

THE DYNAMICS
OF DIPLOMACY

Jean-Robert Leguey-Feilleux



2009

282579



Handwritten signatures and initials

01-21-2

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

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their programs; they need to be good diplomats to succeed in their executive functions; states give them their mandates, provide their funds, and review their performance. This implies *political* in addition to functional effectiveness. Thus we have here a special category of administrator-diplomat.²⁵ Some of these officers may not have diplomatic immunity, but their work still entails a large amount of diplomacy.

Transnational Agents

Transnational agents—a very different category—comprise, for example, representatives of NGOs and multinational corporations (MNC) working with foreign state officials and diplomats as well as international bureaucracies.²⁶ The bulk of international issues are of course handled by diplomatic agents working for nation-states and, in a growing number of significant cases, by international organization diplomats. Nevertheless, NGOs and MNCs exert a growing influence in international diplomacy and their representatives interact with state diplomats. A number of countries and international organizations in fact invite the participation of NGO representatives, and occasionally even MNC agents, in their diplomatic interaction and in the development of policy.²⁷ The NGO and MNC officers involved in those interactions are usually not characterized as diplomats. Nonetheless, they need diplomatic skill to engage in these international activities. Diplomats work with them and acknowledge the need to adjust to this new reality (see the case study on the diplomacy of the landmine treaty in Chapter 5). NGO and MNC agents play important roles in a growing number of international transactions, hence adding to the diversity of the diplomatic environment.

NGO and MNC agents are themselves extremely diverse in culture as well as in professional preparation. MNCs are usually represented by high-level business executives wielding the influence of the considerable resources of their firms. They are taken very seriously by their counterparts in the public sector. Some state officials, particularly in developing nations, are intimidated by their power.²⁸ NGO personnel are more diverse. Some of them have impressive credentials, having had long careers in public service. Others have come from the ranks of international NGOs and have learned from practical experience (as diplomats do). Professional diversity in contemporary diplomacy is thus extensive and likely to increase, adding to the complexity of the diplomatic field.

Greater Need for Specialized Skills

The diplomatic agenda now covers the full range of human endeavors (see Chapter 3). Diplomatic work thus requires greater specialized skill than be-

fore. The need for specialization is particularly visible in the work of international organizations and in the growing number of international conferences on highly specialized or technical topics such as global warming, arms control, population, crime prevention, and drug abuse.²⁹ More and more non-foreign service experts need to be included in national delegations, thus adding to the diversity of personnel assembled in these international gatherings.³⁰

This situation has been one of the causes for involving the full spectrum of government ministries in the conduct of foreign relations.³¹ For example, an agriculture ministry will provide a large contingent for a conference delegation to discuss hunger in East Africa; a health ministry will send delegates for a discussion of HIV/AIDS or the development of new pharmaceutical standards. The involvement of highly specialized personnel in international negotiations has an impact on the conduct of diplomacy. Specialists are likely to focus on the technical issues and to become impatient with the political complications that are frequently infused into the dialogue. They become impatient also with delegation members who have to take into account the political aspects of the situation.³²

Specialists have less opportunity to develop diplomatic or negotiating skills over long involvement in the international process, as their professional pursuits may keep them from participating regularly in international exchanges. Indeed, their professional pursuits have nothing to do with diplomacy and perhaps not even with international relations. Many enter the diplomatic process as advisers, although if a technical issue becomes an enduring feature of some international situation, some experts can be invited to serve for an indefinite period of time. This is the case, for example, in continuous arms control negotiations.³³ In these circumstances, experts can develop diplomatic skills. Still, some experts or specialized personnel may already have diplomatic skills of their own, perhaps because of their multicultural background, upbringing, or foreign experience, rather than as a result of their professional pursuits.

Evolving Diplomatic Culture

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Until fairly recently, diplomats were widely perceived as an elite group. The aristocracy in many countries were fond of the diplomatic profession and eager to serve. The ornate setting of diplomatic functions, elaborate ceremonies, and regular contacts with important figures contributed to the special aura of diplomacy.³⁴

In the eyes of many, diplomats are still an exclusive and elitist group.³⁵ An emphasis on secrecy in diplomatic work, certainly confirmed by the perpetual reluctance of diplomats to talk about their work, probably contributes to this impression. And in some countries, diplomats still come from the upper

classes. Current trends, however, indicate substantial changes in the diplomatic culture.³⁶ Elitism has been attacked in many democracies, and governments are under pressure to hire people from all walks of life. In these societies, foreign service posts are no longer the exclusive preserve of the upper class. Ironically, in the United States, budgetary constraints are such that in expensive capitals (for example London, Paris, and Rome), a US ambassador cannot run the embassy without independent means. What the State Department provides is simply inadequate. Hence these prestigious posts have often been given to better-endowed persons, which is not the best way of addressing the problem (see Box 6.1).³⁷

Many developing countries, of course, experience serious financial constraints in carrying out their diplomatic relations, and this affects their style of representation. Some embassies are less than glamorous—just a few rooms in a nondescript office building. Today, diplomatic work involves more humdrum, bureaucratic routine. Contemporary need for more rapid action in an age of fast communication fosters impatience with cumbersome pomp. Diplomatic jobs are less prestigious as presented by the mass media. Those who have to live on their foreign service salaries can ill afford an exclusive lifestyle. The greater importance of competence has also tended to open the ranks of the profession. Performance is more credible than lineage, and class considerations are becoming less important. Another factor of change is related to gender issues, and it operates at two levels: women are entering the diplomatic profession in greater numbers, and diplomatic wives are more insistent on their independence, both of which are substantially affecting the diplomatic profession.

Box 6.1 Defense Secretary Urges More Spending for US Diplomacy, November 2007

Defense secretary Robert M. Gates forcefully advocated a larger budget for the State Department. He called for "a dramatic increase in spending on the civilian instruments of national security—[specifically] diplomacy, strategic communications, and development." He stressed that the US government must improve its skills in the field of public diplomacy going so far as to say: "We are miserable at communicating to the rest of the world what we are about as a society and culture."

Source: *New York Times*, November 27, 2007, p. A6.

■ Gender Issues

The diplomatic profession has long been dominated by men, as a result of which a variety of traditions, rules of procedure, and protocol simply assume that diplomatic agents are men and provisions are made for the roles to be played by their wives.³⁸ For example, upon arrival, the wife of a new ambassador must visit the wives of the other ambassadors in the capital. Customary practices have a tendency to endure. Nevertheless, a good deal of change is now taking place, however unevenly. The diplomatic profession is in the process of adjusting to the changing role of women in modern society.

Women in the Diplomatic Profession

Some nations were ahead of the times. Myrtha Tavares-Liz de Grossman, minister-counselor of the permanent mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations, stated in a symposium organized at the UN and recorded especially for the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)³⁹ that since the birth of her country in 1844, women have played an important role in Dominican politics and diplomatic service. The delegate who signed the UN Charter in 1945 on behalf of the Dominican Republic was a woman. Interestingly, by 1974, Latin American countries had fifty-three women in their permanent missions at the UN, more than any other regional group.⁴⁰ In many countries, however, the conditions of service were initially draconian. Arundhati Ghose, first secretary of India's permanent mission to the United Nations, reported that when she was interviewed by the Indian foreign service eleven years earlier (1963–1964), she was informed that upon getting married, women officers had to submit their resignations. These resignations were not accepted immediately, but could become effective at any time if the Indian government felt that the officer's domestic life was interfering with the effective discharge of her duties. This rule was later rescinded.⁴¹

Elinor Constable, a US foreign service officer, married and was asked to resign, but she challenged the system in 1958. She questioned the legality of this practice and demanded to be shown the rule. There was no rule. The entire practice rested on tradition and there were no legal grounds for it. She left the service, but eventually came back and rose to become an ambassador and later an assistant secretary of state.⁴² (See also the case study on Melissa Wells at the end of this chapter.) In the US foreign service, no woman served as chief of a diplomatic mission until 1933, and no woman attained the rank of ambassador until 1949. Both women were noncareer officers. The first US foreign service career woman to attain ambassador rank was sent to Switzerland in 1953. Until 1984, forty-four women served as US ambassadors.⁴³ Of these, only 37 percent were career foreign service women. The pool of career candidates available for

