



**The Hague Journal of Diplomacy Conference
Crossroads of Diplomacy**

Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Clingendael

21-22 June 2007

Representing Diplomacy and Diplomatic Representation

Presentation notes

Brian Hocking

Professor of International Relations
and
Director of the Centre for the Study of International Governance
Loughborough University
UK

B.L.Hocking@lboro.ac.uk

Representing Diplomacy and Diplomatic Representation

Brian Hocking

Introduction

As has been frequently noted by students and practitioners of diplomacy, representation lies at its heart and yet is a difficult concept to articulate given the range of meanings attached to it and the uncertainties to which its practice gives rise. Alongside basic definitional questions exist fundamental practical issues such as what is being represented and to whom. But representation, in itself possessing a symbolic quality in its conception and execution, also serves as symbolic of differing approaches to understanding diplomacy as an activity – that is the ‘representation’ of diplomacy in the narratives concerning its evolution and nature. Thus, frequently confused (and confusing) debates about the relative importance of diplomacy in the contemporary world order have concerned the character, value and relevance of diplomatic representation.

At their most elementary level, these have followed a pattern which asserts the irrelevance or continuing importance of residential bilateral diplomacy, taking this as a yardstick by which the utility of diplomacy itself can be gauged. Such discussions have been conducted as a relatively invisible subset (as far as the general academic study of International Relations is concerned) of debates concerning the changing character of the international system and interpretations of what this means in terms of the role of the state and its agents. However, as analyses of the debates over globalization and the concept of global governance reveals, there has been a significant shift of emphasis in this respect. Thus we have seen a movement away from earlier arguments which predicated the decline of the state to the projection of a more complex regulatory environment in which a diverse range of entities interact in a ‘polycentric’ world order. Here, governments as significant actors have a major role to play and as a consequence, the way in which the agencies of the state operate remains a matter of major importance.

Against this background, I shall suggest that the structures of diplomacy are important in terms of their function as articulators of states’ international policy goals and as components in the evolving web of global governance but also as indicators of how the state is responding to and managing change. It is in this light that I shall seek to review how (national diplomatic systems) – that is the machinery that each state develops to pursue its international policy goals – are responding to the pressures on them from their international and domestic environments. In terms of changing modalities of representation, I shall suggest that this has to be seen in the evolution of patterns of interaction between the NDS and the global diplomatic network (GDN) of which they are a constituent element. Representative structures and processes operate at the boundaries of these two systems and are reflective of changes in both environments.

Analysing the way in which diplomatic representation is adapting to a transformational world order can be approached through the lenses of two basic concerns of the NDS: access and presence. The first of these, access, relates to the objectives of representation, namely access to key centres of decision making power and nodes of influence. Presence refers to the modalities and operation of representation. The evolution of patterns of diplomatic representation has involved a dialogue between these two concerns. Traditionally, access has been linked to presence to the extent that the two were once seen as coterminous. Access demanded presence in a physical sense. A more complex set of relationships between the NDS and the GDN means that this link, whilst by no means broken, is being tested in various ways. Thus in such densely configured policy milieus as the EU, the linkage is being placed under intense scrutiny. Consequently, EU member state foreign ministries are considering the logic of bilateral representation within the EU alongside the role of missions to third countries and their functional relationship with Commission Delegations. My presentation will consider the current agenda for change within foreign ministries and their foreign services and how it relates to the basic concerns of these two dimensions of representation.

Outline of presentation

1. Diplomacy and the role of representation

- Defining representation.
- Representative networks as links between two systems: the national diplomatic system (NDS) and the global diplomatic network (GDN).
- Change in modes and functions of representation is a 'dialogue' between the two systems.

2. A 'polycentric' world order and the diffusion of political, economic and social governance.

- The expansion of representation: global, regional and local representative networks embracing governments – at all jurisdictional levels; international organisations; NGOs; business.

3. The challenge for diplomacy at both levels: NDS and GDN.

- Who is engaged in diplomacy?
- Where should it be conducted?
- Nodes of influence and the quest for access:
 - o geographical (eg Washington, London, Geneva)
 - o functional (international agencies).

4. Consequences:

- GDN: multiplicity of foci (mixed geographical and functional foci).
- NDS: growing complexity: enhanced concern with control and coordination.

5. The goals of representation: continuity and change.

- Two key dimensions: access and presence.
 - o **Access:** the objectives of representation: access to key actors, networks and nodes of influence
 - o **Presence:** how representation is undertaken. Historically, there have been two modes of representation: mission and resident.

Access and presence could once be regarded as virtually synchronous. In other words, access demanded presence. In the 21st century this is less true. Modes of access are more diffuse as are the targets of access, objectives of representation have become more complex and information technology has lessened the linkage between access and presence. The broad changes along each dimension are indicated in **table 1**.

Consequences

- Increasingly diffuse nature of representation as the NDS and the GDN demand responses from each other and a redefinition of relationships, roles and rules.
- Growing links between representation to domestic and overseas constituencies.
- Redefining the role of the diplomat in terms of environments and policy concerns: `managers`; `CEOs`, `facilitators` - `boundary spanners`.
- Enhanced importance diplomatic networks as the property of the `national space` – hence concern with `whole of government` and the relations between home departments and posts.
- Challenges to cultures:
 - The MFA, its culture and place in the NDS.
 - The operation of diplomats in the GDN: eg defining relations with other `stakeholders`, especially NGOs in complex negotiating environments.
 - New operational principles: developing public diplomacy strategies at post level;

Table 1 Changing modes of representation and the national diplomatic system

		Access		Presence	
		Objectives, targets & environment of representation		Modes and operation of representation	
		C19th	C21st	C19th	C21st
Environment	Limited focus and scope Relatively simply structured nodes of influence	Expanded geographical focus; multiple and linked agendas Nodes of influence more complex. Multiple actors	Limited presence	Extended presence. Capacity and capability issues	
Focus	Focus on government to government representation	Focus on governments and multiple networks	Bilateral representation; mission diplomacy; limited multilateral diplomacy	Bilateral; plurilateral; multilateral. Mixed residential and mission. Refocusing to reflect new power centres, demographic and economic change. (eg US 'Transformational Diplomacy')	
Agenda	Political and economic	Global, regional and local agendas Expanding security agendas: Terrorism; environmental, health Growing access for non-state actors Domestication of international policy agenda (and vice versa)	Consolidation of MFAs and foreign services	Continual redefinition of structures in terms of functional and geographical organisation. Geographical input sought from posts. Home based ambassadors Functional ambassadors Growth of 'policy transfer' role Crisis management structures	

Composition of the national diplomatic system	Usually (but not always) dominated by the MFA.	Fragmentation of the NDS. MFA roles redefined.	Dominance of foreign service officers at posts.	Growing line department presence. Emphasis on coordination at posts. Problems in 'tasking' the network Some civil society presence at posts
Customer base	Government and commercial	Government. Greater emphasis on commercial work. Other government Departments Public. (Diasporas and tourism)	Foreign service supported by often separate consular services.	Links with business enhanced (exchanges) Redefining consular function and enhanced consular capacity. 'Mainstreaming' public diplomacy and integrating it into profile of activities Development of 'stakeholder relations'.
Organisation	Distinctive organisational norms and structures for managing foreign policy are consolidated	Norms and structures reflect new public management ethos.	Loose links between MFA and posts Professionalisation. Diplomats begin to receive salaries & conditions of service defined.	Structured links established through public service agreements, strategic objectives and performance management targets. 'Benchmarking' Resource issues Emphasis on training
Communications technology	Limited channels of access between MFA improving with electric telegraph	Greatly enhanced communication with ICT developments. Domestic and international arenas become a single information network with real time distribution of messages via media and Internet	Cipher messages/diplomatic bag and telegram.	Utilisation of e-mail; internet and use of web pages to reach publics at home and overseas.