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Theoretical Perspectives in Diplomacy

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Diplomatic Concepts and Theories

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Diplomacy has been theorized long before the development of the subfield of diplomatic theory that we currently associate with the academic discipline of International Relations (IR). Within modern academia, theorizing is commonly perceived as a systematization of thinking, an extensive elaboration of ideas and principles governing or seeking to explain a particular phenomenon. Early theorizing, however, is often fragmentary and unsystematic, as are certain strands of contemporary theorizing, specifically strands that follow what Paul Feyerabend (1975) called an 'anarchistic theory of knowledge'. All approaches can provide valuable perspectives, insights and modes of inquiry. That is why, in this chapter, we look at various disciplinarian attempts that seek to offer more or less complete explanatory narratives of diplomacy, but also others that go beyond the so-called 'grand theory' approaches (Skinner 1990) and underscore the contributions of fragmentary and unsystematic thought. To that extent, we do not limit our account to established 'traditions of speculation' about diplomacy whose historical absence might lead one to conclude that there is 'a kind of recalcitrance' of diplomacy to be theorized about, or indeed that there is no international and, hence in Wight's framing, no diplomatic theory at all (Wight 1966). By contrast, we suggest that there is a lot of diplomatic theory around, including when writers do not name what they do as 'diplomatic theory'. Our *theoretical perspectives in diplomacy* are thus grounded in the key conceptual explorations, epistemological exchanges and normative and critical propositions concerning different aspects of diplomatic practice.

EARLY DIPLOMATIC THOUGHT

Bearing the above in mind, the diplomatic researcher might be initially struck by the archaic link between the practice of theory and the practice of diplomacy. Ancient Greek

theoria, as retrieved from the writings of Herodotus and Plato, was the sacred embassy sent to consult the oracle as well as the ecumenical embassy sent to see the world and reflect on the doings, ideas and values of foreigners. That the name of these special missions of problematization and sustained reflection began to be employed by Socrates and his followers to designate the arduous activity of philosophical contemplation, of knowing thyself and seeking to discover the true essence of beings, offers an interesting point of departure for *diplomatic* theory. It suggests a complex entanglement between early theorizing and diplomatizing, the linking of the incompleteness of human knowledge with the ceaseless search and negotiation of the foreign, the unknown and the unexplained. From quite early on, diplomacy has been as much about the negotiation of meaning, value and knowledge as of the negotiation of interests and positions (Constantinou 1996; see also Chapter 11 in this Handbook).

Among classical, medieval and modern thinkers of diplomacy, a key and recurring issue has been the outlining of the necessary conditions for fulfilling the diplomatic mission. It includes the demarcation of the role of the diplomatic agent, delineating the skills and ethics of the ideal ambassador within different diplomatic cultures. One of the earliest exchanges on this subject is found in the orations of Aeschines and Demosthenes on *The False Embassy* (*Peri Parapresbeias*), which concerned legal charges pressed by the latter on the former for his ambassadorial conduct in fourth-century BCE Athens, following a series of embassies to the Macedonians (Demosthenes 2000, Aeschines 2005). The orations offer valuable insights on what constituted a properly discharged embassy at the time, outlining arguments and counterarguments on the responsibility for ambassadorial reporting and policy advice; on faithfully implementing the instructions of the polis; the appropriate conduct of the ambassador while abroad and on taking responsibility for missing opportunities as assessed post facto.

When following a Judeo-Christian trajectory, however, a different version of how faithfully to fulfil the diplomatic mission is in operation. Based on the 'mytho-diplomacy' of the Fall from the grace of God, diplomatic missions reflect attempts at the horizontal 'mediation of estrangement' between earthly communities but also vertical 'mediation of estrangement' between the human and the divine (Der Derian 1987). Medieval diplomatic thought – based on Augustine's magisterial *City of God*, written in the fifth century CE – granted the Church mediating powers between the earthly cities and the heavenly city. Within a sacralized cosmology, this in effect gave the Church not only spiritual but temporal diplomatic powers and established in Western Europe a hierarchical diplomatic system with the Pope at its head.

In medieval and early Renaissance treatises on the diplomatic office, topics like the sociability, court behaviour, polymathy, oratorical and persuasive skills of diplomatic agents are extensively discussed (see Mattingly 1955, Queller 1967, Hampton 2009). A trait to which diplomatic theorists have also paid attention is temperament and emotional intelligence or, as Bernard du Rosier aptly put it, the development of *equanamitas*, that is, taming one's emotions and cultivating a balanced psychology. The enhancement of these qualities has been strongly linked to the evolution of diplomatic civility and tact (Mastenbroek 1999).

Another key focus of the diplomatic craft has been negotiation. Not only the *conditions* for a successful negotiation but the *ends* of negotiation have been a major concern for philosophers and practitioners. Early on in ancient Rome, stoic philosophers, like Cicero and Seneca, re-conceptualized negotiation as something other than mere public business and/or bargaining of interests (Cicero 1913, Seneca 1932a, 1932b). For these philosophers, *negotium* was valorized as an occupation that strived to benefit the extended community beyond the polis, and only if that was not possible, then benefiting one's

limited community, if not possible, benefiting those who are nearest, and if not possible, then striving for the protection of private interests. In short, negotiation as primarily or exclusively a self-serving exercise was rejected by these philosophers (Constantinou 2006).

In seventeenth-century Europe, Cardinal Richelieu has been the key thinker of *continuous negotiation*, elevated and valorized as an end in itself, including during war and even with no possible agreement in sight (Richelieu, 1965). The idea of continuous negotiation underscored the importance of always retaining open channels of communication, so that compromise and settlement could follow when conditions allowed for them some time in the future. This notion further highlighted the value of indirection or multi-directionality in diplomacy, the importance of negotiating for 'side effects'. These sideway pursuits could occur not merely strategically or as a devious objective of negotiation, but as a pragmatic response when stalemates have been reached, informing and reformulating unsustainable policy objectives and as a means of exploring *modi vivendi* in the midst of protracted disagreement (Constantinou 2012; see also Chapter 17 in this Handbook).

Philosophers–practitioners have reflected on *strategy*, often depicted as a crucial ingredient of diplomacy that underscores the means–ends method of getting one's way with others. In this regard, the importance of deceit and dissimulation, or less darkly of ambiguity, has been highlighted by thinkers from Sun Tzu to Machiavelli. Crucially retrieved from these strategic thinkers, although often singularly and absolutely interpreted, has been the bypassing of restraining ethics or the development of a different ethics (i.e. public morality vs private morality) in determining a course of action. The prevalent motto in such diplomatic thinking is that 'the end always justifies the means', which has worked as a moral license in diplomacy for 'lying abroad for one's country', for intrigue, coercion and the use of force (see also Chapter 3 in this Handbook).

On the other side of the spectrum, however, and especially when one realizes that diplomacy is almost always not a one-off game but an iterative business, one finds thinkers such as De Callières (1983) underscoring the importance of honesty in negotiation, crucial in developing long-term and sustainable relationships with others and not simply concerned with short-term gains or empire building. The complete reversal of 'Machiavellian' strategy comes with thinkers like Mahatma Gandhi (1997), where the means employed should always match the ends, projecting a more holistic–spiritual approach in dealing with rivals – irrespective of the means they choose to use. While this re-integrates personal morality with public morality it also offers a different strategy in sync with the moral, philosophical and anti-colonial aspirations that those involved were professing at that time (see also Chapter 10 in this Handbook).

Raison d'etat has been suggested to be the founding principle of modern diplomacy (Kissinger 1994). Conceived in early Renaissance Italy by thinkers such as Guicciardini and Machiavelli, it legitimated diplomatic action through policies and activities that promoted the status of the ruler, but which progressively acquired an impersonal legal quality and autonomous ethics. Yet, it is in the more sustained meditations of Cardinal Richelieu in seventeenth-century Europe that *raison d'état* finds its fully-fledged application; that is, in building alliances with Protestant states by reason of acting in the national interest of France rather than on the basis of ideological and religious reasons that should have supported contrary alliances with Catholic states.

Beyond theorizations linked to statecraft concerns, there have been humanist meditations among a number of diplomatic thinkers with regard to the ends of diplomacy in early Renaissance Europe. These reflections have been subsequently sidelined or co-opted in accounts of diplomatic thought tied to statecraft. Whether to serve the peace or the prince and international order or dynastical/

patriotic interest were major concerns for writers like Ermolao Barbaro, Etienne Dolet, Torquato Tasso, Gasparo Bragaccia and Alberico Gentili, often presented as predicaments, not as settled positions (Hampton 2009, Constantinou 2013; see also Chapter 2 in this Handbook).

Key Points

- Early diplomatic encounters combined advocacy, negotiation and problem-solving with missions of reflection and problematization.
- The diverse means and ends of diplomacy have been historically debated with regard to the normative aspirations of diplomatic actors.
- In the modern era, raison d'état has predominantly linked diplomacy to statecraft, sidelining its humanist legacy and promise.

DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

It is an article of faith among most scholars of diplomacy that their chosen field and its subject are unjustly and unwisely neglected by their mainstream IR colleagues (Cohen 1998, Sharp 1999, Murray et al. 2011). This is true up to a point, but it is true in a way which is complicated and interesting. The extent to which this issue is deemed important depends on how seriously one takes diplomacy to be an autonomous concept that can in itself offer valuable perspectives in understanding and explaining international relations.

The claim of diplomacy's neglect is only true up to a point because, as even a cursory glance at some of the major works in IR reveals, quite a lot of attention is devoted to something called *diplomacy* (Morgenthau 1967, Kissinger 1994, Avenhaus and Zartman 2007). The claim is complicated because when this is pointed out to students of diplomacy, they tend to respond that what people like Morgenthau and Kissinger call diplomacy is not, properly speaking, diplomacy but something else, for example, foreign policy or statecraft. The claim is interesting because, despite the efforts of its advocates over a period of nearly two decades, the study of diplomacy remains on the margins of mainstream IR. It is also interesting because some of the most innovative and challenging work on diplomacy has been undertaken not in any spirit of advocacy for diplomacy as it is conventionally understood, but more from a fascination with the problems which diplomacy seeks to address or, more properly, give cause for its existence.

Nevertheless, the claim that diplomacy has been neglected may not be particularly important. The question 'neglected by whom?' admits a range of possible answers – American IR, leading academics, academics in general, ordinary people – which provide grounds for valorizing or bypassing diplomacy's perceived neglect. It might be useful to note in this context that most of the subfields of mainstream IR are minor powers whose advocates voice concerns about being undervalued by the rest of the profession both as a natural disposition and as a way to capture more resources, exert more influence and achieve more status.

IR developed as a state-centric field of inquiry, and very much remains one today. States, their roles and their significance remain the axis around which inquiry revolves. Even the descants and challenges to their privileged position which are proliferating still seem to reinforce, rather than undermine, this centrality. As a consequence, diplomacy has been seen in mainstream IR as a state practice. It is assumed to exist, and exist in the way that it does, because states and the modern system of sovereign territorial states exist. It is assumed to function in accordance with the interests, priorities and concerns of these entities. In short, for most scholars the sovereign territorial state provides diplomacy's raison d'être (see also Chapter 21 in this Handbook).

So far so good; but what is diplomacy thought to be in mainstream IR? This is

where things become complicated. Often, especially in the United States (US), the term is used as a synonym for foreign policy or international relations in general (James 1993). Its use for *international relations* in general may be regarded as a holdover from a time in the history of the modern state system when it was reasonable to claim that nearly all important international relations were undertaken by professional diplomats representing sovereign states. It may also be regarded as evidence of people, and Americans in particular, using language loosely, although the argument has been made that in the latter case, treating diplomacy and international relations as synonyms is rooted in a rejection of the idea that international relations ought to be treated differently from other human relations (Clinton 2012). In this view, the term diplomacy should not be used to designate a privileged subset of either international or human relations demanding to run to its own codes and to be judged by its own moral standards.

Similar arguments can be made for treating diplomacy and *foreign policy* as synonyms (see also Chapter 5 in this Handbook). In addition, however, diplomacy is presented in mainstream IR as an instrument of foreign policy along with propaganda, economic rewards and punishments, and the threat or use of force to crush or punish (Holsti 1967). Morgenthau, in particular, presents diplomacy as an undervalued instrument of foreign policy and one which, if used properly, confers the advantages of a force multiplier, and a morally significant one at that. *Good diplomacy* enhances the more material instruments of power allowing a state to 'punch above its weight' or achieve what it wants more cheaply. *Bad diplomacy* can result in a state using its other foreign policy instruments unwisely and underperforming as a consequence. In addition, however, good diplomacy is good because it is associated with pursuing foreign policy objectives peacefully and taking a bigger picture view of what needs to be done. Morgenthau

(1967), for example, saw good or wise diplomacy as the most realistically achievable way of escaping the fate to which the national interests of states were otherwise propelling humankind – death in the nuclear age.

If we can accept that states, or their representatives, very often approach matters of common concern simply by talking things through, then diplomacy may be seen as an *instrument* of foreign policy. One way of getting what you want is by talking to other people. However, the claims in mainstream IR that diplomacy can render foreign policy more efficient, serve as a force multiplier or constitute a morally better way of conducting international relations all pose problems for the idea that diplomacy is simply one among several instruments of foreign policy. As soon as states move from simply talking to communicating threats and promises about punishments and rewards, then diplomacy moves from simply being an instrument of foreign policy to being a *medium* by which the possible use of the other instruments is communicated. It may be important, indeed necessary, but it is no more interesting than the processes by which the message gets delivered, especially when compared to the things being communicated (see further Chapter 6 in this Handbook).

Even as diplomacy is viewed as a medium by which the possible use of other foreign policy instruments is communicated, however, it acquires another and more complex form of instrumentality. This becomes apparent as soon as it is acknowledged that diplomatic messages can be more or less effectively delivered, diplomatic conversations can be more or less effectively conducted and diplomatic démarches can be more or less effectively undertaken. There is more to getting what states want than simply communicating it and what they are prepared to do or give to get it. And when the idea of diplomacy is imbued with the notion that it is a particularly good way for states to get what they want because it is generally cheaper than the alternatives and peaceful, then this

raises the question of *for whom* and *for what purposes* diplomacy may be regarded as an instrument. If monopolized by statecraft, it thus raises questions of representation and inclusiveness as well as of substate and transnational interests.

Mainstream IR has not been interested in considering, let alone resolving, these puzzles about whether diplomacy should be viewed as an instrument (and if so whose instrument and for what purposes), a medium (and if so why and when a virtuous one), or a combination of both. Instead, it has simply treated them as aspects of other issues, leaving its understanding of diplomacy compartmentalized to the point of being fragmented and incoherent. Thus diplomacy, viewed simply as the way a state 'talks' to other states, has been presented as not only unimportant but – in its traditional form as a way of communicating through resident embassies and foreign ministries – as in decline (Fulton 1998). Diplomacy as a way of enhancing (or inhibiting) the effectiveness of other foreign policy instruments has been treated as statecraft – the preserve of the great statesman or stateswoman especially during crises (George 1991) – as a not particularly distinctive type of bargaining and negotiation (Crocker et al. 1999), and as a similarly undistinctive type of organizational and network activity (Hocking et al. 2012). Finally, diplomacy viewed as a good way of handling international relations has been treated as a subfield of the ethics of international and human conduct in general, as a component of international institution-building and as a practice being superseded and displaced by the emergence of global governance and public diplomacy conducted by the representatives of an emerging civil society (Seib 2009).

The response of those interested in diplomacy to mainstream IR's fragmented understanding has been uncertain. On the whole, it has mirrored that fragmentation rather than made a coherent and appealing case for their shared view that diplomacy is interesting, important and needs to be better understood. A number of reasons for why diplomacy has been depreciated and devalorized have been put forward. The rise of IR, it is sometimes argued, coincided with a period of international history in which strategic issues were to the fore, an anti-diplomacy superpower performed the role of hegemon and structural factors appeared to rule over agency in making things happen (Der Derian 1987, Lee and Hudson 2004, Wiseman 2012). By the turn of the twenty-first century it was suggested changes in structure – whether of a transformational or balance of power kind – were re-opening the door to agency and therefore to a revival of diplomacy (see also Chapter 7 in this Handbook). These changes may be occurring, but they have not been matched by a rise of interest in diplomacy in mainstream IR.

Those who are the most closely interested in traditional state-based diplomacy take two different tacks in explaining this lack of interest. First, they hold on to the old argument that diplomacy is necessarily an esoteric business beyond the understanding of most people and incapable of arousing their sympathetic interest (Berridge 1995). This is sometimes accompanied by the corollary of little respect for other IR academics. Compare, for example, what is covered and attracts attention and what is ignored on the programme of a mainstream IR academic conference like the annual ISA Convention with what a Foreign Ministry, a bar of foreign correspondents or ordinary people on a bus would list as pressing international issues. Under pressure, however, diplomacy's more traditional advocates sometimes retreat into maintaining that diplomacy is simply the IR equivalent of Public Administration – a worthy, but not particularly exciting, subfield about which it is important to know something and which happens to interest them (Berridge 1995, Rana 2000).

This modest position on diplomacy is plausible but not convincing. Most students of diplomacy maintain that it is interesting because it is important and

that this importance makes its neglect by mainstream IR a source of concern. Why do they think it is important? In part they tap into the sense that members of professions and trade unions have of their being at the centre of things. Whether it is the operating table, the classroom, the law court or the coal face, they are all liable to claim that their particular site is where the real action takes place and the real work gets done. The diplomatic system of embassies, consulates, ministries and international organizations is thus the engine room of international relations (Cohen 1998; see also Chapter 12 and 13 in this Handbook). This may be a professional conceit, but it is backed by a body of literature on diplomacy which stresses its role, not as one of the instruments of foreign policy, but as a practice which constitutes, reproduces, maintains and transforms international systems and world orders (Sending et al. 2011, 2015).

This body of literature has a long pedigree, reaching back in Europe, at least, to the late Medieval debates referenced above about how ministers (ambassadors) should strike the right balance between their obligations to their respective Princes and to Peace. Thus, preserving the peace of Christendom was argued to take priority over the interests of Princes when these two conflicted, and it was this which provided the functions of ministers with their sacred quality. This broader conception of the duties of diplomats and the functions of diplomacy was further elaborated in the eighteenth century by references to a diplomatic body or *corps diplomatique* constituted by all the diplomats in a capital and their shared interest in knowing what was going on (Pecquet 2004 [1737] (see also Chapter 14 in this Handbook). In the twentieth century this emerging collective professional consciousness was captured by the distinction between the demands made on diplomats by *la raison d'état* and *la raison de système* (Watson 1983). Good diplomats would recognize that the wider interests of their states were best served by pursuing

them with restraint so that they would not damage the international system or society as a whole which made their existence and actions possible (Butterfield 1966, Sharp 2003).

There are at least two problems with this conception of diplomats acting as *guardians* of the international system and *handlers* of their respective sovereigns to that end. The first is that it is possible to obtain only glimpses of them as system guardians and state handlers while we see a great deal of them as state instruments. The diplomats themselves can occasionally be spotted praising one of their number for restraining or subverting the wishes of his or her own political masters for a bigger interest or value. And once in a while we get the sense that a group of diplomats have taken it upon themselves to act in this way to prevent matters getting out of hand. When pressed to acknowledge this sort of activity directly, however, a diplomat will become uneasy and for the record quickly fall back on versions of Barbaro's famous formulation, namely that a diplomat's duty is 'to do, say, advise and think whatever may best serve the preservation and aggrandizement of his own state' (Mattingly 1955).

The second problem with the broad conception of what diplomats do, or think they are doing, is the general claim that, for a host of technical, social and political reasons, whatever they are doing is becoming less important for understanding what people want to know about international relations. Diplomats may work quietly as the guardians of the international society of states and others as they understand this to be. However, this may amount to no more than saying that, like the secret order in a Dan Brown novel, they are working on behalf of a conception of things in which hardly anybody else has any interest. The more traditional approaches to the study of diplomacy in mainstream IR have no effective response to this criticism. To find that, one has to look at other approaches to the study of international relations.

Key Points

- Within the IR discipline, diplomacy has often been understood and studied synonymously with foreign policy, state communication and international relations.
- Diplomacy has been approached as an instrument or medium of statecraft raising practical and normative questions about representation, inclusiveness and purpose.
- Beyond statecraft pursuits, diplomacy has been theorized as a practice that produces, secures and transforms international systems and world orders.

DIPLOMATIC THEORY AND CRITICAL IR

In particular, it is useful to look at those IR approaches which style themselves, or are presented, as post-modernist, post-structuralist, post-colonialist and post-positivist (hereafter all identified as critical approaches to diplomacy to distinguish them from mainstream ones). The divide between mainstream and critical is intentionally overdrawn to clarify patterns of inquiry. Most mainstream IR, viewed from a critical standpoint, assumes the existence of an objective, observable world which is produced by law-governed processes of cause and effect. Problems of context and perception may make it hard to access this world in a way that is agreeable to all, and some phenomena of interest within it may have less independent existence than others. Nevertheless, a mainstream consensus exists that the effort to access this 'real world' and explain its patterns is possible and worth making. Thus, it is assumed we can identify and observe something which everyone, or at least reasonable people, will agree is diplomacy, then take it as a given, examine how it works, and make an assessment of its place and significance in the overall scheme of things.

Drawing on a variety of sources in philosophy, psychology, sociology, linguistics, literature and the arts, critical IR theorists draw attention to the problems with making such an assumption. It is impossible to make true or false claims about what diplomacy really is, only from what people say it is and how they use the term. If this is so, then attempts to define diplomacy objectively are, in effect, attempts to define it authoritatively which, intentionally or not, exclude, marginalize or suppress other uses of the term as well as alternative practices and cultures of diplomacy. Critical theorists argue that how people talk about and practise diplomacy – often differently in different times, places and circumstances – should be explored. Histories of the way the term has come into being and is used – among technocrats but also in popular culture and imagination – should be traced. Changes in the way its practice is used to help constitute the world of international relations – whether it would be colonial or postcolonial, statecentric or pluralist, and so on – should be identified. And theorists themselves should self-consciously use, stretch and transgress the term to explore possibilities for making helpful, empowering, and transformational interventions of their own in political life (Der Derian 1987, Constantinou 1996, Constantinou and Der Derian 2010, Cornago 2013).

While diplomacy has enjoyed the status of a backwater in mainstream IR, it is notable how critical theorists have been drawn into the backwater by the current. They have so for a variety of different reasons. Critical theorists often, although not always, are interested in the way understandings of international relations may be ordered in the interests of constellations of wealth and power. Diplomacy and diplomats, both conventionally understood, are easily presented as obvious manifestations, guardians and perpetuators of the separations and alienations (ethnic, racial, colonial, gender and so on) upon which those orders of wealth and power are seen to depend (Der Derian 1987, Opondo 2010, Neumann 2012a). To be sure, diplomacy employs wealth and power to

achieve ends, but it is also – less pronounced yet rather revealingly – a site for the deployment of truth claims and identity games, that is, a site for exercising knowledge as power and power as knowledge.

In addition, the practice of diplomacy is identified as providing us with one of the more obvious glimpses of what critical theorists want to tell us the rest of life in society is like. Diplomats are explicitly engaged in creating and maintaining the ambiguous and shifting identities of the states and other entities which they are employed to represent (Sharp 1999). They are also engaged in constituting international systems through the performance of their roles. Often, top-down diplomatic practice is not as autonomous as it seems; it is revised and complemented by local practices and discourses (Neumann 2002, 2012b). This performative aspect of the diplomatic vocation is quite revealing. Sometimes diplomats actually tell us this is what they are doing (though often after the fact in memoirs), and they reflect on the sort of disposition which is required to do it effectively. Yet by observing the diplomats we obtain the insight that the rest of social life is not so very different from diplomacy and that the lives of all human beings, particularly in their social and public aspect, are not so very different from the professional lives of diplomats. In other words, we can appreciate that diplomacy is not merely an inherited courtly profession but actually is all around us, not a mere practice of trained initiates but an everyday vocation and mode of living (Constantinou 2013 and 2016). We also learn that the fragmented, incoherent, but mainly unfocused accounts of diplomacy provided by mainstream IR are not weaknesses. They are clues that something very interesting might be going on that needs to be investigated and accounted for (Constantinou 1996, Sharp 2009, Cornago 2013, Holmes 2013).

With this insight, the diplomatic backwater becomes a wider space promising escape from mainstream IR and its artificially fixed channels with their contending, but entrenched and unchanging, same old characterizations of the 'same old melodramas' of international relations. While critical international theorists interested in diplomacy share this insight, however, they put it to different uses. Some approaches, for example, offer detailed accounts of how phenomena as varied as the naming of street signs, the ensuing political arguments and the commentaries of experts and diplomats on the whole process help constitute international narratives, while revealing their gaps, concealments and contradictions at the same time (Der Derian 2012). Some approaches study conventional anomalies – non-state actors with well-established diplomatic standing, for example – to demonstrate how the diplomatic system is more open, and hence amenable to change, than it is conventionally presented (Bátora and Hynek 2014). Some approaches demonstrate how apparent breakdowns are managed in such a way as to deepen and consolidate the arrangements to which they are a response (Adler-Nissen 2015). Others retrieve the non-Eurocentric origins of diplomacy, engaging, for example, ancient classics like the *Mahabharata* to illustrate how putatively mythical principles of negotiating a unified cosmos offered valuable diplomatic principles before, during and after the colonization of India (Datta-Ray 2015). Still others point to the need to reject the consensus and embrace the 'diplomatic dissensus', that is, the need to broaden and change popular perception of what is sensible, to appreciate the dark sides of diplomatic agreement and conviviality, and their effects on the less powerful, the unrepresented and the dispossessed (Opondo 2012; see also Chapter 3 in this Handbook). Finally, others draw on an ethics of inclusiveness and prudence with regard to diplomatic conduct as a way of recalibrating diplomacy (Cooper et al. 2008, Bjola and Kornprobst 2013).

Sociological approaches identify the gaps which exist between the actual practice of diplomats in the day-to-day and the accounts which mainstream IR observers and the

diplomats themselves provide of what is supposed to be going on (Sending et al. 2011, 2015). Practice approaches are not necessarily all critical, however. Some are more rooted in legal traditions, seeking to identify the authoritatively specified goals and explicit principles of conduct for diplomacy by which undertakings of it may be evaluated (see also Chapter 15 in this Handbook). However, they do so not to define diplomacy and its functions authoritatively, but to discover these principles, explicate them and explore their implications (Navari 2010). Some approaches seek to uncover specifically diplomatic elements in the conduct of international relations and human relations generally. They seek to capture the views, priorities and assumptions of those who find themselves situated between, and charged with managing the relations of, human groups which wish to remain separate from one another (Sharp 2009, Bjola and Kornprobst 2013). Still others recover the lost, forgotten and ignored origins of terms like diplomacy, embassy and theory to create openings for more imaginative and creative explorations of what it might mean to be a diplomat and 'do' diplomacy (Constantinou 1996).

There has been an expansion of interest in critical approaches to theorizing diplomacy. They are more than well-represented in the recent publications in what Neumann has called 'the rapid professionalization of diplomacy studies' (Bátora and Hynek 2014). Two established book series in diplomatic studies have recently been joined by two new ones, plus another series devoted to public diplomacy. The only journal devoted exclusively to the study of diplomacy has just completed its first decade and journals focused on public diplomacy and business diplomacy have appeared. Nevertheless, the impact of all these diplomatic studies on the citadels of mainstream IR, especially in the US, remains unclear. Equally unclear, however, is the extent to which capturing these citadels, or even only breaching their walls, matters in an increasingly plural and horizontal world

of international practice and theory. What is clear is that, in borrowing from outside the discipline of mainstream IR, students of diplomacy have benefitted from and, in turn, contributed to long traditions of speculation about diplomacy which exist in other fields.

Key Points

- Critical perspectives in diplomacy have challenged dominant accounts of what diplomacy is or ought to be.
- Most of these approaches seek to expose the ethical and power implications of different practices of diplomacy, and specifically the marginalizations, hierarchies, exclusions and alienations that these practices consciously or unconsciously produce.
- Some of these approaches are sympathetic to diplomacy as a practice for managing a world composed of agents equipped with positivist and universal, yet competing, understandings of this world.
- Critical approaches have helped to bring the field of diplomatic studies into conversation with other fields of IR and underscored the significance of opening up diplomacy to scholarly developments beyond the discipline.

DIPLOMACY BEYOND THE IR DISCIPLINE

Diplomacy has also been theorized outside the IR discipline. Even though such works have not intensely or deeply engaged the concept of diplomacy per se, they have broadly conceived and applied it. At the same time they have imported standard or alternative definitions of diplomacy into their research. Their theoretical contributions, though tangential, as far as mainstream IR is concerned, are nonetheless important; specifically in the way they extend the scope and understanding of diplomatic practice with regard to a multiplicity of actors beyond states but also with regard to conflict resolution or transformation, reconciliation and

peace-building, dialogue of civilizations, place-branding or communication strategy, and so on.

For example, there have been attempts to bring together diplomatic and religious studies, thus engendering a theological and spiritual dimension into the theory of diplomacy. Already within IR there have been commendable attempts to revive diplomacy, through the 'Christian' notions of care, charity and self-sacrifice (Butterfield 1954) or through the 'Islamic' notions of truth, justice and extensions of community, as contrasted to cunning and guile, coercion and national interest (Igbal 1975). In some other writings, religion has been suggested as 'the missing dimension of statecraft' or 'faith-based diplomacy' promoted as a means of 'trumping realpolitik' (Johnston and Sampson 1994, Johnston 2003). Also within the context of new age spirituality, the pursuit of 'world diplomacy' has been suggested as a means of approaching holistically 'the common good of all humanity', promoting global rather than national interests and by doing so seeking to get in touch with the 'divine unity' of the world (Sidy 1992). An especially interesting eco-religious dimension has been proposed by David Wellman in pursuit of a 'sustainable diplomacy' (2004). He specifically identifies common Christian and Islamic precepts that help people to relate more constructively to each other and their environment, but also to bring about conflict-transformation and awareness of structural violence; in the end producing a 'sustainable diplomacy' that supports empathetic encounters and self-critique.

Works in anthropology and sociology have brought diplomacy down from the level of high politics and reconnected it to practices of everyday life. One key early work has been Ragnar Numelin's *The Beginnings of Diplomacy* (1950), which has provided a plethora of illustrations of pre- and non-state diplomatic activities among tribes and groups in non-western societies. Gift-exchange, participating in common religious rituals, marriage settlements, breast-feeding across rival communities, and so on, have been seen to constitute overt or subtle ways of extending kinship and commonality, and of mediating otherness. More recently, Richard Sennett (2012) has employed the term 'everyday diplomacy' in the context of discussing togetherness and to refer to the daily activities and tactics that people use in order to cooperate in the midst of conflict and rivalry. Specifically, Sennett highlights the tact and indirection, the coded gestures, but also the empathetic talk, dialogic conversations and performances that create conditions of collaborative togetherness in everyday encounters.

Interesting contributions from within geography have highlighted 'the legitimizing strategies of unofficial diplomacies' (McConnell et al. 2012). Focusing on actors that imitate state diplomacy, such as governments-in-exile and micropatrias (self-declared parodic nations), the authors examine how diplomacy is used mimetically in order for these actors to make interventions and gain degrees of recognition and legitimacy in the international system. Others have looked at the bureaucratic production of knowledge, authority and expertise in supra-national diplomatic services (Kuus 2013). From within pedagogy, it has been suggested (Richardson 2012) that multicultural education should be reconsidered as a diplomatic activity; specifically in the way it is supposed to enhance a 'diplomatic sensibility'; not only in the sense of teachers as representatives of their institutions but also as 'negotiators of the differences of minoritized communities'. This has been argued as a way of fostering 'culturally responsive pedagogy as cultural diplomacy', to counter-balance state-centred cultural diplomacy that simply brands a token multiculturalism. The 'theory of the living systems' has also been employed to highlight the interrelatedness, non-linearity and uncertainty of the world system, something that renders problematic the exact calculation of interests, the obsession with winning and losing as well as the strict determination of

causal links and final effects in diplomatic practice (Gunaratne 2005).

Volkan's work (1999a, 1999b, 1999c) has sought to explore the entanglements of diplomacy and psychoanalysis: specifically the shift from individual to large group identities, and from small ego to large ego formations; the unconscious links between the nation, natality and the mother figure which creates specific emotional attachments; the association of the leader and his policies with the authority of the father, whose decisions may be challenged but ultimately sublimated at critical moments and followed due to family loyalty; the constant use of others as 'reservoirs' for the projection of the negative aspects of one's identity. Overall, Volkan's work has outlined how diverse and recurring diplomatic activity can be better informed through introspective examinations into the individual and collective unconscious.

Finally, works on ethnology and art history have sensitized diplomatic studies as to the value and role of diplomatic objects. Kreamer and Fee (2002) have suggested that we see diplomatic objects as envoys themselves, with the high symbolic value that specific objects, such as textiles or body artefacts, might engender in particular cultures. This is something that is commonly missed in non-visual, language-centric approaches to diplomacy. Moreover, the work of Kreamer and Fee illustrates how the value of such diplomatic objects 'is transformed through ritual and exchange' (p. 22). In McLaughlin et al.'s *Arts of Diplomacy* (2003), we get a fascinating glimpse of how diplomatic objects were instrumentalized in the encounters between US government emissaries and Native Americans, but also how such objects currently figure in the remembrance and commemoration of these lost communities, which gives them a different functional value today, serving as transhistorical envoys, supporting the mediation of contemporary estrangement between settler and native communities in the United States (see also Chapter 9 in this Handbook).

In this regard, the Actor Network Theory of Bruno Latour (2005), suggesting that we need to move beyond subjects and review objects as non-human agents, can be useful with regard to diplomacy, especially his proposition concerning the ability of objects to act as 'mediators' and 'intermediaries' in different contexts: *intermediaries* being mere carriers of power and knowledge, whereas *mediators* having transformative ability, multiplying difference and supporting the reconstitution of subjectivity (Latour 2005). In his latest major work, Latour suggests that the current ecological crisis and the recognition of different modes of existence demand an entrusting 'to the tribulations of diplomacy'. That is to say, resolving conflicts over value and ways of being in the world requires the emulation of diplomatic agency; i.e. diplomats who are not just advocates of the principles and interests of their masters but 'directly interested in formulating other versions of their [masters'] ideals' (Latour 2013, pp. 483–4).

Negotiating what presents as real, reformulating what appears as ideal and, perhaps above all, acknowledging that we are doing neither more nor less than this may be an apt principle of diplomatic method. If and when applied, it may indeed help to constructively engage the plethora of complex problems in contemporary global society as long as it does not become a licence and caricature for cynically prioritizing interests and discounting aspirations. It may also serve as a final point of reflection upon which to finish our theoretical tour of diplomacy.

Key Points

- New theoretical perspectives in diplomacy have been provided from within disciplines beyond IR, such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, theology, philosophy and cultural studies as well as from within cross-disciplinary perspectives.
- Such studies support the need for a more plural understanding and broadly conceived notion of diplomacy.

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