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THE DYNAMICS OF DIPLOMACY

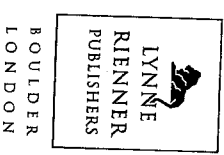
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*To the memory of my mother
To my wife, Virginia
To my children,
Michèle
Monique and Joe
Suzanne
Christy and Ken*

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1 Introduction

X This book analyzes the changing character of diplomacy—the changing ways in which states and other international actors communicate, negotiate, and otherwise interact. The world has undergone dramatic change, and some traditional forms of diplomacy are losing their prominence. Our complex global society has turned to new means of interaction to address international problems, and some scholars argue that diplomacy, a critical instrument of international relations, has been discarded, subverted, or supplanted. Hans Morganthau, a prominent political scientist, repeated for more than thirty years that “diplomacy has lost its vitality, and its functions have withered away to such an extent as is without precedent in the history of the modern state system.”¹ Is it truly the end of diplomacy? But what is diplomacy?

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from 1818 to 1831

X “Diplomacy” is a term that is often used rather loosely. A number of books on “the diplomacy” of certain countries are really about their foreign policy or, more generally, the course of their foreign relations.² Other works, on the subject of *diplomatic history*, are really about the history of foreign relations.³ And then there are books on the practice of diplomacy—that is, diplomacy as a *method of political interaction at the international level*—and the techniques used to carry out political relations across international boundaries (e.g., representation and communication). This is the sense in which “diplomacy” will be used here.⁴

At the core of the concept of diplomacy is the idea of communicating, interacting, maintaining contact, and negotiating with states and other international actors. Diplomacy, too, is an institution.⁵ Many of its practices, perhaps initially the result of expediency or simple practicality, were institutionalized

Diplomacy

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in 1818 -
1831

over the years, and became part of customary international law. They were codified in the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations⁶ and in the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.⁷

Diplomacy also implies a mode of behavior a way of doing business, a certain professional style. Diplomats need to act with tact and circumspection in approaching foreign governments; they deal with matters of state that are frequently delicate. Discretion is essential. They need to work with officials who frequently have enormous egos, an acute sense of their importance, and exaggerated expectations of deference.⁸

Finesse is required to handle complex international issues in a foreign cultural environment, using a different language and dealing with very different modes of behavior. One needs to be cautious and highly perceptive, as misunderstandings can so easily arise and complicate further interaction.⁹ By analogy, this type of behavior is occasionally called "diplomatic" when encountered in other walks of life or professions ("The matter was handled so diplomatically!"). As international relations change, "diplomacy" is used to refer to a larger variety of interactions, such as the international dialogue or negotiations carried out by heads of state in summit meetings (see Chapter 10).

The subject matter of diplomacy, too, has vastly expanded. For centuries, diplomacy was primarily concerned with matters of war and peace—the use of force—encompassing high politics and strategic interests. These matters are of course still prominent, and now include questions of international security, but a vast variety of other matters have been added to the diplomatic agenda, pertaining to the economy, technology, scientific developments, education, the arts, law, and so much more. There is virtually no aspect of life in society that has not, at one time or another, been on the diplomatic agenda. Interdependence and globalization have greatly contributed to this development. Many issues that once were primarily domestic, such as human rights, are now of international concern and of relevance to diplomacy.¹⁰

Diplomats need to be versatile; but in highly technical transactions (e.g., dealing with scientific issues or arms control), experts who are not members of the foreign service of their government must be brought in. The roles assigned to them secure their diplomatic status (even when their skills are less than diplomatic; but then again, the skills of diplomats have always varied considerably). It may also be noted that international relations are no longer the exclusive preserve of foreign ministers. A large variety of government departments are involved in foreign relations,¹¹ even to the point of sending their own personnel on diplomatic missions—a matter that complicates the task of coordinating a nation's foreign relations. Diplomacy is thus increasingly carried out by a variety of people who are not foreign service officers.¹² Through many nations, including the United States, have long resorted to political appointments (i.e., outside the foreign service career) in selecting their ambassadors—people who need to acquire diplomatic proficiency on the

job—they are not necessarily unprepared for their assignments (although some are). Many have extensive international experience and knowledge of international affairs.¹³

A number of contemporary participants in diplomacy are not even "agents" or "intermediaries" in the traditional diplomatic sense of carrying out orders and implementing policy. Heads of state engage in negotiations and other forms of diplomacy in summit meetings. Granted, they represent their states; but they are chief decisionmakers. Similarly, directors of international agencies (e.g., the UN Development Programme [UNDP]), who are chief executive officers and top administrators, practice diplomacy in the fulfillment of their mandates. All of these are rather different from the typical diplomatic representative, although we must remember that a typical ambassador needs administrative skill, having an embassy to run.¹⁴ Career diplomats are still important, but contemporary diplomacy is now carried out by many diverse people. Their work needs to be included in the concept of diplomacy. They are instruments in the conduct of international relations; they are the essential means of international transactions of the most diverse nature.

The functions served by diplomacy are expanding, and this, too, helps to explain the broadening of the concept.¹⁵ Aside from representation, communication, negotiation, observation of the political situation abroad, and reporting (functions to be discussed in Chapter 7), diplomatic personnel in our age of mass communication must engage in a good deal of public relations. On the other hand, a greater portion of international relations is bureaucratized, which creates a greater amount of administrative work for members of diplomatic missions. Embassies must serve the needs of an expanding contingent of their fellow citizens traveling and working abroad. There is also a growing amount of legal work in the interpretation and application of international regulations, the processing of legal claims, and much more. The diplomatic process in international organizations has created even more functions to be served by diplomats. Some of these functions are somewhat unconventional, such as serving in non-national capacities in certain international offices, as will be seen later.¹⁶ All of these developments have brought diplomacy far from the confines of traditional embassies in national capitals. Diplomacy retains many of its basic characteristics, but it has undergone significant changes.

Resort to different forms of diplomacy has contributed to the expansion of diplomatic functions. As the global environment has changed, new forms of interaction have evolved. The resident embassy in a national capital remains a very important element in the conduct of diplomacy, although its mission and structure are changing (see Chapter 7). Multilateral diplomacy is now an essential tool of international affairs;¹⁷ increasing numbers of large international conferences and elaborate international organizations have required the opening of permanent delegations at the sites of organization—a new form of resident representation (see Chapter 8).

Multilateral diplomacy entails a variety of new techniques: the formation of national blocs, diplomatic caucusing, debating, elaborate decisionmaking processes, extensive committee work, and the use of parliamentary procedures. This is a very different diplomatic environment, generating greater interaction and new modes and styles of diplomatic work (see Chapters 8-10).¹⁸ International actors, including national governments, accept all of this as diplomacy. They handle it as part and parcel of their diplomatic routine: the boundaries of the concept of diplomacy are thus expanding—hardly surprising given the changing nature of our global system and the need to address new problems. Under the pressure of necessity, international actors devise new ways of working together, supplementing or modifying older diplomatic techniques. Diplomacy is likely to continue evolving, with its essential characteristics probably retained, but other modes of interaction are coming into use.

The fact that states are no longer the only actors in the international political process is diversifying diplomacy and broadening the concept. International organizations are now significant participants in international relations. Their agents are diplomats who work with the representatives of nation-states and other organizations. The Secretary-General of the United Nations and his envoys are examples of this new category of diplomats.¹⁹ They do not serve the interests of any particular nation-state; they are international public servants subject only to their own organization's chain of command. Some engage in specialized lines of work—for example, many representatives of the World Bank are financial professionals, and many agents of the World Health Organization are physicians or public health administrators. It is interesting to note that the directors of these organizations are chief executive officers who participate in a considerable amount of diplomatic work.

The expanding realm of transnational relations is adding a new layer of diplomacy to international transactions.²⁰ The international actors involved are primarily nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and multinational corporations (MNCs), also called transnational corporations. Some NGOs, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and a number of environmental organizations are extremely active in international relations. They want to influence the decisions of other international actors, and thus send representatives of their own to engage those actors (see Chapter 5).

Recently, a number of international organizations (the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], the World Health Organization [WHO], the UN Children's Fund [UNICEF]) have found it effective to work with NGOs to implement some of their programs without having to work through governmental bureaucracies (and thus avoid red tape and corruption). NGO representatives are invited to participate in project planning, supervision of project implementation in the field, and various forms of consultation and cooperative missions. This amounts to significant institutional interaction. Some governments work with NGOs in similar fashion.²¹

Many multinational corporations seek to influence the governments of the countries in which they operate in order to obtain a variety of concessions (tax breaks, permissive legislation, exemptions from sundry environmental or other restrictions) to enhance their earning capacity, and to this end use some of their officers to maintain contact with government officials who may serve their purposes. Some MNC agents are posted in national capitals just for this purpose. In some countries, these MNC agents compete with the diplomatic representation of foreign governments (e.g., to obtain multimillion-dollar contracts—defense procurement is a huge field for this kind of activity). These can be very high-stakes negotiations.²²

Thus the concept of diplomacy is now much broader. Later chapters will examine how this expansion is affecting international relations. But it must be understood here that it is the international actors themselves—the entities involved in international politics—that have caused this definitional broadening, by accepting the new modes of interaction as diplomacy. The advantages and limitations of these new modes will be discussed later in this volume.²³

■ Negotiation

Negotiation is widely regarded as one of the major functions of diplomacy. In fact, diplomacy is frequently equated with negotiation.²⁴ It must be observed, however, that many diplomats are rarely called upon to negotiate anything; their work (e.g., in an embassy) simply entails other duties.²⁵ Diplomacy serves a large variety of functions, and negotiation, albeit important, is only one of them. It is nonetheless true that global society today is generating an increasingly large volume of negotiation, in part the result of complex interdependence. Each form of diplomacy examined in Part 2 of this volume brings its own method to the multilateral, taking place within a growing number of international conferences and international organizations (see Chapters 8 and 9). Resident missions in national capitals are now frequently asked to take up with their host governments certain aspects of multilateral negotiations presently conducted elsewhere. For example, through its embassy in a particular country, a government may seek to obtain greater cooperation from that state's representative who is currently involved in multilateral negotiations in a UN conference (i.e., the embassy will try to persuade the host government to issue instructions to its representative to be more cooperative). This embassy's intervention with the foreign government supplements the negotiations taking place in the multilateral forum. This is called "parallel diplomacy."²⁶

Some of these negotiations are used to conclude an increasingly larger number of treaties.²⁶ An even more extensive volume of negotiations, although less structured, takes place in the day-to-day decisionmaking process of the

