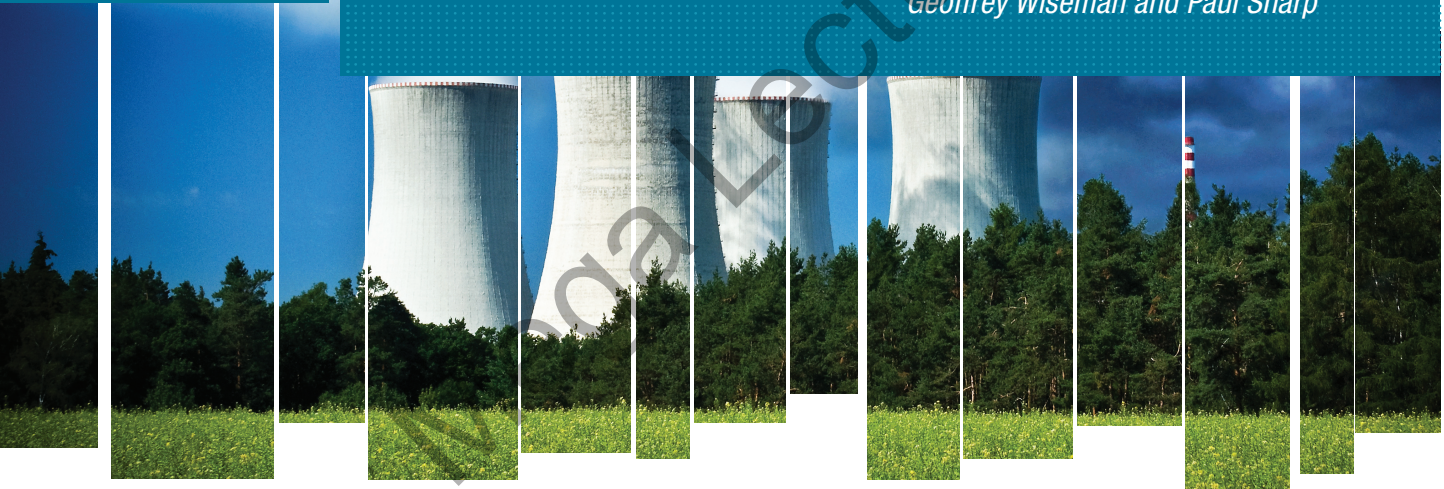




18

Diplomacy

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Introduction	257
Defining diplomacy: what is diplomacy and who are the diplomats?	257
The evolution of diplomacy	258
Trends	264
Diplomacy and the study of IR	265
Conclusion	266
Questions	267
Further reading	267

Introduction

This chapter makes three main arguments: first, that ideas and practices of **diplomacy** have a multi-millennial history, much longer than is generally thought. Second, that this long history has been characterised by both continuity and change. As a result, diplomacy has been as much adaptive as resistant to change. And, third, that diplomacy is not diminishing in importance and that it – and the diplomats who carry it out – should be regarded as evolving and as important to the **theory** and practice of international relations.

BOX 18.1: TERMINOLOGY

Some definitions of diplomacy

'Diplomacy is the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the governments of independent states, extending sometimes also to their relations with vassal states; or, more briefly still, the conduct of business between states by peaceful means' (Ernest Satow [1917] 1979: 1).

'Diplomacy is the management of international relations by negotiation; the method by which these relations are adjusted and managed by ambassadors and envoys; the business or art of the diplomatist' (Harold Nicolson [1939] 1969: 4–5).

[Diplomacy is] the conduct of relations between states and other entities with standing in world politics by official agents and by peaceful means' (Hedley Bull 1977: 162).

'Diplomacy is concerned with the management of relations between states and other actors. From a state perspective diplomacy is concerned with advising, shaping and implementing foreign policy' (R. P. Barston 1988: 1).

'Diplomacy is the conduct of international relations by negotiation rather than by force, propaganda, or recourse to law, and by other peaceful means (such as gathering information or engendering goodwill) which are either directly or indirectly designed to promote negotiation' (G. R. Berridge 1995: 1).

Diplomacy is 'the peaceful conduct of relations amongst political entities, their principals and accredited agents' (Hamilton and Langhorne 2011: 1).

To assess these claims, the chapter first addresses the issue of defining diplomacy, then it examines the evolution of diplomacy in terms that may be characterised broadly as pre-modern, modern, and **postmodern**, and finally the chapter evaluates the relationship between diplomacy and the study of International Relations (IR).

Defining diplomacy: what is diplomacy and who are the diplomats?

Diplomacy is conventionally understood as the processes and institutions by which the interests and identities of **sovereign states** are represented to one another. Diplomats are understood to be people accredited by those they represent to undertake this work. We should be careful with definitions, however (see Box 18.1 for examples). They clarify the ways in which people use a term; they do not capture its true meaning, if there is such a thing, or its best use. Thus, some definitions of diplomacy emphasise a particular diplomatic *activity*: for example, negotiation (Nicolson [1939] 1969). Others stress the *manner* in which the activity should be undertaken: for example, with honesty, tact and understanding (Callières [1717] 2000; Satow [1917] 1979) or peacefully (Berridge 2010). Still others pay attention to *who* is entitled to undertake it and on behalf of whom – claiming, for example, that only the official representatives of sovereign states and international organisations may be properly viewed as engaging in diplomacy (Vienna Convention 1961). Rather than trying to pin down the best definitions of diplomacy and diplomats, therefore, it is more interesting to chart how and why the popularity and use of different ones changed over time and from place to place.

Why, for example, did Edmund Burke feel the need in 1797 to anglicise the French term *diplomatie* (E. Burke [1797] 1899: 450)? Why, in America, is the distinction between diplomacy and foreign policy less acknowledged than in Europe (Kissinger 1994, David Clinton 2011)? And why, nearly everywhere, do people now seek to broaden the use of the term and call a wide range of humanitarian, cultural and commercial activities diplomacy, and whoever undertakes them diplomats (Leonard and Alakeson 2000)?

The evolution of diplomacy

Pre-modern diplomacy

Something like diplomacy must have occurred between peoples in pre-history once messengers were granted immunity from unfriendly **protocols** governing relations with strangers (Nicolson [1939] 1969). Archaeological and anthropological research, however, casts doubt on the idea of communities evolving separately until encountering others. Rather, the record suggests a single group from which peoples separated early on, and processes of peoples both coming together and pulling apart ever since (Diamond 1997; Buzan and Little 2000). There are historical records of negotiations in the Old Testament, and older fragments exist including an archive of relations between pharaohs, their clients and other great kings in the fourteenth century BC (Amarna). From the latter, we obtain glimpses of missions travelling with trade caravans to arrange dynastic marriages, secure gifts, reassure allies and negotiate with rivals. For some this is the first diplomatic system and illustrates how diplomacy is 'hardwired' into the human species (Cohen and Westbrook 2000). For others, the Amarna period fails the test of being a proper diplomatic system because the parties exhibit no self-restraint in the interests of preserving their system (Butterfield 1970) and achieve no institutional expression of that system; for example, resident embassies (Berridge 2010).

The answer to when diplomacy started, as argued above, seems bound up with how diplomacy is defined and by whom. For example, until very recently it has been conventional in the Western world to interpret the earlier diplomatic experience of humanity as a precursor to the emergence of modern diplomacy in seventeenth-century Europe. In this story, while most peoples only managed to send missions when there was something to negotiate, the Greeks are distinguished by their permitting *proxenoi* (local citizens) to represent them, although without plenipotentiary (negotiating) powers (Hamilton and Langhorne 2011). The Romans, as **hegemons**, are presented as uninterested in the give-and-take of diplomacy (Nicolson 1954). The Renaissance Italians, in contrast, are credited with preparing the ground for modern diplomacy (Mattingly 1955). They established permanent resident missions (embassies) whose ministers (ambassadors) had plenipotentiary powers and developed a collective sense of themselves as a diplomatic corps sharing common professional interests and values (Sharp and Wiseman 2007). As for the rest of the world – China, India, the Americas and Africa – its diplomatic achievements are judged unimportant since it was eventually absorbed by the expansion of Europe's international society (Bull and Watson 1984).

As we shall see below, this story of how modern diplomacy emerged and was perfected in its essentials remains important and useful. However, as **power** now appears to be shifting away from Europe and America, and power itself may be transforming in such ways as to make sovereign states less powerful and important, there is a growing sense that the conventional story does not exhaust all the possibilities for diplomacy. Recently,

therefore, interest has revived in how diplomacy used to be conducted in Europe before its states-system was consolidated, in other parts of the world before the Europeans arrived, and between the Europeans and indigenous peoples they encountered (Jennings et al. 1985). Interest has also revived in how so-called primitive peoples conducted (and in some cases still conduct) their diplomatic relations with others (Numelin 1950).

Modern diplomacy in the Westphalian era

Modern diplomacy is generally associated with the traditional agenda of sovereign states (especially the larger, more powerful ones), the **balance of power, war, and international law** (Bull 2002). Modern diplomacy can essentially be divided into two forms, **bilateral** and **multilateral**. Seen as the older more traditional form, bilateral diplomacy is the conduct of relations between two political actors with 'standing', usually sovereign territorial states. Multilateral diplomacy, the conduct of relations between three or more such states, is seen as a 'newer' form of diplomacy.

As noted above, diplomatic historians tend to see modern diplomacy in its bilateral form emerging on the Italian Peninsula during the Renaissance. The key diplomatic players of the time included Florence, Venice, Naples, Milan and the papacy in Rome. Machiavelli, the Florentine diplomat who authored *The prince* ([1513] 1998) and other works on how best to negotiate with other sovereigns, did so in terms that are now synonymous with a **power politics** worldview (Berridge et al. 2001: 13). Thus, as we noted above, Renaissance Italy's main contribution to the development of the ideas and practices of diplomacy was the creation of resident ambassadors. On this model, and unlike in the past when ambassadors tended to go on short-term diplomatic missions, ambassadors would reside in the host country for years, sending reports to their governments back home by whatever means were available. A product of the exchange of resident diplomats, as noted earlier, was the development of a diplomatic corps, the corporate collection of diplomats in any one capital, from Constantinople to London (Sharp and Wiseman 2007).

Many scholars regard the **Treaty of Westphalia** (1648) that ended Europe's Thirty Years' War between Protestants and Catholics, as formalising (but by no means inventing) the principle of state **sovereignty** and thus 'ushering in the era of modern diplomacy' (Stanger 2009: 56). Thus, Westphalia's association with the sovereign state became synonymous with modern diplomacy. Even though the resident bilateral diplomatic mission emerged earlier, in the fifteenth century as we have seen, Westphalia's importance in the seventeenth century was that it both represented and constituted the notion of modern diplomacy. However, while Westphalia's significance is usually associated with the rise of modern sovereign-state diplomacy, it is equally significant as a major step in the development of multilateral diplomacy (Hamilton and Langhorne 2011; Davis Cross 2007). In short, Westphalia reinforced bilateral diplomacy, which was already recognisable on the Italian Peninsula, while also pointing to a more multilateral future for diplomacy.

With bilateral diplomacy (the resident mission) and multilateral diplomacy (such as the congresses surrounding Westphalia) in place by the seventeenth century, other innovations followed. **Notable here was the invention by Cardinal Richelieu – first minister of France under Louis XIII from 1624–1642 – of the foreign ministry: the now taken-for-granted institution under one roof in a country's capital that works with government ministers to formulate foreign policy and supervises a country's**

international network of diplomats and embassies (Berridge et al. 2001). Thus was born the idea of the professional diplomat as a key feature of modern diplomacy and international relations.

For most writers on diplomacy, the diplomacy of the **great powers** mattered most. They were supposed to be responsible for maintaining the balance of power but, as the Napoleonic Wars had demonstrated, were also capable of posing deadly threats to the peace of Europe. Great-power dominance of modern diplomacy's evolution is well demonstrated by the Concert of Europe, an informal yet powerful periodic meeting of European states that negotiated treaties, but typically did not meet in a single assembly (plenary) which would have allowed the smaller powers a larger voice in proceedings. Thus, the Concert was dominated by small, exclusive meetings of the leading statesmen from Austria, Prussia, Russia, Britain and France, such as Prince Metternich (Austria), Lord Castlereagh (Britain) and Prince Talleyrand (France). The Concert is widely associated with a period of relative **peace** in Europe for much of the nineteenth century and up to the outbreak of war in 1914.

In diplomacy's long history, World War I (1914–1918) stands out for two reasons. One, the war was blamed on diplomats conducting the 'old diplomacy' of secret treaties, shifting **alliances** and great-power backroom deals. Two, in the war's aftermath, the multilateral method was taken to a new institutionalised level with the creation of the League of Nations (the 'new diplomacy'). Under the League, diplomats conducting multilateral diplomacy would no longer meet for a few days at a time in a European capital and then return home (on the Concert model). Now, some diplomats at least would be permanently accredited to an international organisation, rather than to a country. This represented an important conceptual shift – albeit one that failed in this instance, with the disbandment of the League during World War II, which it manifestly failed to prevent.

However, the establishment of the **United Nations (UN)** in San Francisco in 1945 (Schlesinger 2003) represented a further, and this time more successful, attempt at institutionalising the multilateral diplomatic method. An important lesson seemed to be that sovereign states were willing to try again, rather than give up on a promising idea. World War II had also initiated renewed interest in the role of public opinion in the formation of foreign policy, and to some extent in its conduct by professional diplomats. After the war, the ideological conflict known as the **Cold War** (roughly 1945–1989) saw the re-emergence and general acceptance of institutionalised multilateralism (Thakur 2002), with the establishment of the extensive UN system, even if there was a sense that the UN was not central to the diplomacy of the great-power contest that was surfacing at the time (Mazower 2009). Traditional bilateral diplomacy, so vilified after World War I, continued in a new conceptual guise known as **bipolarity** – under this wider concept, large numbers of countries lined up, some of them reluctantly, behind the US and Soviet **superpowers**. The main features of this Cold War diplomacy included nuclear diplomacy, crisis diplomacy and summit diplomacy (White 2001: 392–3). The advent of nuclear weapons and their use by the US in 1945 against Japan introduced a novel and sharply dangerous element into the management of crises and the convening of high-level meetings by political leaders. If the over-riding strategic concept of the nuclear age was mutual nuclear **deterrence**, the underlying foreign policy concept was **containment** – an idea advanced by George Kennan, a serving professional US diplomat, that Soviet **communism** could be managed (contained) without the use of military force (see Box 18.2).

BOX 18.2: DISCUSSION POINTS

George Kennan's view of the emerging bipolar Cold War

Soviet communism is 'a political force committed fanatically to the belief that with US there can be no permanent *modus vivendi* ... [The] problem of how to cope with this force [is] undoubtedly greatest task our diplomacy has ever faced and probably greatest it will ever have to face ... But I would like to record my conviction that problem is within our power to solve – and that without recourse to any general military conflict.'

Source: The February 1946 Kennan 'Long Telegram' (Jensen 1993: 28, 29).

Decolonisation provided an important context in which Cold War diplomacy played out. This process whereby the colonies of the European powers achieved their independence had a dramatic impact on international relations in general, and diplomacy in particular. First, as just noted, while many of the newly independent countries identified and allied with one or the other superpower, many others sought to keep some political distance from them, forming groupings such as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Group of 77 (**G77**) in order to strengthen their independence from the Cold War giants. A small minority of the new states, such as China, Cuba and Libya, branded themselves, or were seen by others, as revolutionary states, at first rejecting but later accepting diplomatic **norms** and procedures (Bull and Watson 1984; Armstrong 1993).

BOX 18.3: DISCUSSION POINTS

Proliferation of sovereign states

1919: 25 states participated in the Paris Peace Conference, formally ending World War I and setting up the League of Nations.

1945: 51 states participated in the 1945 San Francisco Conference, establishing the United Nations.

1990: the United Nations has 159 member states.

2010: the United Nations has 192 member states.

A second effect of decolonisation was a dramatic proliferation of sovereign states in the international system. Some 51 countries signed the **UN Charter** in 1945. By 1989, the UN's membership had grown to 159. In 2010, the world body had 192 members (see Box 18.3). At the UN, the impact of the proliferation of new states had two almost contradictory effects: radicalisation and socialisation. *Radicalisation* was manifested in claims for economic and social development and declarations like the infamous 1975 Zionism is Racism General Assembly resolution. *Socialisation* was manifested, for example, in acceptance of the idea that the UN now acted as the membership committee for the international community (where previously this had been left to countries acting bilaterally). In addition, new members generally accepted the norms and routine practices of UN-style multilateral diplomacy (Wiseman 2011). In short, the trappings of sovereignty – embassies, ambassadors and UN membership – were attractive at a time when the political goal was sovereign independence. Given the divisions created by the Cold War and the decolonisation process, it is striking that the international community could come together to agree – in the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations – on the formal rules governing their diplomatic conduct (Langhorne 1992). The Convention set out the five key

tasks of diplomacy (See Box 18.4). It also codified the immunities and privileges accorded to diplomats while serving abroad (see Box 18.5).

BOX 18.4: KEY TEXTS

The 1961 Vienna Convention: functions of a diplomatic mission

According to Article 3 of the 1961 Vienna Convention, the functions of a diplomatic mission consist, among other things, in (emphasis added):

- (a) *Representing the sending State in the receiving State;*
- (b) *Protecting in the receiving State the interests of the sending State and of its nationals, within the limits permitted by international law;*
- (c) *Negotiating with the Government of the receiving State;*
- (d) *Ascertaining by all lawful means conditions and developments in the receiving State, and reporting thereon to the Government of the sending State;*
- (e) *Promoting friendly relations between the sending State and the receiving State, and developing their economic, cultural and scientific relations.*

How does diplomacy operate under hegemonic conditions? Until recently, it has been common to talk of a **unipolar** world, as distinct from a bipolar or even **multipolar** one, revolving around the sole remaining superpower, the US. The Cold War's end in 1989 led to yet another expansion of international society, with the addition of over twenty new countries from the disintegrating Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia, a series of events that reinforced the persistence of sovereignty and a state-based diplomatic culture (Wiseman 2005). And, even as the rise of emerging powers such as Brazil, India, China and South Africa challenges any unipolar US claims, the new powers in no way suggest that these power shifts will be undertaken without diplomacy and diplomats.

This early post-Cold War conventional wisdom was that the US conducted a form of hegemonic diplomacy, not unlike imperial Rome. As former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1999: 198) remarked pointedly in his memoirs: 'The Roman Empire had no need for diplomacy. Nor does the United States'. In fact, the US conducts its relations unilaterally, bilaterally, and multilaterally. The George W. Bush administration tended to emphasise the unilateral (while in practice operating in all three spheres); the Obama administration tends to emphasise the multilateral (while also in practice operating in all three spheres) in ways that no other country can presently match (Schlesinger 2008).

BOX 18.5: KEY TEXTS

The 1961 Vienna Convention: diplomatic immunity

Under the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, diplomats cannot be arrested, no matter what their crime; they cannot be forced to testify in court proceedings, unless their home state 'waives' (lifts) their immunity. The host state may expel them, declaring them *persona non grata* (Leguey-Feuilleux: 155–6).

On 4 January, 1997, 16-year-old Jovine Waltrick was killed in a five-car pileup at Dupont Circle in Washington DC caused by the second-ranking diplomat at the Georgian embassy, Gueorgui Makharadze, who was allegedly intoxicated. The US State Department

formally requested that the Georgian government not withdraw the diplomat from the US, and that it 'waive' his diplomatic immunity so that he could stand trial. Secretary of State Warren Christopher reaffirmed these requests in a letter to the President of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze. On 10 January 1997, President Shevardnadze announced in the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, that he would waive Makharadze's diplomatic immunity. The State Department described the gesture as 'unusual' and 'courageous'. Several months later, on 17–18 July, Shevardnadze visited the US, meeting with President Clinton, Vice President Al Gore and senior State Department officials. Makharadze's trial opened on 21 July 1997. He was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to 7–21 years in a federal prison. In 2000, Makharadze was transferred from the US to Georgia to serve the rest of his term.

Case written by Minta N. Spencer. See also 'Jailed Georgian Sent Home,' *The New York Times*, July 1, 2000.

Yet, as we discuss further below, there are countervailing trends, pointing to a world less dominated by a state-based diplomatic culture grounded unmistakably in sovereignty. The UN today is not simply a meeting place for over 190 sovereign state diplomats, but is becoming an amalgam of players from the sovereign, business, and non-governmental worlds, where sovereignty-questioning norms such as the **responsibility to protect (R2P)** – the idea that the international community could intervene with force after the state had failed to protect its own citizens – are evolving (Evans and Sahnoun 2002) (see Chapter 31).

To sum up this section, the norms, assumptions and practices of the modern Westphalian institution of diplomacy have some of their origins in ancient forms of practice dating back to the Amarna era. But they are also impressively different and, as we now argue, still useful.

The future of diplomacy in a post-Westphalian world

Prediction is always difficult, especially in the social sciences. The relationship between the social world and people's ideas about it is complex, and scholars argue over what is changing and what is meant by change. Consider the question of whether or not sovereign states and their diplomacy are disappearing. Common sense suggests they are not. In fact there are probably more states and more diplomatic missions now than at any time before the unifications of Italy and Germany in the nineteenth century (1861 and 1871 respectively). Reflection suggests they might be disappearing. It is possible that states and their diplomacy are no longer what they used to be presented as being: namely, the most important actors and processes in international politics. The world no longer turns on cable traffic between the embassies and chancelleries of a few great powers as it did at the start of World War I in August 1914. To complicate matters further, however, empirical analysis reveals that states were never as sovereign or as important as was assumed in their heyday. August 1914 was an exceptional and decisive moment, perhaps, but outside the parameters set by that great-power crisis there was a great deal of international relations going on to which sovereign states, their foreign offices and their diplomats were not central. In considering the future of diplomacy, therefore, we begin by acknowledging that at any given moment one can identify a number of possible trends, and that the present is always capable of yielding multiple possible futures, although some seem more likely than others (Henrikson 2006).

Trends

Modern diplomacy still rules

The most obvious trend is the persistence of the Westphalian or modern system of diplomacy noted above and outlined in the previous section. In general, sovereign states are still regarded as the most important actors in international relations and they continue to deploy an extensive system of embassies and consulates by which they and their interests are represented to each other. In particular cases this claim can be modified. Budgetary constraints, for example, can result in the closure of missions or, together with political developments like regional associations such as the European Union (EU), can result in various forms of shared or collective representation. The claim that **globalisation** – developments in the technologies of travel, communication and information-transfer, together with the ensuing ‘collapse of distance’ (see Chapter 28) – has rendered on-the-spot diplomatic representation unimportant has so far not been substantiated. Indeed, the need for such representation, especially in the great diplomatic cities of big powers and international organisations, continues unabated, leading some to speak of a ‘diplomatic counter-revolution’ in terms of the persistence and extension of traditional diplomatic practices (Berridge 2010: 253–55).

Less negotiating, more representation and lobbying

There has been a shift away from traditional diplomatic functions like negotiating and reporting towards both traditional and new forms of representation. Sovereign states may still be the most important actors, but their sovereignty seems to buy them less independence, security and prosperity than in the past, on an international stage that they now have to share with other sorts of international actors. Increasingly they must engage in ‘polylateral’ or ‘triangular’ diplomacy (Wiseman 2004; Strange 1992). As a result, diplomats spend more time lobbying important political and economic actors in their host states than would have been previously thought appropriate given the core diplomatic principle of non-interference in internal affairs and domestic matters. They spend more time engaged in representation contributing to the construction of favourable images of their own country’s identity, interests and values through public diplomacy than would have previously been thought important, given that these activities do not typically target governments (Cull 2009; Fitzpatrick 2007). And diplomats spend more time building local and temporary coalitions of private and public actors to influence policy networks in their host states, internationally and in their home states (Hocking 1999).

Getting out of the embassy

Some diplomats, particularly those of developed and Western states, are increasingly engaged in ‘transformational’ or ‘civilian power’ diplomacy, working in state and civil society ‘capacity-building’ teams with other experts, especially in countries from which terrorist movements operate (Rice 2007; Clinton 2010). However, this is one of those trends of which the strength and significance remain unclear. It seems very novel to have diplomats leaving their missions to work out in the field alongside aid workers, civil engineers, doctors and soldiers, helping communities to build schools, clinics and systems of governance capable of resisting the pressures of terrorists, smugglers and gangsters. It is not clear, however, the extent to which the fate of these activities is bound up with the fate of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and whether diplomats will be seen

to have much of a role to play in them after all. Nor is it clear how these activities differ from those of the political officer in the old European empires, although this is a parallel which none of the parties involved have an interest in drawing. One possible indicator of growing significance will be if rising powers like China and India adopt the same technique of attaching diplomats to their own development teams around the world.

The rise of the hyphenated diplomat

The terms diplomat and ambassador are increasingly applied to people who are not officially engaged in the representation of sovereign states and the adjustment of their interests. As noted above, international and regional organisations like the UN and the EU have long enjoyed diplomatic standing and the right to diplomatic representation among states. Individuals working independently or in a semi-official capacity have long been employed by states to seek agreements and secure interests when conventional diplomacy has been judged to be ineffective or inappropriate. To these can be added **field-diplomats and track two-diplomats**, who work in zones of conflict to secure ceasefires between warring militias and protect non-combatants when fighting is going on (Reychler 1996). **Goodwill-ambassadors and celebrity-diplomats** work to raise consciousness of humanitarian and environmental issues, lobbying those in a position to help and pressuring those causing problems (Cooper 2008). Citizen-diplomats may seek to advance the profile and interests of their home towns in trade delegations and through cultural exchanges, act as international civil society lobbyists, or seek to get round or subvert a particular aspect of their own country's foreign policy with which they disagree – for example, US citizen diplomacy toward Cuba (Sharp 2001).

The rise of the hyphenated diplomats nicely illustrates the problems with considering the future of diplomacy. To the question 'what will the future look like?' has to be added another question 'what will people in the future regard as significant in it?' A European cardinal from the fifteenth century, for example, might be reassured to see the network of Vatican diplomacy still in place today, but slow to recognise that people's attitudes to it are now very different from those of his own time. There will likely be a British ambassador in Paris fifty years from now, but will she be a 'go-to' person for French people seeking to influence their British counterparts, or will both sets of citizens, along with the other 6 billion inhabitants of the world, basically engage in their own direct diplomacy with one another? If so, then what, if anything, will be diplomatic about those relations? How would setting up opportunities for commercial, social or cultural partnerships between people from different countries be distinguishable from similar efforts between people from the same country? Is diplomacy changing, therefore, or is it in the process of fading away as international relations become more like other ordinary human relations?

Diplomacy and the study of IR

The contemporary study of diplomacy is beginning to explore questions such as these. Like anyone else, IR scholars bring to the task their own assumptions about what is going on and what is important. **Thus neorealists insist that there is an unavoidable dynamic to international politics which persists whether we like it or not (Waltz 1979). States and their diplomacy, or something so very like both that they may be treated as the same, will always exist because people live in a law-governed natural universe that constrains possibilities.** Witness, they argue, the way the EU, set up as an attempt to

break from the violent international politics of sovereign states, is rapidly acquiring the characteristics of a great power, including its own diplomats in the form of its External Action Service. **Constructivists**, in contrast, suggest that the social world is much more produced by the way we think about it than people realise (Wendt 1999). Sovereign states and the sort of diplomacy associated with them exist only insofar as people accept the claim that they do. In principle at least, people could consciously think and act themselves into an entirely different set of social relations in which the claims of states to sovereignty would be no longer accepted and diplomacy, as their privileged form of intercourse, would fade into irrelevance. Indeed, some people suggest that this may already be happening and that today's hyphenated diplomats are harbingers of a post-sovereign and post-state world (Wellman 2004). Others, in contrast, note what they regard as people's capacity for wishful thinking in the face of underlying, unchanging and brutish facts (Mearsheimer 2001; Carr [1939] 1946).

As noted above, however, an alternative to fitting diplomacy into broader theories of IR is to examine the circumstances in which people use terms like diplomacy and ambassador. There are shallow reasons, to be sure. Both terms are associated with power and status. Thus public *diplomacy* was so named by US officials because they thought public *relations* would put them at a disadvantage in the competition for resources and influence (Fitzpatrick 2007: 189), and all sorts of people are proclaimed 'ambassadors' when they seek support for causes generally regarded as good. Both terms surface, however, when people talk about relations with people whom they regard as 'other' and 'outsiders' from whom they feel different. This sense of difference may be malign and take the form of an alienation and estrangement that allows us to treat people badly (Der Derian 1987). It can also be benign, however, acknowledging the value of diversity and the different ways in which human communities can live (Constantinou 1996b). Either way, the sense of separateness and difference leads to a special sort of human relations, different from those within groups, requiring special handling and, arguably, a special class of people (diplomats) adept at handling them in such a way as to avoid unwanted conflict (Sharp 2009). To the extent that this is so, then we should neither want nor expect diplomacy to disappear, even if sovereign states and their foreign policies do.

Conclusion

Our review of the premodern, modern, and postmodern ideas of diplomacy confirms a very long history indeed. Even if there is disagreement about the premodern origins of diplomatic practices in forms that we would recognise today, there is little doubt that diplomacy preceded the sovereign states-system. Throughout these three broad historical periods, our review provided many examples of a diplomatic system that is capable of reproducing itself, but also of reconstituting itself in significantly different forms. The evidence of diplomacy from the pre-Westphalian period is important, because it seriously challenges the state-diplomacy link assumed in the literature and indeed by many, but by no means all, contemporary practitioners. We can therefore imagine a future without the state. But as we have conceived of the subject here, we cannot imagine any future without diplomacy. Even within the context of a state-based international order, diplomacy is becoming more important because it and the people who are said to practise it are increasingly needed (Sharp 2009). Moreover, if indeed international relations are moving in a post-hegemonic direction, then diplomacy is

more likely to prosper. In one form or another, the US, China and other major players see advantage in returning to it. Moreover, there is clear evidence of an emerging non-state diplomatic conception in which well-organised groups are now acting, or claiming to act, diplomatically, at least in a minimal sense even if not yet in the full Vienna Convention sense. Students of IR therefore need a good understanding of diplomacy and diplomats (and the many conceptual issues involved).

QUESTIONS

1. Can we continue to place trust in diplomacy in universal organisations such as the UN, or do we need to build regional and even localised diplomatic structures?
2. Do you think that the concept of diplomatic immunity serves a useful purpose in today's mixed-actor world of states and non-state actors? Make the best possible case in favour of the concept and then make the case for its abolition. Can and should diplomatic immunity exist in a future non-sovereign-state world?
3. Identify the ways that we as human beings all think diplomatically on a day-to-day basis – for example, in the ways we present ourselves to a professor as a student and our communications reflect the presumed etiquette, protocols and power relations involved.

FURTHER READING

Berridge, G. R. 2010, *Diplomacy: theory and practice*, 4th edn, Basingstoke UK: Palgrave.

Standard text on the diplomacy of states focusing on the activity of negotiation, bilateral and multilateral modes of diplomacy plus summitry and mediation.

Hamilton, Keith and Langhorne, Richard 2011, *The practice of diplomacy: its evolution, theory and administration*, 2nd edn, London: Routledge. Wide-ranging historical treatment of how the institution of diplomacy developed.

Jönsson, Christer and Hall, Martin, 2005, *Essence of diplomacy*, Basingstoke UK: Palgrave Macmillan. Sociological study of diplomatic practice, which interprets diplomacy as a subset of standard human behaviours that seek to mediate between universals and particulars through communication, representation and reproduction.

Nicolson, Harold 1954, *The evolution of the diplomatic method*, London: Macmillan. These essays take great liberties in terms of the national stereotyping of diplomatic methods but are valuable for their insights and for what they reveal about the outlook of the classical diplomatist.

Seib, Philip (ed.) 2009, *Toward a new public diplomacy: redirecting U.S. foreign policy*, Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. Set of essays reflecting the recent wave of public diplomacy scholarship, including essays on views of the US from other countries.

Sharp, Paul 2009, *Diplomatic theory of international relations*, Cambridge University Press. Argues that diplomats have a characteristic way of viewing international relations and what is important in them which is neglected by academics and other experts, but from which much is to be learned.

Sharp, Paul and Wiseman, Geoffrey (eds) 2007, *The diplomatic corps as an institution of international society*, Basingstoke UK: Palgrave Macmillan. Presents a series of case studies testing the thesis that diplomats stationed in the world's capitals constitute an epistemic entity with significance for international society.