# International Organizations and Digital Diplomacy: The EU, UN and NATO on Social Media

## Speakers & Abstracts

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# INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND DIGITAL DIPLOMACY: THE EU, UN AND NATO ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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## BIOGRAPHY

Ruben Zaiotti (PhD Toronto, Mst Oxford, BA Bologna) is Associate Professor in the Political Science department at Dalhousie University. He is the Director of the Jean Monnet European Union Centre of Excellence and Jean Monnet Chair in Public Diplomacy. His main areas of interest are European Union politics, public diplomacy, border control, immigration policy, and transatlantic relations. Ruben Zaiotti is the author of the monograph "Cultures of Border Control: Schengen and the Evolution of European Frontiers" with University of Chicago Press and editor of books on language and globalization and on migration policy. He has published articles for Review of International Studies, European Security, Journal of European Integration, Journal of Borderland Studies, International Journal of Refugee Law.

## THE WORKSHOP

Following the example of other private and public entities at the national and sub-national level, regional and international organizations (IOs) such as the European Union and the United Nations have increasingly embraced social media as public diplomacy tools aimed at raising their profile and image vis a vis relevant stakeholders both locally and globally. Unlike their national and subnational counterparts, however, IOs' 'digital diplomacy' has received limited academic attention. This is in part due to the fact these organizations tend to be relatively restrained and uncontroversial in their use of social media, and the feedback they receive from the wider public is typically more diffuse and indirect. Yet, the use of social media such as Twitter and Facebook, and digital diplomacy more generally, when applied to international organizations, raise relevant theoretical and empirical questions that the workshop seeks to address. These questions include, but are not limited to, issues of identity, power, communication, legitimacy, ethics, and research methods. The workshop brings together a multidisciplinary and eclectic group of scholars and practitioners to tackle these issues and to explore the current debates surrounding IOs' use of social media and the future of digital diplomacy.

# PANEL 1 – DIGITAL DIPLOMACY, SOCIAL MEDIA AND IOS: THEORETICAL ISSUES

## MICHAEL W. HABEGGER

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## BIOGRAPHY

Mike Habegger is an instructor and Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Political Science & International Relations at the University of Delaware. His research lies at the intersection of democracy and the internet, broadly, and social media practices and the concepts of subjectivity and the public sphere, specifically. His work is influenced by the democratic political theory, internet politics, political communication, and social movements literatures. His dissertation project addresses and challenges the changing foundations of democratic politics by tracing the digital and social media practices in which everyday people engage during momentous and mundane times. He has coauthored work with Tobias Lemke that pushes his theoretical contribution to audiences in IR theory, specifically, the English School.

## ABSTRACT

***Digital communications networks and the changing dynamics of transnational contention***
Recent years have seen an explosion of work on digital diplomacy, including the use of social media platforms by state-actors to reach and interact with foreign publics. From this view, the affordances of digital media offer new ways in which diplomats can conduct diplomatic relations, tailor messages, and facilitate the acceptance of their state's foreign policy. But the often-praised merger of diplomatic practice and digital technology presents an array of challenges for both scholars and practitioners of international politics. Diplomacy rests on the idea that a limited number of vetted actors interact with one another while following a strict set of behavioral rules. In contrast, digital communication is driven by an almost countless numbers of actors—many of whom remain anonymous—who interact irregularly and without much oversight or rules to guide their interactions. We argue that the global proliferation of digitally mediated linkages between individuals and nonstate actors constitutes a fundamental challenge to traditional dynamics of international communication in the diplomatic system. We conceptualize diplomatic and digital practice as two distinct systems of political communication that differ not only in scope (i.e., the number of participants) and process (i.e., how these participants interact) but have produced two very different communicative *logics* that are uniquely tailored toward the achievement of specific outcomes and ritualized practices. For diplomacy, this is the amelioration of international conflict by peaceful means. Digital communication, in contrast, thrives on affect (i.e., gratification) and emotion (i.e., outrage). Based on this functional differentiation, we suggest that international organizations will find it extremely difficult to effectively promote and achieve their communicative goals through the integration of digital practices into the rituals of the diplomatic form.

# JÉRÉMIE CORNUT

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## BIOGRAPHY

Jérémie Cornut is an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada. His teaching and research focus on diplomacy in practice, international relations theory, and Canadian foreign policy. His articles have notably been published in the *European Journal of International Relations*, *Cooperation and Conflict*, *Journal of International Relations and Development, International Studies Perspectives, International Journal, Études internationales, Review of International Studies* and *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*. He is currently working on the transformative impact of technology on diplomacy.

## ABSTRACT

*Digital diplomacy in practice: implications for IOs*
Inspired by International Practice Theory (IPT), this paper looks at the use of social media in IOs as practice. As I explain in the first part, when looked through these lenses, digital diplomacy is not a tool or instrument of IOs, but an activity undertaken by individuals endowed with practical sense. In a practice theory perspective, the focus is put on doing digital diplomacy: it is a performed by improvising agents; it is situated in a specific normative and socio-political context; and it is a nested phenomena, in that it is embedded in other practices. This approach thus leads to focus on four questions: 1. Habits: what are the taken for granted rules that agents in IOs apply when they use social media? 2. Improvisations: how do agents in IOs adapt their use of social media to their specific needs and objectives, the context of their practice, and changing circumstances? 3. Strategies: what do agents in IOs want to achieve when they use social media and how do they achieve these goals? 4. Virtuosity: what are the best practices in the use of social media in IOs? The second part illustrates this analysis with the use of social media in various IOs.

# PANEL 1 – DIGITAL DIPLOMACY, SOCIAL MEDIA AND IOS: THEORETICAL ISSUES



## MATTHIAS ECKER-EHRHARDT

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## BIOGRAPHY
Matthias Ecker-Ehrhardt, Dr. Phil., has been a visiting professor of International Relations at Leipzig University since 2017. He worked as a long-term postdoctoral fellow at Berlin's Social Science Research Center (2003-2013) and directed the project "The Communicated IO: Public Relations, Civil Society Inclusion and Global Politicization of International Organizations" at the Free University of Berlin (2014-2017). His research currently focuses on the politicization and (self)legitimation of International Organizations and has been published in leading international journals including the *International Studies Quarterly*, *European Journal of International Relations*, *Review of International Organizations*, *Review of International Political Economy*, and *International Theory*. He has a soft spot for shoegaze and drone music.

## ABSTRACT
*IOs going digital? Explaining social media adoption and use across cases*
The widespread use of social media opens up entirely new opportunities for International Organizations (IOs) to directly communicate with and engage an increasingly aware and assertive public. Using Facebook pages of a stratified-random sample of 290 IO bodies, time-series cross-section regression is employed to examine the determinants of their creation. Results suggest that multiple factors shape the application of social media for public communication purposes. Four main conclusions are drawn from these results: First, external contestation and the opening of IO bodies for representatives of transnational civil society is strongly associated with the adoption of social media, which suggests an underlying imperative for self-legitimation. Secondly, organizational mandates shape IO demands for social media, for example, by calling for direct implementation of multiple policy programs on the ground. Thirdly, centralized public communication facilitates the adoption and extensive use of social media. Lastly, there is some evidence for the diffusion of Facebook use among global IOs, suggesting that a strong social media presence has become an integral part of the organizational script for global international governance.

# PANEL 2 – IOS ON SOCIAL MEDIA: A PRACTITIONER'S VIEW

## CAROLE FROMAGE-DUFORÊT

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## BIOGRAPHY
Do you remember when posting a picture on Twitter was not an option or when multilingual posts on Facebook didn't exist? Carole does! Carole is a French expat in Brussels, fully making use of her political communication expertise on social media for the Directorate-General for Communication of the European Commission since 2013. Carole is currently in charge of social media coordination and outreach. Like many in Brussels, she studied European affairs, and started working in communication when in 2008 she joined one of Publicis' branches in Brussels for advocacy projects.

## ABSTRACT
### Building the EU's identity on social media
In a world where a lot of time is spent social networking or online, the European Commission and the EU institutions must strive to maintain a dynamic and appealing social media presence. How do we intend to do this at the European Commission? EU values are at the heart of our social media content strategy. At a time where facts and figures alone are not enough, the European Commission is adapting its content strategy to give supporters of the EU the possibility to speak up and voice their support. Feelings play an important role. Our content looks more and more at uniting people behind the core EU values and highlighting the benefits that the EU brings. Engaging, emotional messages and creative visuals are of the essence.

# PANEL 2 – IOS ON SOCIAL MEDIA: A PRACTITIONER'S VIEW

## NANCY GROVES

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## BIOGRAPHY

Nancy heads the 20+-person team that manages the UN's global social media presences which now have 40 million fans and followers. In addition to planning, coordinating and carrying out broader UN System social media initiatives in nine languages, her team writes and implements social media policies and guidelines. Nancy is also part of the small team of senior managers involved in crisis communications response and provides daily advice to senior UN officials across the UN System, including UN Secretary-General António Guterres. Prior to joining the UN in 2004, Nancy worked in Washington, DC, at both CNN and National Public Radio. She also worked with a development-related NGO called Global Volunteers where she led teams of volunteers to Ghana and Turkey. Fluent in French and enthusiastic about her Spanish-language skills, Nancy holds a master's degree from the University of Maryland-College Park's College of Information Studies.

## ABSTRACT

*The UN and its presence on social media*

Adapting to ever-changing information landscape and platforms may be difficult for large bureaucracies that are often resistant to change. Nancy Groves shares her perspective and lessons learned from how the UN Secretariat is working to change the way it communicates online.

# PANEL 2 – IOS ON SOCIAL MEDIA: A PRACTITIONER'S VIEW

## REBECCA OBSTLER

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## BIOGRAPHY

Rebecca Obstler joined NATO as Principal Editor in February 2018. She oversees NATO's content team, coordinating strategic digital outreach across the enterprise channels and platforms in an effort both to engage users in the story of NATO and to contribute to coherence among Alliance communications. A Generation X digital native, Rebecca has worked in communications spanning the analogue and digital eras. She is most recently an alumna of the United Nations system (and related), having spent more than a dozen years in communications at such organizations as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Rome, the International Monetary Fund in Washington, DC, and the International Maritime Organization in London. Prior to her appointment to NATO, she led the UNICEF global web team in New York. A United States national, Rebecca earned a Bachelor's degree with honours in English from Dartmouth College and a Master's in international negotiation and conflict resolution from the American University School of International Service.

## ABSTRACT
### Social NATO

Whom does NATO wish to engage through its institutional social media channels? What methods does it use to do so? Is it working? How do these channels play in to the broader Alliance social ecosystem? This presentation uses a recent case study to illustrate answers to these questions. It first shows two cuts of a short video and describes the strategic approach, rollout and results. It then briefly reviews how NATO, a political-military organization conservative in its approach to communications, has approached social media and evolved as social media have matured. It outlines challenges the Alliance must consider in its social communications, among which security, the information landscape, risk aversion, plurality of interests, staffing and diversity of stakeholders. Finally, it circles back to the content to unpack how the process of making it addressed these challenges and promoted its successful performance.

# PANEL 3 – IOS, SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION



## MICHAL KRZYZANOWSKI

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## BIOGRAPHY

Michał Krzyżanowski holds a Chair in Media and Communication Studies at Örebro University, Sweden as well as a research appointment as a Chair in Communication & Media at the University of Liverpool, UK. In 2018-19 he is also Albert Bonnier Jr. Guest Professor in Media Studies at Stockholm University, Sweden. Michał is one of the leading international experts in critical discourse studies of media, political and organizational communication. His key research interests are in discursive dynamics of right-wing populism, diachronic analyses of constructions of crisis in European and transnational media and in the role of discourse in organizational communication and institutional change in Europe. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Language and Politics and a co-editor of the Bloomsbury Advances in Critical Discourse Studies book series.

## ABSTRACT

***Social media in/and the politics of the European Union: politico-organizational communication, institutional cultures and self-inflicted elitism***
This paper looks at how social/online media – using the example of Twitter – are used in the politico-organizational communication of the European Union at a time when it faces multiple crises – e.g. the recent European 'Refugee Crisis', 'Brexit', etc. – and is in acute need of effectively communicating its politics to the European demos. Proposing a critical discourse framework for the analysis of the politico-organizational use of Twitter, the paper shows that while, to some extent, bringing change or 'modernization' to EU political communication patterns, social/online media often help in sustaining some of the deep-seated dispositions in EU communicative/organizational practices as well as political discourses. As deployed by the EU's – and specifically the European Commission's – spokesperson service, social/online media often solidify some of the controversial patterns in EU political communication. They also bring in other, more contemporary, challenges as regards using Twitter and social media as parts of political and institutional/organizational communication.

# PANEL 3 – IOS, SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

## CAROLINE BOUCHARD

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## BIOGRAPHY

Caroline Bouchard is an Assistant Professor in International Communication at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). She previously held a Research Fellow position at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. She has worked on various research projects studying international organizations in the age of globalization including Designing UN Women, and the MERCURY project - Multilateralism and the EU in the Contemporary Global Order. Her research experience is complemented by professional experiences at the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, France) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) (Ottawa, Canada). Her current research focuses on the United Nations in the digital age.

## ABSTRACT

***The United Nations in the Digital Age: defining the role of digital ICTs in UN processes***
Dynamics within the United Nations have been significantly transformed by the effects of globalization including the development of new digital information and communication technologies (ICTs). Changes have been observed both in the ways UN actors interact within the organization and the ways they communicate with external audiences. This paper presents results from an ongoing research project which examines the United Nations in the digital age. This paper seeks to answer the following question: what is the role of digital ICTs in UN processes? The paper proposes a conceptual framework which draws from the International Relations literature on the United Nations (Smith 2002, 2006), communication studies on ICTs and their associated social contexts (Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2006), and on the diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers, 2003). This paper presents results from a case study analysis which focuses on one UN entity: The United Nations Secretariat and, more specifically, its Department of Global Communication.

# PANEL 3 – IOS, SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

## TODD NEWMAN

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## BIOGRAPHY
Todd Newman, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Life Sciences Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he teaches courses on science communication, strategic communication, and marketing. Newman is the co-author of Brand (2018), which examines the role of brand strategy across different sectors of society, and the editor of the forthcoming volume, Theory and Best Practices in Science Communication Training (2019).

## ABSTRACT

***Social media, international organizations and scientific communication***
Science and technology evade every aspect of our day-to-day lives, yet there are substantial differences in public attitudes about science in general and certain issues in particular. While there are many actors who play a role in ensuring the position of science in society, international organizations play a key role in promoting public awareness and engagement with science and technology. As the communication space for science and technology is predominantly online, it is important to examine the role and function of international organizations as actors within the digital and social media communication space. Bridging research from science communication, political communication, and marketing I will present on best practices for international organization's use of social media within the context of science and technology issues.

# PANEL 4 – POWER, PRESTIGE AND IOS' DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

## ILAN MANOR

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## BIOGRAPHY

Ilan Manor is a digital diplomacy scholar at the University of Oxford. His research focuses on the use of digital platforms during times of geo-political crises. His book The Digitalization of Public Diplomacy was published in 2019 by Palgrave Macmillan. He has contributed to the Hague Journal of Diplomacy, Place branding & Public Diplomacy, the Cambridge Review of International Affairs, Internet & Policy and Media, War & Conflict.

## ABSTRACT

### Digital diplomacy and prestige in the UN

This article responds to previous efforts to calculate diplomatic prestige while adapting these methodologies to the exigencies of digital diplomacy. In particular, we are interested in how digital diplomacy provides opportunities for diplomatic actors lacking in material resources to overcome prestige deficits. We adapt approaches used in earlier studies to calculate the material and ideational components of diplomatic prestige to the online sphere—in terms of presence, centrality and perceptions. By analysing the twitter accounts of 67 foreign ministries and 33 United Nations missions, we find that the traditional markers of diplomatic prestige do not automatically translate online, and that significant effort is required to maintain prestige in online diplomatic networks. We also find that the flexibility and transience of online networks do allow diplomatic actors a degree of prestige mobility. Hence, this study is highly significant for understanding how prestige is managed and strategically influenced in digital diplomacy.

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## BIOGRAPHY

Alexandra Goritz is a doctoral researcher and research fellow at the Freie Universität Berlin, working on the project "Connections and Levels of Influence of Treaty Secretariats in International Environmental and Disability Policy over Time (CONNECT)". Within this project, she writes her dissertation with a focus on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) secretariat and its role in global climate politics, using a network analytical approach. She studied Politics and Public Administration (BA) at the University of Konstanz and Environment and Development (MSc) at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

## ABSTRACT

***Climate change negotiations on Twitter: analyzing the role of the UNFCCC Secretariat***
As the international bureaucracy at the heart of the global climate regime, the UN Climate Change secretariat has become a prominent actor during the annual Conferences of the Parties (COPs). Scholars assessed the secretariat's evolution from a rather passive bureaucracy to an actor in its own right. One aspect of the UN climate change secretariat has gained little attention, although it potentially offers new insights into its strategies to influence global climate policymaking – its use of online social networks. The Secretariat has become an active user of online social media, such as Twitter to promote its work, engage other stakeholders, and highlight climate initiatives. Using a network analytical approach, we identify how the UN climate secretariat influences climate negotiations. We use two issue-specific communication networks and the development of the Secretariat's egocentric network over time as examples.

# PANEL 5 – IOS, SOCIAL MEDIA AND LEGITIMACY

## MATTHIAS HOFFERBERTH

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## BIOGRAPHY

Born and educated in Germany, Dr. Hofferberth completed an M.A. and Ph.D. in Political Science at Goethe University, Frankfurt. At UTSA since January 2013, he received tenure at UTSA in 2018. His work relates to world politics and global governance. He is interested in non-state agency and the provision of order beyond nation states. Research-wise, he recently published a book on 'Multinational Enterprises in World Politics' with Nomos and has published in journals such as International Studies Review, Journal of International Relations and Development, Millennium: Journal of International Studies, Business and Politics, Global Society, and Palgrave Communications. Dr. Hofferberth regularly teaches courses on global governance, international organizations, and related themes.

## ABSTRACT

*Tweeting to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war? The UN, Twitter and communicative action*

Against perceived crisis, discussions in and on global governance have recently focused on the legitimacy of actors involved. In response, international organizations have invested heavily in their public communication. With the potential to disseminate information, ideas, reason, and arguments in an instance, the ways international organizations utilize social media in particular in this vein has become highly relevant to their overall public perception and whether their actions are perceived as legitimate. As such, scholars need to understand whether and how IOs use social media to reach out to their potentially global constituencies, maintain their legitimacy as global governors and further their mission. Looking at the UN and its use of Twitter, the paper discusses the following: How does the UN approach and engage with their audience? How do they frame their global public in the first place? What topics are being addressed and what broader discourses are initiated and maintained? Drawing on the normative dimension of Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action and its applications in International Relations, the article further provides a detailed assessment of the UN Twittersphere. It thus provides a detailed case study how different stakeholders and actors, both individual and institutional, within and towards this global organization communicate through tweets. More specifically, the paper (1) in an exploratory fashion based on a qualitative content analysis of UN tweets from the 73rd UN Session in 2018 reconstructs the UN Twittersphere to determine how and whether this global organization engages its public audience in discourse and (2) assesses this engagement in light of communicative action in order to contribute to a new line of normatively informed IO research which considers new forms of digital communication.

# PANEL 5 – IOS, SOCIAL MEDIA AND LEGITIMACY

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## BIOGRAPHY

Corneliu Bjola is an Associate Professor in Diplomatic Studies at the University of Oxford and Head of the Oxford Digital Diplomacy Research Group. He also serves as a Faculty Fellow at the Center on Public Diplomacy at the University of Southern California and as a Professorial Lecturer at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna. His research focuses on the impact of digital technology on the conduct of diplomacy with a focus on strategic communication, digital influence, data analytics and methods for countering digital propaganda. He has authored or edited six books, including the twin volumes on *Countering Online Propaganda and Violent Extremism: The Dark Side of Digital Diplomacy* (2018) and *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice* (2015). His work has been published in the *European Journal of International Relations, Review of International Studies, Ethics and International Affairs, International Negotiation, Cambridge Review of International Affairs, Global Policy, Journal of Global Ethics and the Hague Journal of Diplomacy.*

## ABSTRACT

***Coping with digital disinformation in multilateral contexts: The case of the UN General Assembly***

Digital disinformation has become a major source of diplomatic concern for many governments in the recent years as the rise of echo-chambers, fake news, and the deliberate weaponisation of information by state and non-state actors has fueled fears of digital technologies potentially reaching the point of undermining the very fabric of the post WWII liberal international order. While many studies have focused on the role of disinformation on states' bilateral relations, little is known about how disinformation operates in multilateral contexts and how it affects the work of international organizations. Drawing on Twitter data collected during the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly, this study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the pattern, intensity and impact of digital disinformation on the activity of the UN. The paper will provide an overview of the most critical forms of digital disinformation directed at the UN and discuss possible methods by which their negative appeal could be minimized and possibly reversed