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EDITORIAL

Welcome to a new edition of the International Journal of Cyber Diplomacy, the premier regional peer reviewed publication on the topic of cyber diplomacy. With the help of our contributors and our readers, ICI Bucharest aims to develop the IJCD into a flagship product in support of the Center for Cyber Diplomacy and its general strategy of internationalization, networking and the combination of policy expertise with rigorous research capabilities.

Cyber Diplomacy covers, as a field, an important range of topics related to security governance, technical coordination and standards, cyber crime and cyberwarfare and institutional cooperation for global ICT infrastructure maintenance and development. As such, we have found that the IJCD has attracted a wide variety of contributions in different fields, which have highlighted the extent to which the Cyber Diplomacy paradigm can be of use to ICI Bucharest in many of its areas of interest, as expressed in the centers it has set up over the years: the Blockchain Services and Development Center, the Executive Blockchain Laboratory, the Cryptocurrencies Investigation and Compliance Center, the Cyber Influence Assessment and Strategies Center and more.

Cyber Diplomacy is also an increasingly visible practice. We are witnessing obvious coordination on technical standards and investment policy within the West and other blocs on emerging digital technologies such as Artificial Intelligence. We have all heard the public debate on the issue of AI and whether it poses a danger to humanity, but there are very real transborder regulatory attempts behind the strident public discourses. The European Union leads the way in regulating AI, having developed an AI legislation, plan of action, regulations and voluntary codes, but it does not lead in the technology itself, remaining behind the US and China. This may limit its ability to influence other countries to adopt its preferred regulatory approaches or compatible standards through the so-called “Brussels Effect”. The global audience has a front-row seat to this strong debate that involves not only nations and the EU, but also private companies, academics and public intellectuals. There is also a strong geopolitical bent to the issue, as transatlantic cooperation on a host of digital and cyber issues, including AI, has become institutionalized through the Working Groups of the Trade and Technology Council. For the US and EU to have “agreed to disagree” on key issues related to the taxation of tech

companies and access to private user data by US tech giants, it was not enough to underline the gains of cooperation, but also the risks of not coordinating during the rapid rise of China, whose investment in such topics outstrips that of the US and the EU. China practices its own Cyber Diplomacy, with a much more discrete and dulcet tone than its more famous “wolf warrior diplomacy”, but no less relentless and ambitious. It seeks to not only position itself at the forefront of various technologies, but to translate them into competitive products through which to capture a global market share in dual-use advanced technologies relying on an increasingly well coordinated group of partner countries, with which it also pursues projects in other fields. Its Cyber Diplomacy preaches comprehensive partnerships that link together finance, communications infrastructure, comprehensive enterprise and government solutions, training, maintenance, upgrades and security, as well as eventual technology transfer. The ties it may build in this way, whether in ICT, energy, transport, finance or even space have alarmed the West which has decided to not only strengthen internal cooperation and limit Chinese influence through ownership of “crown jewel” companies and start-ups, or through licit and illicit access to technology, but also to build up an alternative to the Chinese catalogue for cooperation in third party nations and developing regions.

As you can see, it is an exciting time for this convergence between the digital and the diplomatic. Efforts at resolving the Ukraine war and deterring future aggression will also take place in the cyber realm, and the distinction between civilian and military systems becomes blurred in cyberspace when considering the dependence of military, security and intelligence forces on digitalized civilian critical infrastructures.

We have spent the time since our last issue exploring these issues and more by organizing and participating in a host of international conferences and forums on this issue. In addition to the organization of our yearly International Conference on Cyber Diplomacy on 23 April 2023, we can list, for example, our participation at the level of organizing committee and group moderation in a tabletop exercise on hybrid threats to defence-related critical energy infrastructures which was organized by the European Defence Agency and the Ministry of Defence of Bulgaria in Sofia on 25-26 May 2023, as part of the Consultation Forum on Sustainable Energy in Security and Defence Sectors of the EDA. The exercise emphasized cyber cooperation between civilian authorities, the MoD and companies operating critical infrastructures, both in a national and transnational setting, in the face of a wide variety of direct and indirect cyber threats. ICI Bucharest also provided the leadership of one of the four TTX teams.

The current issue of the IJCD reflects the inherent diversity of the field. The issue features, among others, an analysis of Cyber Diplomacy in the space area with a focus on the activity of the United Nations Committee on the peaceful uses of outer space, a material on the use of Cyber Diplomacy to increase resilience, an analysis of the public cyber diplomacy of the European External Action Service, a modelling exercise on the impact of Cyber Diplomacy within a wide range of scenarios and a complex system governance perspective on space issues that utilizes cyber diplomacy as a framework for understanding transborder coordination in the field.

We hope that you will continue being at our side through this exciting journey and that you will consider publishing with us some of the results of your research and engaging further with ICI Bucharest’s various academic, policy and R&D initiatives.