

## VISUAL STORYTELLING FOR DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

### THE KONY 2012 CAMPAIGN

*Massimiliano Fusari (Senior Lecturer in Digital Storytelling, University of Westminster)*

*(12,000 words)*

If diplomacy is anything at all, it is communication.

The visual is a fundamental component for efficacious communication. In a sea of digital information, interest groups vie with each other to reach the surface. Being engaged with, or even noticed, if only for a second, can make or break your storytelling when communicating online.

This paper aims to analyse how the potential of visual communication might maximise your storytelling. It will argue that cultivating an awareness of the principles of visual semiotics in relation to tactics, strategy and operations is key to *designing* and, hence, *implementing* storytelling of digital diplomacy.

In order to further this discussion, the paper pins down an epistemology of digital diplomacy in relation to its evolving cultural and public qualities. This developing framework draws upon theories of communication and cultural studies. The themes that arise as a result are reviewed through the ground-breaking campaign Kony 2012.

Final recommendations are tested against the consolidated framework of diplomatic practice (tactics, operations and strategies) to accordingly review the usage of storytelling techniques across processes of mediatisation. In turn, resulting ontologies are advanced as *temporary* and *operational* in view of the very shifting quality of today's digital processes.

In conclusion, the paper is a call to arms for all parties engaged in the cultural and public spheres of digital communication: to reconsider the visual capacities of diplomatic communication to effectively storytell visually and, with that, digitally.