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Advance Diaspora Diplomacy in a Networked World

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Abstract

The role of diaspora in cultural exchange, international affairs and in economic development is now well established. What is new is the increasing proliferation of national strategies to harness them actively for public diplomacy. This paper addresses the rise of Australia's only formal, global diaspora network: Advance – Australia's Global community which has acted self-consciously to become an instrument of public diplomacy. Emerging from a small base in New York, Advance sought to 'open doors' for Australians in the world's biggest market. Cultivating a strong membership base of well-connected individuals in the arts, commerce and professions, Advance developed its network centrality by building partnerships with state governments, Australian universities and federal government agencies. As an elite organisation of high profile Australians overseas, Advance has developed into a global organisation communicating Australian culture and economic achievements to both Australian national audiences and foreign constituencies.

Keywords: diaspora; diplomacy; discourse; network centrality; transnational communities.

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1. Introduction

Networks have long been important to diaspora communities to maintain cultural and economic ties but networks are also elemental to the role of diaspora in public diplomacy. It was with the publication of *Diaspora: The World Wide Web of Australians* that Australia's federal and state governments and private sector institutions were encouraged to "capitalise on the networks, talent and goodwill to further the national interest" (Fullilove and Flutter, 2004). The authors of this report called this large community of Australians living abroad, at that time, 1 million in number, "a market, a constituency, a sales force and an ambassadorial corps". They described this community as "well educated, well connected and well disposed to this country" and that greater efforts should be made to "engage the

diaspora in our national life and create a global community of Australians" (Fullilove and Flutter, 2004: 1).

The idea of the potential of diaspora networks as an extension of a countries' hard (economic) and soft (cultural) power is now a common-place. Diasporas have played a role as an extension of national prestige (or decline) for centuries. What is new is the increasing proliferation of national strategies to harness them actively for public diplomacy (Melissen, 2011). Much consideration has been given to the economic productivity of migrants as well as the role of remittances in sustaining cultural ties and aiding development (Brinkerhoff, 2006). However, this paper is concerned with a particular elite category of diaspora. That is, professional communities that are acting either consciously and deliberately through involvement in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with a public diplomacy orientation, or tacitly through their professional networks. In our case study of *Advance* (the Australian diaspora association), networking the organisation to the professions and business sector has entailed not only greater access to powerful figures or resources inside and outside governments but has also created 'network centrality' for Advance.

The role of networks as a tool of diplomacy has also been highlighted in the international relations literature in recent years. In particular, former Director of Policy Planning for the US Department of State, Anne Marie Slaughter advised the US administration to pursue a "grand strategy of network centrality" (2012). She argued that the most important shift for America:

"... is not the rise of China and the realignment of power in the international system, but rather the ubiquity and density of global networks. ... States certainly continue to exist and to play essential roles in the international system. However,... they now act side by side with many types of social actors who are able to come together and act independently on the world stage."

In Slaughter's analysis diplomatic strategists must look at all of the actors that states need to work with: corporations, non-governmental organisations (NGO's), universities, cultural associations, "as participants in an ever-shifting landscape of networks" (2012: 45).

Trade relationships, information and communications technology (ICT) and global service industries are not only significant contributors to economic growth but are also densely networked industries in the global economy. In this network context, diaspora play a role, even if an indirect one, in the national interests of their home state. Yet, crafting a network-based strategy of public diplomacy requires regarding networks, and the relationships and potential influence they offer, in a qualitatively different light from traditional approaches of diplomacy. In the main, earlier forms of public diplomacy have been characterised by one-way communication from governments to foreign audiences; the state is directive.

Where diplomacy and international policy-making processes are regarded as a 'game of skill' and not simply a game of power determined by size, power and geographic location, leveraging of Australian diaspora networks potentially represents a route for Australian policymakers to 'punch above their weight' (Beeson and Higgott, 2014). This paper considers diaspora diplomacy as a modality of public diplomacy, an additional means of illuminating a nation's cultural or soft power (Nye, 2004). In an age which increasingly values information and services (Baldwin, 2016), a "state's ability to position itself as close to the center of critical networks as possible and to mobilize, orchestrate and create networks will prove a vital source of power" (Slaughter, 2012).

There has been enormous debate over the evolution of public diplomacy and the emergence of 'new diplomacy' (*inter alia*, Melissen, 2011; Carter, 2015). 'New diplomacy' incorporates a proactive role for citizens and associational life in diplomatic activity. Non-state actors are directive. By contrast, 'public diplomacy' is usually regarded as government designed and directed, and diaspora strategies as "state-led" (see Hickey *et al*, 2015), where the skills and expertise of 'expatriates' and migrants have been re-imagined into an 'un-tapped' resource to be leveraged by home states (Larner, 2007). Yet, Advance is independent and is not directed by government. But its status as a new diplomat reveals little about its effectiveness in this role. Questions arise about the 'tipping point' for a civil society body like Advance to turn into a new diplomat which we address in Section 2. The

paper also asks to what extent, and for what reasons, the Australian government engages Advance. And it asks how Advance as a network organisation helps broadcast Australian policies and achievements, *inter alia* on science and innovation, the cultural industries, sport, finance or trade.

We argue that diplomacy can be driven by a self-ascribed "ambassador-at-large" diaspora association. Such associations are not necessarily limited to cultural activities or exchange, but engage in a range of economic, political and social activities depending on their organisational mandate. Consequently, for the sake of simplicity, this paper will treat cultural, diaspora, economic, science and sport diplomacy as sub-categories of public diplomacy. By the same token, cultural diplomacy is not regarded as a discrete practice readily distinguishable from other types of diplomacy but blends into other types of diplomacy.

Different conceptualisations of cultural diplomacy have been outlined in this journal. Indeed, there are considerable differences with some authors adopting relatively tight understandings of "state-sponsored deployments of culture and education for foreign audiences" (Carter, 2015: 479) while others take a broader approach recognising the input of non-state actors (*inter alia*, Ang et al, 2015; Nisbett, 2013). Rather than rehearsing the debates already developed in *IJCP*, the point to make here, and illuminated by the case study of Advance below, is that the organisational strategies and network practices of new diplomats are not fixed exclusively to any one type of diplomacy. That is, cultural diplomacy is linked to economic, science and other kinds of diplomacy. As a 'new diplomat', in its relations with the Australian diaspora, Advance tended to 'mix and match' these themes in their activities whereby different parts of the network may be more focused on economic affairs whereas other nodes in the network pursue cultural exchange or scientific cooperation.

First, our empirical focus is Australia's only formal, global diaspora network: Advance – Australia's Global Community. Advance's evolution as a self-conscious 'new diplomat'

dovetails with Australian Government's public diplomacy ambitions. Our method in Section 2 is based substantially on participant observation. One of the authors – Elena Douglas – was the founding Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Advance for five years 2002-07. She was employed by the Australian Consulate in New York to build the network and she interacted with consular officials, diplomats and other Australian political and business leaders in this task. Her personal database forms the basis of Section 2 and is complemented throughout the paper by reference to a wide range of Australian government documentary sources plus media reports.

Second, in addition to our network focus a subsidiary lens of analytical scrutiny is 'discourse institutionalism' (Schmidt, 2008) which we suggest offers insight to the dynamics of both 'new' and 'public' diplomacy. The approach focuses on the discursive and professional interactions of (in our case) diasporic and diplomatic actors taking into consideration who spoke to whom where, when and why in the process of generating policy practices. This soft cultural power takes two forms: a 'coordinative discourse' of policy construction among select groups on the one hand, plus a 'communicative' discourse of public deliberation and social legitimation on the other. This approach also allows us to reveal the "selective incorporation of overseas populations into the orbit of the sending state" (Dickinson, 2015, 80).

2. A brief history of Advance

Advance became a 'new diplomat' accidentally but was deliberately enveloped into Australian government 'public diplomacy' as the network grew in scale and ambition. There have been, we argue, five stages to the evolution of Advance.

Advance was founded in 2002 as the "Young Australian Professionals Association" (YAPA) in partnership with the Australian Consulate General in New York. The new Consul-General, Ken Allen arrived in New York following a 40-year career in global banking in London, New York, and Washington DC (the World Bank). Working in the Australian banking and finance system as it became open to international competition in the 1980's and 1990's, Allen had

extensive dealing with New York operations in that capacity. When taking on the role of Consul General, Allen had the expectation of undertaking genuine business development and economic diplomacy for Australia in areas as diverse as financial services, wine, fashion, manufacturing, ICT services, entertainment, media and technology. His intention was to encourage all of the various Australian representative agencies then in the Australian consulate -- Austrade, Invest Australia and the public diplomacy and cultural activities of the Consulate -- to pull together in promoting Australia's economic interest. However, there was only a small team available to him within the Consulate and few resources to pursue the range of tasks and the scale of the promotional enterprise – the entire North-East of the USA.

With so few resources, Allen sought to leverage the talent pool of Australian professionals resident in New York. His own network of Australians in Wall Street was significant, and the next generation of professionals were arriving in New York in larger numbers as New York increasingly replaced London and the "rite of passage" destination for young outbound Australians who held global aspirations. Large numbers of Australian finance, IT, marketing and media professionals were making New York their home as they pursued careers.

Another catalyst for the formation of a formal network of professionals was the terrorist tragedy of September 11 (Gray, 2018). This event occurred shortly after Allen's arrival in New York and it sent shockwaves through the Australian community, as it did all New York resident communities. Many Australian professionals – senior and emerging – who at that point had little or no time for 'expat' activities, became known to each other and the idea for YAPA was born.

When YAPA was founded, New York already had Australian expatriate organisations. There was the venerable Australian American Association (AAA), founded by Keith Murdoch[1], a political correspondent, in the wake of World War 2. This group was focused on creating

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[1] Keith Murdoch was the father of Rupert Murdoch, the current CEO and Chairman of News Corp.

scholarship funds to enable talented young Australian scholars to study in the US; (it now has a two-way programme). There was also Australian Women in New York (AWNY) which was popular, particularly with women with children. However, the interests, career ambitions and line-up of social events capable of interesting the large number of Australians in New York who wanted a richer experience than a generic Australian connection, was largely unmet.

The YAPA enticement, as promoted by Ken Allen to this younger professional audience in New York, was "mentors, jobs and deals". YAPA was able to build a large network not so much by bringing Australians together around being Australian, but with a focus on their industry sector and professional interests. Committees were formed to launch and galvanise these industry specific interests via 'Vertical' networks as they were called. These Vertical networks were fashioned around: (i) banking and finance (and later vii. Women on Wall Street was also created), (ii) public interest (NGO's UN etc); (iii) property; (iv) life sciences and biotechnology; (v) media and creative industries, and (vi) ICT. Volunteer committees facilitated by one paid staff member (Elena Douglas) and a number of interns produced events that drew the leading figures in that community in New York. For example, James Gorman in banking, the Director of the Cold Spring Harbour Laboratory in Life Sciences, and also Bob Isherwood, then Global Creative Director of Saatchi & Saatchi in Media and Creative Industries.

In its first formal year of operation Advance had more than 50 events and involved thousands of Australians in New York. One event was paid by a $25,000 a year investment by three prominent Australian business leaders -- Anthony Pratt, Lachlan Murdoch and Peter Lowy[2]. The rest of the work was done by committee members of the Vertical committees and a number of interns. Most events were sponsor or user-pays. YAPA's rent was provided gratis inside the office of the Australian Consulate in New York for two years.

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[2] Pratt is an Australian billionaire and Executive Chairman of Visy Industries and Pratt Industries United States, the world's largest privately owned packaging and paper company. Lachlan Keith Murdoch is executive co-chair of News Corp and 21st Century Fox and mass media heir to Rupert Murdoch. Peter Lowy was at the time, joint Co-Chief Executive Officer of Westfield Corporation, a world's leading shopping centre company.

The attraction to the Australian diaspora who became YAPA members was the opportunity to network with people in their industry or professional domain, and potentially to participate in an informal mentoring programme. From a public diplomacy point of view, while the Consul General saw the exercise as holding potential corollary benefits in being a ready-made "rolodex" of access for the broader economic diplomacy task, YAPA, at this stage, did not envisage itself as an instrument of public diplomacy. Instead, it operated not unlike many other diaspora associations that find "expression not only in formal arrangements but in a range of cultural events and enterprises" (Collins and Bekenova, 2017: 733). Today, Advance continues to generate cultural synergies in the US such as in June 2018, the Australian Theatre Company Summer Reading Series in Los Angeles or the 'Taste of Down Under' charitable event in New York.

The second phase for Advance is marked by the change of name of the organisation to "Advance - Young Australian Professionals in America" in March 2004 at a high profile event in New York's Lincoln Centre with James Wolfensohn, former World Bank President and an Australian (Overington, 2004). The change of name signalled new developments in Advance's journey towards becoming an instrument of public diplomacy. Firstly, it was no longer a New York centric network, but embraced the opportunity to be a resource firstly for Australian professionals but increasingly as a market-entry resource for Australians entering the broader US market. The use of a member data-base to engineer these kinds of introductions became part of what Advance sought to offer the various agencies of the Australian Federal and State governments. In addition, this was the phase in which the "ambassador-at-large" thinking started to develop in the organisation's self-identity.

The publication and dissemination of the report by the Committee for Economic Development, *Australia's Diaspora: Its, Size, Nature and Policy Implications* in 2003 was another turning point in Advance's orientation towards public diplomacy and conceiving of itself as an ambassadorial corps. The fact that there were 1 million Australians overseas (compared to 20 million within Australia – see Hugo, Rudd and Harris 2003) and that the US

based professionals were just one group in this diaspora had a strong impact on the organisation's leadership. The Consul General hosted one of the authors, Graeme Hugo to speak about the report to a packed audience at the Consulate. Some of the professional Australians' who had emigrated to the United States now began to think of them-selves as still being a part of Australia's national endeavour.

The CEDA Report also reinforced the themes that were emerging in Advance Board who were examining the work of TIE – The Indus Entrepreneur – an expatriate organisation active in Silicon Valley (and also now Australia, Cheng 2016). Another model of attempts to link expatriates to national economic development was the New Zealand equivalent, a partnership between a philanthropist and the NZ Government in founding KEA – Kiwi Expatriate Association (Gamlen, 2013; Larner, 2007). Observing the activities of other nations' and their efforts to formalise their diaspora networks and expatriate organisations strengthened thinking among the Advance Board about new diplomacy. Around this time, the Singaporean government sent a delegation to study the operation of Advance. The Singaporean response was to resource a new government agency, Contact Singapore, and provide it with a large injection of funding (reported to be $15m over five years) to focus on talent recruitment and engagement of Singaporeans with a focus on New York, Boston and London (see Ho and Boyle, 2015).

The third phase of Advance's evolution was a tipping point for the network with the development of direct partnerships with Australian state governments and universities. The New York hub was servicing these new arrangements as well as meeting requests of other communities in the US to build Advance Chapters. Within two years of the establishment of the original New York Chapter with its 7 industry verticals, there were also an additional group of city-based Chapters including Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Washington DC. All of these chapters were launched by the end of 2004 by volunteers with support from the New York office.

This rapid growth saw the extension of the funding model of Advance, from Patrons and event sponsors, to the development of fee-for-service packages to build State based, and university centric alumni networks and ambassadorial councils to guide their alumni engagement and donor acquisition strategies in the US market. Advance was able to fund several additional staff through this period and to introduce new online technologies (content management system) and to direct more time in producing online content to drive the acquisition of new members in each of the industry verticals, for each of the new US chapters, as well as for Australian state government and university audiences.

Although Advance was the c reation of a diplomatic body – the New York Consulate General – in its first two phases Advance was US focused. Only by 'going global', could its new diplomacy potential be developed. The fourth phase of Advance's evolution was when it decided to become "Advance - Global Australian Professionals" and move beyond the US and into first the UK and Europe and then increasingly Asia. The demand from London, which is home to Australia's largest expatriate community, was very strong. For Advance this was a critical time as the founding figure, Ken Allen, had finished his term and returned to Australia. There were strong entreaties for Advance to fold into the AAA. But becoming a global network diluted the argument for a merger because the AAA's charter is bilateral, not global. In March 2006, Advance was launched in London with a major event addressed by the then High Commissioner Richard Alston.

The global orientation was further reinforced by the hosting, in December 2006 of Australia's first diaspora summit, the Advance 100 Summit. It was convened around an invitation to recognise 100 leading Australians overseas holding influential positions in corporations and institutions around the world. Hosted at the Sydney Opera House in 2006, Advance presented the Summit as an opportunity to engage an important national asset and to formalise the relationship between the country and the leading members of its diaspora. The objective of the Summit was an exercise to communicate to the Australian public the achievements of 'global Australians", that is:

"to engage Australia's most influential citizens abroad in Australia's economic, social and cultural development to advance the national interest. It will be an opportunity to showcase Australia's achievements in the last decade and for connections to be made between Australian peers from around the world".

This Summit was Advance's first significant exercise engaging with the Australian domestic public rather than with the diaspora.

Advance's first Prime Ministerial Patron, John Howard, was quoted on the invitation: "It is important for our country to maintain a live and active connection with talented Australians abroad and to draw on their skills and experience to promote the national interest. Advance has created a powerful network of eminent and emerging Australians in many fields of enterprise". All Australian Prime Minister's have since been patron: Tony Abbott, referred to members of Advance as "the unofficial ambassadors of our country".[3] Malcolm Turnball (2016) has said that the "strides that Advance has made are extraordinary" in harnessing the diaspora, "this smart grid of human capital".

The fifth phase of Advance's evolution has seen the emergence of a formal contractual relationship with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), to continue to develop the global network of Australians and to convene high-profile events. This has included the 2008 Asia 50 Summit in Shanghai and the 2009 Women's Summit at the Sydney Opera House. This partnership also required Advance to increase its presence in Asia and to widen its remit to include the recruitment and engagement of another strategic cohort – Australia's global alumni. That is, those international citizens who studied in Australia or at an Australian institution. There are more than 2.5 million international graduates who have studied in Australia, and through them "educational providers are gaining awareness of the ways in which international education in Australia is both shaped by and actively creates highly networked and enduring transnational communities" (Ziguras, 2016).

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[3] Tony Abbott: http://advance.org/patrons-ambassadors/#sthash.CBR4V8Iy.dpuf

The watershed CEDA Report (2003) a decade earlier was followed in this fifth phase by the ACOLA (Australian Council of Learned Academies) research project on 'Securing Australia's Future'. This project ran from 2012-16 and generated a number of reports on diaspora communities within Australia, especially the Indian and Chinese diaspora in Australia, and their operations overseas (see Cheng, 2016; as well as Rizvi, Louie and Evans, 2016). In light of the on-going stream of research, reports and advocacy, Australian governments, federal and state, were positively disposed towards the re-named 'Advance: Australia's Global Community'. The diaspora association came to be seen as a means to facilitate economic imperatives.

With each phase Advance has strengthened its global reach connecting and mobilising influential networks of Australia's diaspora and alumni. Today it describes itself as "a non-profit built on a public-private partnership model with a community of 25,000 members that spans over 90 countries... (and) has outposts in New York, San Francisco, Hong Kong, France and London. Working with the Australian government and the private sector, it aims to "turn the one million Australians abroad into a powerful knowledge network and resource" (Advance 2016). With each phase Advance was able to consolidate top-rung political patronage and engagement across the Australian public service. But it was only at the fourth stage – of organisational consolidation, a more secure funding base, and going global – that Advance moved from diplomatic potential into practice.

Building a "community of global Australians who are able to make a difference for Australians, Australian companies and Australia around the globe", this diaspora association has strived for an economic advantage for both its members and for the national interest. Advance operates through:

> "the exchange of knowledge, connections and ideas to: Inspire and empower other global Australians to succeed in the world; Build entrepreneurial Australian companies globally; Grow global career opportunities for global Australians and create opportunities to be a 'brain resource' for Australia".

Advance now hosts the annual "Advance Global Australian Awards" celebrating the achievement of high profile Australians overseas in the frontiers of science, the arts, commerce and public administration. At the 2016 awards, Prime Minister Turnball endorsed such aspirations arguing that for Australia to prosper, the critical need was "to promote innovation and science" which is to be achieved by being "more open, more global, more connected". Accordingly, the discussion now turns to the network dimensions of public diplomacy in general, and that of Advance in particular.

3. Advancing Networks of Public Diplomacy

Traditional understandings of public diplomacy centre around "influencing government- to-government relations in a given area of foreign affairs by engagement with citizens and groups whose opinions, values, activities and interests may help sway another government's position (Pamment, 2013: 1). However, not only is the term polysemous but the practice is in constant evolution. Alongside information and transportation technologies that have allowed ease of international communications between individuals and communities, a radical re-orientation of public diplomacy is in play. It is increasingly less so a tool of state, monopolised by diplomats and Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs), and more so shared with a panoply of non-state actors with their own agendas about international cooperation – the so-called 'new diplomats'. Advance has sought this diplomacy role through the networks it has cultivated and its own network mode of operation as a 'bottom-up' parallel strategy to the state directed strategies of public diplomacy.

Not all networks operate as new diplomats. Nor can all activity of a 'new diplomat' organisation or network be categorised as being of diplomatic intent. Many of Advance activities are otherwise directed, simply in supporting members and their professional development. Advance's diplomatic functions were in some ways accidental, with the New York executive taking advantage of opportunities as they presented themselves and as relations with various state agencies solidified during phases 3 and 4. After the publication of the ACOLA studies in the mid 2010s, and in the wake of advocacy of senior figures among

Advance's membership, the federal government recognised the public diplomacy features of Advance and became more proactive in leveraging the network for its own purposes.

Slaughter argues that the role of the diplomat and the strategist is not only to help situate a state as a 'hub' of state actors within critical regional and global networks but also to muster, coordinate and galvanize networks in order to achieve 'centrality'. In the case of her own nation-state:

> "The United States should thus strive to be the most central node – the supernode – in the networks that are most important to advancing its interests and that are most connected to other networks. Such positioning does not mean that the United States should be a part of every network that other countries, even important countries, create and participate in. Nor does it mean that the United States should necessarily be the central actor in network actions; leading in networks often requires connecting disparate actors with resources and creating the conditions and coalitions for others to act. The biggest challenge in implementing a grand strategy of network centrality is choosing which networks to be part of…" (2012: 46).

Rather than 'grand strategy' or aspirations to become a 'super node', the notion of 'middle power leadership' and the idea of being a 'top 20 power' is more often encountered in the Australian foreign policy lexicon. "At its most basic, middle power theory… provides an alternative analytical way of framing of international politics, viewed through the lenses of secondary, as opposed to the primary players" (Beeson and Higgott, 2014: 220). This paper does not have word space to address the realist critiques of middle power theory suffice to say that realists tend to view middle power innovation in international policy in building coalitions, as entirely dependent on great power willingness. Nonetheless, Australia has achieved some enviable middle power successes with its inclusion in the Group of 20 and its seat on the UN Security Council (Bryne, 2011); political achievements that could also be interpreted, in Slaughter's language, as a search for 'network centrality'.

Middle power theory remains a statist view of world affairs. By contrast, public diplomacy represents a further analytical step away from both primary and secondary *official* players in international politics by moving towards peripheral *non-state* players. There are, consequently, considerable dangers of over-stating the influence of diaspora networks. Nor is it a foregone conclusion that MFAs in general can effectively utilise such networks or wish to do so.

Notwithstanding the high-level political patronage outlined in the previous section, DFATs *Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16* does not mention Advance, and gives cursory attention to diaspora communities in terms of specific objectives. Instead, diaspora communities are signified as an "audience" (reflective of the traditional one-way, top-down public diplomacy communication). That is, DFATs public diplomacy goals and objectives are pursued through "approaches that engage audiences on contemporary Australia and which facilitate networks, collaboration and connections between people and institutions" (2014: 3 see also Carter, 2015). In this formulation, Advance is one such 'audience'. The strategy constitutes "diasporic overseas populations as self-governing good partners and loyal extra-territorial members" (Dickinson, 2015: 80).

Arguing that diplomatic strategists "should analyze states as the principal hubs of intersecting regional and global networks", Slaughter's position on network centrality is about the US *state* achieving such centrality. While, diaspora communities and expatriate organisations could be utilised to promote concerns of state, they also pursue other interests. For instance, these other interests can be seen in what has been described as 'scientific and technological diasporas' or 'diaspora knowledge networks' which are usually driven more by the pursuit of scientific inquiry, knowledge creation and epistemic protocols that transcend narrow state interests (Meyer and Wattiaux, 2006).

Similarly, corporate interests do not necessarily coincide with state interests. Elements of the business community may well eschew state guided networking in the form of economic or public diplomacy as an unnecessary intrusion in business affairs. Yet, on the other hand,

diaspora networks can have, as Prime Minister Turnball opined in the case of Advance, "enormous value for our innovators and entrepreneurs by matching local businesses with international advisers, customers and investors"[4]. A good example was Elevate 61, an Advance programme sponsored and co-delivered in partnership with KPMG to 'fast track Australian entrepreneurs' through exchange programmes. In this programme, and its later programme 'Propel', start-ups learn from some of Australia's best business minds on how to navigate cultural nuances, tackle complex business challenges in foreign contexts, and transform into a globally sustainable company.[5]

A prosaic administrative concern relates to the capacity of MFAs in general, and DFAT in particular, to plan, resource and implement network centrality strategies.   Constructing network strategies in conjunction with non-state actors entails a wider ambit of professional and political skills, plus commitment of time and resources, than diplomacy has traditionally called upon. The capacity and willingness of diplomats and other officials to function as 'network orchestrators' cannot be taken for granted. Nor can 'audiences' (and in our case, the diverse membership base of Advance) be assumed to be empty cyphers imbibing Australian foreign policy priorities without question or that they be willing followers in diplomatic enterprises.

Nevertheless, the Australian Government is acting both deliberately and inadvertently through this organization. The deliberate, albeit diffuse, approach is connected explicitly to foreign policy objectives to "use ... diaspora communities and expatriate networks ... to strengthen relations and reinforce messages" (DFAT, 2014: 6). Advance is an excellent vehicle for this kind of credible and effective 'image cultivation' Byrne (2011, 19). As a partner NGO to the Federal Government, Advance promotes an "image of Australia as sophisticated, creative, technologically advanced, innovative and entrepreneurial" (Carter,

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[4] Malcolm Turnball, Remarks at the 2016 Advance Global Australian Awards Ceremony, 21st October 2016, Sydney: https://www.pm.gov.au/media/2016-10-21/remarks-2016-advance-global-australian-awards-ceremony.

[5] Elevate 61 https://home.kpmg.com/au/en/home/services/innovate/elevate61.html accessed June 17th 2018.

2015: 480). For Australian government actors, Advance has become a reliable and trusted partner. Importantly, it is also an elite body of 'high achieving Australians'. The corporate, social and professional elites associated with this body – heavily represented on its Global Advisory Board – and the organisational orientation towards high profile activities and events, make Advance a partner of choice compared to a grass-roots organisation or more amateur civil society groupings. In essence, Advance itself has achieved high network centrality within the Australian diaspora.

The inadvertent features recognise "diplomacy conducted indirectly" by organisations like Advance. The myriad of network connections made by Advance members are well beyond the policy direction or steering capacities by government but can nonetheless have positive externalities for the national interest or for nation branding. This is particularly so in the case of Australia which lacks an equivalent agency such as the British Council or Germany's Goethe Institute.

The National Innovation and Science Agenda – NISA – launched by the Federal Government in December 2015, has propelled wider government interest in leveraging the diaspora "to boost innovation and transform the economy" (Zaharov-Reutt, 2015).   The then Minister for Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, Christopher Pyne also referenced Advance as part of the nation's innovation response:

> "This will feature five new landing pads in global innovation hot spots to support Australians travelling to these locations to start a new business. … Organisations like Advance are already doing great work in linking together Australians living overseas ..." (Pyne, 2015)

Even so, NISA stops short of developing an ambition to pursue science and innovation diplomacy.   This provides a window of opportunity for bodies like Advance to take the initiative with regard to the science and innovation variant of public diplomacy.

In its indirect or inadvertent public diplomacy guise, Advance has built its centrality through its high-level messaging of Australian achievements through awards, network events and summits. The annual Awards Ceremony has become a cultural event. Through the lens of discourse institutionalism (Schmidt, 2008), this approach can be categorised as a 'communicative discourse' which is distinct from the 'coordinative discourse' of traditional official diplomacy.

Coordinative discourse refers to the creation, elaboration and justification of policy and programmatic ideas among transnational or national policy communities. It is usually a closed or an elite process among politicians and policy makers. Advance's contribution to coordinative discourses of foreign policy making is negligible. The organisation made a submission and Advance's CEO was a witness to the Senate Inquiry into the Diaspora (Advance, 2004) but was only one voice among many other organisations. Accordingly, Advance is best considered as an unofficial and self-ascribed "ambassador-at-large". In the traditional government-centric understanding of public diplomacy, Advance would be regarded as a tool of public diplomacy for communication with publics overseas as well as domestically; that is, reinforcing messages or assisting in nation-branding.

Communicative discourse, by contrast, is concerned with the relationship between policy makers and the public (Schmidt, 2008: 310; Douglas and Stone, 2015). This idea connects to classifications of public diplomacy being on the one hand, informational (with activities such as nation-branding, international broadcasting and campaigns) and on the other, relational and constructing social structure (such as through cultural and educational exchange, leadership visits or networking schemes) (Zaharna cited in Byrne, 2011: 22). An elite example are Advance's 'Salons': "An invite-only evening of discussion and conversation, curated by a high-achieving individual within the Advance community… to discuss international cultural, political and social issues and how they pertain to Australia".[6]

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[6] https://www.advance.org/salons Access June 17th 2018.

In the discourse institutionalism framework, investment in communicative discourses is usually considered to eventuate only after coordinative policy processes become settled and established. However, the case of Advance indicates a different pattern of causality where Advance's communicative discourse to leverage expatriates into networks was developed first and its successes on this front then led into a partnership with the Australian Government. The organisation is more a proactive broker or NGO entrepreneur in developing its 'ambassador-at-large' role and in forging multiple partnerships inside and outside government. Other partners include leading Australian firms (such as Macquarie Bank and CSL-Commonwealth Serum Laboratories); Australian media (such as *The Australian*, *The Australian Financial Review*, and SBS - the Special Broadcasting Service) and universities which have funded Advance to extend their networking, promotional and professional services to the diaspora as well as to the national communities to which Australians are connected.

Individual partners – referred to as 'Champions' who are "excelling on a global stage" – include people such as the film director, Baz Lurhman; the golfer Jason Day; the cook and author, Maggie Beer; the Dean of Wharton Business School, Geoffrey Garrett, amongst many others who are both culturally recognisable and commercially successful. Many 'champions' are now Australia based and/or transnational commuters from Australia. A further set of champions are alumni of Australian universities. Their inclusion in the Advance community modifies the notion of diaspora: just as cultural diplomacy has become a "semantic constellation" (Ang *et al*, 2015: 369), so too the term 'diaspora' has been stretched to accommodate new meanings.

Public diplomacy has become "dialogical, collaborative and inclusive" shifting from old fashioned uni-directional 'broadcasting' to audiences to take "advantage of social media to establish two-way engagement with the public" (Pamment, 2013: 3). The relationship of Advance to the federal government is symptomatic of this shift. Rather than a tool or instrument of government, the evolution of Advance indicates that the association has been creative and proactive about its own public diplomacy role. The organisation has benefited in this regard from high level sponsorship and support from Australian business leaders and

professional communities. Moreover, the networked business model of the organisation has allowed Advance to replicate its structure and continue this role in other key global cities and economic centres in North America, Europe and Asia. That is, Advance has first built its own network centrality within Australian diaspora communities and then built centrality with certain Australian government agencies. Whilst this is not a 'grand network strategy', nonetheless, two broad points emerge from Advance's experience with regard to business or cultural interlocutors and consular activity.

First, Australia does not punch-above its weight in funding its diplomatic network. For a country of its population size and wealth, Australia has relatively few diplomatic missions. Working with well-connected diaspora organisations enables Australian diplomatic posts to "do more with less". This paper highlights the relevance of modern-day consulates as bodies with the potential to develop into more than administrative offices for managing extra-territorial populations (see also Dickinson, 2015). By providing seed-funding to selected, senior and capable volunteer committees with an appropriate level of administrative support and facilitation, Consulates General have the potential to crowd-source creative events and engagement activities led by an organised diaspora community. This was particularly possible in large centres where there is a density and concentration of senior and talented Australians (New York, London, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Singapore).

Yet, the tasks of consular actors navigating between, and differentiating between forms of support and resourcing for, expatriate organisation can cause tensions. When Advance arrived on the US scene, there was a constant complaint from incumbents that it was duplicative and unnecessary; that the needs of the expatriate community were already being met. Whether or not this was true, it resulted in pressures being put on diplomatic posts. In light of this, distinctions between different types of expatriate and diaspora networks need to be observed and carefully managed. Public diplomacy is not part of the mandate of all 'expat' bodies. For Advance, diplomacy was only ever a part-time concern with mentoring and networking alongside member activities and social events taking a larger quantum of organisational attention. The needs of members versus national interest will be of different relative importance depending on the association, specific events and

the individuals involved. In this context, diplomats and consular offices need to be mindful of the extent to which it is realistic to engage different types of diaspora or cultural exchange associations to promote the national interest.

Advance is an elite body – it lauds those who were referred to as "gold-collar professionals" in *Diaspora: The World Wide Web of Australians*. Targeting the upper-echelon of the diaspora – getting the most talented Australians engaged through Summits, high-profile events and industry specific 'verticals' – was crucial to its long-term success. For example, Australian Women on Wall Street built a powerful network around finance that was very well used by the Australian government's Invest Australia unit. Similarly, the only way Advance successfully reconnected with scientists was through specific science-oriented events (see also Meyer and Wattiaux, 2006). But a different set of engagements and consular tactics are required for non-elite, low-skilled migrants and informal bodies (see Hickey, et al, 2015). Diasporas today are increasingly depicted as 'transnational communities'[7] that maintain regular social and economic links with home communities courtesy of advances in transport and communications, often hold dual citizenship, and also display multiple cultural identities and loyalties. Harnessing the Australian diaspora, diplomatic missions are often alert to the complex identities of Australians overseas.

Second, the value of the diaspora to Australian companies and start-ups had been related anecdotally time and again, but Advance is cultivating understanding and countering "the common complaint of Australians working overseas and many who return that their global achievements and experience are not valued" in Australia (Gray, 2018). Combined with the 2.5 million alumni of Australian universities who have returned to their homes, the cadre of successful professionals overseas, are noticeable well above the nation's relative economic weight in terms of the number of Australian CEOs and senior executives located in key global sectors and markets. Collectively, they make a solid exemplary case for Australia's

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[7] A complex body of thinking best depicted in *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs*: http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/wwwroot/gnjournal.htm

education system and as standard-bearers of professional capabilities in terms that are hard to replace through other means of communication.

Conversely, while it is not the role of Australia's DFAT to assist every start-up that goes to Silicon Valley, keeping direct channels of communication open with these innovation centres have numerous benefits. Indeed, this was the idea behind the establishment of 'innovation hot-spots' around the world as part of the National Agenda on Innovation and Science. Places like Silicon Valley are highly competitive environments where access to networks is an element in the competitive framework. For Australian companies to succeed, networks need to function well. There are senior Australians in the upper echelons of these environments. Activities like Elevate 61 and Propel also leverage these diaspora networks in a strategic and coordinated fashion.

This leverage principle applies to finance, business and especially to science and the arts. It also applies to Australians around the world in intergovernmental organisations and public administration. Australians from Jacques Nasser (former Chief of Ford Motor Company and then Chairman of BHP Billiton) to Rodney Brooks (former Head of the famed MIT Media Lab and now Head of global robotics pioneer Rethink Robotics) have been brought into closer connection with Australia through active engagement by Advance that has then introduced these people to the diplomatic community. However, pursuing centrality in the global economy also requires ongoing political investment in deeper networks and collaboration in their maintenance.

4. **Conclusion**

This paper has assessed the rise of Australia's only formal, global diaspora network and explored its evolution from member-focused professional network to official recognition as an Australian public diplomacy asset. We also considered Advance's interactions with the diaspora via the analytic lens of networks to arrive at three network conclusions.

First, the organisation's mode of operation is to operate as, and to gestate, networks. Today, Advance is a global network that has evolved and expanded from its initial New York City base to chapters in other US cities and then into Europe and Asia. From its early days, Advance was a distinctive player in relation to other diaspora bodies in New York (that were more social or more limited in mandate) due to its type of network mobilisation; that is, the creation of the so-called Verticals which were clustered around professional groupings or industry sector affiliations among Australian expatriates. By targeting different professional identities Advance's public diplomacy approach evolved with strong elements of economic, cultural and science diplomacy. In this regard, Advance's success was to build affinity within diaspora communities that went beyond their shared common denominator of nationality; that is, by creating economic and professional networks that transcended and became more substantive for participants (in terms of industry contacts, professional mentoring schemes and other career opportunities) than simply sharing citizenship.

Second, Advance was built on the premise of a networked global economy. Network centrality and the ability to leverage relationships across global value chains is a source of economic power. Achieving centrality requires innovations – with network responses like Advance – to help promote or 'fast track' access for Australian businesses and entrepreneurs. When announcing NISA, the federal government sought to capitalise on Advance's capacities with Minister Christopher Pyne (2015) stating that Advance was "doing great work in linking together Australians living overseas" and "Australians travelling to "global innovation hot spots". The independent status of Advance, allows the Australian federal government to communicate with the diaspora selectively – that is with elite and professional groups – and in a coordinated but 'light touch' manner.

Third, Advance's evolution has been symptomatic of the networked nature of new public diplomacy: Advance has institutionalised successfully its brand of communicative policy discourses to (re)connect elements of the Australian diaspora to the home country (Gray, 2018). Distinct from the statist coordinative policy discourse of middle power diplomacy, the public diplomacy of diaspora and expatriate groups is indirect and dialogical. Advance is a civil society organisation: it "connects"; it "innovates" with platforms and events to

globalise Australian initiatives; and it "influences" ideas and thought processes (Advance, n.d.). Advance does not mobilise its membership for political purposes. Nevertheless, it has become both a foreign policy asset for the Australian Government and itself a 'new diplomat'.   Internally, Advance has also needed to develop its own coordinative discourses as an 'Ambassador-at-large' to bind the varied interests of members with a diverse set of public and private partners. Advance has created its own 'social world' of new diplomacy.

Lastly, while this paper has been modest in focus and limited to one case study, the experience of Advance holds a promise for comparative study of other cognate bodies like KEA, Singapore Connect and TIE and how cultural and economic relations are managed by both official and unofficial actors, separately and in partnership, with the different constituencies inside diaspora communities. The manner in which Advance managed its relations highlights how in practice, the meshing of different objectives takes place: cultural, economic, science and sport diplomacy are blended and interwoven with diaspora concerns. Similar to the "capitalist avatar of the 'global Indian'" that Prime Minister Narendra Modi promotes during his travels abroad (Isar, 2017), the 'global Australian' promoted by Advance is entrepreneurial, an innovator and open to (business) opportunity. Rather than a separate strategy or policy instrument for science diplomacy distinct from another approach for cultural diplomacy, the day-to-day realities of Advance's network interactions are more entangled to take account of diverse patterns of engagement with both private sector partners and Australian government agencies. Economic, cultural and science objectives are blended together discursively with diaspora issues, in an instrumental fashion for public communication and policy coordination, in the diplomatic game for network centrality.

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[8] All web links accessed17th June 2018 except where otherwise noted.

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