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# Everyday Diplomacy: Mission, Spectacle and the Remaking of Diplomatic Culture

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## Chapter 1

# Everyday Diplomacy: Mission, Spectacle and the Remaking of Diplomatic Culture

Costas M. Constantinou

Images, narratives and practices of diplomacy occur on a daily basis. The everydayness and ordinariness of diplomacy, however, is not readily acknowledged – at least within the discipline of International Relations (IR). In matters diplomatic, during the last century, the discipline predominantly concentrated on the activities of the official agents of states as infused by the aristocratic and bureaucratic tradition of the European international society (Satow 1922, Nicolson 1939, Kissinger 1994). Even among critical IR scholars considering the ‘future of diplomacy’ more recently, diplomacy is only reserved for the work of diplomats representing sovereign territorial units. It is not meant for the representatives of non-territorial units (e.g. NGOs, humanitarian agencies, religious missions, and so on) whose activities only ‘resemble’ those of state diplomats and consequently, according to this view, only catachrestically bear the formal title *diplomacy* (Sending, Pouliot and Neumann 2011).

This chapter takes issue with this restricted account of diplomacy. It concurs that the development of modern diplomatic thought and practice is primarily linked to the development of the international relations of the modern territorial state. But it also recognizes that the modern territorial state constitutes itself partly by monopolizing, through the practice of diplomacy, the international representation of a specific territory and the block negotiation of human interests linked to that territory (Constantinou and

Der Derian 2010: 8-13, Black 2010: 56-57). Such monopolization reserves diplomacy as an exclusivity of sovereignty, whilst the diplomatic world, currently and diachronically, has been far richer and more complex than interstate diplomatic culture allows for. This chapter argues that diplomacy can be broadly understood to emerge *whenever someone successfully claims to represent and negotiate for a territory or a group of people or a cause, or successfully claims to mediate between others engaging in such representations and negotiations*. In the quotidian, diplomacy ceases to be a professional skill or special technique and thus captures a wider spectrum of social activities as outlined below.

For Richard Sennett (2012), *everyday diplomacy* involves the use of indirection and dialogic conversation in ordinary life. It deploys civility and cultural codes developed, at least in the context of Europe, during the late Renaissance and early Reformation by courtiers and professional diplomats. Notwithstanding that ‘civility on the modern street looks little like the courtesy so elaborately deployed in old embassies and salons’, Sennett argues that ‘the organizing principles of secular ritual have endured’ (2012: 221). Sennett’s thesis is interesting and useful but I depart from his notion of ‘everyday diplomacy’ as merely a means of conflict management or fostering cooperation, ‘one way people deal with people they don’t understand, can’t relate to or are in conflict with’ (Sennett 2012: 221). I fully agree with his insightful suggestions and examples on how ‘everyday diplomacy’ occurs and is operationalized through codes of indirection, listening skills, tact, coded gestures, staged performances, and empathy, yet I see everyday diplomacy as covering a wider spectrum beyond collaborative togetherness. Everyday diplomacy, as diplomacy in general, can sometimes be simply a means of getting one’s way, presenting the case for something or promoting the interests of someone, influencing or forcing others to do what they would not otherwise do. In short, there is a more dubious side to diplomacy, which is linked to self-promotion, deceit and coercion, and which can certainly feed into the everyday.

With these in mind, one challenge in this chapter is to revise the standard high-born portrayal of diplomacy as a special craft meant for the chosen few and detached from the everyday. Detached ambassadorships of this kind are condescending and not in sync with

‘where diplomacy is at’, where meaningful, effective and affective representations/negotiations/mediations are taking place. As argued elsewhere, the shifting location of diplomacy is an ontological puzzle that practitioners and theorists of diplomacy can only ignore at considerable risk with respect to what kind of knowledge they need to acquire in order to understand the setting they operate in and engage diplomatically (Constantinou 2013). Indeed it makes quite a difference in terms of action or inaction if a diplomat thinks s/he is a representative or a mediator or both, i.e. ‘on the side’ of someone or a particular cause, or ‘in between’ actors and conflicting positions, or charged to do a mixture of both.

Throughout history, if we are not restricted to looking at it from a state-centric perspective, diplomacy has been practised by different actors and via different media over different issues. Beyond the work of authorized representatives sent to negotiate in the name of collective groups – often depicted as a precursor of state diplomatic practice – it could be located in the work of missionaries delivering new religions and building institutions to minister foreign communities; explorers encountering foreign lands and having to deal with foreign peoples and customs; merchants promoting ideas and values while exchanging commodities; mediators and intermediaries bringing together and seeking to conciliate rival parties; and so on and so forth (Numelin 1950). Around such interactions, ‘high’, ‘low’ and alternative cultures of diplomacy have developed, tasked with mediating and regulating otherness, formulating and renegotiating identity while retaining marks of distinction and degrees of separateness (Der Derian 1987, Constantinou 1996, Sharp 2009).

Changes in diplomatic practice over the last decades have been especially dramatic and difficult to ignore. The portrayal of diplomacy as a static immemorial institution that is tightly and exclusively associated with sovereignty and statecraft is increasingly untenable in theory as well as in practice. Beyond professional diplomats, movie stars, athletes, scientists, intellectuals, entrepreneurs, and others are tasked to serve as officially or media appointed *ambassadors* of nations, communities and a long list of worthy causes (Cooper 2008). Their ability to impart knowledge and support action through

spectacle and/or expertise is the distinctive feature of their mission. The proliferation of such missions means that diplomacy has acquired many prepositions and gone in many different directions with regard to scholarly investigations: ‘public’, ‘digital’, ‘indigenous’, ‘human’, ‘corporate’, ‘ecological’, ‘activist’, ‘military’, ‘guerilla’, ‘multi-stakeholder’, ‘celebrity’, ‘scientific’, ‘educational’, ‘sportive’, ‘integrative’, ‘transformational’, ‘quantum’ and so on.

This plurality of diplomacy in public discourse and scholarly work has been persuasively and comprehensively examined (Cornago 2013). At the same time, national diplomatic services are changing, striving to integrate the output of different stakeholders (Hocking et al. 2012) and discovering the outreach advantages of everyday diplomacy as they seek to partner with and coopt the activities of NGOs and civilians (Constantinou and Opondo, 2014). What requires further investigation is how diplomacy is increasingly and deliberately intertwined with a wide range of new cultural forms and exchanges (Gienow-Hecht and Donfried 2010) that allow it to be practised from anywhere. This is not to say that anything and everything is diplomacy, but rather that any actor and any encounter with *otherness* can be potentially diplomatized. Any mission in the name of a territory, a group or a cause can become a diplomatic mission. At stake therefore is what it means in specific contexts to adopt the diplomatic identity; i.e. what the adoption of diplomatic identity entails in terms of seeking to promote a specific issue as a *diplomatic* problem or the interests of a particular group as pertaining to those of a *diplomatic* interlocutor, and whose concerns are consequently open to negotiation rather than the mere exercise of domestic governance and authority (Constantinou and Der Derian 2010, Opondo 2012).

While reflecting on these developments with regard to the practice of diplomacy, this chapter seeks to re-consider the notion of diplomatic culture, which in the IR discipline has been predominantly viewed as the stock of ideas, values and skills possessed by the professional diplomatic corps (Bull 1977). It tries to rethink diplomatic culture in the context of the plural channels and cultural resources employed to service and enact contemporary diplomacy. One consequence of the rise of diverse everyday diplomacies, as elaborated below, is that *diplomatic culture* can no longer be credibly understood

independently of *world culture* and *cultural diplomacy*. It is simply impossible to disentangle the various ways and means of ‘professional’ diplomats from the plethora of ‘glocal’ cultures and subcultures that develop around missions promoting territories, groups and causes. Put differently, the professional and the quotidian are intertwined in ways that render claims about a singular diplomatic culture untenable.

To that extent we should not be merely concerned with the transformation of the diplomatic culture of foreign ministries and their officials, and their now frequent partnering with non-state actors and civil society to deliver ‘transformational diplomacy’ or more ‘effective’ implementation of foreign policy in ‘new’ ways and in ‘new’ places.<sup>1</sup> We ought to be concerned with understanding the wider spectrum of practices beyond the ‘high’ culture of the official diplomatic service – looking at cultures of diplomacy that are not merely linguistic and effective, but visual and affective.

If we are living in the age of the *homo globalis*, how should we rethink diplomatic culture vis-à-vis global culture and cultural diplomacy? How does this redraw the traditional picture of diplomacy we are accustomed to? In responding to these questions, we need to delve beyond the exclusivist culture of the diplomatic corps and into the spectacles and performances that emerge within and around a wide range of missions, historical as well as contemporary.

### **Rethinking Diplomatic Culture**

Within International Relations, the notion of diplomatic culture was first given prominence in the work of Hedley Bull, and specifically in his development of the concept of the international society. Bull defined diplomatic culture restrictively as ‘the common stock of ideas and values possessed by official representatives of states’ (1977: 316). Note in this definition the notion of *possession* – meaning that some people seem to have it and some do not. In other words, he understands culture as a personal trait, rather than as something that collectively emerges out of social encounters. Note also that those

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<sup>1</sup> For the lecture of former US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice on ‘Transformational

who have it are officials and agents of power; i.e. diplomatic culture is not extended to non-official or subaltern agents that may have developed interesting ways of diplomatizing, practical mechanisms of dealing with others of equal or different status. Diplomatic culture for Bull (1977: 317) is nothing less than ‘elite culture’.

Bull followed on from Marin Wight (1979: 113), who approached ‘the diplomatic system [as] the master-institution of international relations’. He thus claimed that the ‘diplomatic profession itself’ has been ‘a custodian of the idea of international society’ – itself viewed as the society of states rather than global civil society (*ibid.*). Specifically, the ‘willingness’ of Western as well as non-Western states ‘to embrace often strange and archaic diplomatic procedures that arose in Europe in another age’ was, for Bull, less suggestive of cultural imperialism or the obsessive continuation of an anachronistic tradition, and more indicative of the ‘symbolic role’ diplomacy plays in ‘the universal acceptance of the idea of international society’ (1977: 183)

From this perspective, the body of professional diplomats was idealized as they were seen to constitute the guardians of the common interests, rules and institutions that were formally acknowledged and more or less adhered to in building durable international relationships within an anarchical international society. That is to say, the aristocratic, cross-national culture of the diplomatic corps – the practices of this club of noble initiates – was positively valorized and indeed their members romanticized as worldly-wise overseers, whose cultural practices nourish a permanent universalist aspiration. They were seen not only as followers of *raison d'état* but of *raison de système*; having a permanent universalist aspiration which endures in the midst of rival national interests and diverse and sometimes hostile national cultures (Watson 1982, Sharp and Wiseman 2007)

It is important to note, in this respect, how such claims to universalist aspiration change when one considers world culture as opposed to diplomatic culture. Let me quote in some detail from the work of R.J. Vincent, which followed from Hedley Bull’s conceptualization:

*Diplomatic culture is the culture derived from the aristocratic cosmopolitanism of dynastic Europe which provides custom, precedent and manners for the rather precious society of diplomatists. These diplomatic niceties are social manifestations of a more substantial culture underlying the society of states – the international culture whose values find formal expression in the treatises of international law, and whose character is revealed in quasi-legal principles like the balance of power... My starting-point for thinking about world culture is where international culture stops. International culture is a minimalist culture of procedure rather than substance, of agreed ways of disagreeing, of cuius regio eius religio [whose region, his religion]. Its cardinal principles of sovereignty and non-intervention unite international society around the doctrine that independence is the value which above all require respect. They seek to exclude states from each other's areas of competence. By world culture, I intend something more inclusive, which unites across international frontiers rather than relying on a principle of division, and which can be said to have in it substance as well as mere rules of procedure.'* (Vincent 1975; my italics)

So with Vincent we have a clear division, in fact a severance, of diplomatic culture from world culture. Diplomatic culture is inextricably linked to international culture, which underlies the society of states, the formal diplomatic relations between sovereign political units. Diplomatic culture is minimalist, elitist and exclusivist; i.e. it is not for everyone but for the chosen few. Its common stock of ideas and values have a very specific purpose and function; they are meant to support the 'rules of the game', reduce tension, service channels of communication and so keep the engine room of intergovernmental relations in good working condition. From this angle, diplomatic culture features a procedural, functional universalism – not substantial universalism.

By contrast, for Vincent, world culture is maximalist, plebian and can underpin the cosmopolitan world society of the multitude. Potentially we can all partake in it, though in practice its cosmopolitanism might still be exclusive, limited to life in highly modern urban centres.<sup>2</sup> It supports trends to think of people beyond borders, efforts to change the

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<sup>2</sup> Note also that the early thinkers of the English School of IR were writing before the advent of the globalization debates in the 1990s, so they were using the term 'world culture' rather than the term 'global culture' which is used nowadays to underpin claims about new ways of doing things under conditions of planetary mass media and digital interconnectedness.



world and enhance the development of a single world society in ways that are not top-down or governmentally initiated. In the globalized, highly mediated world we live in, world culture celebrates, promotes and circulates common ideas, aspirations and feelings across divisions and differences of all sorts.

In short, for these IR theorists, diplomatic culture is specifically counterpoised to world culture and supports the good functioning of the universal system of states via which national aspirations may be pursued (some of which may indeed entail universalist aspirations). If Vincent is right when he says that world culture begins when international / diplomatic culture ends, then diplomatic culture is supposed to lack substantial universalism or the genuine enhancement of a non-elitist cosmopolitanism, a cosmopolitanism from below, political action from the multitude in support of a certain cause or global commonwealth (Hard and Negri 2005, 2009)

Vincent draws, in my view, a rather sharp and absolute distinction between diplomatic culture and world culture. As with plural diplomacy, we should acknowledge the existence of more than one diplomatic culture – clearly at least one with more tendencies towards procedural universalism but also others with more tendencies towards substantial universalism? As well as acknowledging the minimalist, technical ways and means of professional state diplomats in an exclusivist diplomatic culture, we also need to appreciate the historical presence of maximalist cultures of diplomacy, mediating more broadly and regulating relations between a wider range of ‘Selves’ and ‘Others’, including the promotion of universalist causes and ideologies that seek to change the world.

In developing this point, I build on the work of scholars like James Der Derian and Paul Sharp, who have themselves engaged in interesting ways the IR English School notion of diplomatic culture. Der Derian asserts that it is not interstate culture and interdependence but rather ‘difference, deviance, and otherness which constitute and reveal the need for a diplomatic culture’ (1987: 32). Specifically, the need for diplomatic culture arises when ideas and values between societies differ and to that extent diplomatic culture expressly

or discreetly validates these differences, which are not only national. Identifying the existence of a diplomatic culture thus reproduces the socio-political boundaries of a range of collective identities – be it different territorial units, civilized and barbaric groups, cosmopolitan and native groups – out of which diplomatic culture itself emerges as the necessary third space for mediating alienation. In other words, diplomatic culture negotiates these boundaries but also facilitates their everyday crossing. Thus Der Derian reinterprets ‘diplomatic culture as the symbolic mediation of estrangement’ (1996: 92).

Paul Sharp (2004), further underscores the redrawing of boundaries in which diplomatic culture constantly engages. In certain contexts, diplomatic culture draws not just on separate and alienated units but on united or integrated cross-border entities. Indeed this is currently most prominent within the EU diplomatic culture and how member states strategize and negotiate the domestic and the foreign in rather different ways than in a non-EU context (Cross 2007, Adler-Nissen 2008). Sharp also calls for the strengthening of ‘the autonomous component of diplomatic culture’ as it develops within ‘encounter cultures’ (2004: 371), in interactions with strangers of all sorts. Specifically, the culture that develops out of gift-exchange, caravan trade routes, inter-dynastic marriage, white European – indigenous communications in America and so on.

This kind of diplomatic culture, Sharp argues, ‘operates as a weak force when compared to the far stronger national and statist component in which individual diplomats grow and mature, the priorities of which they are committed to serve’ (2004: 375). The extent to which it will provide a meaningful antidote to national or statist culture very much depends on the conditions and circumstances of the encounter. It is somewhat differently put by Sending (2011), who rightly valorizes the ‘strength of weak relations’, which develop around practical forms and routines of diplomatic collaboration in the midst of rivalry. This renders diplomacy as a ‘thin’ rather than a ‘thick’ culture, i.e. a culture that is not supported by ideological affinity and commitment or substantive value sharing.

Leaving aside the exclusionary state thesis in some writings, what I take from these critical diplomatic thinkers and seek to build upon is the possibility of the less visible and

more ephemeral diplomatic cultures that ought to be given recognition – that is, beyond the interstate diplomatic culture that developed out of the European international society. To be sure, state-centered diplomatic culture has for some authors, widespread international acceptance - functional, civilizing and socially adaptive capacities that are rightly underscored and should not be ignored (Wiseman 2005, Sofer 2013) and can be extended beyond state practice (Mastenbroek 1999). Yet there is also a price to be paid in terms of understanding and praxis, if we ignore the so-called ‘low’ diplomatic cultures that arise in the daily non-official encounters with a wide range of ‘significant’ or ‘less significant’ others.

### **Diplomacy, Mission, Spectacle**

How should we then reconfigure the dominant conception of diplomacy in a way that will allow us to be more inclusive of ‘high’ as well as ‘low’ and alternative diplomatic cultures? Renaissance diplomatic culture reflected the amalgamation of power shifts: specifically, the structural changes that came about with the rise of secular humanism, the advent of the territorial state, the challenges of the Reformation, and the progressive decay of medieval political authority and its established forms of knowledge.<sup>3</sup> It came about in a world kindled by the consciousness of the ‘discovery’ of the ‘new world’ and the ‘first globalization’. The early modern diplomatic culture, in turn, supported the Renaissance world. It fully displayed a humanist, knowledge-savvy, and reflexive attitude with respect to striving to know others beyond religious universalism and secular dilettantism, critically engaging the question of the human and of political authority (Constantinou 2013). In other words, it was a diplomatic culture at the forefront of a wider social and political culture, posing anew the question of authority, sovereignty, solidarity and knowledge of other worlds. A diplomatic culture about which Max Weber, in ‘Politics as a Vocation’, was unambiguous in his admiration, describing diplomacy as a ‘*consciously cultivated art*’ practised by trained initiates (Weber 1991: 89).

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<sup>3</sup> Note, for example, the curtain that covers the crucifix, symbolizing the end of an era, the demise of religious politics and the advent of a new scene, of secular politics as well as the items in the mathematical, astronomical, religious and cultural items at the centre, including the lute with a broken string possibly depicting religious disharmony in Europe. See further Foister, Roy and Wyld 1997, North 2004

Yet this is not the only story, nor the only culture of diplomacy. Indeed, there are other narratives and cultures that are rendered invisible, when we remain captive admirers of this aristocratic portrait of diplomacy and the elitist cosmopolitanism that it portrays. We miss, for example, all the pre-modern cultures of diplomacy that included a multiplicity of actors and agents, diverse cultures that were defeated by progressively restricting the *ius legationis* – the right to send and receive embassies – only to sovereign territorial units. That is to say, we miss practices of diplomacy before the monopolization of the *ius legationis* by sovereignty, when embassies were also commonly sent by local rulers, cities, monasteries, universities, and so on, to the extent that for medieval diplomatic theorists, like Durantis, a diplomat ‘was simply anyone sent by another’ (Queller 1967). If we remain captives of this aristocratic picture, we furthermore miss the indigenous cultures of diplomacy that were treated as uncivilized and inferior, and consequently pushed aside in the expansion of the European society of states; cultures of diplomacy that even today strive to be recognized yet remain unacknowledged or end up being exoticized or mimicking state practice (Beier 2009, Opondo 2010, McConnell, Moreau and Dittmer 2012).

To move from dominant to alternative, from professional to quotidian, from ‘high’ to ‘low’ diplomatic cultures, it will be necessary to appreciate the entanglements of diplomacy with missionary and theatrical practices, and the embassies of salvation and affect these practices establish.

### *Missionary Action: Embassies of Salvation*

In the western Christian imaginary, missionary culture was initiated by and modelled out of St Paul, the so-called ‘Apostle to the Nations’. To be sure, Paul was not the only apostle, and by various accounts not the most important one. There were twelve disciples who enjoyed apostleship by being members of the chosen inner circle of Jesus, and there were various debates over their hierarchy that reflected power contests within the Church: e.g. Peter the favourite of Jesus whose primacy is reflected in the authority of the Church

of Rome that he established, John the most kind and trustworthy of the disciples, Thomas who evangelized eastwards and was influenced by Asiatic spirituality if his non-canonical gospel is to be believed. Beyond the twelve, there were a number of others who comprised an outer circle and were viewed in various historical periods and within non-church circles as the true apostles of Jesus; e.g. the mysterious James, brother of Jesus, who appears as the leader of the Church of Jerusalem in the *Acts*; or Mary Magdalene, recently popularized in Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*; or Judas the Iscariot, who was dropped by the church, but if the apocryphal gospel that bears his name is to be believed the only one who understood the true meaning of Christianity. Nonetheless, it is Paul's insistence for the need to internationalize the church, to bring the 'good message' beyond the Judaic community and to engage in foreign missions to the gentile nations that elevated him as Christian missionary par excellence (Constantinou 2006).

Paul's missionary activity to save the entire humanity from sin and moral decadence is replicated in contemporary missions to save strangers from a range of problematic states of being, addressing both spiritual and material need. Many 'official' and 'non-official' missions are legitimated via a similar Paulian logic. Note that when Paul proclaims himself an 'ambassador of Christ' (interestingly branded an apostle and an ambassador without ever meeting Jesus in person or being instructed by him to deliver the gospel) he enacts a key moment in the history of diplomatic thought. Paul's embassy risked being considered bogus, yet it proved to be a novelty of diplomatic accreditation. As he put it to the Corinthians when they challenged his credentials, in a paradoxical way it was they – the Corinthians – who already dispatched him on this embassy. It was their spiritual condition that had called for and ultimately legitimated his mission. As Paul states in his Epistle:

'Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts' (2 Corinthians 3:1-3.)

Anyone who comes in the name of a ‘good cause’ such as spiritual regeneration can, according to this logic, be an ambassador: there is no need to be expressly or physically dispatched by someone or the Lord. Such an ambassador’s credentials are given in reverse, written in advance by the receivers of the ‘good message’ (Constantinou 2006).

In other words, the mission is accredited and judged not (only) by the official credentials carried and instructions given, but by how useful is the conduct, and how good is the work in mediating the spiritual alienation and material needs of others.<sup>4</sup> The point of revisiting the Paulian mission is not to romanticize the missionary call but to render it meaningful within the context of an alternative culture of diplomacy. For, on the one hand, Paul’s mission is very contemporary in light of both the established and fringe religious missions in the global south. On the other hand, this missionary culture increasingly characterizes secular humanitarian missions of the kind that celebrity diplomats undertake: missions that sometimes work in parallel to state diplomacy but may also work contrary to governmental goals and agendas. Angelina Jolie’s role in the film *Beyond Borders* is a case in point, a role she invariably undertakes in real life as well: a freelance mission to ‘save strangers’ that has to negotiate its way on the ground against domestic and international political agendas. Such missions are legitimated in the name of an important cause, rather than traditionally authorized by a state or intergovernmental organization, though they may also hold credentials from the latter.<sup>5</sup>

In sum, missionary work (at least as originally encapsulated by Paul, not as subsequently developed by the Church or UN agencies) is a ‘low’ diplomatic culture, a post-aristocratic culture. Paul specifically stressed that he was an apostle who lived of his own means; an ‘ambassador of Christ in chains’ (Ephesians 6:20) in order to distinguish himself from the esteemed status, comfortable lifestyle and immunity enjoyed by the Roman legatus at the time. His diplomacy was not a profession or a civic endowment but

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<sup>4</sup> It is also important to acknowledge that the Self-Other nexus can take different forms across time and such missions may also become an accomplice to imperialism; i.e. how out of the Paulian missions an ecclesiastical state and a Respublica Christiana were established.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0294357>

a lived experience. It stresses the point of opening up diplomatic culture to incorporate the religious and secular descendants of such missions.

*Theatrical Action: Embassies of Affect*

By underscoring theatrical action in diplomacy we can appreciate how the representation of self/other and the mediation of otherness increasingly entail public performative and affective dimensions. I refer here to, inter alia, the so-called celebrity diplomacy, the UN Good Will Ambassadorships and celebrity activism of the likes of Bob Geldof, George Clooney and a wide range of film and pop stars, athletes, fashion models, royalties, etc. Crucially by endorsing ‘the mission’ these celebrities also induce their fans and followers to get interested and potentially to get emotionally and actively involved. Embassies of affect have certainly been shown to work on face-to-face encounters (Holmes 2013) but the ‘familiar face’ can also be affective from a distance.

What supports these embassies of affect is the elevation and valorization of their work within the contemporary ‘society of the spectacle’ (to use Guy Debord’s felicitous term). If, according to Debord, the confluence of mass media and capitalism means that social life has indeed been supplanted by its representation, then the mediation of nations, peoples, collectivities and individuals takes place less through experiential encounters but mainly or exclusively through the mediation of representative images and appearances. For Debord, spectacle seems to have supplanted all forms of diplomatic representation – the use in the following extract is metaphorical but the point and ultimate conclusion quite powerful.

The specialist role played by the spectacle is that for a spokesman for all other activities, a sort of diplomatic representative of hierarchical society at its own court, and the source of the only discourse which that society allows itself to hear. (Debord 1994: section 23)

Official diplomatic discourse thus becomes subservient to the ‘diplomacy’ of the spectacle. Even if one merely focuses on the radical changes in state diplomacy over the last couple of decades, Debord’s point cannot be ignored. Official diplomacy is

increasingly concerned not just with the oral and textual craft traditionally associated with its exercise, but with visual culture and in doing so increasingly going digital, combining words and images to reach and feed wider audiences (Dizard 2001).

The major challenge nowadays, as evidenced by the rise of public diplomacy, is how to stage events, circulate images, and credibly perform and mediate the affectivity of things like, friendship, solidarity, danger, security, emergency, and so on, and doing so beyond the diplomatic elite. In other words beyond the practising professionals, to shape and circulate meaning among all the stakeholders and the multitude that observe the global stage and react and respond to the bombardment of imagery.

It is in this context that the diplomacy-theatre nexus can be understood: in terms not only of using words and promoting ideas, but of using symbols and images that have a mediatory potential, expressing and glossing ideas and values that are valorized in local or global culture. This is a diachronic, not a modern or postmodern phenomenon, though, to be sure, it is exacerbated in the globalized, hyper-mediated world in which we live. Consider, for example, the recent Kony2012 campaign, which started through a documentary that was posted on YouTube and which got over 80 million hits in the first 3 weeks of launching (Karlin and Matthew 2012). How do we account for this kind of diplomatic culture which mobilizes teenagers and puts pressure on politicians and celebrities that, in turn, ‘put pressure’ on the US government and the African Union to take action, to send troops to an otherwise ‘insignificant’ region? How do we account for this world-making, the manufacturing of global ‘interest’ that makes the otherwise ‘indifferent’ matter, while also promoting – in ways that can also be problematic – not just procedural but substantial universalism and a global missionary spirit?

If Alain Badiou (1997) is right that the foundation of universalism is epitomized in the Paulian salvific mission – specifically how the receiving of the gospel makes our differences indifferent, and creates a new solidarity and collective identity in the midst of ethnic, racial and cultural differences – then one could view celebrity-theatrical ambassadorship as the secular, pop version of that mission. It is visually and virtually



mediated salvation, disseminating brands and iconic images which make differences ‘indifferent’, which unite through ‘infotainment’ and ‘slackactivism’ (Der Derian 2001). Again this might not be the ‘high’ diplomatic culture that English School theorists had in mind, but it is the diplomatic culture in which ordinary people participate. It is a diplomatic culture that symbolically mediates certain forms of estrangement while of course producing new alienations: for example highly visible and professional representatives of good causes vis-à-vis subaltern actors unable to ‘properly’ represent themselves.

### **Images of Everyday Ambassadorship**

What would it mean then to be an ambassador in this age of global culture, amidst embassies of salvation and affect? Traditionally the modern ambassadorial function had to do with joining the diplomatic service, serving one’s country abroad, and learning about foreign peoples and cultures so as to build, regulate and sustain interstate relationships. Nowadays, one can equally and proudly become an everyday ambassador, link to the global civil society, deal with a range of social problems and aspire to change the world – a common trend, it seems, among the new generation of Millennials. The way of achieving this is extensively explained in a new platform initiated by blogger and activist Kate Otto, who has invited concerned individuals to become everyday ambassadors and thus seeking to ‘make a difference by connecting in a disconnected world.’<sup>6</sup> The ‘reality’ appears to be nothing less than the elevation of self-declared global citizens into self-declared diplomats, the repositioning of intercultural relations into diplomatic ones, as they stem from the predicaments of globalized life:

‘In a world of limitless digital networks, we are more connected than ever before. But does the very nature of our hyper-connected lifestyle threaten our ability to interact authentically with one another? *Everyday Ambassador* tackles this crucial question at a time when the idea of global citizenship has become the new currency of “cool”, evidenced by an explosion of new social enterprises and young people traveling abroad. Yet, despite our good intentions, we often allow our constant digital immersion to foster impatient, distracted behavior and,

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<sup>6</sup> <http://everydayambassador.org>

ultimately, hinder our efforts to serve others.’<sup>7</sup>

What is especially interesting and pertinent for our purposes are the claims being made in the name of discharging everyday embassies of this kind. For a start, it appears that it is not enough for one to be a global citizen, but rather to become a thoughtful ambassador in order to ‘interact authentically’, ‘serve others’ and ‘create connections that last in a digitally connected world’. Everyday ambassadors, we are informed, aspire to ‘foster deeper “connectedness” through values such as empathy, patience, commitment and humility.’<sup>8</sup> They provide ‘international public service’ and seek to ‘change the world across continents and sectors’.

Examples of good practice of everyday ambassadorships include: leading young women’s mentorship programs; defending immigrant and LGBT rights globally; designing innovative community spaces to promote public health; engaging communities affected by civil war in trauma therapy; supporting sustainable economic development through fair-trade fashion; creating content for social causes; improving family engagement in education, and so on.<sup>9</sup> In a nutshell, one can become an everyday ambassador for any kind of good cause – engage in a secular Paulian mission not necessarily sent by someone but legitimated through reverse accreditation, accredited among those who receive the ‘benefits’ of the mission. Equally one can be discredited as an everyday ambassador if the proclaimed ‘benefits’ are rejected or challenged by the beneficiaries of the mission. The latter is something that does not commonly register in the celebratory narratives of ‘everyday embassy’ and consequently requires media vigilance and investigative journalism.

Beyond ability to invent one’s diplomatic mission, major technological advances mean that everyday ambassadors can also choose their own stage and medium of action. They can travel around the globe and make their advocacy and representations felt ‘on the

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<sup>7</sup> <http://everydayambassador.org/the-book>

<sup>8</sup> <http://everydayambassador.org/the-book>

<sup>9</sup> See book preview video at YouTube  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWDZycxfb08>

ground'. Or, indeed, entangle the virtual and the physical, as everyday embassies mediatize and digitize 'the ground', making their mission felt in and through the internet and the various social media. This is nowadays more feasible given how the classic distinction between hot and cold media – the former saturated with information and the latter leaving a margin for audience participation (McLuhan 1994) – is increasingly overtaken by the new interactive media that empower individuals to produce, disseminate and respond to visual and textual information. Thus one can become an everyday ambassador on any kind of stage and through any kind of medium – making representations, sustaining audience attention and inducing action through the contemporary society of the spectacle.

One recent striking example of everyday missionary diplomacy as entangled with theatrics and visual affectivity concerns the case of the abduction of hundreds of schoolgirls by Boko Haram in northern Nigeria. The mothers of the abducted girls voiced their demand for national and international action via placards displaying the emotive motto 'Bring Back Our Girls!', a message globally disseminated through the mass media and social networks. This mission was symbolically embraced by a range of other actors, by holding placards with the same message: human rights and women's NGOs, ordinary people and celebrities, ranging from the Pakistani schoolgirl-activist Malala who survived an assassination attempt by the Taliban for pursuing her right to education to Michele Obama who held the same placard inside the White House.

What is especially interesting in this case is the ease with which anyone can join the mission to save the Nigerian girls. Parallel to the 'official' deliberations between the Nigerian government, the US, and the African Union, what has been more successful in terms of public diplomacy was the visual portrayal of solidarity through the holding of the placards, which was of course used, misused and coopted by strikingly different actors.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, this image was also used transgressively, as in the case of Michele Obama holding a placard with an altered message: 'My Husband Kills Kids with

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<sup>10</sup> A simple search through 'Google images' illustrates the plethora of uses and actors that for genuine or disingenuous reasons got involved in 'the mission'.

Drones'. In other words, given its iconicity it was employed to register the affective presence of a different issue, equally dramatic and emotive: that of drone strikes and their violations of international humanitarian law. In short, it supported other missions of salvation through visual narrative and reframing.

Another interesting illustration of the confluence but also the tension between official and everyday ambassadorship concerns the work of former UK ambassador to Uzbekistan, Craig Murray, who was removed from his post and forced to resign in February 2005. Being an outspoken critic of the Uzbek regime, Murray used his ambassadorial position in ways that both the British and Uzbek governments considered 'problematic' and 'undiplomatic'. This focused on his direct critique and confrontational style in supporting human rights activists in Uzbekistan and generally his cavalier attitude with regard to established protocol and diplomatic propriety.

Specifically, Ambassador Murray fully immersed himself in local culture, as his autobiographical *Murder in Samarkand: A British Ambassador's Controversial Defiance of Tyranny in the War on Terror* describes in detail. He mixed with and supported civil society organizations, joined their protests, made controversial speeches in their support but also joined unseemly nightclubs and, while married, fell in love with a local woman. He thus appears to have developed what in diplomatic language is derogatorily described as *localitis*, i.e. going native and being seen to represent primarily the interests of the locals rather than those of his own government. Disputing these criticisms, Murray argued that he adopted 'a new style of ambassadorship, one that is more down to earth and less stuffy'.<sup>11</sup> Or as he more graphically put it: 'You don't have to be a pompous old fart to be an ambassador.'<sup>12</sup>

In practice, Murray revalorized *localitis*, arguing that he was a better representative of the official, publicly pronounced British foreign policy as well as much better in fulfilling a public diplomatic role through his support for basic freedoms and human rights

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2004/jul/15/foreignpolicy.uk>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2004/jul/15/foreignpolicy.uk>

demanded by Uzbek civil society. He claimed, persuasively I think, that he was viewed by the Uzbek people as a more honest representative of a liberal democratic country, and thus as a diplomat who acted beyond crude national interests in the face of human rights violations and suffering. He was a Western ambassador that did not hypocritically and comfortably proclaim universal norms and ethical principles but someone who acted upon his word and defended these principles in practice.

Murray's case epitomizes the different diplomatic cultures as well as the embassies of salvation and affect outlined above. Murray seems to have realized that while being an official ambassador in Uzbekistan he was in effect in more than one mission, divided between the façade of state protocol and intergovernmental communication, and the ethical predicament of promoting human rights within an oppressive regime. This clash of missions was not visible in British foreign policy as publicly presented, but was experienced on the ground by the head of mission. The culture of the official diplomatic corps was clearly limiting for his attempts to address this other aspect of his diplomatic mission – it only offered a stage for occasional symbolic speeches and token gestures of moral support. By contrast, the 'lower' diplomatic culture of civil society engagement and direct involvement was for him crucial in order to practically and effectively support human rights and bring about real change in Uzbekistan.

Given the substantial – not merely procedural – universalist aspirations of Murray's mission, he found the restricted stage of making ambassadorial representations behind closed doors to be wholly inadequate. Interestingly, following his resignation from the British Foreign Office, he continued the other 'missions' through a web portal, as well as delivering public lectures and making interventions, and even wrote and participated in a theatrical play. Currently, he openly presents himself as a 'vauntie cybernat, former ambassador and human rights activist'<sup>13</sup>, keeping him in sync with the alternative diplomatic culture he always practised, though he now freely engages in the everyday ambassadorship he once struggled to legitimate among his peers.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.craigmurray.org.uk>

## **Towards an Open Diplomatic Culture**

The need for a more inclusive diplomacy in all its facets (Bjola and Kornprobst 2012) and a more open and dynamic diplomatic culture recognize and seek to redress diplomatic exclusion and embassies that remain unacknowledged or go amiss. That is to say, they recognize that building relationships and finding ways to live together with others we value, may in the process sideline the embassies and representations of *less* significant others, something that this needs to be rectified. The diplomatization of the subaltern is increasingly accepted in scholarly works that underscore the ‘multitrack’, ‘parallel’, ‘informal’, ‘privatizing’ or ‘integrative’ tendencies of modern diplomacies. Their multiple ways of doing things and their cultures of protest, representation and identity reconstruction need to be translated and accounted for diplomatically. That certainly does not mean that the pluralization and pedestrianization of diplomacy is a panacea or always works positively with regard to the complex problems that we face on a local or global scale. It could mean, for example, a negotiation mania where a plurality of actors seeks not only to negotiate but to renegotiate anything and everything. Complex and protracted Somali negotiations that involve the endless proliferation of stakeholders – clans, subclans, ‘minority clans’, and subsubclans ad infinitum – have been a case in point (Harper 2012). It could result in a spiral of endless negotiation, multiple embassies of salvation and affect that trump comprehensive settlements and support ‘the privatization of settlement’ within regimes of exception (Constantinou 2012).

Still, the exclusivity of intergovernmental diplomatic culture grossly distorts the reality of plural actors, issues and methods in diplomacy. As shown above, certain embassies that unsettle the public transcript, like that of the official Anglo-Uzbek relations, have been suppressed, even though they may take place by the designated representative of state and head of mission who in turn deemed them necessary in order to adequately implement the pronounced foreign policy of his government. Other everyday embassies that emerge out

of issues of public concern are recognized by the media, take the diplomatic initiative and can be coopted by official diplomacy, where expedient. The perception that diplomatic culture is a closed one and antithetical to world culture, does not allow for an appreciation of the struggles for diplomatic recognition but also of the manifold missions and actors, the multiple advocacies and mediations that register, demand, and seek to bring about global change.

So, in conclusion, in rethinking diplomatic culture this is what I consider to be at stake: remembering the state-centric colonization of diplomatic space and indeed the homogenization of diplomatic culture that has come about by the European society of states as outlined above. To be sure, suppression and exclusion of other diplomacies and everyday embassies will always happen. But remembering this exclusion brings about self-awareness, and lays down the conditions of possibility for a better diplomacy.

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