

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES, ARTS, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Research Highlights 'Interview'



Self-Introduction

- Briefly introduce yourself, the department and school that you are in.

Hello! I'm Dylan M.H Loh from the Public Policy and Global Affairs programme in the School of Social Sciences.

Elaboration

- Share with us what is your research project.

My ongoing research project ('Diplomacy at the margins: How non-state actors sustain, contest and supplant international diplomacy') studies non-state, non-traditional international actors and their diplomatic practices. The number of international actors has proliferated since the end of the Cold War and this project investigates the ways in which such actors (quasi-states, corporations, Non-governmental Organizations and so forth) conduct diplomacy and how these practices interface with traditional, state-sanctioned diplomacy.

- What inspired you to embark on this research project?

One of the more exciting developments in the field of international relations (IR) today is the growing recognition of the political roles non-state (and non-state sanctioned) actors play in world politics. Indeed, these actors frequently escape neat lines, contours and definitions that still defines the IR discipline. This research builds on my doctoral research examining Chinese diplomacy and shifts its analytical focus unto other forms of diplomacy that has traditionally be ignored by the literature.

- **What is/are the most interesting finding(s) of this project?**

One tentative observation is that quasi-states frequently mimic the diplomatic practices of state diplomacy but because it lacks recognition, it can never quite fully lay claim to be 'legitimate'. Even so, this 'illegitimate' diplomacy is, concurrently, attempting to be 'legitimate' and always in the process of 'becoming' legitimate because of its mimicry. This tension, in turn, creates conditions for innovation in both the concept and practice of diplomacy.

- **How do you think your research can impact society?**

When people think about 'diplomacy', they often link it to official diplomats, officials, state leaders and politicians. However, international political life is inhabited by various actors that directly and indirectly conduct diplomacy. Having a more nuanced understanding of how diplomacy works (through an investigation into these marginal actors and their diplomatic practices) can help us understand change and stasis in international diplomacy and further our understanding on a range of international phenomenon such as social movements and the internationalization of domestic politics to name a few.

Future Plans

- **Tell us about your future research plans and if you are looking for any research collaborators!**

I am also embarking on a study of cryptocurrencies and the ways in which it impacts international politics through the lens of novelty and liminality.