

# De-Conceptualizing Science Diplomacy as an Interface Symbol

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## Overview

- Discussion of Science Diplomacy on **conceptual level**
- First outline of argumentation for a publication / exploration
- Risk of over-generalization / over-doing / provocative
- Concern: Empirically informed



## From where do I start?

- Observation of growing fascination with Science Diplomacy (SD)
- In literature and research: SD is praised...
- ...but as what?

What is it that creates so much fascination with the concept of Science Diplomacy?

Do these causes stay true to their promises?



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**Do the causes stay true to their promises?**



## What is Science Diplomacy?



**Real world practices**

Diverse and complex

**A label / discourse**

Carries hopes and  
expectation



## 1) The concept of Science Diplomacy

- Distinction between science and diplomacy
- Addressed as abstract entities
- “Interface Symbolism”



<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/knowledge-diplomacy-can-academics-help-heal-worlds-rifts>

## Knowledge diplomacy: can academics help heal the world's rifts?

In a world where diplomatic ties seem to be fraying everywhere – between China and the US, mainland Europe and the UK, North Korea and pretty much everyone – can academics help patch things up?

This is the question posed by the concept of “science diplomacy”, now often called “knowledge diplomacy” so that the humanities and social sciences are not left out.

Different definitions of science diplomacy abound. But the core idea is that working together on research projects can build trust and networks between countries, improving their overall relations.

“Working together on scientific projects would be a very sincere vote of trust in the relationship,” explained Carolin Kaltofen, a research associate at



## 2) Interface symbolism and conceptual consequences

- Lifts discussion to high level of abstraction
- Macro-level perspective
- Over-generalization and fuzziness
- Distinction – Interrelation – logic





### 3) Interface symbolism and intention of application

- IS carries the promise of “designing” relationships on large (global) scale to solve big “issues”
- Risk: Disregard of micro-level complexities and motivations that have propelled those initiatives in the past that we call Science Diplomacy today.



## Conclusion

- Turn to the micro-level of Science Diplomacy
- Evolution of the concept: originally empirical
- Afterwards: strategic twist -> designing SD
- Get back to empirical level
- More reflection on the broad distinctions (Science and Diplomacy) and how we apply them
- Science Diplomacy as Interface Symbolism



**Many thanks!**



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## The S4D4C angle on Science Diplomacy

- Awareness that science & technology and international affairs are increasingly interrelated
- Expectation that science can be exploited for diplomacy and foreign policy goals and that diplomacy can support science
- Address societal challenges in many different ways

