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## Evolving Institutions for Twenty-First Century (Science) Diplomacy

*Vaughan C. Turekian*

**B**Y recently publishing “Hardly Academic: Why Diplomacy and Science Need Each Other” by Rodney Nichols, *Foreign Affairs* focused for the first time explicitly on the issue of science diplomacy. However, this article is just part of a growing trend in this most prestigious journal and a growing area of focus for its publisher, the Council on Foreign Relations, a major institution of foreign policy. Over the recent decade, its treatment of science and technology issues has increased substantially, with a number of cover stories focused on topics that bridge science, technology, and foreign affairs. This thought leadership reflects a broader shift in thinking within institutions throughout the world about the importance of better integrating the communities of science and diplomacy in novel ways.

In May, a high-level committee convened by Japan’s minister of foreign affairs released fifteen recommendations for how Japan could better incorporate its scientific and technological expertise into its foreign policy. While many of the recommendations were to be predicted, including the establishment of the position of science adviser to the foreign minister, the breadth of the recommendations highlighted numerous new ways Japan could leverage science to meet its foreign policy objectives. The report itself marks a turning point for an institution looking to upgrade its ability to meet and shape the challenges of this still young century.

On the other side of the Pacific, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences released its own assessment of science in the U.S. Department of State. Their report, "Diplomacy for the 21st Century: Embedding a Culture of Science and Technology Throughout the Department of State," builds on its landmark 1999 report, which, among other things, established the position of science and technology adviser to the secretary of state. The twenty-seven recommendations in the new report are wide ranging, but as a whole speak to the fact that while one of the oldest U.S. institutions of government has made much progress toward becoming more scientifically and technologically literate, there are many more steps that could be taken to leverage science and technology as a key element of U.S. foreign policy.

These two recent reports highlight the importance of foreign ministries as vital instruments of science diplomacy. These agencies of foreign affairs, like their counterparts around the world, are often viewed as conservative and somewhat inflexible institutions focused on stability rather than transformation. However, they are adjusting to a world in which developments in science and technology move rapidly and affect relationships and interactions at bilateral, regional, and global scales.

At the same time that some traditional national instruments of diplomacy are evolving to better incorporate science, international science institutions are also evolving to meet the diplomatic and foreign policy drivers of this more technical century. Over the past few months, I have had the opportunity to visit some of these institutions, and I have observed their own transitions during this period. A common theme for each is that they are moving beyond the Cold War issues that defined the second half of the twentieth century, and they are more focused on the large, global challenges facing our multipolar world.

This past April, during the inaugural science diplomacy conference organized by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS, publisher of *Science & Diplomacy*) Center for Science Diplomacy, there were discussions about some of the twentieth century institutions that have been working in the new twenty-first century science diplomacy space. The conference heard from Flavia Schlegel, the current assistant director-general for natural sciences at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), about the nearly seventy-year commitment of the multilateral organization to build science cooperation throughout the world in an effort to promote peace and prosperity. UNESCO has served as an important platform for science cooperation between the North and South, but a recent diplomatic row involving the United States and Palestinian membership in UNESCO has severely limited the budget for the organization. How the institution responds to the budget difficulties will be an important consideration for its future science diplomacy efforts.

Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to visit the International Institute of Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), outside of Vienna, Austria. Housed in a former Hapsburg palace, it was originally established to bring together scientists from the East and West to focus on science issues with international dimensions. With the

end of the Cold War, IIASA's mission as a bridge builder has had to change. Rather than focusing on regions of tension, today it brings together scientists from the North and South to analyze complex multidisciplinary global challenges such as climate, energy, and food.

A week after visiting the Blauer Hof Palace, I participated in the second annual AAAS-TWAS (The World Academy of Sciences) course on science diplomacy. The event was held in Trieste, Italy, a site of many science institutions, including the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) and TWAS, which were established in part to provide an institutional center for developing world scientists to congregate, share knowledge, build capacity, and establish networks. During the Cold War—when the focus of science was on the competition, and occasional collaboration, between U.S. and Soviet scientists—Trieste served a special role and marked a spot where developing world scientists were the focus.

IIASA, ICTP, UNESCO, and TWAS are just a few of the myriad institutions that have worked to bring together scientists regardless of strained political relationships. Their successes as institutions build not on the diplomacy, but on the science and training that underpin their missions and visions. Still, they are active pillars of the science diplomacy movement.

In recent years, *Science & Diplomacy* has looked at a range of science diplomacy institutions and analyzed their role in fostering greater societal ties and advancing knowledge and understanding about important global challenges. In fact, the importance of institutions, whether national or global, in the science diplomacy ecosystem is far ranging. How these institutions adapt and respond to internal and external changes will go a long way in determining their relevance and influence in this century. **SD**