

Culinary Diplomacy: Breaking Bread to Win Hearts and Minds

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Summary

The concept of ‘culinary diplomacy’ is defined as the use of food and cuisine as an instrument to create cross-cultural understanding in the hopes of improving interactions and cooperation. Its origins are rooted in ancient history, while a modernized version emerged alongside French diplomatic tradition in the early nineteenth century, beginning with the iconic French chef Antonin Carême. The theory underlying the concept is multifaceted, with foundations in the schools of public and cultural diplomacy, non-verbal communication, nation-branding, and in the conflict resolution theory of the contact hypothesis. Culinary diplomacy campaigns worldwide have been undertaken, from the national governmental promotions of multiple South-East Asian countries, to the White House’s outreach to promote healthy eating, to grassroots efforts by cooks to reduce violent conflict. The summit of culinary diplomacy is the *Club des Chefs des Chefs*, a group of the chefs of heads of state, whose goal it is to unite people with a good meal. There is work to be done in the field, but there are big potential gains, up to and including world peace.

Keywords

culinary diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, nation-branding, national cuisine, soft power, contact theory.

Introduction

La destinée des nations dépend de la manière dont elles se nourrissent.
(*The destiny of nations depends on how they nourish themselves.*)
Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, 1825¹

Food is a universally vital part of our lives, representing history, traditions, and culture. Each of us relies on food not only to survive, but to comfort ourselves, communicate with others, and connect us to our forebears. As Brillat-Savarin knew, food is an important way in which nations define themselves — national cuisine is a marker by which a people self-identifies. ‘As American as apple pie’,

¹) Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du Goût* (Paris: Flammarion, 1982 [1825]), p. 19 (translated by M.F.K. Fisher, 1949).

for instance, not only imbues the comparison with patriotism, but inextricably links the nation with the food, never to be split apart.

The power and connection of food and nationalism leads us to consider the potential of using this link as a tool of international relations. This article defines the concept, which is here called 'culinary diplomacy', as the use of food and cuisine as an instrument to create cross-cultural understanding in the hope of improving interactions and cooperation. The art of entertaining foreign diplomats and envoys with one's national cuisine is as old as diplomacy itself, but as an institutionalized method to conduct diplomacy it is still new and relatively untested. As this article explores, however, its popularity is spreading and there is potential for greatly expanded use in the future.

The concept consists of two distinct but related facets: *public* and *private* culinary diplomacy. Public culinary diplomacy falls under the heading of public diplomacy, and more specifically, cultural diplomacy. This theoretical underpinning will be explored later in this article, but at this point it is worth noting that public culinary diplomacy is exemplified by governmental outreach programmes like those undertaken by the Thai and South Korean governments, which will be discussed in this article. Private culinary diplomacy, on the other hand, occurs behind closed doors. Commensality, from the Latin for the act of sitting at the table together, is vital to diplomatic discussion. While public dialogue and large conferences can lead to decision-making, the best negotiation and conversation often happens away from the public eye, over a meal or a drink. This distinction — between public and private culinary diplomacy — will help in our understanding of what makes this tool so potent.

In order to define the term more clearly, it must be distinguished from what it is not. Culinary diplomacy must not be confused with less formal connections of food and culture, or with other uses of food *vis-à-vis* diplomacy. Regarding the former, culinary diplomacy is not simply a tool of intercultural relations or anthropology that is meant to ease relationships between people from different cultures. It does borrow some theoretical basis from intercultural communication, but it is firmly grounded in diplomacy theory. Culinary diplomacy is also distinguished from *food diplomacy* — that is, using food aid as a tool of public outreach to reduce global hunger. This is an important and productive instrument that is used by many nations worldwide, including the United States, in the fight against poverty. It is a developmental tool as well as a diplomatic tool, and therefore outside the realm of culinary diplomacy.

This article will explore the nascent field of culinary diplomacy, about which there is limited academic scholarship. Using a combination of first-hand interviews, news sources and extrapolation of what research has been done, the article will attempt to create a basis for future scholarship. A framework will be utilized that outlines the history, theory and practice of the field to lay a solid groundwork. Combining all of these, the article proposes that culinary diplomacy is an

effective and practised form of diplomacy that gains its potency because of its use of food — a universally vital, comforting and powerful element of our lives — to unite, engage and nourish both friends and enemies.

The section on history will start with a discussion of ancient Greece and culinary diplomacy in pre-history, and will turn to illustrate French influence on modern culinary diplomacy. The theory of the field is not deeply researched, but the article will propose that such a theory can be formed using a combination of the current thinking on public and cultural diplomacy, including non-verbal forms of communication, along with contact theory, a concept borrowed from the field of conflict resolution. The practical applications of culinary diplomacy are diverse and wide-ranging. For example, some governments, mostly in South-East Asia, have been establishing culinary outreach programmes for nation-branding purposes. Others have been using food as a tool of cultural exchange. At the summit of such exchanges is the *Club des Chefs des Chefs*, a body of chefs of heads of state that meets periodically to discuss the field and their impact on it. This high-level meeting exemplifies the importance and worth of culinary diplomacy, for behind each successful leader is a supportive chef and a body of national cuisine with which to win hearts, minds and stomachs.

History

The culinary art follows diplomacy and every prime minister is its tributary.
Antonin Carême²

The importance of food and commensality is deeply rooted in the history and tradition of diplomacy. Costas Constantinou, in his book *On the Way to Diplomacy*, describes the connections between food and diplomacy in ancient Greece, as well as in the Bible. For example, both within and among the city-states of ancient Greece, commensality between public citizens was necessary to maintain a sense of community. In his book *Politics*, Aristotle discussed the importance of common meals within a community in order to provide a ‘bond of solidarity’ like the one created in the family unit.³ This was especially important between ambassadors from rival cities — public luncheons brought together what Constantinou calls a ‘primordial *corps diplomatique*’ to discuss allegiances, conclude aggressions, or ratify treaties. Ragnar Numelin discusses a similar concept in non-Western societies: whether its function is to pay tribute to a former antagonist or to say

² ‘Public Diplomacy: Cuisine’, available at <http://publicdiplomacy.wikia.com/wiki/Cuisine>, accessed on 28 November 2011.

³ Costas Constantinou, *On the Way to Diplomacy* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 128.

'[i]f I ever break my oath, may I be slain like this beast that lies bleeding before me', a sacrifice is often used to make peace.⁴ Through ceremony and sharing a common meal, warring groups can set aside their struggle and decide how co-existence can be achieved.

Culinary diplomacy continues its historical trajectory through the advent of modern diplomacy, deeply rooted in a strong French tradition. Louis XIII's first minister Cardinal Richelieu took responsibility for creating a new system of diplomacy in which a resident embassy replaced more temporary *ad hoc* appointments. This new paradigm allowed for the concept of 'continuous negotiation' to take root, which created a new familiarity with the conditions and personalities with which a diplomat would be working. This familiarity, along with the elimination of deceit as a tool of diplomacy, meant that a new professionalism imbued the practice of diplomacy.⁵

In his book *On the Manner of Negotiating with Princes*, French diplomat François de Callières discussed not only the strength and importance of this new diplomacy, but its connection with cuisine. As ambassadors took up residence in neighbours' capitals, they also brought along traditions from their home country, including cooking. De Callières stated that an ambassador's table 'should be served neatly, plentifully and with taste'. He goes on to say that:

[The ambassador] should give frequent entertainments and parties to the chief personages of the Court and even to the Prince himself. A good table is the best and easiest way of keeping himself well informed. The natural effect of good eating and drinking is the inauguration of friendships and the creation of familiarity, and when people are a trifle warmed by wine they often disclose secrets of importance.⁶

This frank attitude is present in all of de Callières' writing. The suggestion that an inebriated diplomat is an open diplomat, while universally understood, may not be directly acknowledged in today's handbooks for diplomats. The rest of de Callières' suggestions underscore the concept of culinary diplomacy: it is a 'good table' that brings important people together to create familiarity, friendship and a conduit for information.

One cook who put de Callières' advice to real use was Antonin Carême, quoted above, who occupied the perfect nexus between French diplomacy and cuisine. Carême, known as the 'king of cooks and the cook of kings', was asked in March 1814 by Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord to prepare the meals marking

⁴ Ragnar Numelin, *The Beginnings of Diplomacy* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), p. 200.

⁵ Geoffrey R. Berridge, *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 4th edition 2010), p. 104.

⁶ François de Callières, *De la Manière de Negocier avec les Souverains*, UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office website under Quotations on Diplomacy and Foreign Policy, available at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-us/our-history/historical-publications/research-projects/people-policy-places/quotations-diplomacy-foreign>, accessed on 27 November 2011.

the abdication of the French throne by Napoleon.⁷ According to Goldstein, ‘Talleyrand was a shrewd diplomat who understood the importance of *bon goût*, not only in negotiations but also at the table’.⁸ The good taste supposedly made the embarrassing moment of Napoleon’s capitulation easier, as well as welcoming Russian Tsar Alexander I to Paris. Carême joined Talleyrand at the Congress of Vienna and provided culinary support to the French delegation. As Talleyrand was negotiating his way back into the good graces of the European leadership, Carême was impressing them with cuisine, including a *gâteau Nesselrode* to honour the Russian negotiator and a *Charlotte Russe* in tribute to Tsar Alexander I. In a telling anecdote, the negotiators for each party announced their love for their own national cheese, but when Talleyrand served the *Brie de Meaux* brought by Carême, the competition, and perhaps France’s re-established status in Europe, was decided.⁹

In recognition of France’s contribution to the history of cuisine, UNESCO included the French gastronomic meal on its list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Stating that ‘the gastronomic meal draws circles of family and friends closer together and, more generally, strengthens social ties’,¹⁰ UNESCO acknowledged the power of French cuisine and meals more broadly to bring people together. Only two other cuisines have been selected to this list: traditional Mexican cuisine, whose knowledge ‘express[es] community identity, reinforce[s] social bonds, and build[s] stronger local, regional and national identities’;¹¹ and the Mediterranean diet, which ‘encompasses more than food’ to include ‘social interaction’ and ‘foster[ing] intercultural dialogue’.¹² Peru has initiated its own campaign, entitled *Cocina Peruana Para el Mundo*, in the hope of gaining status on UNESCO’s list as well.¹³ The next section will explore how important both the social bonds that are forged and the identities that are created through a national cuisine — such as those in France, Mexico and Peru — provide us with the theoretical underpinnings for the concept of culinary diplomacy.

⁷ Darra Goldstein, ‘Russia, Carême, and the Culinary Arts’, *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 73, no. 4, 1995, p. 693.

⁸ Goldstein, ‘Russia, Carême, and the Culinary Arts’, p. 693.

⁹ Daniel Rose, ‘Late Nights at the Congress of Vienna’, *Lapham’s Quarterly*, 13 July 2011, available online at <http://www.laphamsquarterly.org/roundtable/roundtable/late-nights-at-the-congress-of-vienna.php>, accessed on 14 November 2011.

¹⁰ ‘The Gastronomic Meal of the French’, UNESCO website, available online at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00011&RL=00437>, accessed on 14 November 2011.

¹¹ ‘Traditional Mexican Cuisine: Ancestral, Ongoing Community Culture, the Michoacán Paradigm’, UNESCO website, available online at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00011&RL=00400>, accessed on 14 November 2011.

¹² ‘The Mediterranean Diet’, UNESCO website, available online at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00011&RL=00394>, accessed on 14 November 2011.

¹³ Rachel Wilson, ‘*Cocina Peruana Para El Mundo*: Gastrodiplomacy, the Culinary Nation Brand, and the Context of National Cuisine in Peru’, *Exchange*, vol. 2, Fall 2011, pp. 15-16.

Theory

A man may be a pessimistic determinist before lunch and an optimistic believer in the will's freedom after it.
Aldous Huxley¹⁴

The theory undergirding culinary diplomacy is not well researched, but this article will propose a combination of various concepts to lay a new groundwork. The article borrows from the work of Costas Constantinou and Raymond Cohen to discuss the non-logocentric aspects of culinary diplomacy, and its use as a non-verbal signal on the diplomatic stage. The article will also refer to the work of Paul Rockower, who popularized the term 'gastro-diplomacy' to discuss the concept, and has written about the public diplomacy of food through the practice of nation-branding.¹⁵ To theories of public and cultural diplomacy, which borrow heavily from ideas of nationalism, will also be added concepts of soft power, found in the work of Joseph Nye, as well as the contact hypothesis of Gordon Allport. The theory as a whole combines both public and private aspects of culinary diplomacy, and focuses in particular on the concept of commensality.

Community, Non-logocentrism, and Diplomatic Signalling

Costas Constantinou, as mentioned above, discusses the concept of what he calls 'gastronomic diplomacy'.¹⁶ His concern is that while food has historically been considered as a facet of diplomacy, it has only been part of its ceremonial practice, not as a potential active tool of the field.¹⁷ To think about gastronomy and diplomacy, we must instead consider their uses as a locus of community, both private and public, domestic and international.¹⁸ As discussed above, Aristotle wrote about the importance of commensality to create commonality — that is, sharing a meal with either friends or enemies serves to strengthen ties and reduce antagonism. Ragnar Numelin, in his discussion of non-Western societies, discusses such various community-building practices as blood- and milk-sharing rituals to create a sense of visceral fraternity, as well as great feasts to commemorate the end of warring and the beginning of cooperation.¹⁹

Furthermore, Constantinou stresses the use of gastronomy as a 'non-logocentric form of communication' — that is, one that does not use words for functionality.²⁰

¹⁴ Robert Andrews, *The Columbia Dictionary of Quotations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 347.

¹⁵ For access to articles by Paul Rockower, visit online at http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/index.php/about/bio_detail/paul_rockower1.

¹⁶ Constantinou, *On the Way to Diplomacy*, pp. 125-141.

¹⁷ Constantinou, *On the Way to Diplomacy*, p. 125.

¹⁸ Constantinou, *On the Way to Diplomacy*, p. 126.

¹⁹ Numelin, *The Beginnings of Diplomacy*, pp. 200-208.

²⁰ Constantinou, *On the Way to Diplomacy*, p. 126.

This concept aligns with the work of Raymond Cohen on non-verbal diplomatic signalling, which he discusses in *Theatre of Power*. Cohen defines non-verbal communication as having two aspects, both the 'deliberate transfer of information by non-verbal means from one state to another and also from the leadership of a state to its own population on an international issue'.²¹ This recalls the discussion above of private and public forms of culinary diplomacy: a non-verbal transfer occurs both at meals between diplomats and other dignitaries, as well as when a government establishes a domestic or international culinary outreach programme. As Cohen says, 'Underlying diplomatic signalling is an *assumption of intentionality*', and the non-logocentric message of culinary diplomacy is no different.²² It serves as a powerful tool of communication that is made stronger precisely by the absence of words. Language, especially when written, is relatively unambiguous. Even body language tells an unequivocal story. Gestures of private culinary diplomacy, however, can be made as obviously or as ambiguously as a diplomat desires. Seating arrangements and other aspects of protocol point to varying levels of power, but they can do so subtly. A carefully constructed menu can send a message — both in what is included and what is left off. Cohen states that a non-verbal form of communication can 'exploit[] its ambiguity [...], which] can be of benefit in permitting a message to be signalled whilst avoiding the sort of commitment — or provocation — involved in an explicit verbal statement'.²³ When food and drink are the media of communication, a new form of diplomatic language arises — one that all diplomats must be aware of in order to maximize its effectiveness.

Soft Power, Public Diplomacy and Cultural Diplomacy

Public diplomacy, and more specifically cultural diplomacy, takes place at both official and informal levels. In its official capacity, it relies on a nation's soft power, which is defined by the political theorist Joseph Nye as 'the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. [...] Soft power arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies'.²⁴ Diplomacy theorist G.R. Berridge states that the intent of public diplomacy is to exert influence on foreign governments 'indirectly; that is, by appealing over the heads of those governments to the people with the influence upon them'.²⁵ In the words of marketing expert Bernard Simonin, public diplomacy uses the

²¹ Raymond Cohen, *Theatre of Power: The Art of Diplomatic Signalling* (London: Longman, 1987), p. 19.

²² Cohen, *Theatre of Power*, p. 212.

²³ Cohen, *Theatre of Power*, p. 35.

²⁴ Joseph S. Nye, 'Soft Power and American Foreign Policy', *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 119, no. 2, 2004, p. 256.

²⁵ Berridge, *Diplomacy*, p. 182.

soft power framework to ‘go beyond traditional diplomacy and extend to the general public’.²⁶

The concept of cultural diplomacy narrows this further by applying a nation’s cultural capital to appeal to a foreign nation’s populace. As historian Nicholas Cull writes:

Cultural diplomacy is an actor’s attempt to manage the international environment through making its cultural resources and achievements known overseas and/or facilitating cultural transmission abroad. Historically, cultural diplomacy has meant a country’s policy to facilitate the export of examples of its culture.²⁷

The strength of cultural diplomacy is once again embedded in soft power — a government can rely on the friendlier aspects of its image to appeal to foreign governments and populations. Instead of the headlines that are usually in the news — military excursions, economic policies and political decisions — more agreeable topics, such as music, art and dance, can make nations famous.

Culinary diplomacy resides perfectly within the sphere of public and cultural diplomacy projects. It relies on a cultural resource — a nation’s cuisine — both to appeal to foreign leaders as well as populations. As some of the historical examples illustrated, private culinary diplomacy can be used in intimate settings, such as around the dinner table at the Congress of Vienna or in the private dining room at the French Embassy, to affect the moods and opinions of policy-makers and world leaders. Many of the contemporary examples that are discussed below represent more of the outreach component of public culinary diplomacy: nations employing their culinary distinctiveness to appeal to foreign publics.

Furthermore, food and cuisine are ideal examples of a nation’s soft power. Nye’s definition revolves around *attraction* — that is, what draws people in and appeals to them. Nothing better than food can have this universal effect. While many people simply do not care about what they eat, the mere fact that they need to eat to survive makes food a more powerful tool than other cultural markers such as music, art, or dance. Brillat-Savarin’s famous aphorism ‘Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are’ inextricably links consumer and consumed — no one can escape classification based on food preferences. This can play a potent role if diplomats know foreign counterparts’ predilections. It has been said that former French President Jacques Chirac built up a better relationship with the Japanese because of their mastery of French cooking and their gumption in serving him his

²⁶ Bernard L. Simonin, ‘Nation Branding and Public Diplomacy: Challenges and Opportunities’, *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, vol. 32, no. 3, 2008, p. 24.

²⁷ Nicholas Cull, ‘Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories’, *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 616, March 2008, p. 33.

own country's cuisine.²⁸ This strength also works for both leaders and publics trying a new food for the first time. Chef Mark Tafoya writes,

When we try a new dish that comes from another land, we have a visceral experience of foreignness brought into our bodies, which begins the process of familiarization which can lead to great understanding of our shared tastes and values.²⁹

The process of familiarization is the key to cultural diplomacy — it is Cull's 'cultural transmission' that brings foreign audiences to newfound respect for one's cuisine, culture and, hopefully, country.

Nation-Branding

At work alongside public diplomacy is a more commercial concept, that of nation-branding, which relies on marketing and nationalism to create a strong image and to build a good reputation of a country.³⁰ This concept is based on a nation's self-image and the way in which it projects itself to the world. Simonin writes that 'The nation/country identity [...] is what a country believes it is (or wants to be). [...] Creating or reshaping an identity is an attempt to sway the image'.³¹ Simon Anholt, the creator of the concept of nation-branding, writes that a 'country's representation powerfully affects the way people inside and outside the place think about it, the way they behave towards it, and the way they respond to everything that's made or done there'.³² Nation-branding attempts to improve that image in order to have outsiders view a nation more positively. Viewed commercially, a more positive view of a country can lead to better economic relations worldwide. Academic Peter van Ham writes,

Place branding is [...] required to make a country's image work for its economy and its citizens. Although many places offer the same product — territory, infrastructure, educated people and an almost identical system of governance — they must compete with each other for investment, tourism and political power, often on a global scale.³³

It is this concept of 'nation as a product' that makes nation-branding so powerful, and what makes it apropos to our discussion of culinary diplomacy. Nationalism

²⁸ Prami Pal Chaudhuri, 'Diplomats' Choice', *Hindustani Times Online*, 5 August 2011, available online at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/729866.aspx>, accessed on 21 November 2011.

²⁹ Mark Tafoya, 'Diplomacy of the Dish: Cultural Understanding through Taste', in Fritz Allhoff and Dave Monroe (eds), *Food and Philosophy* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), p. 264.

³⁰ Simon Anholt, *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities, and Regions* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

³¹ Simonin, 'Nation Branding and Public Diplomacy', p. 22.

³² Anholt, *Competitive Identity*, p. 8.

³³ Peter Van Ham, 'Place Branding: The State of the Art', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 616, March 2008, p. 129.

and nation-branding play an important part in the creation of an effective culinary diplomacy campaign. Sociologist Michaela DeSoucey uses the term 'gastronationalism' to underscore this connection: 'Gastronationalism [...] signals the use of food production, distribution, and consumption to demarcate and sustain the emotive power of national attachment, as well as the use of nationalist sentiments to produce and market food'.³⁴ A nation invokes the power of its cuisine as the tool of the national brand, so that when foreigners take a bite of food, they recognize it as belonging to the country of origin, and thereby strengthen their associations with that country.

In order for a country to display itself on the strength of its food, it requires a national cuisine upon which to establish itself. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's seminal work about national cuisines finds that cookbooks play a fundamental role in their creation, especially in a post-colonial context such as modern India.³⁵ In other situations, such as the UNESCO-recognized cuisines discussed above, it is an external source that consolidates a cuisine's national or transnational (as in the case of the Mediterranean diet) standing. Authenticity inevitably comes up in this discussion as well, as nations with relatively unknown cuisines actively work to create a brand upon which to advertise their food to the world. Anthropologist Richard Wilk writes that he was able to witness, over the course of twenty years of travelling to Belize for research, the creation of a new national pride about Belizean cuisine.³⁶ In recently formed countries, national cuisine is a construct, raising fundamental questions about what constitutes 'authentic'.

Once a national cuisine has become established, it can be exploited as a facet of a nation's brand. Ingredients, cooking techniques and culinary philosophies can be advertised by chefs and restaurants and marketed to complement a national outreach campaign. This can be an ideal approach for nations that have not been successful at creating a well-respected image. Paul Rockower writes that 'Gastro-diplomacy helps under-recognized nation brands such as Taiwan use their culinary skills to attract international attention'.³⁷ As foreign populations start to recognize the existence of such a cuisine, it enters into their worldview as a country worth noting. This is a small but important step to gaining international favour, especially in light of van Ham's portrayal of national competition for investment, tourism and political power.

³⁴ Michaela DeSoucey, 'Gastronationalism: Food Traditions and Authenticity in the European Union', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 75, no. 3, 2010, p. 433.

³⁵ Arjun Appadurai, 'How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 30, no. 1, January 1988.

³⁶ Richard Wilk, "'Real Belizean Food': Building Local Identity in the Transnational Caribbean", *American Anthropologist*, vol. 101, no. 2, January 2008.

³⁷ Paul Rockower, 'Projecting Taiwan: Taiwan's Public Diplomacy Outreach', *Issues and Studies*, vol. 47, no. 1, March 2011, p. 126. See below for an expanded discussion on Taiwan's nation-branding initiatives.

The commercial aspects of nation-branding must not be overlooked when we think about culinary diplomacy. As will be discussed later, many national campaigns overtly state the economic components of a national culinary outreach programme. To quote academic Philip Scranton, “National cuisines” may be most important to the people who stand to profit the most from their construction, especially politicians, food marketers and other food professionals.³⁸ It is indeed these food professionals that benefit economically from culinary diplomacy programmes, but that should not undermine the significance of the political and social aspects of outreach programmes. Foreign publics eating national cuisines are not only contributing to the cooks and farmers, but to their own understanding of nationhood and, along with that, their attitudes towards the other.

Contact Hypothesis

Underlying the key components of soft power and cultural diplomacy is a more psychological aspect that is borrowed from the field of conflict resolution. One of the theories underlying the field is the contact hypothesis, which asserts that under the right conditions, contact among members of different groups will reduce hostility and promote more positive behaviour in inter-group meetings. This contention is predicated on the assumption that unfamiliarity and lack of knowledge about another group create tension and potential rivalry. The theory, which was created in the 1950s by psychologist Gordon Allport through a number of studies, is a powerful tool to explain how relationships evolve and change as a result of inter-group contact.³⁹ Not all contact is good, Allport realized, but when used in the correct context, proximity — which includes discussion, learning and teaching — can lead to positive connections being made.

Further work on contact hypothesis was done by social psychologists Marilynn Brewer and Samuel Gaertner, who studied the ideal conditions for contact to lead to positive interactions. They concluded that contact must be intimate and not superficial, and individuals must have equal status in order to overcome stereotypes. Furthermore, contact cannot be forced in a laboratory-type setting, but must be natural and comfortable.⁴⁰ Psychologist Yehuda Amir continued this research to state that if contact is pleasurable, it will encourage people to seek mutual understanding and appreciation.⁴¹

³⁸ Philip Scranton, ‘Introduction’, in Philip Scranton and Warren Belasco (eds), *Food Nations: Selling Taste in Consumer Societies* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 12.

³⁹ Gordon W Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus, 1954).

⁴⁰ Marilynn B. Brewer and Samuel L. Gaertner ‘Toward Reduction of Prejudice: Intergroup Contact and Social Categorization’, in M. Brewer and M Hewstone (eds), *Self and Social Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 298-318.

⁴¹ Yehuda Amir, ‘Contact Hypothesis in Ethnic Relations’, in Eugene Weiner (ed.), *The Handbook of Interethnic Coexistence* (New York: Continuum, 2002), pp. 162-181.

The contact hypothesis adds to our understanding of both private and public culinary diplomacy through the fact that sharing food — whether between individual civilians, diplomats, or heads of state — necessarily brings people into contact in an intimate and pleasurable setting. This is the concept of ‘breaking bread’ — a phrase that is widely used in the Bible to represent the Eucharist and that has come to mean metaphorically the sharing of a meal. As quoted above, de Callières wrote that ‘the natural effect of good eating and drinking is the inauguration of friendships and the creation of familiarity’. Tafoya states that ‘the practice of sitting down together at a table and breaking bread is one of the most ancient forms of contract negotiation, sealing a deal, or promising a betrothal’.⁴² The word ‘companion’, whose meaning implies familiarity and friendship, and its relative ‘company’, itself a genial concept, come from the Latin *com*, meaning ‘together’, and *panis*, meaning ‘bread’ — that is, having bread together with others.⁴³ This theory, of course, is fully in line with the discussion above on communal community-building, from the ancient world to today.

It is not simply the pleasure and intimacy of eating with others that makes culinary contact so strong. Food has such a central but understated role in the lives of every living being that its consumption and sharing invoke the basest of what it means to be alive. As Barthes writes, food is ‘a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations and behavior’.⁴⁴ Sharing a meal with someone invokes a whole range of subliminal interactions. The host or provider may be trying to alternatively impress, or satisfy, or comfort, or disparage. The recipient may be hungry or may just be trying to be polite; he or she may be offended or awed, or may be worried about being poisoned. Many of these feelings go unstated and perhaps unacknowledged by the parties; they are so wound up in each interaction that those seated around the dinner table may not recognize the complex interactions that are occurring between parties.

Culinary diplomacy invokes the subconscious aspects of sharing food with others, to strong effect. A diplomat or head of state may want to impress a guest with a wide variety of local delicacies; or they may want to show respect by serving the best food from the guest’s home country. US President Ronald Reagan, for example, when entertaining the visiting Gorbachevs at a historic state dinner, served Russian caviar to show respect, as well as a California wine from the Russian River valley, in reference not only to Reagan’s home state but in subtle homage to the history of Russian immigrants in the area.⁴⁵ According to reports, at

⁴² Tafoya, ‘Diplomacy of the Dish’, p. 267.

⁴³ ‘Companion’, *Oxford English Dictionary*.

⁴⁴ Roland Barthes, ‘Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption’, in Carole Counihan and Penny van Esterik (eds), *Food and Culture: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2nd edition 2008), p. 29.

⁴⁵ Peter Schifando and J. Jonathan Joseph, *Entertaining at the White House with Nancy Reagan* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), p. 169.

meetings between Japanese and Chinese diplomats, the Japanese hosts consistently make masterful Chinese cuisine, a feat that the Chinese cannot perform in reverse.⁴⁶ The loss of face by the Chinese chefs strongly reflects on their diplomats, and the upper hand is on the Japanese side of the table. Finally, while we may not think about it often, it was not long ago that heads of state needed a taster to ensure that any foreign-prepared food was safe for consumption. Had Viktor Yushchenko been more wary of what he was eating, the famous poisoning incident of the 2004 Ukrainian presidential cycle might not have occurred.⁴⁷ Each of these examples displays private culinary diplomacy, showing that the intimacy of contact between the parties — and the underlying ‘system of communication’ that is represented by food — can form diplomatic relationships that are far stronger than those without food present.

Practice

A good cook is often an excellent conciliator.
François de Callières⁴⁸

Culinary diplomacy has, in recent years, become something of a trend among nations wanting to bring their cuisines, and their cultures, to the world. The region in which the most work has been done is South-East Asia, but there have been projects in other parts of the world, including South America, Europe and the United States.

Apart from culinary nation-branding initiatives, there are other practical applications of culinary diplomacy. The Obama White House and administration have engaged actively with food initiatives, planting a garden on White House property as well as appointing the first American ‘Culinary Ambassador’.

This article will also discuss a unique restaurant concept: the Conflict Kitchen in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This take-out café serves food only from countries with which the United States is in conflict, using food and creative design to teach its customers that our enemies eat just like Americans do. This concept of citizen culinary diplomacy embodies the perfect nexus of conflict resolution, diplomacy and contact theory.

Finally, at the summit of the field is a group called the *Club des Chefs des Chefs*, a group of head chefs who serve heads of state. Just as summit meetings allow

⁴⁶ Chaudhuri, ‘Diplomats’ Choice’.

⁴⁷ ‘Doctors: Yushchenko was Poisoned’, CNN.com, 11 December 2004, available online at <http://web.archive.org/web/20070218082557/http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/europe/12/11/yushchenko.austria/index.html>, accessed on 20 November 2011.

⁴⁸ François de Callières, in Charles W Freeman Jr, *The Diplomat’s Dictionary* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1997), p. 77.

national leaders to share valuable policy input about their national position, a meeting of the *Club* 'allows the chefs to explore the cultural ties and culinary traditions' of their respective countries.⁴⁹ The following section will show the current state of culinary diplomacy, and will be followed by potential criticisms of the field and an outlook for the future.

South-East Asian Culinary Diplomacy

The strength of a national culinary diplomacy programme is its use of soft power and cultural communication, which allow nations with less military, political, or economic strength to put their imprint on the world around them. Batora writes that 'for small and medium-sized states, public diplomacy represents an opportunity to gain influence and shape international agenda in ways that go beyond their limited hard power resources'.⁵⁰ As discussed above, cuisine can be an effective way to put under-recognized countries on the map, particularly when the government initiates the project.

This is exactly what has been happening over the past decade. So-called middle powers, mostly in South-East Asia, have initiated culinary diplomacy campaigns to lead their charge onto the world stage. The beginning of an internationally recognized use of culinary diplomacy took place in 2002-2003 when the government of Thailand launched a programme called 'Global Thai'. The stated mission of the project was to increase the number of Thai restaurants in the world. When the programme was announced, *The Economist* suggested that more Thai restaurants would not just have economic effects, but that 'it could subtly help to deepen relations with other countries'.⁵¹

The Thai government has also initiated the 'Thailand: Kitchen of the World' project. Run by the Foreign Office of the Government Public Relations Department, the campaign aims to teach about the history and practice of Thai cuisine both in Thailand and abroad, as well as to give a special 'Thailand's Brand' certificate to Thai restaurants abroad that satisfy the criteria of Thailand's Ministry of Commerce. This is multi-layered nation-branding — the government, in order to build up Thailand's reputation, has encouraged more Thai chefs to open restaurants abroad, but in order to maintain a certain level of quality the government has also created a brand to certify restaurants. The programme has been wildly successful: from 5,500 restaurants at the launch of the campaign; to 9,000 by 2006; and to 13,000 in 2009.⁵²

⁴⁹ 'About *Club des Chefs*', available online at <http://www.webspawner.com/users/lechefsofstate/clubdesches.html>, accessed on 1 December 2011.

⁵⁰ Józef Batora, 'Public Diplomacy between Home and Abroad: Norway and Canada', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2006, p. 55.

⁵¹ 'Thailand's Gastro-Diplomacy', *The Economist*, 21 February 2003, available online at <http://www.economist.com/node/999687>, accessed on 21 November 2011.

⁵² The Thai Government Public Relations Department, 'Thai Restaurants Promoted All Over the World', 26 July 2006; 'Popularity of Thai Food Overseas', 26 September 2006; 'Thai Kitchen to the

The Global Thai and Kitchen of the World programmes raise an obvious facet of culinary diplomacy that may challenge its status as a purely cultural and political pursuit. With the clear goal of increasing the number of Thai restaurants worldwide, the Thai government was making an economic move — more Thai chefs working in foreign cities to support diaspora populations, purchasing Thai ingredients and thereby adding to the Thai economy. This aspect of culinary diplomacy is indeed present and is a major driving factor for many of the national programmes described in this article. It is also an underlying factor in nation-branding, as discussed above. Economic motivation does not undermine the intercultural and diplomatic importance of the Global Thai programme, however, nor of any culinary diplomacy programme. With each new Thai restaurant, an unofficial embassy opens and a new opportunity for cross-cultural interaction is established.

Seeing the success of Thailand's programme, the government of South Korea decided to follow a similar path. In a trope coined by Greg Rushford but popularized by Rockower, this was the birth of 'Kimchi Diplomacy'.⁵³ In April 2009, the Korean government announced a US\$ 44 million programme called 'Korean Cuisine to the World', with a goal of making Korean food one of the five most popular ethnic cuisines in the world.⁵⁴ The programme included the Thai goal of increasing the number of Korean restaurants abroad, as well as initiating cooking programmes at international cooking schools such as *Le Cordon Bleu* and the Culinary Institute of America, and the cultivation of Korean celebrity chefs. A kimchi institute was also inaugurated in order to create new types of the Korean staple. This programme — led by South Korea's Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries — is ongoing, with future goals to standardize Korean cooking methods and dish names as well as to adopt a restaurant certification system like the 'Thailand's Brand' programme.⁵⁵ South Korea's Vice Minister of Food underscored the programme's intent by saying, 'Ultimately, the plan aims to offer more and better opportunities for people across the world to relish *hansik* [Korean food] and understand Korean culture'.⁵⁶

World Project to Focus on the Principle of Creative Economy', 29 December 2009, available at <http://thailand.prd.go.th/>.

⁵³ Rushford tells a fascinating story of a 1967 meeting between US President Lyndon Johnson and South Korean Prime Minister Chung Il-Kwon, in which Chung confided in Johnson that Korean troops fighting in Vietnam were suffering from low morale as a result of being cut off from a supply of kimchi. He asked for support from the Americans, who came through with funds to keep the Koreans in kimchi for the remainder of the war. See Greg Rushford, 'Kimchi Diplomacy', April 2003, available online at http://www.rushfordreport.com/2003/4_2003_Publius.htm, accessed 21 November 2011.

⁵⁴ Kim Hyun-cheol, 'Global Hansik Off to Strong Start', *Korea Times*, 26 April 2009, available online at http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/biz/2009/05/123_42711.html, accessed on 22 November 2011.

⁵⁵ 'Food: Sponsoring Food Industry Sponsorship', Korea Ministry website, available online at http://english.mifaff.go.kr/eng/list.jsp?group_id=1002&menu_id=1027&link_menu_id=&division=H&board_kind=&board_skin_id=&parent_code=1002&depth=1&tab_yn=N, accessed on 22 November 2011.

⁵⁶ 'Global Hansik Off To Strong Start'.

This government-level diplomacy has been paralleled at the citizen level by an active Korean diaspora, who have covered the United States and other countries with new forms of Korean food, notably the Korean taco. This invention has become a fashionable new fusion food abroad, and has led more foreigners to enjoy Korean food than before. Rockower, the culinary diplomacy apostle, cites this citizen diplomacy to criticize the Korean government's campaign:

When public diplomacy actors pay attention to local and global public opinion rather than gluttonously engaging in advocacy, they are more adept at taking advantage of unorthodox openings created by authentic cultural innovations to carry out enhanced public diplomacy.⁵⁷

This point shows the current level of debate in the still-nascent culinary diplomacy world: where and how should it progress? Should it take place at the formal, official level, or is it better left to the realm of citizen diplomats? Rockower suggests that a synthesis of the two would be ideal: government programmes working from the top, as well as supporting grassroots culinary diplomacy, would create a complete and effective campaign.

The most recent national culinary diplomacy campaign is one that is being undertaken by the government of Taiwan. Taiwan is a unique case, as it is not a widely recognized country, but a disputed territory and *de facto* state. As such, traditional diplomacy is not as effective, for Taiwan is not a member of the United Nations and therefore does not have access to many means of conventional relations. As a result, Taiwan has worked to reach out via non-traditional means, including the use of culinary diplomacy. Taiwanese president Ma Ying-Jeou started a US\$ 30 million programme to, in the words of *The Guardian*, initiate a 'diplomatic drive to differentiate the country from its giant and sometimes antagonistic neighbour, China, and to end the perception that Taiwan is little more than the mass-production workshop of the world'.⁵⁸ The campaign includes the government hosting international cooking competitions as well as sending Taiwanese chefs to contests abroad in an attempt to highlight the aspects of the cuisine that are different from the international view of 'Chinese' food.⁵⁹ The government will also be establishing a 'culinary think tank' to work with restaurants abroad to promote Taiwanese food. It is focusing special effort on bringing local Taiwanese cuisine to mainland China, in the hope of influencing the

⁵⁷ Paul Rockower, 'Korean Tacos and Kimchi Diplomacy', 25 March 2010, available online at http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/index.php/newswire/cpdblog_detail/korean_tacos_and_kimchi_diplomacy, accessed on 22 November 2011.

⁵⁸ Robert Booth, 'Taiwan Launches "Gastro-Diplomacy" Drive', *The Guardian*, 8 August 2010, available online at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/aug/08/taiwan-launches-gastro-diplomacy-drive>, accessed on 22 November 2011.

⁵⁹ Paul Rockower, 'The Gastrodiplomacy Cookbook', *Huffington Post*, 14 September 2010, available online at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-rockower/the-gastrodiplomacy-cookb_b_716555.html, accessed on 22 November 2011.

relationship between the two.⁶⁰ Journalist Mark Caltonhill juxtaposes the Taiwanese campaign, which was launched on the one-hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Republic of China (Taiwan), with the People's Republic of China's sixtieth anniversary spending campaign, which featured tanks, missiles and aircraft.⁶¹ Soft power versus hard power, and noodles versus nuclear arms: the distinction is clear, and the path for middle powers to assert themselves on the world stage is set.

The United States' Initiatives

The United States recently appointed its first official 'culinary ambassador'. In September 2011, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced that José Andrés, a Spanish-born Washington DC-area chef, would be the first to hold the title. His role is as the United States' liaison with the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, an international partnership that is working to bring new cooking technologies to the developing world. While this position does not fit directly within our definition of culinary diplomacy, it does indeed have a deep connection, and Andrés' role is a key link. He is a well-respected chef who has made his name in the cooking world through two decades of work in the nation's capital. With that goodwill, he believes that he can expand into promoting global development and ultimately world peace.

The US State Department has recently embarked on an even more advanced culinary diplomacy initiative. In July 2012, the US Chief of Protocol, Ambassador Capricia Penavic Marshall, convened a gathering of chief protocol officers from almost one hundred countries. The first Global Chiefs of Protocol Conference aimed to bring protocol officers together to 'exchange knowledge and ideas, evaluate and enhance their craft, and strengthen the role of protocol in diplomacy'.⁶² Andrés, who was invited to speak at and cook for the meeting, touched on the importance of commensality in diplomacy, and served a menu highlighting American cuisine from the past two hundred years.⁶³ After the occasion, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke to *The New York Times* about the importance and power of private culinary diplomacy:

⁶⁰ 'Cooking a Prosperous Future', *Taiwan Today*, 4 June 2010, available online at <http://www.taiwantoday.tw/ct.asp?xItem=105822&ctNode=425>, accessed on 22 November 2011.

⁶¹ Mark Caltonhill, 'Promoting Taiwan through its Food', *American Chamber of Commerce in Taiwan Publication*, vol. 41, no. 1, available online at <http://www.amcham.com.tw/content/view/3138/479/>, accessed on 22 November 2011.

⁶² 'Ambassador Capricia Penavic Marshall to Launch Inaugural Global Chiefs of Protocol Conference', State Department website, 2 July 2012, available online at <http://www.state.gov/ti/pa/prs/ps/2012/07/194418.htm>, accessed on 11 July 2012.

⁶³ Beth Kormanik, 'International Protocol Chiefs Share Ideas at New DC Conference', *BizBash*, 11 July 2012, available online at http://www.bizbash.com/international_protocol_chiefs_share_ideas_at_new_dc_conference/washington/story/23758, accessed on 11 July 2012.

Showcasing favorite cuisines, ceremonies and values is an often overlooked and powerful tool of diplomacy. The meals that I share with my counterparts at home and abroad cultivate a stronger cultural understanding between countries and offer a unique setting to enhance the formal diplomacy we conduct every day.⁶⁴

Finally, the White House has also been doing its share of both private and public culinary diplomacy. First Lady Michelle Obama has led an outreach drive to both the American people and abroad with a campaign highlighting the importance of healthy and local food. Mrs Obama oversaw the planting of a garden at the White House that feeds the family and provides fruit and vegetables for state dinners, as well as installing a beehive to produce White House honey.⁶⁵ The White House kitchen — led by Executive Chef Cristeta Comerford, Pastry Chef Bill Yosses and the Obama-picked assistant Sam Kass — has been leading the effort for both domestic and international culinary diplomacy. State dinners are an especially key moment for outreach. Yosses says that the kitchen staff has a ‘very strategic system’ to go about planning for such an event.⁶⁶ Starting months in advance, the team identifies which fruits and vegetables from the garden will be in season at the time of the dinner. They then consult with the various departments involved in the planning, including the State Department, to establish what tone is desired for the occasion. The meal is then constructed to reflect that tone — whether it is casual and comfortable or formal and proper. Yosses says that some of the input comes from the guests themselves, but that final menu planning is at the discretion of the kitchen. Comerford says that it is important to give a ‘nod’ to the guest’s home cuisine, but that the ‘menu has to be reflective of American cuisine and hospitality’.⁶⁷ Each state dinner is therefore a combination of gesture and national pride — outreach to the other while maintaining a strong sense of self is the key to culinary diplomacy.

Conflict Diplomacy

Recalling the discussion above about contact theory, culinary diplomacy on a less official scale is ripe for being invoked in situations of conflict. Crofts illustrates the effect of food in bringing together conflicting parties by describing the work of food vendors in Khartoum, Sudan.⁶⁸ Sudan’s capital has brought people

⁶⁴ Marian Burros, ‘Diplomacy Travels on Its Stomach, Too’, *The New York Times*, 2 July 2012, available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/04/dining/secretary-of-state-transforms-the-diplomatic-menu.html?pagewanted=all>.

⁶⁵ Rachel Tepper, ‘The Obamas Eat from a Garden that Yields 1,600 Pounds of Food’, *The Feast*, 18 October 2011, available online at <http://www.thefeast.com/chicago/restaurants/The-White-House-Kitchen-Garden-Yields-1600-Pounds-of-Food-105187314.html>, accessed on 27 November 2011.

⁶⁶ Bill Yosses, personal interview with author, Cambridge MA, 28 November 2011.

⁶⁷ Cristeta Comerford, email correspondence with author, 30 November 2011.

⁶⁸ A.V. Crofts, ‘Silver Lining: Building a Shared Sudanese Identity through Food’, *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*, vol. 10, no. 1, winter 2010.

together from all around the nation, including the region that is now the Republic of South Sudan. As these displaced people look for livelihoods, many end up selling food from their own regions. Crofts writes, 'Making the best of a bad situation, these vendors [...] have inadvertently become culinary ambassadors. [...]hey [...] facilitate a nascent sense of a shared Sudanese identity and nationalism'.⁶⁹ The provincial nature of many of the cuisines that have been brought to the capital has an effect on the city's usual residents. As urban Sudanese slowly overcome their preconceptions and discover a taste for regional cuisines, meals have the power to function as unofficial diplomacy during this turbulent time in Sudan's history.⁷⁰ Although it may not be a replicable model of conflict resolution, this unheralded form of private culinary diplomacy does point to an alternative potential power of the tool.

A more local and engineered version of public culinary diplomacy that is dealing with conflicts is a project by two restaurateurs in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. They have established a take-out restaurant known as the Conflict Kitchen, which only serves food from countries with which the United States is in conflict. The restaurant rotates its theme, focusing its energy on one conflict cuisine at a time. The first iteration, known as 'Kubideh Kitchen', served Iranian food, supplemented by community-supported events, performances and discussions.⁷¹ A Skype-linked dinner and conversation between diners in Pittsburgh and the Iranian capital, Tehran, was initiated to expose each population to the other's culture and cuisine. The next two rotations — the 'Bolani Pazi' (Afghan takeout) and 'Arepas Kitchen' (Venezuelan takeout) — have included similar outreach devices. While it is unclear how deep the effects of these culinary connections are, the project occupies a perfect space within culinary diplomacy: to utilize local and everyday food — like that which would be eaten on the street — from conflict countries and to use it as a basis for conflict resolution. Future forays into the myriad uses of culinary diplomacy should study this model and build upon it.

At the Summit

At the summit of private culinary diplomacy is a group called the *Club des Chefs des Chefs*, or the 'Leaders' Chefs' Club'. Founded in 1977 by French designer Gilles Bragard, this is an informal organization bringing together the head chefs of various heads of state — that is, the chefs who cook for the world's presidents, prime ministers and royalty. Summit diplomacy takes place at 'the highest level of political authority';⁷² summit culinary diplomacy therefore takes place at the highest level of culinary authority. Bragard's motto for the club is 'Politics divides

⁶⁹) Crofts, 'Silver Lining', p. 110.

⁷⁰) Crofts, 'Silver Lining', p. 110.

⁷¹) More information available online at www.conflictitchen.org.

⁷²) Berridge, *Diplomacy*, p. 161.

men, but a good meal unites them'.⁷³ Annual meetings take place at rotating locations, allowing the chefs not only to compare notes with each other but to increase their connection with the host country.⁷⁴ The organization is highly secretive, however, and does not divulge much of what is discussed beyond the occasional summit menu. Discretion is vital, because as Buckingham Palace's head chef Mark Flanagan fears, if he disclosed his boss's preferences, 'chefs would recreate it for her everywhere she went — she would be served it so many times that it wouldn't be her favourite any more'.⁷⁵ More serious than losing a favourite dish, perhaps, would be if host chefs used such knowledge to sway a leader's political position by tempting them with food. Comerford provides some insight into the workings of the club, saying that 'We meet once a year to discuss, shar[ing] experiences and know-how. When their Head of State visits the United States, or our President visit[s] their country, our knowledge of our leader sets us apart in terms of knowing and having [first-hand] information'. Perhaps this indicates that a little knowledge-sharing about favourite dishes does occur, and that the club does indeed grease the wheels of decision-making. De Callières' writing on the value of food to relations among princes indeed remains true today, as the power of the plate continues to be influential at the highest level of political authority.

Criticisms

The above discussion displays the strengths of culinary diplomacy. Through anecdotal and historical evidence, as well as an application of existing theory on diplomacy, culture and contact, we can see the power and potential of expanding the field. It is still nascent, however, and like any academic field has weaknesses. This article will attempt to elaborate upon the problems facing culinary diplomacy, with suggestions for future investigation. The issues raised are not insurmountable, however, and — with future study and application — culinary diplomacy can grow to be a strong and durable aspect of diplomacy that is employed by governments worldwide as a soft-power addition to strategy.

The biggest issue is perhaps the difficulty in assessing whether or not a culinary diplomacy project has actually completed its goal of increasing communication and goodwill through cuisine. Quantifiable programmes such as Thailand's 'Global Thai' initiative are easy to evaluate: how many more restaurants opened in the past year because of Thai government spending? Other facets of culinary

⁷³ Hugh Schofield, 'The Culinary United Nations', *BBC News*, 29 August 2003, available online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3191091.stm>, accessed on 27 November 2011.

⁷⁴ 'About *Club des Chefs*'.

⁷⁵ Angélique Chrisafis, 'Club Provides Cooks' Tour of World Leaders: *Chefs des Chefs* Gather to Discuss How to Spice up those Political Summits', *The Guardian*, 14 July 2007, available online at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jul/14/france.lifeandhealth>, accessed 27 November 2011.

diplomacy, however, both public and private, are far more qualitative. How much goodwill do the White House chefs garner for their non-verbal gestures to visiting dignitaries? What leg up do Japanese chefs gain from serving impeccable Chinese food to Chinese diplomats? How do neighbouring food vendors in Khartoum *actually* regard each other's regional origins after sharing tastes? None of these questions, or others that are posed from the various anecdotes presented in this article, have satisfactory answers. Outcomes are merely presumed from theory. Allport's work, along with extrapolations from the fields of cultural diplomacy and soft power, suggest that the above makes sense. In reality, it is difficult to ascertain the truth.

This is true in many fields, however, and as such is not enough to condemn culinary diplomacy. Many nations engage in more accepted forms of cultural diplomacy, including sending musicians behind enemy lines to build up goodwill among foreign populations. Embassies reach out through public diplomacy campaigns to teach others about national policy. Yet how can attitudes abroad be assessed, especially in hostile countries in which polling is not realistic? These programmes are still pursued, however, in the hope that something will get through. Culinary diplomacy, if engaged extensively, has great — if unknowable — potential and should not be dismissed for its lack of measureable outcomes.

Another potential criticism of the concept is that we are discussing 'just food'. Indeed, food and cuisine hold varying levels of interest for people; many treat food as fuel and do not place any particular weight on the nuances of presentation, flavour and origin. To serve a carefully considered and executed meal may come off to some as insulting self-aggrandizement and others as just plain boring. US President Kennedy's White House chef René Verdon left the position in 1965 after escalating incidents with Kennedy's successor, the decidedly non-gourmet Lyndon Johnson, who tried to cut costs by buying canned vegetables.⁷⁶ Reacting to Johnson's request for a certain Southern menu, Verdon said, 'You can eat at home what you want, but you do not serve barbecued spareribs at a banquet with the ladies in white gloves'.⁷⁷ Such disconnects are not infrequent in the political and diplomatic world — some people are just not interested in cuisine. Among these people, culinary diplomacy will not work.

A related charge is that some may accuse culinary diplomacy as being a tool that is available only to the elite. An invitation to dinner at the White House is a rare and highly sought-after prize, even among Washington DC's elite. How can culinary diplomacy win over hearts and minds if the plates are gilded? The public outreach aspects, however, make multicultural cuisine available to everyone.

⁷⁶ Emma Brown, 'René Verdon, White House Chef for the Kennedys, Dies at 86', *Washington Post*, 3 February 2011, available online at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/03/AR2011020306146_2.html, accessed on 27 November 2011.

⁷⁷ Brown, 'René Verdon, White House Chef for the Kennedys, Dies at 86'.

The Thai, Korean and Taiwanese projects aim to disseminate those cuisines worldwide, not just to diplomats but to publics. This is the difference between private and public culinary diplomacy — the former mostly remains behind closed doors and is effective among diplomats and statesmen, while the latter can reach anyone who is interested in foreign cuisines. The twin pillars of the tool, therefore, give it a functionality that does not just involve elites.

Conclusion

There is nothing to which men, while they have food and drink, cannot reconcile themselves.
George Santayana⁷⁸

Culinary Diplomacy: History, Theory and Practice

As we have seen, culinary diplomacy has its roots deep in diplomatic history — as long as diplomatic relations have been undertaken, conversation has taken place over a meal. In ancient Greece, negotiations and peace treaties were undertaken over lunch and wine to facilitate conversation. Sacrifice, either to a rival or a god, creates an unassailable communion that is not easily broken. Just as modern diplomacy crystallized in nineteenth-century France, culinary diplomacy also reached a point of institutionalization with Antonin Carême, whose work in France and Vienna established a foundation for the use of food in official diplomatic functions.

The theory of culinary diplomacy has multiple facets that work together to create a distinctly potent tool of diplomacy. In both public and private practice of culinary diplomacy, the non-verbal communication of food and the physical closeness of commensality create a powerful locus that is centred on the space in which food is shared. Everything is in play: formal or informal; the seating arrangement; the type, origin and quality of foods; who is there and who is not. Public culinary diplomacy involves added dimensions of nation-branding and outreach, but the theory remains at the level of commensality; at its basest, culinary diplomacy occurs when individuals — whether they are private citizens, diplomats, or heads of state — share food and drink.

Projects are under way in South-East Asia, in South America, in the United States and elsewhere. Food's universal importance makes culinary diplomacy effective everywhere in the world, which is why we have seen it adopted in many areas and at many levels of engagement. From the summit down, the practice of culinary diplomacy has proven to be successful, and will hopefully continue to do so.

⁷⁸) 'Public Diplomacy: Cuisine.'

The Future of Culinary Diplomacy

As a new field, culinary diplomacy requires more study to elaborate upon its potential. United States Chief of Protocol Capricia Marshall recognizes that food is gaining in importance in popular culture, increasing the prospective power of its use as a tool of international relations.⁷⁹ How best, however, to harness that power? Rockower believes that it is best utilized when interactions take place between citizens: ‘Gastro-diplomacy is perhaps best conducted with attention to local level perspective and even private sector insight’.⁸⁰ The work that is being done by the Thai, Korean and Taiwanese governments, as well as the new initiatives being undertaken by the US Office of Protocol, point to a more public level of discourse. Wherever food is used to interact with someone to improve cooperation, change attitudes, or encourage understanding — whether at an urban stall, a restaurant, or the White House — a nexus of culinary diplomacy has been created. We should do all that we can to encourage such interactions.

Food is powerful, and when transformed through the lens of national identity can take on a highly influential role. It is important in its most basic forms to keep humanity alive, and as it becomes manipulated and adapted by culture, it gains the potential to change populations’ and leaders’ minds and therefore national policies. José Andrés, the US Culinary Ambassador and a self-proclaimed diplomat from Spain, feels that — for our world to survive — exploring this route is vital: ‘I don’t think the war strategy has ever worked for humanity, but after thousands and thousands and thousands of years of earth controlled by humans, war still seems to be the answer? I hope one day, food will be the answer’.⁸¹

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⁷⁹⁾ Burros, ‘Diplomacy Travels on its Stomach, Too’.

⁸⁰⁾ Paul Rockower, ‘Gastrodiplomacy and the Promotion of Korea’, 1 July 2010, available online at <http://brandingkorea.org/gastrodiplomacy-and-the-promotion-of-korea/>, accessed on 22 November 2011.

⁸¹⁾ Personal interview with José Andrés in Cambridge, MA, on 19 October 2011.