

Introduction

Diplomacy and the European Union

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The conduct of external policy within the framework of the European Union has generated considerable attention from both policy practitioners and academic observers. At the most fundamental level, this attention has focused on the nature of foreign policy as an area of activity and how this can best be conceptualized in the complex policy milieu represented by the EU. EU foreign policy is commonly portrayed as a multi-level phenomenon reflecting the interactions of national, subnational and EU levels of activity. To avoid the implication that there is a hierarchy of 'layers', it has been suggested that a 'multi-location' foreign policy might be more appropriate.¹ Beyond location, however, lies the issue of what 'foreign policy' means in a European context. On the one hand, EU foreign policy is presented as something qualitatively different from traditional and state-centred formulations in terms of agendas, actors, and modes of delivery. In this context, it is clear that the more delimited sphere of diplomacy is registering significant change, but has generated less attention than it might warrant. In part this is because of its association with state-oriented assumptions and the Westphalian patterns of international politics. With this in mind, the central aim of this special issue of *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* (*HJD*) is to provide an opportunity to reflect on the changing nature of diplomacy, what it signifies in the EU environment and how it is adapting to the demands placed upon it, both in terms of processes and the structures through which these are pursued. In this sense it reflects a longstanding debate concerning the role and significance of diplomacy in changing environments but one that has frequently failed to recognize its essential character from pre-state manifestations to those forms associated with the European states system.

Against this background, this issue of the *HJD* rests on several assumptions. The first is that rather than being eclipsed by a polycentric world order, diplomacy

¹ S. Keukeleire and J. MacNaughtan, *The Foreign Policy of the European Union* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 31-32.

remains a significant dimension of governance.² Second, and following from this, it is important to understand how diplomacy, both in terms of process and structure, is responding to change. Third, the EU — as a large-scale experiment in governance beyond the state — can be seen as a fascinating laboratory for studying the evolution and adaptation of diplomacy. This is not to say that it is the only significant environment within which lessons can be learned, for member state governments are required to adapt their diplomatic strategies and resources to demands emanating from forces within and without the Union. But the multi-level and multi-layered character of the EU constitutes a range of arenas for diplomatic activity that are interconnected in complex ways.³ Consequently, the articles in this special issue provide varying perspectives on the nature of diplomacy in the EU context, who is engaged in it, the structures through which it might be pursued and its developing strategies.

While the EU might be viewed as a 'post-diplomatic' order disconnected from diplomacy, at the same time it has been portrayed as a 'negotiated order' that is reliant on one of its characteristic mechanisms.⁴ As has been frequently pointed out, the predisposition to view diplomacy as a phenomenon that is coterminous with the emergence of the state system is based on misapprehensions regarding diplomacy's origins and character. Thus Cohen and others have demonstrated that it has a far longer pedigree, evolving in terms of methods utilized in different cultures.⁵ Sharp has argued that diplomacy should be seen as a resource that is not contingent on its identification with the state system but as 'responses to a common problem of living separately and wanting to do so, while having to conduct relations with others'.⁶ Constantinou argues that this offers the best defence of diplomacy against the decline school:

[...] a better way of confronting those who herald the end of diplomacy in an era of multiple global actors, mass media and satellite communication is to outflank them theoretically, by suggesting that

² A.F. Cooper, B. Hocking and W. Maley (eds.), *Global Governance and Diplomacy: Worlds Apart?* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

³ See, for example, B. Soetendorp, *Foreign Policy in the European Union: Theory, History and Practice* (London: Longman, 1999); I. Manners and R. Whitman, 'Introduction', in I. Manners and R. Whitman (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of European Union Member States* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); B. Tonra and T. Christiansen, *Rethinking European Union Foreign Policy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); M.E. Smith, *Europe's Foreign and Security Policy: The Institutionalization of Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Keukeleire and MacNaughtan, *The Foreign Policy of the European Union*.

⁴ M. Smith, 'The EU as an International Actor', in J. Richardson (ed.), *European Union: Power and Policy-Making* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 247-262.

⁵ R. Cohen, 'Reflections on the New Global Diplomacy: Statecraft 2500 BC to 2000 AD', in J. Melissen (ed.), *Innovation in Diplomatic Practice* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

⁶ P. Sharp, 'For Diplomacy: Representation and the Study of International Relations', *International Studies Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1999, p. 51.

diplomacy may not simply consist of that interstate, intersovereign, and interambassadorial side that they see as an anachronism.⁷

This has a clear resonance in the EU context, where Commission delegations are required to adapt to the demands of a 'stateless' diplomacy,⁸ but it also poses interesting questions about the relevance of diplomacy to the EU in terms of its internal processes.

It is not our purpose here to rehearse these arguments, but simply to note that much of the discussion of EU external policy processes fails to acknowledge the essential characteristics of diplomacy as an institution of international order and its adaptation to changing environments. One perspective on such change is reflected in Adler-Nissen's article, in which she employs the term 'late sovereign diplomacy' to suggest an increased overlap of political and legal authorities, the replacement of territorial separateness with functional cooperation and the gradual emergence of a single European voice in specific contexts.

Underpinning current debates regarding the forms and functions of diplomacy are to be found an interrelated set of issues that provide a background for exploring the character of European diplomacy. Central to these is the relationship between foreign policy and diplomacy that is referred to above — foreign policy constituting the substance of an actor's international policy, with diplomacy one of the instruments through which this can be effected and the procedures through which actors communicate in systematic ways. This is more than a semantic point, for it is one thing to argue that there is a developing EU foreign and security policy in terms of outputs and quite another to suggest that this is accompanied by a distinctive style and mode of delivery. Keukeleire's article forges this link in a direct form, suggesting that a distinctive EU foreign policy orientation — namely 'structural' foreign policy — produces a form of 'structural' diplomacy in which actors seek to use the processes of diplomatic communication 'to influence or shape sustainable political, legal, socio-economic, security and mental structures on various relevant levels'. This, it is argued, marks a shift from the traditional focus of diplomacy on the management of relationships.

One significant aspect of this development is the EU's growing involvement in multilateral diplomacy, a feature analysed in Jørgensen's article. Here, by focusing on five dimensions of multilateralism in seven policy areas, the growth of EU diplomatic engagement is highlighted, as well as the differing forms that it assumes.

The general theme of the changing content and mode of delivery in EU foreign policy is pursued by Hardacre and Smith in the context of the emergence of what

⁷ C. Constantinou, 'On the Way to Diplomacy', *Borderlines*, vol. 7 (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. xv.

⁸ M. Bruter, 'Diplomacy without a State: The External Delegations of the European Commission', *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1999, p. 193.

they designate as 'complex interregionalism'. They elaborate on the tensions related to the current realities of the EU's multi-level diplomatic engagement with other world regions and the European Commission's strategy of forging 'pure interregional' relations with these regions.

Inseparably linked to these issues are questions regarding the methods through which diplomacy is deployed. A familiar feature of this debate is the distinction between bilateral and multilateral forms of diplomacy, with the suggestion that it is the latter, or variants thereof, that are characteristic of EU diplomacy. However, not only is this problematic in the sense that it fails to capture the complexities of modern diplomacy, it also discounts the possible significance of bilateralism in multilateral environments, not least the EU. Furthermore, there is a linked tendency to assume that diplomatic processes (such as bilateralism) are inseparably linked to specific institutional forms (namely the maintenance of a network of bilateral embassies.)

Additionally, significant boundary questions arise: where does diplomacy occur? There is a strong case to be made that even in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Europe, the traditional distinction pointed to by Nicolson between the formulation of international policy and its implementation was not sustained in practice.⁹ But certainly, the growing linkage of policy arenas, as exemplified in the EU, and the multifaceted points of contact between member state governments¹⁰ have significantly changed the ways in which negotiation is conducted. As in other policy environments, this poses important questions as to the management and sequencing of policy processes and where, precisely, diplomacy occurs. It is made far more complex, however, by the associated erosion of the distinction between foreign and domestic arenas. Despite the frequency with which this phenomenon is noted, it is significant here inasmuch as another cardinal principle of the 'traditional' diplomatic milieu is challenged — namely the separation of diplomacy and politics. As is often noted, especially by trade diplomats, as much time is spent nowadays in the 'two-level games' linking domestic and international diplomacy as in negotiating in international forums.¹¹ In such an environment, it is no longer evident what constitutes 'high politics', subject to the specific rules of foreign policy-making and diplomacy, and what constitutes 'domestic' affairs that are subject to rules of democratic policy-making and legitimacy. As Claes argues in his study of Norway's membership in the European Economic Area, EU governance can be conceptualized as 'political organization in the field

⁹ H. Nicolson, *Diplomacy* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1939), p. 12.

¹⁰ For discussions of the changing patterns of multi-level and multi-actor policy-making in the EU, see S. Bartolini, *Restructuring Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); J.P. Olsen, *Europe in Search of Political Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); and B. Kohler-Koch, 'Interdependent European Governance', in B. Kohler-Koch (ed.), *Linking EU and National Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹¹ P.H. Evans, H.K. Jacobson and R. Putnam (eds), *Double-Edged Diplomacy: International Bargaining and Domestic Politics* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1993).

of tension between democracy and diplomacy'.¹² This 'domestication' of diplomacy brings about increased democratic expectations in relation to its conduct.¹³ Moreover, the traditional mainstay of diplomats' work — the promotion of national interests — has been subject to various forms of socialization, fostering new kinds of roles and expectations for member state diplomats — issues explored in the articles by Adler-Nissen and Spence. Examples include the work of permanent representatives in the COREPER who need to balance between their roles as promoters of national interest and 'law-makers' of the Union,¹⁴ or the 'double-hatted' roles of diplomats representing the rotating EU Presidency.¹⁵

Associated with these dimensions of diplomacy in the EU milieu are those relating to agency and 'actorness'. Here, traditional state-centred approaches take a narrow view, arguing, in essence, that diplomacy is conducted by national diplomats and that the institutions of bilateral diplomacy not only survive but perform much the same functions in similar ways. However, this does not accord with much of the analysis coming from practitioners and outside observers — or, indeed, from the numerous reviews generated by national foreign services as to what they do and with whom they should engage in doing it. The diffusion that has occurred within an expanding foreign policy community is exemplified in the EU, and it is a commonplace observation that officials from member states' sectoral ministries, as opposed to professional diplomats, now comprise the greater element in the staffing of the Permanent Representations in Brussels.

A related set of issues is the development of EU-level foreign affairs administrative capacities. This includes structures and processes of external diplomatic representation in the duality of a) the High Representative for CFSP, his Policy Secretariat, and the EU Special Representatives appointed to crisis regions; and b) the Commission's Directorate-Generals in charge of external relations and the external service of the Commission.¹⁶ The putative European External Action Service (EEAS) would be a step towards enhancing the structural and procedural integration of resources, although, as Simon Duke points out in his article,

¹² D.H. Claes, 'EØS-avtalen: mellom diplomati og demokrati' [The EEA Agreement: Between Diplomacy and Democracy], *Internasjonal Politikk*, vol. 61, no. 3, 2003, pp. 275-302, at p. 277 (authors' translation).

¹³ H. Sjørusen, 'Integration without Democracy? Three Conceptions of European Security Policy in Transformation', RECON Online Working Paper, no. 2007/19 (Oslo: ARENA, 2007).

¹⁴ J.W. De Zwaan, *The Permanent Representatives Committee: Its Role in European Decision-Making* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1995); M. Westlake and D. Galloway, *The Council of the European Union* (London: John Harper Publishing, 2004); J. Lewis: 'The Janus Face of Brussels: Socialization and Everyday Decision-Making in the European Union', *International Organization*, vol. 59, no. 4, 2005, pp. 937-971.

¹⁵ J. Lewis, 'Double-Hatting by Design: The EU Presidency as a Font for Supranational Entrepreneurship', in U. Sverdrup and J. Trondal (eds), *The Organizational Dimension of Politics* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2008), pp. 261-283.

¹⁶ Obviously, the EU is represented externally by the rotating Presidency and/or the Troika, as well as, in certain situations, by individual member states and/or their groupings. Here, however, we focus on the structures of diplomatic representation developing at the level of EU-level institutions.

a number of practical and organizational matters regarding its organization and operation are still to be resolved. The key systemic issue that relates to the formation of the EU-level foreign affairs administration is how it will deal with the ambiguities relating to its status as a set of institutional arrangements geared towards diplomatic representation of the EU as a non-state entity in a 'Westphalian' diplomatic order. This order — with its standards, norms and procedures — is maintained by peer-pressure within the global organizational field of foreign ministries fostering isomorphic adoption of structures and procedures by newly formed diplomatic apparatuses.¹⁷

The external service of the European Community and its delegations illustrates this point. Since the 1970s — and largely unnoticed by the member states' governments — they have been gradually gaining recognition for their diplomatic status from host governments, even though the EC is not a state. As one EC official argued:

Legally speaking, it was an act of piracy. [...] Our argument was that the EC was a 'partial' state. The Japanese were the first ones to accept that somewhat revolutionary thesis [...] in fact we created an international legal custom: the European Community as a diplomatic actor could be considered as a state.¹⁸

Consequently, as Bruter points out, the EC's delegations and external service continue to function with a somewhat ambiguous status even though they have been acquiring the characteristics of a traditional diplomatic service.¹⁹

These developments have generated differing responses. For instance, former British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw observed in a statement to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee in 2004:

[...] you find all sorts of odd bods running these sorts of odd offices. [...] There are a lot of these people abroad and it is not entirely clear what they are doing. [...] All sorts of people are referred to as ambassadors. I meet them every day. What's astonishing is the less important the country, the more people like this they seem to have. I call everybody Excellency, which doesn't cause any problem.²⁰

However, others point out that it is precisely the non-diplomatic culture (or 'oddness' in Straw's terms) of EU diplomats that has enabled them to function effec-

¹⁷ J. Bátorá, 'Does the European Union Transform the Institution of Diplomacy?', *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2005, pp. 44-66; and J. Bátorá, *Foreign Ministries and the Information Revolution: Going Virtual?* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

¹⁸ V. Dimier and M. McGeever, 'Diplomats without a Flag: The Institutionalization of the Delegations of the Commission in African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2006, pp. 483-505.

¹⁹ Bruter, 'Diplomacy without a State'.

²⁰ 'Straw Pokes Fun at EU "Odd Bods"', *The Guardian*, 26 May 2004, available online at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2004/may/26/uk.eu>.

tively in managing external trade negotiations,²¹ administering aid provision in developing countries,²² and in conducting transformational diplomacy in accession countries.²³ The key issue, then, is how the EU-level foreign affairs administration will develop. On the one hand, the quest for legitimacy in the global organizational field of diplomacy will prompt deeper socialization into the standards of Westphalian diplomacy. In recent years, the training of EC external service personnel has been aimed at the development of 'a culture of a diplomatic service', which would be in line with the standards and culture of national foreign services.²⁴ This has been further supported by the infusion of traditional diplomatic culture through secondment of national diplomats into various structures of EU-level foreign affairs administration. On the other hand, this might well deprive the EC external service (and the putative EEAS) of the innovative edge that its systemic 'oddness' currently provides. The EU-level foreign affairs administration might therefore find it beneficial to continue seeking out niche areas in the conduct of EU diplomacy, which are complementary to the capacities and focus of member states' diplomatic services. In this way, a symbiotic relationship might develop between the continued relevance of national foreign affairs administrations of member states and the innovative EU policy-oriented scope of EU-level foreign affairs administration.

Overall, the articles in this special issue of *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* speak to three interrelated sets of issues. The first is the most general: namely, how is diplomacy responding to the challenges confronting it in the twenty-first century? These challenges come from several directions, ranging from the global to the regional to the local, and transcend many traditional assumptions regarding the boundaries demarcating diplomatic environments. The second layer of issues relates to the traditional diplomatic structures maintained by member states' governments. Whatever the future for the emergence of a European diplomatic system, it will, at least for the foreseeable future, exist alongside those at the national level. Contrary to some views, national diplomatic systems are themselves locked into processes of transformational change, the precise outcomes of which are unclear. The third layer, to which the following articles speak most directly, relates, of course, to the future of the EU as a diplomatic actor, its policy objectives, strategies and the structures that are most appropriate to their attainment. Each of these three layers are intertwined, and the papers in this issue of the *HJD* provide

²¹ C. Woll, 'The Road to External Representation: The European Commission's Activism in International Air Transport', *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2006, pp. 52-69.

²² Dimier and McGeever, 'Diplomats without a Flag'.

²³ D. Spence, 'The Commission's External Service', in D. Spence (ed.), *The European Commission* (London: John Harper, 2006), pp. 396-425.

²⁴ S.W. Duke, 'Preparing for European Diplomacy?', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 40, no. 5, 2002, pp. 849-870.

valuable insights for those with a general interest in the present and future state of diplomacy, as well as its present and future state in the EU.

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