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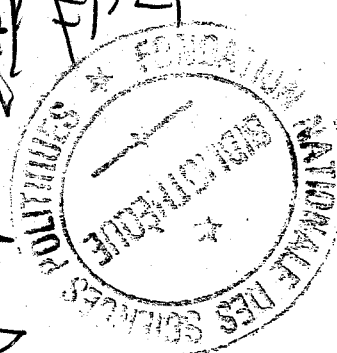
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Global Governance and Diplomacy

Worlds Apart?

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5. On this criticism, see Suzanne Nossel (2004) 'Foreign Policy: How America Can Get its Groove Back' (with commentary from Mitchell Cohen, Stanley Hoffmann, and Anne-Marie Slaughter), *Dissent* (Fall): 31-43; See also Joseph S. Nye, Jr. (2002) *The Paradox of American Power: Why The World's Superpower Can't Go It Alone*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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On the Manner of Practising the New Diplomacy

Jorge Heine

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"Politics in an information age 'may ultimately be about whose story wins'".

John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt¹

Introduction

What do diplomats do in a rapidly changing global environment?

On 25 April 1994, I arrived in Johannesburg at what was then still known as Jan Smuts International Airport, two days before the election of Nelson Mandela as President of South Africa. On the previous day, a Sunday, a bomb had exploded at the very same terminal I landed at, killing two people. I told myself how lucky I was that the Malaysian Airlines flight from Buenos Aires arrived on Mondays rather than on Sundays. Welcome to the new South Africa, I said. Perhaps those who warned me it was a mistake to accept a posting to an African country undergoing a violent transition, instead of a more comfortable European destination, had been right after all. ('South Africa? You are mad', a friend had told me. 'Why not Bosnia? You'd be safer there.')

A few months later, a Government of National Unity was fully in place, Nelson Mandela was President, F.W. de Klerk Deputy President and Mangosuthu Buthelezi Home Affairs Minister, and the country was on a roll. Part of the South African transition, of course, had to do with 'transformation', meaning putting new staff - black African, Indian, Coloured - in the ministries. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) too was undergoing some major changes. These changes affected all structures of the ministry, but those divisions in charge of regions, like Latin America, of less than central concern to South African foreign policy took a bit longer to be restructured than others, and it was not always clear who was in charge of what.²

Several colleagues of mine, very much in the traditional mould, who were trained to define their function rather narrowly as the art of negotiating

agreements between sovereign states and who found that for months on end there was no one in charge of Latin America at the MFA, were rather bewildered and frustrated. Eventually, some of them, in despair, left of their own volition. On my part, my foremost concern was not to negotiate any kind of agreement or to find out who my exact interlocutor at the MFA would be, but to educate myself about and contribute in a modest way to one of the emblematic processes of democratic change in the nineties. I went on to spend an extraordinarily stimulating five years there during the presidency of Nelson Mandela, in a period described by one of my colleagues as 'the springtime of our lives', but also one in which much happened in the relationship between Chile and South Africa.³

This perhaps overlong personal vignette illustrates the perspective I bring to bear on the question of how diplomats deal with a quickly changing environment - one in which established procedures and norms do not always apply, domestic governmental structures are in flux, and the distinction between internal and foreign affairs is increasingly blurred.

This particular perspective is that of a professional political scientist from Latin America, who has had the opportunity to spend close to five years as ambassador in South Africa during its transition to democracy, and now two-and-a-half years in India, at a time when that country's opening to the world - in the opinion of some, taking it by storm; in the expression of the local press, foreign relations experience of key countries in the global South that are undergoing what can only be described as cataclysmic changes, has given me a special window on the diplomatic practice of middle powers like Chile and how they can achieve their objectives in an increasingly competitive international system.⁵ Drawing on this experience and perspective, this chapter advances some propositions as to how we can best further our understanding of the challenges faced today by diplomats in general, but especially by those from middle powers among the developing nations of the global South.⁶

From the 'club' to the network model of diplomacy

'Globalisation' has become a bit of a buzzword. My own preference is instead to use 'globalism,' defined as 'a state of the world involving networks of interdependence at multicontinental distances' (Keohane and Nye, 2000: 2). Globalisation then is the process by which globalism becomes increasingly 'thicker'. In some ways, globalisation itself is not particularly new. Most observers, however, would agree with the proposition that 'globalism' today is 'faster, cheaper and deeper' than before, and that there is a qualitative, not just quantitative, difference in the flows of goods, services, capital, images, data and general information that today crisscross the planet, as well as in the effects of these flows on international governance and on governments themselves.

What are the implications of globalism for diplomacy and diplomatic practice?

Globalism poses a severe challenge to the nation-state, most dramatically expressed in the financial crises that have bedevilled countries - such as Russia, Brazil, Thailand, and Indonesia - as 'hot money' suddenly flows out of (mostly) emerging markets, often as quickly as it has come, wreaking economic havoc and, in the process, affecting the stability of many other economies, including some far removed from the one originating the crisis.⁸ The challenge, however, is not only economic. In the political sphere, globalisation, the increasing number of international interactions, and the rapidly diminishing cost of communications have led to a growing number of actors, both domestic and international - non-governmental organisations (NGOs), private companies, churches, business associations and the always critical 'foreign policy community' - which are making their presence felt and adding layers of complexity to government decision-making and legislation. In short, the model of an international system based purely on independent states has been replaced by one in which the nation-state is still a key component, but by no means the only one.

In the 'club model' of diplomacy, diplomats meet only with government officials, among themselves and with the occasional businessman or woman, and give an interview or speech here or there. By and large, however, they restrict themselves to fellow members of the club, with whom they also feel most comfortable, and focus their minds on 'negotiating agreements between sovereign states'.⁹

As can be seen in Table 16.1, in the world of the twenty-first century, the 'club model' of diplomacy has given way to a flatter, less hierarchical 'network model'¹⁰, in which diplomats engage a vastly larger number of players in the host country - including many who would never have thought of - setting foot in the rarified atmosphere of the salons and private clubs the diplomats of yesteryear used to frequent. More and more, diplomacy is becoming 'complexity management', to a degree earlier master practitioners like Cardinal Richelieu would not have imagined. Yet, although the environment in which diplomacy is exercised has changed drastically, there is a considerable 'lag' between these changes and the adaptive behaviour of

Table 16.1 Club versus network diplomacy

	Number of players	Structure	Form	Transparency	Main purpose
Club diplomacy	Few	Hierarchical	Mostly Written	Low	Sign Agreements
Network diplomacy	Many	Flatter	Written and Oral	High	Increase Bilateral Flows

many diplomats, missions and foreign ministries, which is part of the problem they face.

The advent of the network model has to do not only with increased democratisation and the growing number of relevant actors for policy-making – all of whom must be 'kept in the loop' for 'things to happen' – but also with the increased interpenetration of different societies.¹¹ As significant a dimension of globalisation as the economic is the social and cultural one. With modern communications and travel, societies can easily take up experiences from other countries and apply them in their own. Ideas travel fast in today's globalised world, but they do not do so by themselves – they need to be shepherded and guided, especially so in the case of small and middle powers.

Diplomats, in their 'labour in exile', as Callières (1963: 65)¹² put it, are ideally placed to communicate to their host societies the ideas, values and significant social and cultural projects that are under way in their home countries. In so doing, they bridge the gap between them, which can often be quite wide, and thus lay the foundation for cooperation across a wide array of issues.

Commentators often consider this new environment in which diplomats operate in terms of 'add-ons' to the traditional diplomatic functions of the old 'club diplomacy'. Far from being mere 'add-ons' to the tried and true ways of practising the diplomatic craft, I argue that the changes brought about by globalism and the forces that are reshaping the international system require a radically new approach.

One would think that the increases in international trade and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows, and the negotiation of many international treaties to facilitate these flows, would lead to a 'golden age of diplomacy' in which the roles of foreign ministries and diplomats would be recognised as vitally important, and translated into increased budgetary allocations and other, more symbolic expressions. That this has largely not occurred (in fact, the opposite may be true) leads me to argue that many of the difficulties diplomats and foreign ministries more generally face these days are due to a lack of understanding of these imperatives of change, as the world makes the transition to a much more dynamic and less hierarchical 'network diplomacy'. A traditional line of attack on the 'diplomatic establishment' – and the elaborate structure of resident missions, consulates, pomp, protocol and paraphernalia that goes with it – has been its supposed irrelevance in a world in which presidents and prime ministers meet at summits and instant communications are available.¹³ What purpose is served, so the reasoning goes, by having diplomats stationed at great expense in distant lands, when deals and agreements could be struck over the phone or by teleconferencing and the text sent anywhere in the world in fractions of a second?¹⁴

A second source of vulnerability has been the world's growing democratisation and push for transparency. Whereas a few decades ago foreign policy

and diplomacy were considered by many to be beyond the grasp of the mass public, this is no longer so. Television and 24-hour news channels have brought the world to one's living room, and citizens can see quite graphically the effects of their leaders' foreign policy decisions and how diplomats cope with them on the ground – even halfway across the world. That the electorate should therefore develop strong opinions on such matters is not surprising, and politicians must be ready to face the consequences. We are in a different world from the one in which the ordinary elector could be described as 'ignorant, lazy and forgetful regarding the international commitments for which he has assumed responsibility' (Nicolson, 1963: 48).

Transparency is also at play. The media and the public, quite legitimately, want to know what is happening 'behind Embassy windows', at least in terms of how (and if) their interests are being served and furthered, and the demand for diplomatic accountability, something which would have astounded Callières, is very much with us. This expresses itself especially in the many belt-tightening exercises to which foreign ministries and their missions abroad are subjected. Diplomats are thus no longer sheltered in the political give-and-take, at least not as much as they were in the past, and they must respond to these new demands.

And if these 'external' pressures often put foreign ministries and their missions abroad against the wall, much the same could be said about 'internal' ones, meaning developments inside government. The considerable increase in international flows of goods, services, capital, people, images and data across the world has meant that more and more ministries and government agencies are 'getting into the act' with their own 'Office of International Affairs', which conducts a parallel diplomacy of sorts. In some of the bigger countries, an Embassy might have more staff from other ministries than from the foreign ministry – staff over which the head of mission often has little effective control. Often, these other ministries have more resources than the foreign ministry, and many of the more specialised functions, such as trade negotiations, are handled by non-diplomatic experts.

All of this is leading to a progressive 'hollowing out' of traditional diplomatic duties, sometimes leaving the impression of diplomats as mere 'coordinators' of the substantive activities of other agencies – hardly an enviable position, but one that conforms to such cutting remarks as those of Peter Ustinov, some years ago, that 'a diplomat these days is nothing but a head-waiter who is allowed to sit down occasionally'.

Yet, these pressures must be put in perspective.

With some 216 member countries in FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) and 192 at the United Nations, nobody expects governments to have fully manned missions everywhere, and none does. Microstates, like some of the English-speaking Caribbean islands or those in the Pacific, have only a few missions, and in most countries the foreign ministry's budget is among the smallest of all ministries. In Chile, the

hard-currency yearly budget is around US\$140 million for some 70 embassies, which comes out at around US\$2 million per embassy.¹⁵ For a country that this year is projected to export US\$55 billion and that has attracted on average some US\$5-6 billion a year in FDI over the past 15 years, this would not seem to be an extravagant amount of money. It amounts to less than 0.7 per cent of the fiscal budget and 0.1 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

For all the talk about the inordinate sums foreign ministries spend abroad, with ever-increasing flows of international trade and FDI - when any given successful FDI project a foreign mission generates can mean, at one go, an investment worth ten times the ministry's total yearly budget - the notion that cutting spending at the foreign ministry from 0.7 per cent to 0.65 per cent of the fiscal budget is a productive exercise is doubtful, to put it mildly.

One reason foreign ministry budgets are under seemingly permanent attack is that they have not developed their constituencies or adapted to the new age of 'network diplomacy'. Ministries with much larger budgets - agriculture, health, education - have no such problem, for obvious reasons. Yet, in a world in which more and more jobs depend on international trade and FDI, it should not be too difficult for top foreign ministry authorities, and diplomats themselves, to be a bit more proactive in making clear to the informed public that international markets do not operate on autopilot, that opening markets for one's country's products is not done by an invisible hand, and that it is a tough competition out there to attract multinational corporations and to sign trade and tax agreements.

One obvious route is to generate direct links between missions and their home state's own regions and localities.¹⁶ This can show that diplomats on the ground actually help to generate jobs, something not always apparent to the average citizen. Headquarters will often not approve, as it will feel left 'out of the loop', but it would do well to consider such a strategy as part of its outreach activities. It is certainly needed to counter the strange (and in many ways perverse) foreign ministry cost-cutting syndrome. This is where the ministry with one of the smallest budgets - whose policies often get the best public opinion ratings and which plays a key role in opening export markets and attracting FDI - finds itself permanently operating on a shoestring, closing missions and cutting to the bone of its core activities.

In fact, in today's world, diplomacy, far from becoming redundant, is more important than ever, since there is so much more at stake in international engagement. And the diplomat, as an intermediary between his or her country and the host country - as a 'hinge' of sorts - is critically positioned to make the most of leveraging the opportunities that come his or her way or that are generated through his/her own wits. However, this demands a certain conception that is very different from the traditional view of diplomatic duties.

It requires understanding, above all, that it is no longer enough to count on the good will of the 'Prince', as ambassadors of yesterday were, to get things done and to keep your job. In today's world, to be effective, diplomats must practise 'network diplomacy'. In other words, they must build up extensive networks at home and abroad to 'deliver the goods.' Being on good terms with the head of state or government (whom many diplomats today hardly know anyway), the foreign minister or the ministry bureaucracy is no longer sufficient. Yet, as one who has been associated with and has taught at diplomatic academies - especially, but not only, in Latin America - for many years now, I know only too well that the skills required to build, to nurture and to reach out to those extensive networks are hardly among the priorities in curricula filled with courses on international law, protocol and similar subjects, which, however interesting in themselves, hardly speak to the main tasks at hand. Why?

The nature of the problem

The standard template of a diplomat provides the basis for what I have referred to as the 'club model' of diplomacy. There are, naturally, the prescribed rituals, from the elaborate presentation of credentials, through the courtesy calls on ministers and colleagues, all the way to the farewell dinners. But I am not referring here to form, important as it is. I am thinking of the day-to-day behaviour in a job that, at least at the head-of-mission level, is to a large degree self-defined, which is part of its attractiveness but also part of its difficulty.¹⁷

This template, originally forged in the Italian city-states of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries,¹⁸ was formalised subsequently largely by French and British diplomatic conceptions and practices. In a highly traditional profession - sometimes called the 'second oldest in the world' - this template provides a ready-made, off-the-shelf manual for many diplomats from African, Asian and Caribbean countries still in the first decades of independent nationhood and the initial stages of developing a foreign service. It is no coincidence that even a revolutionary state like the former Soviet Union saw fit to translate and publish an edition of Sir Harold Nicolson's book on diplomacy and to distribute it to its legations and embassies. Many diplomatic conventions and customs are still very useful and will stay with us for years and decades to come. But the real question is not about rituals and procedures, important as they may be and in whose absence nothing much of substance could be accomplished. Rather, it is, in today's post-Cold War world - when issues of human security are displacing more conventional ones of state security, when transnational politics and cross-border flows are as significant as state-to-state interactions or even more so - is it still useful to think of what diplomats do in the same old-fashioned way, though perhaps with a couple of 'add-ons'?

Table 16.2 Complexity management in network diplomacy

Levels
Local, Domestic, National, Bilateral, Regional, Global
Broad array of public policy issues
Governments, Private Firms, MNCs, NGOs, Trade Unions

Diplomats today are essentially tasked with helping their own countries navigate the perils of globalisation.¹⁹ To some degree, this is done by minutely, undertaken by foreign ministries and their missions abroad. Now, the diplomat's traditional skills of dealing, mostly *in camera*, with a relatively small group of government officials and elite decision-makers are quite different from those needed to engage, often in the open and under the glare of television lights, the many actors that have become relevant in international affairs today – from business associations to trade unions, from NGOs to think tanks, from political parties to farmers' groups and, of course, the media. And, as can be seen from Table 16.2, it is not only the vastly larger number of actors involved that adds complexity to the management of the new diplomacy, but also its much broader scope, and the many more policy levels it entails.²⁰

Yet – and herein lies a great paradox – many young diplomats from young countries today are being socialised into a certain way of practising diplomacy precisely at the time when it is becoming obsolete. Perversely, the standard diplomatic template becomes an aspirational goal for many foreign service trainees from the global South just when it is increasingly irrelevant. It is as if we were to put calligraphy and excellence in longhand writing at the very top of our high school priorities just when the IT revolution is hitting us. Elegant handwriting, as with many other expressions of human skill, has its place, but to put it front and centre among the things our youth should strive to master would strike most as a little *passé*. Much the same goes for the standard diplomatic template.

What do diplomats do?

For Nicolson, the tasks of a diplomat are *to represent, to inform and to negotiate*. The three have been radically altered by the course of events, with the first two demanding more proactive and discriminating stances, and the third somewhat receding in significance as more specialised officers take their seats at the negotiating tables.

The 1961 Vienna Convention, on the other hand, lists *representing, protecting, negotiating, ascertaining and promoting* as among 'the functions of a diplomatic mission'. They all have a somewhat routine, bureaucratic tinge to them that seems far removed from the different pace we have acquired as a

result of the Third Industrial Revolution, launched in 1980. Acknowledging these functions to be somewhat on the passive side, Kishan Rana provides an alternative list, which includes *promotion, outreach, feedback, management and servicing*.²¹ In an age when high-quality 'service to the public' is expected from government agencies, the latter cannot be ignored. 'Household chores', to which 'management' refers, are, naturally, another *sine qua non*.

Such functions, however, provide only a baseline. They are a necessary, but by no means sufficient, condition for fulfilling the diplomat's duties in today's world. Even the words *promotion* (largely associated with commercial purposes) and *outreach* (implying, in its blandness, the periodical sending of Embassy newsletters to various 'friends of the mission') fail to do justice to the centrality of the diplomatic task: the *projection* of one's country into the host nation.

It is all very well to say that diplomacy is 'the art of negotiating agreements between states'. With more than two hundred independent nation-states, many agreements are signed on a daily basis. But there is a limit to the number of agreements a country can sign. So, for diplomats, in many ways the most critical issue is the signing of agreements that are really worth it, with countries that have something to offer. Indeed, the real task is getting to the negotiations, let alone the signing. This takes some doing, and I am not sure that the traditional diplomatic toolkit has all the necessary instruments that small and middle powers need to get there.

In today's world, the only way this can be done is by *bridging the gap* between *home and host country* – that is, by attempting to bring the two societies closer. And for this, the development of extensive networks around key issue areas in both countries is critical. Otto von Bismarck's dictum that 'diplomacy is the art of gaining friends abroad' remains valid. What has changed is that the sheer number of friends that need to be gained has increased exponentially. To an important degree, this means taking one's country's case to the public at large, to engage civil society – which leads us to the role of think tanks.

On think tanks and program material

It is one thing to promote exports or one's country as an investment destination; it is quite another to have a 'story', and the moment diplomats limit themselves to the equivalent of used-car salespeople, they do a disservice to themselves and to their own countries.

And this is where research centres from 'back home' come in.²² Much has been written about NGOs and research centres as 'independent diplomatic actors';²³ here, however, I am more interested in their role as 'dependent diplomatic actors' – that is, in how they can be enlisted and deployed by diplomats. By definition, their business is to churn out information and analysis on the issues of the day. In doing so, they can become valuable

allies of diplomats. By bringing relevant material and, whenever possible, some of the researchers and analysts who are 'thinking one's country', as it were, diplomats can make a lot of difference in 'bridging societal distances' – one of the cardinal objectives of diplomacy these days.

The Big Powers use many such instruments, from Voice of America to the BBC and the British Council, from the Alliance Française to the Goethe-Institut and the Cervantes Institute. High-quality glossies like *Span*, distributed by US embassies, or *Asia-Pacific*, published by the Japanese Foreign Ministry, perform a similar role. Yet, most developing nations have nothing of the sort.

Yet, if much of this can be broadly construed as 'outreach' or 'public diplomacy', I am thinking of something else: relevant public policy experience.²⁴ Unlike the countries of the North, few countries in the developing world have sufficient resources for international cooperation programs, whether generous or miserly, to engage in what is sometimes referred to as 'South-South cooperation.' But what they do have is experience in many crucial public policy areas that can be valuable to other countries in the South – experience that, in some ways, is much more valuable than that of developed societies. The transfer of that experience, however, is by no means a mechanical or even straightforward process. It needs to be researched and systematised, findings backed up and so on – all tasks for which research centres and think tanks are the natural foci. For those tasks, they could be deployed in a much more energetic and proactive fashion than most foreign ministries in the developing world are willing or ready to do.

In Chile, we still have a long way to go in this matter, but we have made some progress. In the early nineties, a decision was made to get Chile involved in Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). We realised early on that it could not be done without the backup of some research centre. So, in the mid-nineties, the Fundación Chilena del Pacífico was created, funded by both the public and the private sectors. This small but highly effective think tank has played a key role in Chile's Asia-Pacific policy. Chile joined APEC in 1994, the second Latin American country (after Mexico) to do so. The Fundación has provided some basic research and dissemination capabilities at which foreign ministries are not very good, and it played a key role in the November 2004 APEC Summit, which Chile hosted and which was the most significant international conference ever held in Santiago.

In 2007, Chile had more trade with Asia than with North America or Europe – 40 per cent of Chile's exports went to Asia. Chile's top export was China, and three of Chile's top six export markets are in Asia (China, Japan and South Korea). A free trade agreement with South Korea came into effect in 2004, another with China was signed in November of 2005, and I signed a preferential trade agreement with India in March 2006 – all of them 'firsts' between a Latin American country and each of those Asian nations.²⁵

Diplomacy in media-driven societies

References to the way modern communications affect diplomacy are not new. The invention of the telegraph and later of the telephone were watershed events that, effectively, brought the foreign mission much closer to headquarters and eliminated much of the leeway that diplomats had in the era when instructions came by post. Hans Morgenthau, in the chapter on diplomacy in his classic 1948 book *Politics Among Nations*, also comments on it extensively. Telex, radio and newspapers, however, are one thing; the Internet and 24-hour news channels – of which there are 36 in India alone, in English, Hindi and Tamil, among other languages – are something else again. The rise of media moguls and empires, considered by some to be much more influential than governments themselves (since in many ways they can make or break governments) is another expression of this.²⁶

Yet, it is important not to get stuck on the means of communications themselves and their strictly technological dimension, significant as it may be. The hundreds of television channels available in any one country and internationally, the thousands of AM, FM, short- and long-wave radio stations, the thousands of newspapers – India publishes some 7000 daily, with a circulation of some 78 million copies, in a business that is growing at 7–8 per cent a year with no signs of slowing down – the millions of web sites and not least, the blogs, the latest fad in all this, all of these effectively make us operate in real time, as it were, in one gigantic 'Big Brother' reality show. But we must also realise that the communications revolution is driven by and needs 'content', something to fill the newspaper columns and all that empty air. Yet, most diplomats from small- and medium-sized powers do not know how to fill those needs.

Emblematic of the changing significance of communications for today's diplomacy was the recently strong if ultimately unsuccessful, candidacy of UN Under Secretary General for Communications Shashi Tharoor for the position of UN Secretary General. Tharoor ended up as the first runner up for the position in all the straw polls undertaken in the Security Council, yet only a few years ago it would have been considered preposterous for the communications person in any significant international organisation to be considered for the top job. Such people were often second-rate journalists who got their jobs through political connections or sleek public relations specialists who were great at managing events and producing press releases but who had nothing to say on substance. Yet Tharoor, an accomplished writer with a PhD in international relations who rose through the ranks to his present position, is precisely the sort of international civil servant who has made a brilliant career in multilateral diplomacy by understanding that, as important as *what* you are doing on the global scene is *to tell your story*. The many opinion pieces signed by Kofi Annan on various issues, from AIDS to the Football World Cup, that crowd the world's leading editorial

