subvert traditional forms of control and authority, he describes as "the electronic equivalent of the Maoist tactics of dispersal of guerrilla forces around a vast territory to counter an enemy's might with versatility and knowledge of terrain."[111] Although he is keen to stress that "the Information Technology Revolution DID NOT create the network society,"[112] he is equally adamant that without information technology (in which he includes high-speed transportation) and its "circuit of electronic exchanges" linking up various "nodes and hubs," [113] network society "could not be such a comprehensive, persuasive social form, able to link-up, or de-link, the entire realm of human activity."[114] As he points out, the network is not a novel configuration in and of itself. However, it has traditionally been a more private or small-scale form of organization, limited by its incapacity "to exercise coordination function beyond a certain size and level of complexity:"

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[110] Castells. (1997) p. 16

[111] Castells. (2010) p. 6

[112] Castells. (1997) p. 7 (emphasis in text)

[113] Castells. (2010) pp. 442-443

[114] Castells. (1997) p. 15

> That's why throughout history –armies, churches, states—all big
> machines that have been the basis to mobilize people, to oppress or
> control them, have been the winners against networks. Networks
> were the refuge of solidarity, interpersonal support, families, friends,
> survival –the private life, the survival life. The official life has been
> large-scale organizations and big machine, because networks have
> not been able to master resources...They could not handle
> complexity.
> Now technology, new information technology, allows the
> decentralization of execution, the variable geometry of the
> components of the network and, yet, an effective coordination of its
> tasks and control on the unity of the purpose of a particular network.
> So coordination, decentralized execution and the ability to process
> constant change...has become possible because of technology.[115]

Instrumental as it may be, technology is not the sole factor in the emergence of

network society for Castells. Two other interacting processes play a major role: the

restructuring of capitalism in the global –and hence inclined to networking—economy,

and the growth of cultural social movements since the 1960s, whose modular,

associational essence is now increasingly deployed on a worldwide scale.[116] The latter

brings the notion of civil society once again to the forefront of information of age theory,

perhaps even more significantly so than ever.

Bell had noted earlier on that the post-industrial society would be essentially

communal, nurturing public mechanisms of decision making. Touraine too, although his

tone was generally more cautionary, initially argued that the "emptiness" of post-

industrial society public space could in fact give rise to a new civil society and extend

collective public life beyond the strictly political into the cultural realm thereby

promoting "reflexive self-productive agency" (i.e. society's capacity to take action upon

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[115] Castells. (2001) p. 25

[116] See Castells. (1997) p. 6

itself).[117] Despite finding himself "caught between a new disabused individualism, on the one hand, and the degenerate and bureaucratized forms of the old representations of social life," Touraine, whose focal interest since he published *La Société Post-Industrielle* has been social movements, has nevertheless repeatedly asserted his belief in a "return of the actor."[118] Thinkers have for sure, explored the tensions between civil society and information society,[119] particularly those emanating from the more controling, "Taylorist" accounts of the information age. Splichal, for example, argues that the only possible "convergence between the two concepts is that between civil society and the *critique* of information society."[120] However, barring the direst accounts of a public *irredeemably* subdued by social control and the commoditization of public discourse to the point of utter passivity, analyses of the social and political implications of post-industrial or information society have in fact time and again stressed the enhanced significance of some form of civil society, or at the very least, of human connectivity. Most of these analyses may not exhibit the ebullience of Masuda's vision of a society whose "core social structure" would become voluntary communities, able to "paint a design on the invisible canvas of the future, and then to actualize the design,"[121] but the general themes of a heightened awareness and intensified individualism, the weakening of institutions, and the relative fragmentation of social life brought about by the increased circulation of

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[117] See Touraine. (1969, 1977, 1981)

[118] Touraine. (1988) p. 16

[119] See Splichal, Calabrese & Sparks, eds. (1994)

[120] Splichal. (1994) p. 74

[121] Masuda. (1981) p. 136

information have generally converged to accord associational life a renewed and sizeable role both at the social level and, in the more positive assessments, at the political level. Castells' notion of network society adds a structural dimension to the argument, the network model being by nature the conventional organizational structure of associational life. Civil society therefore appears almost fated to flourish in a network society, expanding its reach in the ever-growing space of transnational flows, as in Hardt and Negri's vision of "the rising biopolitical productivity of the multitude...working in common in expansive and indefinite social networks" (albeit in their Marxist view inevitably threatened by "the processes of private appropriation").[122]

Castells' account of an "informational economy" driven by knowledge, flexibility and innovation confirms the initial inklings of Bell and his successors, and furthers them by placing them in the context of the connectivity and interdependence of the global economy.[123] This implies not merely a proliferation of multi-national corporations --a well entrenched phenomenon already—but the emergence of a variety of modular forms of alliances between companies which may be lasting or simply "organized ad hoc for a specific project... dissolving/reforming after the task is completed."[124] In Castells' network society, civil society and the economy are both therefore marked by the rise of flexible networks of partners, and hence emerge as "geometrically variable"[125] structures,

[122] Hardt & Negri. (2004) pp. 186-187

[123] Castells. (2010) pp. 77-162

[124] Castells. (1997) p. 8

[125] Barry. (2001) p. 101

enabled by and modeled on information and communication technology, and dialectically

engaged with globalization. So too does the political scene:

> States are bypassed by global flows of wealth, information and
> crime. Thus, to survive, they band together in multilateral ventures,
> such as the European Union. It follows the creation of a web of
> political institutions: national, supranational, international, regional,
> and local, that becomes the new operating unit of the information
> age: the network state.[126]

Castells' network state echoes somewhat Braman's heterogeneous, dynamic and

"self-renewing" notion of the "morphogenetic state," which she saw emerging as a

response to "the intersection of theories of organizational evolution, second-order

cybernetics, and chaos" that characterize information society.[127] Hardt and Negri will

push Castells' argument to a logical extreme, going beyond existing institutions such as

the European Union or even the UN, and projecting the network on a global and, in what

may at first appear like a contradiction in terms, "imperial" scale (which they insist, is *not*

"imperialistic" for imperialism is predicated on a particular *nation-state* extending its

might over foreign territory):

> ...a "network power," a new form of sovereignty, is now emerging,
> and it includes as its primary elements, or nodes, the dominant
> nation-states along with supranational institutions, major capitalist
> corporations, and other powers...Not all powers in Empire's network,
> of course, are equal –on the contrary, some nation-states have
> enormous power and some none at all...—but despite inequalities
> they must cooperate to create and maintain the current global order,
> with all its internal divisions and hierarchies.[128]

Hardt and Negri's *Empire* highlights a facet of networks which, though now

increasingly under scrutiny, was often understated in the initial focus on their dynamism

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[126] *Ibid*. (1997) p. 16

[127] Braman. (1994)

[128] Hardt & Negri. (2004) p. xii

and flexibility: the configuration and extension of power *within* them. Castells did of course mention from the beginning the inequalities of inclusion in networks, as well as the relative dominance of certain "nodes" or "hubs" over others,[129] but although he did note that "networks are not necessarily instruments of freedom, you can have very oppressive networks,"[130] he never fully examined that aspect. As Barry notes:

> Concepts of networks...interactivity, deterritorialisation all seem to speak of a world in which the boundaries of nation-states, persons and firms are dissolved or blurred, a world in which connections are increasingly easy to make...However...the development of technical artefacts and practices involves the formation, translation and contestation of new blockages and impediments as much as their dissolution.[131]

It must be said that the 1990s, during which the metaphor of network emerged and flourished in social theory, were generally marked by a renewed faith in multilateralism and transnational collaboration which followed the end of the Cold War. Although it was not blind to inequalities of "flows," novel forms of exclusion, and the risk of yet to be determined dangers ahead, social and political thought of the period largely focused on the new possibilities for cooperation and interdependence this rupture with the past world order did not perhaps guarantee, but at the very least suggested. The relative disorientation provoked by the rapid dissolution of the Cold War paradigm provided fertile grounds for social theorizing, offering a sense that concepts, models, and institutions were all suddenly open to reformulation. As Beck wrote at the time:

> ...after the Cold War, the West has slid into a victory crisis and the goals of social development must be spelled out all over again. What

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[129] See Catells. (2010)

[130] Castells. (2001) p. 25

[131] Barry. (2001) pp. 201-202.

modernity is, can be or want to be is becoming palpably unclear and indeterminate. An entire political and social lexicon has become obsolete in one stroke, and must now be rewritten.[132]

In the emergence of this realm of possibility at the socio-political level, combined with the loss of the safety net which had been provided by the now defunct or threatened structures and paradigms, Beck saw the advent of a "second, non-linear, global modernity in a 'cosmopolitan intention,'"[133] but also a "reflexive modernity," one that would begin to "doubt itself" (in the positive sense that "doubts liberate"[134]) and thereby "largely produce of [its] own accord the problems and challenges which confront [it]."[135] This concept of a modernity "coming to terms with the limits and contradictions of the modern order,"[136] and increasingly manufacturing –due to its increasing complexity and the multiplicity of uncontrollable consequences it generates-- its own challenges and uncertainties, led the way for the notion of "risk society" championed by both Beck and Giddens since the end of the 1990s. The notion of "risk" in this instance does not necessarily imply danger, but as Giddens specifies, refers to:

> ...a society where we increasingly live on a high technological frontier which absolutely no one completely understands and which generates a diversity of possible futures...
> ...a society increasingly preoccupied with the future (and also with safety), which generates the notion of risk."[137]

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[132] Beck. (1997) p. 6

[133] *Ibid*. p. 11

[134] *Ibid*. p. 163

[135] *Ibid*. p. 40

[136] Giddens. (1999) p. 6

[137] *Ibid*. p. 3

Beck and Giddens were not the first to unveil the notion of risk. The theme was repeatedly addressed throughout the 1990s, as the darker companion of sorts to freedom, rupture, potential and globalization. As Mann wrote in 1993, already employing the network metaphor:

> Today, we live in a global society. It is not a unitary society, nor is it an ideological community or state, but it is a single power network. Shock waves reverberate around it, casting down empires, transporting massive quantities of people, materials and messages, and finally, threatening the ecosystem and atmosphere of the planet.[138]

Nico Stehr put forward a related observation in his 1994 *Knowledge Societies*, arguing that information, or as he preferred to term it, "knowledge societies"' inclination to greater flexibility also corresponded to greater indeterminacy and therefore more "fragile" societies. With what seems, with post-9/11 hindsight, like prescient intuition, he added:

> While success may at times justify the high hopes of many that techniques and technologies will be developed to reduce if not eliminate much of the uncertainty...sudden and unexpected events almost invariably disconfirm, almost cruelly, such optimistic forecasts about the possibility of anticipating and therefore controlling future events. As a matter of fact, and paradoxically, one of the sources of the growing indeterminacy can be linked directly to the nature of the technological developments designed to achieve greater certainty. [139]

The sense of endless possibility –albeit tempered by a growing awareness of unpredictability-- which characterized the 1990s thought was of course reined in by the events of September 11th and their aftermath. Not everything could be "reinvented" in politics and society after all; freedom, democracy and collaboration could not simply

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[138] Mann. (1993) p. 11

[139] Stehr. (1994) pp. 156-159

flourish unhindered in ever extending *networks*. Traditional concepts of militarism and

security were not quite as obsolete as some would have liked them to be; as Bell once

noted, "social systems take a long time to expire."[140] Beck himself had in fact

acknowledged limits to the *Reinvention of Politics* early on when he wrote in 1994:

> The enemy, or in more precise sociological terms, the successful
> 'social construction of an enemy stereotype'...empowers the state to
> restrict democracy. The consensus on democracy competes with the
> consensus on defence.[141]

Interestingly however, while the post-9/11 state of affairs appeared on the one

hand to weaken certain aspects of the network society thesis and its derivatives (the

notions of increased multilateralism, the weakening of the nation-state, the empowerment

of civil society), the emergence of what was repeatedly portrayed as a *flexible*,

transnational, *unpredictable, amorphous* "enemy" *network* also gave network society

renewed relevance (in parallel vividly confirming the notion of risk society).

In spite of the new forms of exclusion, domination and risk it is bound to

generate, the network society remains, as Castells argues, a "highly dynamic, open social

system."[142] Its structural inclinations may not be deterministic enough to promote the

international cooperation, global democracy, and disappearance of borders that its more

idealistic supporters have argued for, but it would be disingenuous to deny that it does at

least foster the *possibilities* for interaction, cooperation, and innovation. Even Hardt and

Negri concede that the domineering logic of Empire, "its network of hierarchies and

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[140] Bell. (1976) p. 371

[141] Beck. (1994) p. 79

[142] Castells. (2010) p. 501

divisions that maintain order through new mechanisms of control and constant conflict,"

is offset by "the creation of new circuits of cooperation and collaboration that stretch

across nations and continents and allow an unlimited number of encounters"[143] thereby

giving rise to a counteracting network: "the multitude." What differentiates the multitude

from other common conceptions of the public such as *the people* or *the masses*, they

argue, is its irreducible plurality, its transnational spread, and its unique potential for

agency. Whereas the notion of *the people* "reduces diversity...to a single identity," and

that of *the masses* drowns that diversity in an "indistinct, uniform conglomerate,"[144] the

network structure of the multitude does not require such reductive or unitary conceptual

measures. The multitude's modular nature thus allows it –in principle at least-- to nurture

pluralism and in fact thrive through it. This "living alternative that grows within Empire"

faces of course the challenge that underlies all concepts of global civil society, that of

being able to "communicate and act in common" [145] and decisively, all the while

preserving and nurturing its essential social plurality.

With the notion of network society now well into its second decade, it is

legitimate to reassess its relevance. Are we still arguably living in a network society? On

the one hand, the concept seems to have somewhat exhausted itself in the academic

sphere. But the lack of "hot" debate around a notion does not necessarily spell its demise.

It can just as well attest to its normalization. The network metaphor, after all, does remain

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[143] Hardt & Negri. (2004) p. xiii

[144] *Ibid*. p. xiv

[145] *Ibid*.

recurrent in analyses of economic, political and social life, even though the notion itself is less subjected to scrutiny. Has it then, to quote Feyerabend, fossilized into unexamined orthodoxy?[146] It is perhaps too soon to tell. Nevertheless, the fact remains that no concept appears to have emerged yet to fully negate or replace the network society (the notion of risk society, itself almost as old, also carries significant currency, but neither invalidates nor supersedes network society, and is in fact entirely compatible with it.) This is not to say that network society is a unanimously embraced concept. Yet even skeptics such as Barry concede that though it may be "problematic," particularly in its functioning at times as prescriptive ideology rather than explanatory tool, the network metaphor does nonetheless "capture something of the discursive and spatial connections...and both the connectedness and fragmentation of contemporary social relations."[147] Meanwhile, the network concept continues to flourish in the news (to a large extent due to the persistent matter of "terrorist networks"), the mainstream media, and even more noticeably in everyday experience where the rise of Internet-based social *networking* (Facebook, LinkedIn, Ning, Twitter etc.) seems to have given it a new life. In an April 2010 interview, for instance, General Petraeus, then the Commander of U.S. Central Command, commented on the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan with the remark "It takes a network to deal with a network. And that's what we have."[148] Meanwhile, a series of articles in the online magazine *Slate* and live discussion at the New America Foundation

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[146] Feyerabend. (1993) p. 29

[147] Barry. (2001) pp. 14-15

[148] Petraeus, D. Interview with Charlie Rose. *Charlie Rose*. PBS. New York. 23 Apr. 2010. http://www.charlierose.com/view/interview/10977

–to name but one other particularly vivid example-- recently examined the capture of Saddam Hussein "using Facebook-style social network theory...and how the lessons from that search continue to change US war-fighting."[149]

The network may not have entirely superseded all other forms of national and international societal structures, particularly when issues of security or conflict arise. It may perhaps not even prove to be the *dominant* form of contemporary economic, political and social organization. Its conspicuous recurrence in all these spheres of human activity, however, does endow it with continued relevance, at the very least while information age theorizing awaits its next ground-breaking and comprehensive articulation.

III- PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND THE INFORMATION AGE

How does this constellation of theories we have just examined tie in with the concept of public diplomacy? As we have seen, the transformation of political life, both at the national and at the international level, has been has been a continuous focus of enquiry. Several entwined themes in particular have repeatedly emerged that are of relevance to our topic: 1-the rising production, dissemination and use of information at all levels of social life 2- the considerable increase in the circulation of that information --as well as people, goods and capital-- across or even bypassing borders, 3- the resulting growing connectedness and interdependence of the international order and the challenge therefore to traditional conceptions of borders, as well as --to some extent— the sovereignty of the nation state.

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[149] Wilson, C. (2010) http://www.slate.com/id/2245228/

None of these observations are of course undisputed axioms. The undeniable *quantitative* rise of information in our lives does not, as Habermas, Chomsky, Schiller -- or even Bell--[150] time and again remind us, necessarily make us *better* informed. Access to significant information, to knowledge that could effect meaningful action, often remains controlled by dominant forces.[151] As Norris further argues in *The Digital Divide*, the Internet, in spite of its open and anarchic architecture, possibly reflects and reinforces, rather than eliminates, inequalities of access and agency, be it at the *global* (between countries), *social* (between segments of society) or *democratic* (between those who actually use information to participate in public life and those who remain passive citizens) level.[152] Critiques of a more qualitative nature, in keeping with Habermas's diagnosis of a "refeudalization" and decline of public discourse, frequently condemn what they view as the "favouring of the entertainment over the pedagogic mode of the media function to the detriment of social learning and cohesion."[153] More positive assessments, like Keane's, point out that "the old dominance of state-structure and territorially bounded public life mediated by radio, television, newspapers...is coming to an end" opening up new venues and "stages of power" for civic involvement:

> ...public life is today subject to a 'refeudalization,' not in the sense
> in which Habermas...used the term, but in the different sense of the
> development of a complex mosaic of differently sized, overlapping,
> and interconnected public spheres that force us radically to revise

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[150] Bell. (1976) pp. 467-468

[151] See Schiller. (1989, 1996); Chomsky. (2002); Herman & Chomsky (1988).

[152] Norris. (2001)

[153] Garnham. (2001) p. 115. See also Postman (1986).

our understanding of public life and its 'partner' terms such as
public opinion, the public good, and the public/private distinction.[154]

The notion of a liberating and empowering "de-massification"[155] – in the sense of diversification and customization-- of media is countered by claims that at another level, "the spread of global media products, services and producing conglomerates is a deepening of massification."[156] In terms of the consequences for citizens' mobilization and the practice of democracy, more pessimistic assessments like Carey's, see the public sphere being replaced precisely by *mass* commercial culture,[157] while Hart argues that the very proliferation of information, be it ultimately diverse or centralized, rather than heightening awareness "supersaturate(s)... [and] creates in viewers a sense of activity rather than genuine civic involvement."[158]

Meanwhile, even the indisputable increase in connectedness and co-dependency is offset by a parallel contrasting process of fragmentation. The world we live in may have become increasingly "networked," but it remains far from "meshed...together into a unified...grid."[159] No lesser advocate of network society than Castells himself cautions: "we are in a creative world, in an extraordinarily productive world, but at the same time we have major problems and potential dangers of social exclusion, personal isolation and

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[154] Keane. (1995) p. 8

[155] See Castells. (2010); Dyson, Gilder, Keyworth & Toffler. (1996).

[156] Garnham. (2001) p. 116

[157] See Carey. (1995)

[158] Hart. (1994) p. 109

[159] Kumar. (1995) p. 10

loss of shared meaning."[160] The forces of homogenization, heterogeneity and hybridization, compete therefore as equals on the global scene[161] with no clear overall winner emerging in the "Jihad vs. McWorld"[162] contest. In the meantime, old forms of borders (spatial, national...) may have lost some of their significance, but new ones may also be emerging that are just as, if not more, constricting. "Electronic networks are hardly borderless themselves," notes May, "although the borders are not necessarily territorial. The imposition (or adoption) of specific sets of technical standards creates default boundaries through which information flows may be more difficult or even impossible."[163] As the French geographer Michel Foucher points out, borders, be they symbolic or material, remain "indispensable markers of identity, self-consciousness and diversity."[164] Symbolic, spatial *and* national boundaries remain crucially significant, he argues, perhaps even more so than previously, as forms of restriction of access (the old guards and gates, the new chips, pin codes, or biometric measurements) proliferate, new *meta-frontières* arise to "highlight difference on a world-scale" and replace the expired East/West ideological cleavage with what Huntington would term new "clashes of civilizations,"[165] and blood continues to be shed in border conflicts.[166] More pointedly, he notes:

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[160] Castells. (2001) p. 36

[161] Barney. (2004) p. 24

[162] Barber. (1996)

[163] May. (2003) p. 132

[164] Foucher. (2009)

[165] Huntington. (1996)

> ...around 3% of the land political borders are nowadays equipped to
> be hardened borders, with walls, electronic devices or barbed wire
> fences. Fencing is fashionable, notably in some democratic regimes
> where security issues are highlighted and dealt on the border scene
> (Israel, India, the United States.)...
> Fear and policies of (in)security are the main drivers for fencing in
> the border scene which looks like a counter-model for "the
> borderless world."[167]

As borders appear more relevant than utopian accounts would like them to be, so too does the nation-state. The contemporary framework of the information age,[168] with its abundance of flows, its accelerating global interdependence, and ever-rising number of transnational institutions and agreements has undoubtedly diminished the efficacy of the sovereign national state in certain areas of the economic and political realms, locking it "into an array of global, regional and multi-layered systems of governance"[169] itself subject to rising mobility, complexity and indeterminacy. Yet, while Beck may be *partially* right in eagerly asserting that "capital, culture, technology and politics merrily come together to roam *beyond* the regulatory power of the national state,"[170] states have neither entirely lost the power to make and enforce decision, nor have they been wholly reduced, to borrow Barney's image, to mere "transmission belts" more or less in control

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[166] See Foucher. (2007)

[167] Foucher. (2009)

[168] "Contemporary" ought to be stressed here, as it is the processes of globalization, rather than the rise of information *per se*, which have primarily problematized the sovereignty and role of the state. Earlier accounts of the information society such as Bell's, while appreciating changes to the practice of political life and recognizing that governments might not ultimately be able to control the full consequences of the advances in information and communication technology (see Minc and Nora. (1980)) nevertheless allowed for an active government and a largely unchanged concept of the nation state.

[169] Held & McGrew. (2002) p. 19

[170] Beck. (1999) p. 107

of the passage of people, money, ideas and things "*through* their jurisdiction."[171] As

Drucker acknowledges, "Despite all its shortcomings, the nation-state has shown amazing

resilience."[172] Its practices may be changing, adapting to new constraints (and also new

possibilities), but this does not necessarily amount to a decline in significance.

Moreover, accounts of the nation state's loss of power –or at least of *exclusive*

power-- often fail to take into account the fact that much of this authority was not

helplessly stripped from but in fact *wilfully* ceded by national governments. "There is a

common but flawed assumption," notes May, "that something called 'globalization' has

arrived from *elsewhere* to undermine the state," which appears to neglect the fact that

"states also play a major and important role in facilitating the types of activities that some

believe will render them obsolete."[173] As Barney remarks, "after all, it is national

governments which form, direct and consent to the activities of international agencies and

agreements."[174] Not only did governments aid and abet therefore the emergence and

maintenance of an institutionalized globalization, they have also played a considerable

role in encouraging (or, in the case of certain more authoritarian regimes, obstructing) the

deployment of information and communication technologies. The national state may not

perhaps have full power over the full range of consequences this deployment has brought

about –as Kumar remind us, "Origins do not determine destinations"[175]—but its "role as

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[171] Barney. (2004) p. 22

[172] Drucker. (1997) p. 159

[173] May. (2003) p. 114, 126.

[174] Barney. (2004) p. 23

[175] Kumar. (1995) p. 7

legislator and police authority is crucial for the continuance of (informational) economic

development and the governance of the global information society."[176] Furthermore,

while individual states may lose some authority to the complex, entwined, and at times

ungovernable processes that underwrite the so-called global information age, they also

have the opportunity to gain some, as Sica for instance points out, by "exploit[ing] the

same technology that facilitated the globalisation of financial markets to increase their

monitoring capacity."[177] As a result, and perhaps most perilously warns May,

overlooking or minimizing the state's capacity leaves governments "a freer hand to

indulge in the sort of actions which should be held more democratically accountable than

they are."[178] Once again, we are forced to confront the fundamental tension between

control and liberation, the dialectic of subjection and empowerment, that underlies the

information age in both theory and practice:

> The presumption that state power is *inevitably* constrained by ICTs
> allows any problems linked to the state's (information-related)
> activities to be ignored or treated as transient. Indeed, while there
> may be potential for enhancing political freedom through the
> deployment of ICTs, this is neither inevitable nor necessary: it
> depends on political will. Where that will is absent or political
> pressures contradict such potentiality, then human rights abusers,
> dictators and oppressors will make use of ICTs, not be halted by
> them. Here authoritarian technics will triumph over the
> democratic.[179]

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[176] May. (2003) p. 131

[177] Sica. (2000) p. 71

[178] May. (2003) p. 140

[179] *Ibid*. p. 133 (emphasis in text)

Finally, returning to the issue of security and the use of force addressed in the previous chapter, while threats may have become, as Kaldor demonstrates, increasingly plural (local or transnational, private or public, centralized or network-like) and the conduct of warfare increasingly "blurring the distinctions between war... organized crime...and large-scale violations of human rights"[180] in the "global" era, the fact remains that states still retain a monopoly over the *legitimate* use of violence. As May somewhat cynically sums it up, "when attacked [and conversely, we should add, when attacking] the state suddenly seems a little less irrelevant to the beneficiaries of the information age."[181] In addition to this, Kumar notes, the military-industrial complex, itself a major aspect of the origins of the Internet, may well constitute the most "intimate" link between government and the information age, as "military requirements have in nearly all societies been the main engine of growth of the IT industries."[182] In fact, one aspect of information age theory in which government expertise has been, for a change, conspicuously central is the field of "information warfare." The deployment of propaganda and other psychological weapons may be as old as war itself, but the notion that the "information revolution" may actually constitute the latest revolution in military affairs since the advent of nuclear weapons has indeed garnered sufficient recognition, not only in popular discussion but also in professional discourse,[183] to foster for instance

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[180] Kaldor. (1999) p. 2. See also Arquilla & Ronfeldt (2001).

[181] May. (2003) p. 143

[182] Kumar. (1995) p. 28

[183] See Karatzogianni. (2009); Adams. (1998); Arquilla & Ronfeldt. (1996); Lord. (2006); Brown, Robin. (2003); Dearth. (2003); Garfield. (2003).

the creation of the *Journal of Information Warfare* in 2001. This theme of course leads us straight back to the very heart of public diplomacy as a form of "perception management."[184] Unlike more covert and deceptive form of psychological operations, public diplomacy may not be deployed solely in times of conflict or tension, but it remains essentially a form of that comprehensive combination of "psychological-political warfare with elements of diplomacy and international assistance" Lord labels "strategic influence."[185]

As an instrument of government, public diplomacy does rest to a certain extent on the classically modern model of an international regime of *distinct* and *active* states interacting with one another. On the other hand, it is also very much a product of the information age, and more precisely, of the increasingly mediated, or to borrow Debord's phrase "spectacularized" nature of its politics. Anticipating somewhat Baudrillard's later thoughts on the effacement of reality and the channelling of political life into "non-events" (the first Gulf War) and "absolute events" (the 9/11 attacks), Debord already noted in the 1967 *Society of the Spectacle*:

> In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all life
> presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything
> that was directly lived has moved away into a representation...
> The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation
> among people, mediated by images.[186]

Twenty years later, Debord sharpened his argument in *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, noting that the "spectacularization" of society had become so pervasive it

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[184] Dearth. p.1

[185] Lord. (2006) p. 8

[186] Debord. (1983) p. 1

had in fact progressed from overt device of representation (and power) to progressively

normalized, internalized, and therefore unquestioned, social and political conduct. His

argument brings to mind Galbraith's reflections on the "great modern role of conditioned

power"[187] (that more surreptitious form of power which does not rely on explicit

mechanisms of reward or punishment) which we mentioned in Chapter I, as well as Nye's

subsequent case for the ascendency of the more indirect, assimilated form of "soft power"

in the contemporary "global information age:"[188]

> In 1967 I distinguished two rival and successive forms of spectacular
> power, the concentrated and the diffuse. Both of them floated above
> real society, as its goal and as its lie. The former, favouring the
> ideology condensed around a dictatorial personality... The latter,
> driving wage-earners to apply their freedom of choice to the vast
> range of new commodities now on offer, had represented the
> Americanisation of the world, a process which in some respects
> frightened but also successfully seduced... Since then a third form
> has been established, through the rational combination of these two,
> and on the basis of a general victory of the form which had showed
> itself stronger: the diffuse. This is the *integrated spectacle*, which has
> since tended to impose itself globally...
> The spectacle has spread itself to the point where it now permeates
> all reality.[189]

Castells' notion that political life in the network society is, to quote Webster,

"either on the informational networks or irrelevant"[190] confirms Debord's feeling view

that "the establishment of spectacular domination...has radically altered the art of

government:"[191]

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[187] Galbraith. (1983) p. 188

[188] See Nye. (1990, 2004, 2005)

[189] Debord. (1998) pp. 8-9

[190] Webster. (2001) p. 7

[191] Debord. (1998) p. 87

> In all countries, the media has become the essential space of politics.
> Not all politics takes place through the media, and imagemaking still
> needs to relate to real issues and real conflicts. But without
> significant presence in the pace of media, actors and ideas are
> reduced to political marginality. This presence does not concern
> only, or even primarily, the moments of political campaigns, but the
> day-to-day messages that people receive by and from the media.[192]

As "political marketing is the essential means to win political competition in

democratic politics,"[193] political life becomes largely subsumed therefore to "the whole

paraphernalia of informational politics: polling, advertising, marketing, analyzing, image-

making, and information-processing."[194] "Politics in this context is less a practice of

public judgement and action than it is a profession of public relations," [195] reckons

Barney, and as Habermas notes, "the very words 'public relations work'

(*oeffentlichkeitsarbeit*) betray the fact that a public sphere must first be *arduously*

contructed case by case, a public sphere which earlier grew out of the social structure."[196]

The increased need to *manage* "informational" or "spectacle" politics brings us back, in

one sense, to the "control" aspect of the information age stressed by Beniger, and more

particularly to the development of increasingly "systematic, calculative and

rationalised"[197] methods for administering social life during the first decades of the

twentieth century which we explored earlier in the context of public opinion. In their

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[192] Castells. (1997) p. 11

[193] *Ibid.*

[194] Castells. (2004) p. 396

[195] Barney. (2004) p. 123

[196] Habermas. (1974) p. 55 (emphasis added)

[197] Robins & Webster. (1999) p. 1000

analysis of the birth of modern advertising as the extension of Taylor's Scientific

Management into the consumption sphere, Robins and Webster reason that:

> It was these advocates of big business who first turned to the
> 'rational' and 'scientific' exploitation of information in the wider
> society, and it is their descendants –the multinational advertisers,
> market researchers, opinion pollers, data brokers, and so on—who
> are at the heart of information politics today.[198]

In the mid-1950s Potter already contended that in a century, advertising had

evolved from "a very minor form of economic activity" into "an instrument of social

control –an instrument comparable to the school and the church in the extent of its

influence upon society."[199] Raymond Williams, in his 1961 "Advertising: The Magic

System," was also keen to highlight advertising's development from "processes of

specific attention and information to an institutionalized system of commercial

information and persuasion."[200] While there is undeniable truth to these claims of

growing institutionalized dominion (and postmodern thinkers such as Baudrillard and

Poster have been particularly keen to explore the "new technology of power" inscribed by

advertising and electronic mediation[201]), however, the fact remains that the power of

publicity remains at the end of the day contingent upon persuasion, an effect no amount

of systematization or calculation can guarantee. Moreover, the proliferation of

information channels, and hence of competing messages, while fostering the spread of

global marketing (be it commercial or political) also serves to counteract the

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[198] *Ibid*. p. 98. For a thorough treatment of "the revolution in control of mass consumption," see also Beniger. (1986) pp. 344-389

[199] Potter, D. (1954) p. 168

[200] Williams, R. (1980) p. 170

[201] See Baudrillard. (1998); Poster. (1990, 1995)

centralization and order of the controlling impulse. As Webster notes, "the [information] networks are simply too fluid, too leaky, too undisciplined and too rampant to allow the politicians to maintain an effective hold."[202] In yet another display of the "integral and necessary relation between repressive and possible emancipatory dimensions"[203] of the information age, the increased management and mediatization of political life is therefore spurred by controlling tendencies, all the while also severely limiting them. This fundamental tension –variably viewed as a dialectic between oppression and freedom, homogeneity and pluralism, unification and fragmentation, the local and the cosmopolitan, order and chaos—which has repeatedly surfaced in our discussion of the information age infuses in fact the very notion of public diplomacy, whose dual premise in communicating with a foreign audience is both the wish to *manipulate* the public and the paradoxical trust in that public's *agency* and *power* in its own polity.

Meanwhile, the increased connectedness of the world stage, in spite of the countering fragmentation, also gives public diplomacy renewed and to some extent transformed relevance. As the lives of individuals world-wide become locked in ever more complex and intersecting systems of interdependence, war and conflict cease to be the primary cause for transnational collision and the need for governments to address foreign publics hence grows to be more routinized. Once a specific instrument to be deployed mainly in times of relative crisis, public diplomacy now becomes a matter of daily conduct, or to borrow Debord's expression, an *integrated* practice.

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[202] Webster. (2001) p. 7

[203] Robins & Webster. (1999) p. 93

CHAPTER V- CONCLUDING REMARKS

> *Not that they hadn't built bridges, they had, at optimistic moments over the centuries, but then somebody always burned them... And, in fact, for pretty much all the recorded history in this part of the world, most of the bridges had been built by conquerors...and had thereby earned themselves a bad reputation.*
>
> Alan Furst, *Blood of Victory*

> *- ...I have to beg you for every scrap of information about the world.*
> *- But that's the only way you value it. When it falls from out of the trees you think it's rotten fruit.*
>
> Leonard Cohen, *Beautiful Losers*

As we have argued throughout this dissertation, the twentieth century idea of public diplomacy as a concerted and institutionalized governmental practice was to a large extent the product of the modern conceptualization of public opinion as a measurable and influenceable force, as well as the novel possibilities for its mobilization offered by the gradual evolution of civil society as a third sector. But public diplomacy is also, and perhaps above all, very much a child of what we chose to term "the information age", both in theory and in practice. At the concrete and practical level, its systematized deployment on a large scale could evidently not have been envisaged without the advances in information and communication technology that have marked the past century. Even more fundamentally however, the very recognition of the growing importance of a "softer" form of persuasive and enticing power directed at foreign publics is directly related to the considerable rise in the production and dissemination of information, as well as to the intensifying sense of global interdependence that have

characterized the information age. Had information –in its variety of dimensions—not come to dominate economic, political and social life, and without the transnational interconnectedness that innovations in communication technology have enabled and fostered, the notion of attracting or swaying foreign public opinion outside of actual war time would have remained at best a secondary concern of governments.

If public diplomacy is very much therefore an artefact of the information age, it has also, needless to say, considerably evolved with it since its official debut in the Cold War context of the mid-1960s. The information "revolution" and the noticeable –even if uneven or contested—broadening of globalization have transformed political life. Many of these transformations are still ongoing of course, their ultimate consequences – particularly with regards to the autonomy and sovereignty of the nation state-- therefore yet a matter of debate both amongst theorists and policy-makers. But while the exact contour of tomorrow's nation state for instance, or the actual effective power of non-state actors on the political scene, remains to be determined, it is hard to deny the growing spectacularization of politics and its increased enmeshment with the economic and cultural spheres.

This is not to say that more traditional forms of political practice have been entirely superseded. "Hard" power remains very much in currency, national political institutions continue to frame important aspects of social life, conflicts carry on being fought with physical consequences, and leaders are still empowered to make decisive -- and not necessarily mindful of public opinion— choices with tangible repercussions. Political practice has not been –and probably never shall be—*wholly* reduced to what

Castells refers to as a "cultural politics," enacted in the media and fought with symbols.[1]

It would nonetheless be disingenuous not to acknowledge the ever-rising mediatization of political life and the "increased importance of culture and cultural codes in the contestation and consolidation of structures of domination."[2] Culture and cultural codes have arguably always played a vital and constitutive role in social and political life, in the construction of social relations and identity. Kant's 1784 observations in *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent*, with which we opened this dissertation, serve to remind us that awareness of the significance of the cultural factor in the exercise of political power and its projection on the international scene is not in and of itself an entirely new consideration. Cultural features have however –and unsurprisingly-- gained increased significance in the information age, and so consequently, and as Nye has repeatedly argued, has "cultural and ideological appeal" or soft power.

With regards to political power, one of the most salient consequences of the multiplying flows of information, to Nye, derives from what he calls the "paradox of plenty," the notion that "a plenitude of information leads to a poverty of attention."[3] As attention then becomes the "scarce resource," power increasingly grows to be a matter of being able to attract and fix attention as opposed to merely providing information. As a result, "Reputation becomes even more important than in the past, and political struggles occur over the creation and destruction of credibility."[4] With political conduct therefore

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[1] Castells. (2000) pp. 72-73

[2] Nash. (2001) p. 81

[3] Nye. (2005) p. 89

[4] *Ibid.*

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increasingly guided by a largely spectacularized contest for reputation, and against a backdrop of rising global interdependence, public diplomacy has gradually, and naturally, grown from an instrument deployed in times of relative tension or crisis to a normalized practice in the general conduct of government.

It could in fact be argued that public diplomacy has become so integrated and routine a practice that paradoxically, the term itself may have lost significance, or at least currency. Indeed, when we compare the recent evolution of the term with that of the practice itself, a certain form of inverse proportionality emerges. Having allegedly made a substantial contribution to bringing about the demise of the Soviet Bloc, public diplomacy vanished somewhat from the political vocabulary in the 1990s. Its principal institutional channel, the United States Information Agency (USIA) was also subsequently abolished on October 1st 1999 by the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act, and most of its functions were folded into the Department of State. At a certain level, these changes made sense. The Cold War was over and had yet to be replaced by an antagonistic paradigm of comparable magnitude. In the absence of a major ideological battle to be fought, public diplomacy had ceased to be needed as the specific instrument it had initially been conceived to be. But if these developments spelled a decline in the currency of the term, they were far from indicating the demise of the practice. As we have seen, the 1990s, marked as they were by the introduction of the Internet, the prevalence of globalization discourse, and the significant resulting ascent of cultural and spectacular politics, also --and to some extent conversely-- prompted the routinization of the practice and an intensification therefore, rather than a waning, of

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public diplomatic communication. The US Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy's uniquely broad reformulation of the definition of public diplomacy in its 1991 Report as "the open exchange of ideas and information...[whose] global mission is central to...foreign policy," appears in hindsight to have indeed heralded the transformation of public diplomacy, its absorption and normalization into the everyday management of government affairs as something more akin to the foreign policy equivalent of public relations than to the unified, concerted and somewhat propagandistic system of influence.[5]

"Public diplomacy" did enjoy a strong terminological revival in the early years of the War on Terror, as the Bush administration scrambled to "win hearts and minds" in the Islamic world. Once again, it is interesting to note however that if "public diplomacy" became a catchphrase again in these first years of the 2000s, this was not a symptom a renewed relevance, but was rather due mainly to the fact that it was being revived in its earlier Cold War sense, as an instrument of persuasion in a clash of ideologies. Since then, the term appears to have fallen out of favour again, no doubt owing to its failure to fulfil its promise, at least in the context of the Bush administration's War on Terror. As we noted in early in this study, the Obama administration, for instance, has exhibited a tendency to avoid explicit mention of "public diplomacy" when referring to its "strategic communications" activities. On the other hand, after a noticeable lull in scholarship on the subject throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s, the past few years seem to have witnessed a certain revival in public diplomacy studies with a manifest keenness to

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[5] See Brown, J. (2008)

reformulate its essence and methods in order to define the contours of a "new public diplomacy." The recent hurdles faced by public diplomacy during its much-publicized deployment under the Bush presidency appear therefore to have prompted both a retreat of the term from public discourse, and a renewed interest in diagnostic and remedial analysis of the practice. Like "civil society," the popularity of "public diplomacy" is likely to rise and fall again in the political vocabulary. Meanwhile, its relative lexical fashionableness, as we have argued, remains no definitive indicator of its currency as governments' communication with foreign publics, be it direct and deliberate (as when President Obama addresses the Arab world in a speech from Cairo) or more indirect and unintentional (as a by-product of the increasingly global and mediatized nature of political life) remains more widespread and normalized than ever before. As Melissen remarks, public diplomacy may nowadays "be considered as part of the *fabric* of world politics."[6]

The increasingly pervasive and normalized use of public diplomacy does however introduce a novel cause of concern for the practice: the possibility that it may also have become less effective. Overexposure inevitably breeds resistance and suspicion. It also begets, to quote a favourite theme of Zygmunt Bauman, a certain "cheapening" of the commodity in question. And here again, Nye's "paradox of plenty" comes into play. The sheer number of competing and incessant efforts at cultural and ideological seduction means the battle for credibility and attraction is perpetually renewed, never securely won. The fluidity that marks the contemporary social, economic and political scene also

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[6] Melissen. (2005) p. 6 (emphasis added)

encourages, as Nash notes, more "widespread and frequent contestation."[7] Moreover, as Entman demonstrates, the disappearance of the Cold War paradigm has made audiences' response to foreign affairs issues "less stable and predictable,"[8] a condition that the "War on Terror paradigm," if we may call it that, deployed as it was in a conditions of increased fluidity, fragmentation and interdependence, did not manage to reverse more than partially and temporarily. Finally, no matter the extent of its intensification and normalization, public diplomacy remains only *one* potential source of influence amid what Tuch describes as the "daily onslaught of information, impressions, and perceptions to which foreign audiences are exposed through commercial or private channels."[9] Taking these observations into consideration, McNair's vision of an emerging "chaos paradigm" governing the "relationship between journalism and power in a globalised world" marked by "an increasingly anarchic cultural marketplace"[10] might similarly be applied to public diplomacy endeavours.

The uneven but nevertheless intensifying process of globalization, or as Nye prefers to call it "complex interdependence," largely aided and abetted by the decentralizing tendencies of advances in information and communication technology, has encouraged, as we have extensively discussed, a relative diffusion of power away from governments. This does not entail the decline of politics or national power into irrelevance, far from it. Global interdependence may be marked by a density of reciprocal

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[7] Nash. (2001) p. 90

[8] Entman. (2004) p. 21. For a more complete discussion of the subject see pp. 123-146.

[9] Tuch. (1991) p. 11

[10] See McNair. (2006)

effects, but these are rarely homogeneous or balanced, and politics negotiate and reflect these various asymmetries, be they economic, social, or military. This "thickening" of interdependence does however greatly complicate political practice as the channels of contact and influence within and between countries, the relevant actors, and the number of issues themselves proliferate and the intricacy of their relations becomes increasingly intractable.[11] It is therefore reasonable to concede that politics in general, and foreign affairs in particular, cannot anymore be considered "the sole province of governments."[12] Public diplomacy which remains after all, in strict terms, a *state* activity, thereby finds itself accordingly undermined by the rise of competing, influential and not necessarily governmental voices.

In many ways one could argue, borrowing and adapting Beniger's thesis about the effects of the Industrial Revolution in *The Control Revolution*, that the processes of decentralization, fragmentation, and interrelation that have characterized the past decades represent a new "crisis of control" for governments. This explains in great part Nye and Keohane's observation that "governments have become increasingly involved in *attempting* to regulate the economic and social life of the societies they govern."[13] Such attempts are also congruent with Polanyi's argument that openings in society –in this case largely brought about by advances in communication technology rather than the rise of capitalism which he was primarily concerned with—necessarily give rise to a

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[11] See Nye. (2005) pp. 191-200

[12] *Ibid*. p. 82

[13] Nye & Keohane. (2005) p. 173 (emphasis added)

counterbalancing urge for authorities to contain and master these openings.[14] In the

meantime, the on-going efforts by governmental authorities to counteract or prevent a

loss of control have yet to prove decisively victorious. As we highlighted in Chapter IV,

the information age has both increased governments' monitoring capacities and

diminished their commanding power. If, as Beniger forcefully made the case, the control

crisis brought about by the Industrial Revolution precipitated measures that led to the

advent of the information age, what kind of "revolution" will the control crisis caused by

the evolution of the information age itself -from the initially centralizing effects of mass

communication to the general process of dispersion encouraged by digital technology-

then result in?

It is evidently too soon to answer this with more authority than tentative forecasts

allow. And it is particularly too soon, in spite of the many indicators to that effect, to

proclaim the end of political life as we know it, or as Touraine suggests, the demise of

"the political paradigm" and "the collapse and disappearance of the world we call

'social.'"[15] Politics may indeed be undergoing a "revolution" of sorts, but it is all the

more pertinent therefore to recall the actual *dual* meaning of that much-abused word, as

both Beniger and Farr are keen to call attention to. "The concept of revolution," Farr

notes, "We connect it with radical novelty; in another age it was definitely connected

with restoration and return."[16] The older meaning may hardly be in use today, but

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[14] See Polanyi. (1957)

[15] Touraine. (2007) pp. 1-2

[16] Farr. (1989) p. 24

Beniger does insist for example that in his notion of "Control Revolution, the term is intended to have both of these opposite connotations," indicating as it does both an radical change in the economic, social and political procedures brought about by technological progress, but also "the beginning of a restoration...of the economic and political control that was lost at more local levels of society during the Industrial Revolution."[17]

What we mean to suggest is that social (r)evolution need not be solely an inexorably linear process of disposing of the past. "Constant change appears to be the only truly constant thing about our political concepts,"[18] writes Farr, but impermanence proceeds in various ways. Developments can be furthered, but they can also be reversed. Notions and practices may be discarded only to be revived at a later stage. "Absolute discontinuities do not exist in human history," note Nye and Keohane in their essay on *Globalization*, "every era builds on others, and historians can always find precursors for phenomena of the present."[19] The intensification of globalism which we have come to call globalization may only have "emerged as a buzzword in the 1990s,"[20] but its roots are far older, they argue, citing for instance the Silk Road as an early, albeit much "thinner," form of transcontinental economic and cultural network. More significantly, they pursue, the evolution of globalism has not been one of simple and steady increase.

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[17] Beniger. (1986) p. 7

[18] Farr. (1989) p. 24

[19] Nye & Keohane. (2005) p. 194

[20] *Ibid*. p. 191

There are many dimensions to globalization (economic, military, social, cultural, environmental) and they have previously risen and ebbed, not always synchronizedly.

> One can sensibly say, for instance, that economic globalization took place between approximately 1850 and 1914, manifested in imperialism and increased trade and capital flows between politically independent countries; and that such globalization was largely reversed between 1914 and 1945. That is, economic globalism rose between 1850 and 1914 and fell between 1914 and 1945. However, military globalism rose to new heights during the two world wars, as did many aspects of social globalism. The worldwide influenza epidemic of 1918-1919, which took 30 million lives, was propagated in part by the flow of soldiers round the world. So did globalism decline or rise between 1914 and 1945? It depends on what dimension of globalism one is examining.[21]

These considerations about the rise and fall of political phenomena, their antecedents, transformations and intersections, lie of course at the heart of this dissertation and of our decision to analyze public diplomacy not just conceptually but above all genealogically, placing it in a broader historical perspective. Persuasion and strategic influence endeavours have always figured in relations between sovereign political entities, be they empires, nations, or city states, and will most likely continue to do so. Public diplomacy may be their dominant form today, but it too will inevitably mutate. As things stand however, public diplomacy, as a phenomenon of its times, finds itself deployed on an international scene marked by increasingly intricate networks of interdependence, fragmentation, competition and seemingly governed at times by the impenetrable laws of chaos theory.

A famous anecdote about Niels Bohr recounts how, astonished to see a horseshoe above the physicist's door at his home in Tisvilde, a visitor asked him if he actually believed the horseshoe would bring him luck. "Of course not," replied Bohr, "but I am

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[21] *Ibid*. p. 193

told it works even if you don't believe in it." In the current climate of mounting complexity and resulting uncertainty that finds leaders possibly undergoing a crisis of control, individuals arguably more aware and emboldened, and public opinion a significantly less circumscribed entity, public diplomacy may well be developing into a Bohr horseshoe or Pascalian wager of sorts for contemporary governments.

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