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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Concluding conversation: decentring science diplomacy

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GB/AH: Science diplomacy was not a widely used 'actors' term' in the periods on which we work, and the nature of its emergence has both geographic (for example,

Anglo-American or 'Western') and conceptual (for example, universalism) baggage.[1] Can 'science diplomacy', then, be a useful term or framework to examine the relationship between geopolitics (international and transnational) and science, technology, medicine and the environment if conceptualized in that broad way – and would being conceived in this broad way still be useful in the fields in which you engage despite that baggage?

KS: The question that interests me off the bat is whether everything that is science diplomacy is always geopolitical. Your suggestion that there is a relationship between geopolitics (international and transnational) and science, technology, medicine and the environment implies that those things run in parallel. Yet we see some interesting variation in their degree of intersection in the fascinating contributions to this special issue.

CE: A different version of that question is: are there any bounds around what counts as science diplomacy, in terms of how explicitly scientific projects need to be harnessed towards geopolitical ends in order to be considered 'diplomatic'? What kinds of scientific projects are we talking about exactly?

I am thinking here of Gabrielle Hecht and colleagues, who have proposed the notion of 'technopolitics' as a way of talking about those material assemblages – from nuclear power to humanitarian aid kits – which fuse technology and politics and, in the process, enact forms of power that may exceed or escape the intentions behind those who produced these assemblages in the first place. My suspicion is that we would tend to think about 'science diplomacy' as a *tool* of politics, but I am curious about whether approaching science diplomacy as a *mode* of politics, as Hecht suggests, might allow us to think about how technologies shape the exercise of political power in quieter or unanticipated ways.[2] So rather than approach science and geopolitics as projects in parallel that may each capitalize on the other to achieve a defined set of goals, think instead about how they are mutually imbricated from the start. But, and this brings us back to Kate's point, geopolitics is not necessarily the same thing as 'diplomacy', so I am curious about how we understand the distinction between these terms and how that makes the specific project of this special issue unique.

KS: To build on this, when we talk about the term 'science diplomacy' and its uses as an umbrella term, we might say that of course each type of science diplomacy has distinctive aspects but also much in common. And it is the 'much-in-common' part that I would love to have unpacked. So another question is, what are the commonalities? Or how are the papers in this special issue collectively defining those commonalities in a way that's useful or novel?

GB/AH: Our choice of Asia as a regional focus has not been about setting it up as something apart or 'othered' that therefore requires a separate set of analytical categories or tools from other regions. Rather, we see twentieth-century Asia as having characteristics that make it an ideal space/period to consider widely

[1] On these issues see Simone Turchetti *et al.*, 'Just Needham to Nixon? On writing the history of "science diplomacy"', *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences* (2020) 50(4), pp. 323–39.

[2] Gabrielle Hecht (ed.), *Entangled Geographies: Empire and Technopolitics in the Global Cold War*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011.

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relevant issues and aspects in the history of science diplomacy. For example, the cases in our issue include discussion of both external and internal imperial powers/power structures. It includes longer-established states (or geopolitical units) and recently founded or emerging ones (as well as those undergoing significant transformations). Its geopolitics and its systems of science, technology and medicine involve both local and regional dynamics, while also being interconnected with larger global or inter-regional ones. These cases often involve multiple imperial systems, 'worlds' and 'blocs'.

KS: This characterization of Asia seems to me to be quite structural, suggesting that there are different centres of power at play in each; the centralization of authority over science diplomacy is at different scales or among different groups of actors across the pieces. I think this framing is very interesting, but I wonder whether the time periods that you're looking at might be stages on a journey to something more homogeneous.

GB/AH: We made a conscious choice to focus on ones that emphasized local agency and local actors in the cases on which the issue focuses. In doing so, we can see the subversion of diffusionist narratives or additional complexity in relationships involving asymmetries of power. In other words, science diplomacy is not simply about powerful or external actors – especially the 'West' – shaping or imposing practices on others. Our view is that these cases show science diplomacy as providing ample opportunities for a wide range of actors from Asia to navigate, to subvert and to shape geopolitical and STM-related relationships. That is to say, decentring our understanding of science diplomacy away from narratives of diffusion or American hegemony allows us to more fully appreciate its wider relevance and fundamental heterogeneity.

KS: The subversion of assumptions about diffusion is a really important undertaking. But a further question – or provocation, shall we say – centres on precisely the idea of the fundamental heterogeneity that you allude to. I wonder if there is a way in which it is possible to over-fetishize heterogeneity, to the point where we are looking maybe at things that are different, but also the same. And I wonder about the utility of engaging with that dichotomy because you're saying, on the one hand, that there are practices in science diplomacy that have much in common. For example, they perhaps all link in some way to geopolitics, which invokes homogeneity. But then you're also saying, on the other hand, that they are all different and we see diversity and heterogeneity. I am interested in the space between those two positions.

There is a great piece by Pinar Bilgin who looks at the quite vibrant disciplinary quest for a non-Western International Relations (IR). She argues that everybody is desperately looking for diversity and trying to pluralize the discipline of IR, but actually what we might find is variation on things that are very similar. And she encourages students of IR to be 'curious about "non-Western" ways even when they seem "similar" to the point of coming across as "uninteresting"'.[3] Todd Hall makes a similar point in our 2020 conversation *Does IR Need Area*

[3] Pinar Bilgin, 'Thinking past 'Western' IR?,' *Third World Quarterly* (2008) 29(1), pp. 5–23.

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Studies?,[4] where he underscores the importance of both probing 'seemingly familiar surface appearances', which may make things falsely 'appear homologous across contexts' and avoiding the exoticization of difference. The space between 'different sameness' or 'sameness in difference' when looking at common or shared practices like science diplomacy seems to me to then open up even more really interesting questions, like 'why' and 'how'?

GB: In a sense that is essentially what we are trying to explore – how to link the notion of Asia as a testing ground, like a microcosm, with larger dynamics. I think both of us [Barrett and Homei] felt we needed to challenge potentially essentializing notions such as 'Asia is simply different, you have to look at Asia differently'. One of our agendas is to say that these are embedded and integrated. They are not always the typical interconnections that we are thinking about and that we have Asian stories that are interconnected with these other processes elsewhere. And, at the same time, we believe that the reflections that we are seeing in these cases can be applied elsewhere. This is the pitch that I would make to Atlantic-centred scholars or Europeanists: that it is variations on central themes relevant to experiences in other contexts. So people who are looking at or outward from, for example, Europe or other parts of the world, we think our cases should give them pause to think about potential parallels.

CE: I am speaking from the perspective of a historian of science and medicine specifically working on South East Asia. In response to those Western-centric narratives that emphasize the hegemony and diffusion of Western science, there has been pushback among scholars of Asian STS who reject the notion of any universal storyline. The impulse is instead to emphasize how subaltern forms of knowledge and local agency interacted with imported knowledge to produce something new and even unexpected.[5] What emerge are more locally grounded and heterogeneous accounts. The challenge remains how to connect these local stories. Warwick Anderson, for instance, warns of the dangers of relying too heavily on narratives of globalization which tend to flatten out differences, and seamlessly gloss over relationships of power.[6]

I would say in response to Gordon that I think, for me, 'science diplomacy' is less useful in terms of thinking about common themes than of contemplating points of connection or entanglements between different places, politics, kinds of expertise. Sunil Amrith has written a lot on this topic, on the internationalization of health in South and South East Asia.[7] Part of what he talks about is how there is this move away from describing the region in climatic terms ('tropical'), and more in terms of socio-economic determinants. His emphasis is on the development of thinking at the League of Nations in the 1920s and 1930s around poverty and social medicine in Eastern Europe. He argues that initiatives around rural hygiene become the basis

[4] Louise Fawcett, Todd H. Hall, Andrew Hurrell, Kalyopso Nicolaïdis and Kate Sullivan de Estrada (eds.), *Does International Relations Need Area Studies?*, special issue, *St Antony's International Review* (2020) 16(1).

[5] See, for instance, Projit Mukharji, *Doctoring Traditions: Ayurveda, Small Technologies and Braided Sciences*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016; Sean Hsiang-Lin Lei, *Neither Donkey nor Horse: Medicine in the Struggle over China's Modernity*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014; Tine Gammeltoft, *Haunting Images: A Cultural Account of Selective Reproduction in Vietnam*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.

[6] Warwick Anderson, 'Thickening transregionalism: historical formations of science, technology, and medicine in Southeast Asia', *East Asian Science, Technology and Society: An International Journal* (2018) 12(4), pp. 503–18.

[7] Sunil Amrith, *Decolonizing International Health: India and Southeast Asia, 1930–1965*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006.

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for new forms of comparison with other regions, specifically South and South East Asia, which were perceived to be facing similar challenges associated with agrarian decline and economic depression. These places were deliberately being looked at together and actively compared as the basis for determining whether similar interventions could travel from one regional context to another.

This is something I have explored in my own work on mental health and psychiatry in colonial South East Asia: the movement of experts between French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies as part of these study trips, and how acts of comparison led to the consolidation of a regional model for asylum care, the agricultural colony.[8] So I think what we are looking at, and this goes back to Kate's question, is not variations on a global or universal theme, but rather the product of a history that sought to create stable referents that saw these regions as structurally comparable to each other. It is an artefact of the very scientific-diplomatic conversations that were happening in this earlier colonial period which shored up ideas about East and South East Asia as distinctive regions, and later Cold War ideas about development and technology as eminently portable.[9]

KS: Yes, and I think once we see what Claire describes, it helps us to disrupt some of the categories that perhaps we have taken on and now unreflexively use in our scholarly thinking. Rather than leveraging cases and concepts and categories as fixed mental furniture, we can try to redefine them from newly elaborated accounts of connection. This is very much in line with the recent pivot to relational thinking in IR – which hopes to produce, as Milja Kurki puts it, 'manifold situated relational knowledges and conversations between different forms of relational thought and practice'.[10] Robbie Shilliam's study *The Black Pacific*, for example, asks why the struggles of the African diaspora have resonated so strongly with South Pacific peoples, and shows us the conceptual disruption that can take place once we explore and recognize the relations between these groups, across times and places. The struggles against colonial rule and racism among African peoples, including the diaspora, and among Polynesians, are less 'comparable' because of their common experiences of colonialism, and more 'deeply related' on account of the legacies of their connections to each other across times and places.[11] Shilliam demonstrates how the 'preparation of a ground for relating' can move us away from thinking in terms of separate entities that are the result of prior categorization, and take us towards a 'deeply relational' account of similarity or refraction.[12]

CE: Yes, what I would argue is that even the concept of South East Asia itself – as a region that required distinctive forms of knowledge and modes of intervention – was shored up as a result of international collaboration and cooperation across different empires, and across different emergent nation states, in the early to mid-

[8] Claire Edington and Hans Pols, 'Building psychiatric expertise across Southeast Asia: study trips, site visits and therapeutic labor in French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies, 1898–1937', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (2016) 58(3), pp. 636–63.

[9] Randall Packard, 'Malaria dreams: postwar visions of health and development in the Third World', *Medical Anthropology* (1997) 17(3), pp. 279–96.

[10] Milja Kurki, 'Relational revolution and relationality in IR: new conversations', *Review of International Studies* (2021) 48(5), pp. 821–36, 821.

[11] Robbie Shilliam, *The Black Pacific: Anticolonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections*, London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2015, p. 24.

[12] Shilliam, op. cit. (11), p. 30.

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twentieth century. So that's one of the possibilities about the special issue: rethinking science diplomacy can provide a way of destabilizing those categories that we take for granted. And not just categories, but I think also potentially open new scales and South–South geographies, and the expansion of the host of actors who are typically included in these stories.

AH: I agree with you fully, Claire. In my work I look at the specific ways diplomats, medical experts and activists used family planning to re-establish Japan's post-war international reputation. And I have been really uncomfortable about these established categories of 'North'/'South' and 'developed'/'developing' countries, because Japan, in the 1950s–1960s, was really struggling with this question of 'where are we actually in this world order'. And at some point in my research, I realized that Japanese actors were an active player in creating these categories, including the region of 'Asia' itself, by taking advantage of the connections they created through colonialism and through alliance with the US during the Cold War era.[13] And in the middle of that was the Japanese engagement with global and regional power politics, which was made so complicated because of Japan's position and identity within that politics. Japan had to walk on eggshells in international/regional politics during this period because of its legacy as the only non-Western colonial power and as an imperialist aggressor but now a self-identified democratic and peace-loving nation and the number-one US ally in the region in the Cold War. So I was almost compelled to be attuned to this making of these worlds and how Japanese actors positioned themselves in the middle of these categories. Our goal was to try to find a lot of surprising connections that have been obscured by established narratives. Jaehwan Hyun's paper in this issue, along with his other work, uncovers some surprising connections by examining transnational historical figures and events of science and diplomacy that dropped into obscurity precisely because they resisted easy categorization as South Korea emerged as a sovereign nation.[14]

GB: Another example is Aashique Ahmed Iqbal's paper on aviation. One of the things we are really interested in in Iqbal's paper is that he is looking at a princely state within the British imperial system, at how aviation became a tool of that system, and at the set of processes that were specific to that context.[15] These are not necessarily the type of actor that I would be expecting when talking about things like science diplomacy, and yet they seem very, very familiar in terms of what this princely state is doing and what it is aiming to achieve. Again, this maybe ties to this question about units of analysis. In Kenji Ito's paper, looking at the foundation of the Japanese Science Council,[16] one of the things we are interested in is that he's subverting existing accounts on several levels. He's taking internalized narratives about American influence and saying they've been replicated even within Japanese-language scholarly writings on this, and by the actors involved. But as Ito shows, it was a more dynamic process. As much

[13] Aya Homei, 'Between the West and Asia: "humanistic" Japanese family planning in the Cold War', *East Asian Science, Technology and Society: An International Journal* (2016) 10(4), pp. 445–67. See also Hiromi Mizuno, Aaron S. Moore and John DiMoia (eds.), *Engineering Asia: Technology, Colonial Development and the Cold War Order*, London: Bloomsbury, 2018.

[14] Jaehwan Hyun, 'Negotiating conservation and competition: national parks and "victory-over-communism" diplomacy in South Korea', this issue.

[15] Aashique Ahmed Iqbal, 'Jodhpur and the aeroplane: aviation and diplomacy in an Indian state 1924–1952', this issue.

[16] Kenji Ito, 'Transnational scientific advising: occupied Japan, the United States National Academy of Sciences and the establishment of the Science Council of Japan', this issue.

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as there was a clear power hierarchy and dynamic, beneath the surface, the nature of interactions allowed for a certain subversion of power.

To me, this speaks to some of the things that you talk about, Zuoyue, in you work on Sino-American relations. It is not a one-way process of 'Americanization'; it is this mutual process of 'transnationalization'.[17] And I think this is an example of the broader relevance of these cases: nothing is straightforward diffusion. Again, with science diplomacy, we get this notion of this as a European or basically Atlantic world phenomenon that then is rolled out elsewhere. But there are familiar processes that are happening all over the place. While the Royal Society and the American Association for the Advancement of Science cite Joseph Needham as one of the key examples in their Anglocentric narrative of science diplomacy, Needham and the Sino-British Science Co-operation Office were as much influenced by Chinese officials on the ground and the Chinese scientists he encountered.[18] These simple narratives mask an awful lot which is fundamental to the nature of how these interactions developed.

ZW: Right. Kate's and Claire's points really help me think through some of these subjects and I have been doing some reading on science diplomacy, too. The historian John Krige has edited several books related to this topic. In the 2015 volume *How Knowledge Moves*, I contributed a chapter on how American and Chinese scientists first engaged each other in nuclear arms control in the 1980s. Their interactions fell under the category of science diplomacy, but it was the mixture of state sponsorship and private networking that we have talked about.[19] Tensions between state and non-state actors with regard to science and technology crossing national borders also featured prominently in Krige's 2022 edited volume *Knowledge Flows in a Global Age*.[20] I know that, Gordon, you have written about 'people's diplomacy', which is also important in reminding us that science diplomacy was not always purely state-driven.[21] I believe that this public/private dynamics shows up in the papers in this special issue too.

There are a couple of other points I would like to make. One is Claire's comment about South East Asia being a result of diplomatic arrangements, so to speak. This helps highlight the value of the term 'science diplomacy' versus transnational history, because it does get out of the macro side of things. Transnationalism has become trendy in the last twenty years or so, but now people have begun to reflect on its potential limitations. In Krige's introduction to *Knowledge Flows*, for example, he wrote about some of the earlier accounts about transnational flows of science or

[17] For example, Zuoyue Wang, 'Transnational science during the Cold War: the case of Chinese/American scientists', *Isis* (2010) 101(2), pp. 367–77.

[18] *Science Diplomacy: Navigating the Changing Balance of Power*, London: Royal Society, 2010. On the importance of these influences, Gordon Barrett, 'Between sovereignty and legitimacy: China and UNESCO, 1946–1953', *Modern Asian Studies* (2019) 53(5), pp. 1516–42; Barrett, 'Picturing Chinese science: wartime photographs in Joseph Needham's science diplomacy', *BJHS* (2023) 56(2), pp. 185–203; Thomas Mougey, 'Building UNESCO science from the "dark zone": Joseph Needham, empire, and the wartime reorganization of international science from China, 1942–6', *History of Science* (2021) 59(4), pp. 461–91.

[19] Zuoyue Wang, 'Controlled exchanges: public–private hybridity, transnational networking, and knowledge circulation in US–China scientific discourse on nuclear arms control', in John Krige (ed.), *How Knowledge Moves: Writing the Transnational History of Science and Technology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019, pp. 368–410.

[20] John Krige (ed.), *Knowledge Flows in a Global Age*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022.

[21] For example, Gordon Barrett, *China's Cold War Science Diplomacy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

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knowledge that tended to give too optimistic a view of how knowledge flowed freely across national borders.[22] So in some of his recent works he has looked at the other side: the obstacles to knowledge flow, especially American export controls going back to the early Cold War and becoming even more prominent today. For instance, the US government's 'China Initiative' in 2018–21 deployed export controls to investigate people, mostly Chinese American scientists, who were accused of passing sensitive but unclassified information to China.

Similarly, Nancy Green in her book *The Limits of Transnationalism* also criticized advocates of the transnational approach as being unduly sanguine about the diminishing role of nation states.[23] In contrast she saw merits in the older concept of international history, in which the nation states tended to play a bigger role than in transnational history. So the word 'diplomacy' in 'science diplomacy' can help us highlight the role of the nation states in transnational science and allows us to get at both the forces pushing for transnational movements and the forces that block such movements.

And yet, as someone who has pushed for the transnational approach in the history of science, I think that the concept can be salvaged because the appeal of 'transnational' to me is its openness. It doesn't have a very strong agenda like global history, or world systems theory. With proper care, transnational history does not necessarily turn into optimistic history or cheerleading. Even 'science diplomacy', for me, can focus too much on the nation state's side of these interactions. It tends to neglect the on-the-ground, the informal or the private interactions that are always there. As you know, Gordon, there was always an interesting mixture in 'people's diplomacy', which of course had the state in there, but the personal interactions mattered, too. It has a counterpart in my study of Chinese American scientists and what I call their 'cultural nationalism'. It has the state in there, but it is also their feelings, their attachments to their culture and to the people they knew.[24] So I still think 'transnational' can be saved, so to speak.

This highlights the tensions among the transnational approach, science diplomacy and global history. Lynn Hunt touched on some of these in her *Writing History in the Global Era*, in which she argued that global history was top-down, while transnational history was bottom-up.[25] So maybe science diplomacy can actually somehow fit in the middle of the two at the meso level of analysis.

A final point: I wonder whether we can fruitfully historicize the concept of 'science diplomacy' itself. The American Association for the Advancement of Science has been a leader in the field, with a Center for Science Diplomacy established in 2008, covering a diverse range of topics such as climate change, sustainability and health.[26] The Center in turn has published an online journal, *Science and Diplomacy*, since 2012.[27] In a way, these developments represented a

[22] Krige, op. cit. (20), pp. 1–30.

[23] Nancy L. Green, *The Limits of Transnationalism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019.

[24] Zuoyue Wang, 'Chinese American scientists and U.S.–China scientific relations: from Richard Nixon to Wen Ho Lee', in Peter H. Koehn and Xiao-huang Yin (eds.), *The Expanding Roles of Chinese Americans in U.S.–China Relations: Transnational Networks and Trans-Pacific Interactions*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2002, pp. 207–334.

[25] Lynn Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era*, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2014.

[26] 'S&T leaders see a renewed role for science diplomacy', *Science* (2008) 321(5893), p. 1171.

[27] 'About the journal', at www.sciencediplomacy.org/about (accessed March 2023).

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shift from the Cold War, when the concern in the US, especially in many Area Studies programmes, was mainly over nuclear arms control and the physical sciences.[28] In this connection, it is worth noting a point made recently by historians Matthew Adamson and Roberto Lalli: science diplomacy has not always produced only positive outcomes.[29]

Earlier Claire and Kate were talking about what science counts in science diplomacy, and I think that maybe one of the appeals of science diplomacy was to move away from a focus on physical sciences, nuclear weapons and security, as biomedical and environmental concerns have arisen since the 1970s, as historian Greg Whitesides has explored.[30]

CE: To build on that point, I am curious about how this shift away from nuclear energy and state security to concerns about tuberculosis, for instance, or cancer, may expand how we think about science diplomacy beyond relations with non-state actors. For instance, I am thinking of Aihwa Ong's book *Fungible Life* that analyses biomedical science in Singapore, and efforts to assert the regional or the global value of knowledge that's being constructed for Asians by Asians.[31] Basically, subverting these earlier colonial narratives about the Asian body as being pathological or deviant and instead saying, actually, Asian populations are suffering from cancer rates, because they tend to carry certain kinds of genetic markers. It is become this huge hub of global capital, these pharmaceutical biotech companies are going to Singapore, because that's where they are running all these clinical trials and firming up the idea of an 'Asian disease' or 'Chinese disease.' But of course, in the process, they are reinscribing the earlier idea of the possibility of stabilizing what counts as 'Asian-ness'.

ZW: One of the points made in Greg Whitesides's book was that in addition to the rise of transnational corporations, there was a conscious American foreign policy to push the US to dominate the world market in the biomedical area through policies such as the protection of intellectual property.

CE: I think what's interesting in the Ong example is how it is a Singapore-led effort, upending expectations or assumptions about where and how things are flowing. That's a point that I think aligns with Michitake Aso's article.[32] Vietnam was not just accepting aid from East Germany; they were also exporting to Africa. We see lots of China development work now in Africa. I think that it is worth emphasizing these actors not in terms of receiving aid and attention, but as exporting their own kind of diplomatic geopolitical strategies abroad as part of the socialist bloc.

GB: That's one of the important things that Aso's paper is bringing to the issue. And also in the areas of medicine and health, in the case of China, Mary Brazelton, Yue Liang and Dongxin Zou have all produced fascinating work that undercut

[28] For example, Matthew Farish, *The Contours of America's Cold War*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

[29] Matthew Adamson and Roberto Lalli, 'Global perspectives on science diplomacy: exploring the diplomacy–knowledge nexus in contemporary histories of science', *Centaurus* (2021) 63(1), pp. 1–16.

[30] Greg Whitesides, *Science and American Foreign Relations since World War II*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

[31] Aihwa Ong, *Fungible Life: Experiment in the Asian City of Life*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016.

[32] Michitake Aso, 'Performing national independence through medical diplomacy: tuberculosis control and socialist internationalism in Cold War Vietnam', this issue.

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any notions of the PRC as lacking agency or influence in the decades before the eras of rapprochement and 'reform and opening up'.[33] So this, I think, is a really positive shift, especially in pushing for narratives emphasizing agency.

AH: Zuoyue's point about the criticism toward transnational history that it fetishizes the transnational 'flow' – which John Krige with the edited volume wonderfully elaborated[34] – and Claire's point with the case of Singapore point to a significant way science diplomacy as an analytical framework can contribute to historical scholarship, which is that it can allow us to see the presence of power and identity politics in how science was negotiated through international relations. And the 'diplomacy' in science diplomacy allows us to foreground different perspectives that the parties involved had that motivated them to bring themselves to a negotiating table (and this was informed by each party's self-identities). And because of the power that informed the relations between the negotiating parties, the negotiation could lead at times to a consensus, at times to a conflict, and at times to surprising outcomes, and how these outcomes shape science as knowledge and practice. Also 'diplomacy' in science diplomacy allows us to see the influence of the perceived relations with the parties that were not directly involved in the negotiation for science.

GB: As with other factors we have discussed, this is another area where there is a meaningful parallel between History and International Relations when considering the relationship between science, or scientists, and international affairs – especially when it comes to scholarship focused on transnational relations and epistemic communities, in which the boundary work and questions of categorization become very tricky when it comes to differentiating state and non-state actors. The Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs emerged as the classic case with this, in which there seems to be a constructive tension, or perhaps a blurring of boundaries, that scholars from both disciplines have had to navigate and balance out when discussing Pugwash.[35] So one of the things this issue has sought to do is to bring together papers where those state and non-state tensions or ambiguities are manifested in different ways, with a variety of actors operating across a range of contexts. And, in doing so, stepping away from those kinds of 'classic' cases or contexts, considering the balance of such dynamics related to them.

KS: Yes, that balance is a fresh and interesting one to explore. I have two last reflections from my side. One centres on the tension between historicizing science diplomacy – which in some of the periods addressed by the papers might have a lot to do with independent state formation or part of that process – and the idea of using the practices we see and the actors we see as a model to try to understand parallel

[33] Mary Augusta Brazelton, 'Viral reflections: placing China in global health histories', *Journal of Asian Studies* (2020) 79(3), pp. 579–88; Yue Liang, 'The inauguration of China's health diplomacy: Hubei medical experience and Chinese first medical team in Algeria, 1963–1965', paper presented at the International Symposium on the History of Science Diplomacy in 20th Century China, 19 March 2020; Dongxin Zou, 'Socialist medicine and Maoist humanitarianism: Chinese medical missions to Algeria, 1963–1984', PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2019.

[34] Krige, op. cit. (19).

[35] For an explicitly cross-disciplinary reflective discussion of this see Matthew Evangelista, 'Blurring the borders of a new discipline: the achievements and prospects of Pugwash history', in Alison Kraft and Carola Sachse (eds.), *Science, (Anti-)Communism and Diplomacy: The Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs in the Early Cold War*, Leiden: Brill, 2019, pp. 324–43.

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processes or cognate processes in the present, which is interesting and possibly methodologically challenging.

The other centres on the idea of there being connections between parts of the world that are in what we today call the 'global South', but at the same time are still being framed in reaction to a transatlantic or Euro-Atlantic dominant or hegemonic narrative. And perhaps there's a risk of romanticizing some of the bidirectionality when we talk about transnational exchange as well, especially across power differentials (which need not be North–South but can also be South–South). So I guess, for me, I am still struggling a bit – in a productive, positive way – with that tension between something being different and connected in a space that is underexamined and, however, being still probably in the shadow – either in the way that we are trying to create knowledge about it, or in the way that it was actually operating at the time – of a dominant centre of colonial or imperial power. And this methodological question: are we creating these categories [or] examining new categories in the past, and if we are, are they relevant to the present?

The word 'decentring' starts with a centre, right? I think, if you do not start with that centre, where do you start?

ZW: I just have one last thought, again, about historicizing science diplomacy or criticisms of transnationalism. In the last twenty years or so, we began to see this backlash against the WTO model of free-flow capital. Thus we have had Brexit and Trumpism, and they were quite a while in the making. Scholars, of course, have noticed these developments and so that began to also affect the way they have looked at categories of analysis. When transnationalism first became prominent, one of the main concerns was that we should not forget about the suffering of people who went through the transnational process, such as immigrants.[36] Now, with the reassertion of the nation states, especially in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, everybody is talking about a new, and perhaps more dangerous, era of a post-post-Cold War, deglobalized world.[37] Inevitably such developments are going to affect historians too, and scholars in general.

CE: One thing I just wanted to add is I think part of what people like Reiko Kanazawa and Michitake Aso are doing in the special issue is pointing to forms of anti-colonial or anti-Western solidarity that are being articulated through these transnational scientific networks.[38] I do not think this observation suggests an equivalence or bidirectionality in scientific exchanges between the global North and global South. Rather, it was precisely the recognition of the continued, and considerable, power imbalances between North and South which prompted actors in the decolonizing world to imagine new kinds of connection and possibilities (what Adom Getachew calls 'world-making') for future political action that in

[36] For example, Gabrielle M. Spiegel, 'The task of the historian', *American Historical Review* (2009) 114(1), pp. 1–15.

[37] For example, 'The new geopolitical epoch', *The Economist* (online), 26 December 2022, at www.economist.com/united-states/2022/12/26/the-new-geopolitical-epoch (accessed March 2023).

[38] Reiko Kanazawa, 'The politics of medical expertise: WHO consultants for substance control in Thailand and India during the Cold War', this issue; Aso, op. cit. (32).

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some instances circumvented Geneva altogether.[39] Anne-Emmanuelle Birn and Carlos Muntaner, for instance, describe the vibrancy of health cooperation across Latin America, historically, based on left-wing solidarity and social-justice values.[40] I think it is an important part of this story, too.

But I like thinking of historicizing the term 'science diplomacy' itself, historicizing the regions or the categories that we are working with because they themselves are legacies of empire that continued to inform how policy gets done and how public health gets made. I really like Kate's invitation to think about what the stakes for this conversation for IR are today and moving forward. I think that is productive and useful.

AH: I wonder if science diplomacy is, in fact, looking at imperialism and imperial history. That's something we started to talk about in the beginning, right, Gordon? That's where we started.

GB: It runs through everything. We talked about it earlier, but Aashique Ahmed Iqbal's paper shows that most explicitly in Jodhpur navigating an imperial system, but with an eye on what happens afterwards.[41] And so that imperialism is there and, I think again, we were thinking about Asia as 'useful' for problematizing science diplomacy, because there's not just one 'imperialism' that's present in the region, historically. There are multiple forms, coming from multiple origins, and we are engaging with that at different points. Yue Liang's paper, focusing on post-1949 China, also considers this in terms of anti-imperialism, explicitly, and solidarity.[42]

CE: These post-war global or Cold War development projects are a recasting of earlier forms of imperialism.

KS: Yes, and we might conclude by also and again foregrounding the imperialisms in knowledge production that we still see and practice and into which this collection is an important intervention. To return to your earlier point, Gordon – that you and Aya are keen for the variations on central themes in your cases to inform scholars working on science diplomacy in Europe or North America – this is perhaps the intervention that matters the most. As Claudia Derichs has made clear recently, scholarship in the global North may well now be recognizing theories, methods and concepts developed in the global South, but rarely are they applied to the study of the global North.[43] Universal theoretical claims, as Itty Abraham points out in conversation with Derichs, 'cannot be separated from the power differentials that divide and create Global North and South' – they operate through geopolitics more than through our epistemological choices.[44] But geopolitics is in flux – not least

[39] Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019.

[40] On on South–South solidarity in Latin America, Anne-Emmanuelle Birn and Carlos Muntaner, 'Latin American social medicine across borders: South–South cooperation and the making of health solidarity', *Global Public Health* (2018) 14(6–8), pp. 817–34.

[41] Iqbal, op. cit. (15).

[42] Yue Liang, 'Technology diplomacy in early Communist China: the visit to the Jinagjing Flood Diversion Project in 1952', this issue.

[43] Claudia Derichs, Ariel Heryanto and Itty Abraham, 'Area studies and disciplines: what disciplines and what areas?', *International Quarterly for Asian Studies* (2020) 51(3–4), pp. 35–49.

[44] Derichs, Heryanto and Abraham, op. cit. (43), p. 43.

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in Asia, and we will see – and already are seeing, as William Callahan makes clear in the case of Chinese IR, for example[45] – alternative forms of conceptualization and theorizing that seek to justify the hegemonic political ambitions of an alternative set of actors. But I would like to hope that not everything – including science diplomacy – is always tied up with geopolitics! As scholars in positions of privilege we may have at least some kinds of power at our disposal – not least our convening power and our critical power – and this special issue offers rich examples of both.

[45] William A. Callahan, 'Chinese visions of world order: post-hegemonic or a new hegemony?' *International Studies Review* (2008) 10(4), pp. 749–61.

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