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2016

# Introduction: Understanding Diplomatic Practice

Costas M. Constantinou

Pauline Kerr

Paul Sharp



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# Introduction: Understanding Diplomatic Practice

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Welcome to *The SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy*. Handbooks generally aspire to give readers a handy toolkit, a practical guide. Recalling one of the most famous handbooks of diplomacy, Sir Ernest Satow's *A Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, the aim was to offer 'practical utility, not only to members of the services, but also to the general public and to writers who occupy themselves with international affairs' (Satow 1, 1917: ix). Similarly, this Handbook aims to provide guidance to three audiences: (a) the professional in national diplomatic services as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations; (b) the student and researcher of diplomatic and international affairs; and (c) the interested layperson who recognizes or suspects that diplomacy is an important daily occurrence with immense consequences for how we live together in a globalized interdependent world. Mindful of the practical imperative then, this Handbook provides a collection of *sustained reflections on what it means to practice diplomacy today* given

what we progressively learn about how it was practiced in the past, what global trends and challenges we face in current times, and what hopes and aspirations we harbor for the future. Like Satow we aim to be useful about the ways and means of practicing diplomacy; unlike Satow, however, we do not offer a single authoritative, declaratory account but a scholarly handbook that poses *questions and problematizations*, and provides *possible answers* to them.

Preparing a handbook on diplomacy nowadays reflects a major challenge that was not present during Satow's times, and which lets us say a great deal more about diplomacy than Satow could. Specifically, a handbook today encounters and benefits from the development over the last 100 years of the academic discipline of International Relations and within it the rich and expanding field of Diplomatic Studies. It must therefore refer to and engage this literature – the accumulated body of knowledge on diplomacy. Indeed, a practical guide that disregards such theoretical

developments – that is, the more or less systematic thinking aimed at understanding and explaining diplomatic practice – will be broadly unreflective and have little practical utility as to *what works* as well as *how, where* and *when* it works, or doesn't work.

It is useful to remember that practice moves on in ways that practitioners sometimes are the first to understand and recognize, yet also sometimes dogmatically resist acknowledging for a variety of reasons. At the same time, theory is sometimes pioneering in analyzing trends or re-conceptualizing practice, yet sometimes only belatedly catches up on what practitioners realized and routinely practiced for some time. What is needed to redress this dissonance is quite simple and often repeated: better cross-fertilization between theory and practice (see, among others, Brown 2012). The renewed interest in 'practice theory' in diplomatic studies (Sending et al., 2015; Pouliot and Cornut, 2015; Wiseman, 2015) is a welcome development in this respect.

## THE PRACTICE–THEORY NEXUS

The Handbook's advance of the practice–theory nexus and the view that diplomatic practice and theory are two sides of the same coin is not new (see Constantinou and Sharp in this Handbook). It suggests that a diplomatic handbook for the twenty-first century ought to be conceptual and historical but also fully global – in terms of issues and scope. It needs ambitiously to engage and understand the concept of diplomacy in history, the contexts within which it emerges as a positive or negative term, as well as what is at stake in demanding or claiming moves from 'old' to 'new' diplomacy (see Leira in this Handbook). It also needs to appreciate the complex entanglements of modern diplomacy with the colonial encounter, and what forms of diplomacy it legitimated or eradicated in colonial and post-colonial times (see Opondo in this Handbook). It should be concerned with how historically

specific practices of diplomacy are implicated with colonial governance and displacements of indigenous diplomacy as well as pre- and sub-state diplomacy (see Beier in this Handbook).

The Handbook suggests that both the student and the practitioner of diplomacy ought to remain robustly engaged with *normative questions*. That is to say, one should, where scholarly research has already yielded new and critical knowledge, scrutinize the usage of dominant universals, their geographical and historical utility, and their proper or inappropriate use. In this respect, the Handbook examines the extent to which the nature of foreign policy has changed in response to shifts in both international and domestic policy milieus and changes in the demarcation, including the impossibility of demarcation, of the *domestic* and the *international* (see Hocking in this Handbook). It points to how the mobility of political issues from the domestic to the international stage necessitates the reconsideration of the conceptual triad of statecraft, strategy and diplomacy, and specifically the limits of state power and the different kinds of actors the state needs to engage nowadays in order to achieve results (see Kornprobst in this Handbook). It also suggests that attention should be paid to how diplomatic agents are entangled in their everyday practice with deeply established but also contested conceptions of representation and legitimacy (see Adler-Nissen in this Handbook). Furthermore, the delegated authority through which diplomatic agency operates raises issues of ethical scrutiny and accountability, and should encourage 'reflection-in-action [...] by which diplomats seek to align the practical requirements of the situation at hand with the normative imperatives prompted by their divided loyalties' (see Bjola in this Handbook). None of this is possible without coming to terms with the changing currency of diplomatic norms and values.

These normative aspects open up wider questions about the *functional and symbolic forms of diplomatic practice*. For example, the verbal and non-verbal forms of diplomatic communication need to be understood in

their instrumentalist mode, i.e. as tools of the trade necessary for the fulfillment of daily diplomatic functions and signaling, but also in their constitutive mode, producing meaning and enacting the diplomatic worlds within which actors operate (see Jönsson in this Handbook). Similarly, with the notion of diplomatic culture we encounter the technical, professional culture of the diplomatic corps but also the wider notion of the diplomatic community beyond state officials and thus the pluralization of diplomatic cultures that are linked to everyday mediations and conflict resolutions (see the chapters of Dittmer and McConnell, and Sharp and Wiseman in this Handbook). Moreover, art is often used instrumentally in diplomacy to project the representation of polity or policy, but such representations as well as counter-representations by artists have legitimacy effects that need to be understood and taken on board by practitioners (see Neumann in this Handbook).

To support a better understanding of this practice–theory nexus, this collection seeks to present the latest theoretical inquiry into the practice of diplomacy in a way which is accessible to students and practitioners of diplomacy alike as well as the interested general reader. That said, the readers of this volume will note that there are different views about the status of theory within Diplomatic Studies that are reflected in various chapters. Diplomacy's resistance to being theorized (Wight, 1960; Der Derian, 1987) is no longer a tenable proposition (see Constantinou and Sharp in this Handbook). There are plenty of theories of diplomacy. What remains conspicuous by its absence, however, is any meta-theory of diplomacy – a theory of the theories of diplomacy – which might present all the different things that people want to identify and discuss in a single set of coherent relations with one another. The more people become interested in practicing and theorizing diplomacy and the more the hubris of 'grand' theorizing is revealed and taken to task, the more the prospect for any such overarching general

account of it appears to recede. A guide to the practice of diplomacy must acknowledge this meta-theoretical lack and, at least, explore the possibility that it is not necessarily a matter for regret, quite the reverse.

This *resistance to meta-theorizing* with its associated sense of fragmentation and pulling apart is reflected in both the general organization of the Handbook and in some of its individual chapters. Part I focuses on concepts and theories of diplomacy, followed by Parts II, III and IV on diplomatic institutions, diplomatic relations and, finally, types of diplomatic engagement. One might expect, therefore, a rather stately progress from the orthodoxies of the past when aristocrats and professionals managed the relations of sovereign states, through the excitements and disappointments of the 'new' diplomacy and conference diplomacy of 1919 onwards (see Meerts in this Handbook), up to a present in which economics, terrorism, social mediation, and a host of other 'usual suspects', as Captain Louis Renault might term them, conspire to subvert, obscure, and transform the perceived orthodoxies of diplomacy. This happens to some extent, but more in individual chapters than in the collection as whole.

Taken in the round, the collection often presents a series of surprising and suggestive juxtapositions. Thus, for example, a chapter on what it means for states to be in diplomatic relations – an utterly orthodox, yet surprisingly ignored aspect of diplomacy to date (James in this volume) – rubs shoulders with an essay on pariah diplomacy, i.e. 'the methods by which extra-legal and disorderly conduct are justified or impressed upon other sovereign entities in international politics' (Banai in this volume). There are chapters on key institutions, such as on the diplomatic and consular missions (Rana and Pasarin), international law (Clinton), diplomatic immunity (Frey and Frey), negotiation (Zartman), mediation (Aggestam), summitry (Dunn and Lock-Pullan), and diplomatic language (Oglesby). There are regional, subregional, and single country perspectives, where diplomatic

relations are analyzed with regard to what theories and concepts the specific authors assessed as pertinent to their case.

Specifically, the Handbook examines the European Union and its hybrid system of diplomatic representation and action (Smith in this volume); the revolutionary legacy and changes in American diplomacy (Henrikson in this volume); the changing policy and discursive shifts in Russian post-Soviet diplomacy (Zonova in this volume); the 'modernization' of Chinese diplomacy and its shift to more proactive foreign policy (Chen in this Handbook); the surprising deficit of studies on diplomacy in East Asia as well as the near absence of anything that might be called 'regional diplomacy' (Kerr in this volume) at least compared to the EU region of Europe (see Smith in this Handbook) and even compared to the regional adherence to the *concertación* approach to diplomatic management in Latin America (Burgess and Bastos in this volume); and how colonial and postcolonial environments shaped Middle East diplomacy (Stetter in this volume), African diplomacy (Huliaras and Magliveras in this volume), and Southern African diplomacy (Chan in this volume). In short, the Handbook has a global outlook but there is no single theoretical perspective from which to view and order the knowledge of diplomatic institutions or through which to explain historical and current diplomatic relations in their entirety. There are often common understandings about the value of diplomatic institutions or the forms of diplomatic relations, but there is also a *prioritization of different levels and units of analysis* by different authors.

Conventional scientific and social scientific approaches concerned with rigor in method, coherence in conceptualization, and cumulation in the production of knowledge, suggest that resistance to meta-theorizing should be regarded as a problem. People interested in diplomacy, however, seem less concerned. To be sure, a more relaxed approach courts certain dangers. If one insists that diplomacy should be properly regarded as a practice performed

exclusively by the accredited representatives of sovereign states, then much of what is called diplomacy today and is presented as such in this collection will appear to be mislabelled. If, on the other hand, one has an open conception of diplomacy as ways of conducting relations, or is content to accept as such whatever other people present as being diplomacy, then 'diplomacy' and 'diplomats' remain blurry and indistinct. This is particularly the case with studies focused on elaborating the contexts in which diplomacy is undertaken.

### THE MEANING OF DIPLOMACY: SINGLE OR PLURAL?

Such elaborations on contexts are necessary, especially in a time which people characterize as one of change and innovation. The danger, however, is that they stop short of discussing diplomacy as such, or what it means to be diplomatic. The question 'why and how do we come to call this diplomacy or diplomatic?' remains a powerful one, although not as an attempt to discipline departures back into line from an orthodox or classical standpoint. It is an open question which admits of multiple answers, but it does ask that people attempt to answer it.

Indeed, it is a useful exercise to canvass how this open question might be answered even when people call something *diplomacy* or name someone an *ambassador*, catachrestically or 'unprofessionally'. Considering how such terms feed into *everyday reality and thinking*, literal or metaphorical, is quite crucial for fully appreciating the conceptual richness of diplomacy as well as its practical applications in social life (Constantinou, 1996). This is for two reasons. First, concepts carry within them and often begin themselves as metaphors – words carrying meaning from one context to another. Concepts then get modified through consciously literal but also consciously and unconsciously metaphorical use (Derrida, 1982: 258–71). One can be sympathetic to

the critique of conceptual overstretching, the private and excessive broadening of a concept just in order to prove a scholar's latest theory or idea. But it is difficult to be sympathetic to approaches that essentialize and police concepts, striving to prove conceptual purity and extricate historical interbreeding and the inevitable hybridization of ideas. In both, the quest for a fake clarity can shade over into a quest for control which is all too real. It is reminiscent of an age where religion could only be defined by the church and the priest, meaning in effect that the differing religious and spiritual ideas of people and their forms of expression were denied any reality, and thus could only figure as either mythical or heretical.

Second, especially for those working within a critical or constructivist mode, *linguistic uses are not just instrumental to communication but enact and create the worlds within which we live and operate*. The Wittgensteinian motto that 'to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life' is worth recalling here (Wittgenstein, 1958: section 19). Words are not just passive tools but active mobilizers of imagination. To imagine that one is experiencing a life in diplomacy has power effects and affects. Some flights into diplomatic fantasy may be harmless and frivolous, as when one is playing the board game *Diplomacy* and decides for the sake of fun to practice intrigue and coercion on a friend as the game encourages one to do. But other flights into diplomatic fantasy may have more serious implications, such as if one thinks that the board game's strategic understanding is the natural way of relating to others and diplomacy can only be that. Moreover, it is often missed that non-official or 'unauthorized' use of diplomatic discourse and terminology may hide wider or unresolved issues, be it claims to recognition or territorial sovereignty; taking exception to someone else's governmental jurisdiction; aspirations to fully represent or rightly speak for someone or something; or power to negotiate or reopen negotiation or opt out of an agreement, and so on. In short, quotidian diplomatic terminology may be just

language gaming or trope, just as it may be expressive and symptomatic of a major political claim or power context or representation anxiety.

On the whole, the difficulties created by a relaxed approach to defining diplomacy and establishing the boundaries of what can properly be regarded as such are far outweighed by the advantages. This is certainly the shared position of the editors for this project. Certainly, each of us had our preferences in the sense of wishing that more attention be given to one aspect of diplomacy and less to another – more on state practices, more on transformational potentials, more on real life diplomatic practice in concrete situations, for example. Each of us working individually might have produced a different balance between themes than the one which emerged from our joint efforts.

However, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that diplomacy is an inherently plural business which encourages an inherently plural outlook on the way people see things and see things differently from one another, and to that extent how diplomatic knowledge is crucially implicated not only in the instrumentality of official communication but also in the development of rival perspectives over any issue (see Cornago, 2013 and in this Handbook). A social world composed of different actors with different interests, identities, and understandings of what the world is, how it works, and how it might work – to the point that we may usefully talk of many worlds (Walker, 1988; Agathangelou and Ling, 2009) whose relationship to each other is captured by no single claim – invites a number of responses. *Which differences* should some effort be made to resolve, and which should be left alone? And *by what means* should differences be resolved or maintained – by *force* when there is sufficient power, by *law* when there is sufficient agreement, and by *habit and tradition* when there is sufficient sense of belonging? 'Good diplomacy' – with its emphasis on peaceful relations, avoiding misunderstandings

and unwanted conflict, and on paying attention to the Other – offers ways of conducting relations in a plural world where power, law and community are in short supply. Even ‘bad diplomacy’ can sometimes offer a way of rubbing along together where these are absent.

### **THE PRACTICE OF DIPLOMACY: TRADITIONAL OR TRANSFORMATIONAL?**

In a sense, therefore, the breadth of this collection and the, at times, most tenuous connection between some of its constituent elements is itself an appropriately diplomatic response to the subject matter. Two general themes emerge, nevertheless. The first is that in a world where power and authority seem to be diffusing, people are looking to something which they traditionally understand as, and want to call, *diplomacy* as a way of conducting their relations with one another. The second is that many of the contextual changes which fuel this demand for more diplomacy, make diplomacy – at least as it has traditionally been understood – more difficult to undertake.

There is very little desire to return to a world in which a relative handful of carefully selected, refined, low key, discreet, diplomatic guardians of the universe plied their trade, secure in their shared values and respect for confidentiality. And even if there was such a desire, such a world is unrecoverable, not least because of the considerable extent to which it was a myth in the first place. Accordingly, the task that confronts those theorizing and practicing diplomacy today is a complex one. What is required is a fundamental change in some elements of diplomatic practice, but not all of them. The prospects for reinsulating diplomacy and diplomats from the consequences of low cost, high content, information instantly available to the general public, for example, are probably very low, at least for now.

Nevertheless, there are some signs that this change is beginning to happen. While diplomatic careers have no doubt been damaged as a result of the diplomatic indiscretions revealed by WikiLeaks, they no longer produce the drastic outcome in diplomatic relations that they have produced in the past (Satow, 1917: 375). Younger diplomats, reflecting the outlook of their peers in society at large, are much more likely than their elders to agree with the proposition that ‘people say all sorts of stuff’. Diplomatic practice, therefore, might evolve in the direction of not holding diplomats so tightly to their words or, perhaps, specifying when their public or revealed utterances should be taken as *ex cathedra* and when they should be regarded as harmless instances of ‘people saying all sorts of stuff’. A similar shift might take place in attitudes towards the crisis character with which contemporary international news is presented by authorities and reported by mass media, a character often amplified in the tweeted and blogged responses within social media. Rather than trying to lower the temperature, diplomatic practice might seek to take the higher temperature as the normal operating level and recognize that people are neither as upset nor as energized as they often sound.

However, the need for diplomatic practice to adjust, in some instances, to changing conditions, is matched by the concomitant need of the myriad of new diplomats to take on at least some aspects of diplomatic practice as these have evolved from what appear in the present to have been quieter, simpler times. The representatives of ‘new’ international actors – private corporations, humanitarian organizations, and transnational political actors, for example – have traditionally positioned themselves as outsiders acting upon a world of insiders, that of the system or society of sovereign states. As a consequence, they have been viewed and tended to act as lobbyists, pressure groups, agitators, and subversives on behalf of rather narrowly defined objectives. So too at times have the more traditional state-based diplomats, of course. In addition, however,

the best among the latter have had some sense of ownership of, responsibility for, and even affection towards the system or society which facilitates and makes possible their work. This can be seen to work at the level of what Adam Watson (1982) calls *la raison de système* and underpins a diplomatic theory of international relations that can valorize political collaboration and coexistence whilst accepting separation and difference (Sharp, 2009).

As Navari (2014 and in this volume) notes, within the basic structures of state-based diplomatic practice as these have been articulated in the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and Consular Relations, there are other rules and conventions – some more tacit and less formal than others – by which specific *démarches* may be judged to be instances of the diplomatic game more or less well played. A similar sense of responsibility, however, can be found at the individual level when people who are not only radically different from one another, but who might also have a highly problematic place for each other in their respective universes, experiment in conflict transformation and coexistence (Constantinou, 2006). How they are to make meaningful representations, or conduct relations without conquering the other or capitulating to the expectations of the other, constitute diachronic diplomatic problems which require both reflection and self-reflection.

### THE DIPLOMATIC FIELD: REVIVAL OR EXPANSION?

One of our starting observations in this Handbook is that it has become commonplace to claim that interest in diplomacy is reviving. The end of the Cold War is often credited with initiating this revival, while the ongoing revolution in information and communication technologies (ICT) seems to be supercharging it. The War on Terror threatened to put diplomacy back in the deep freeze, but the foreign policy disasters which resulted merely underlined the need for more

effective diplomacy. In his election campaign for US President, Barack Obama called for more diplomacy and was rewarded with victory at the polls and a Nobel Peace Prize, just one year after taking office. However, it is perhaps worth noting two points about this diplomacy revival claim, for they have a considerable bearing not only on promoting a less cynical outlook on diplomatic practice but also on how the study of diplomacy has developed in recent years, which is reflected in this collection.

The first point is that the claim refers to *interest* in diplomacy, not diplomacy itself. Of course, diplomacy did not disappear during the Cold War. Even ideologically driven and strategically minded superpowers needed diplomacy – albeit diplomacy of a certain kind – and their diplomacy was neither so dominant, nor as ubiquitous, as their own accounts of international relations at the time suggested. Even so, the Cold War left its mark, particularly on the academic study of international relations which was, and remains, heavily centered on the United States. Diplomacy was necessary, everyone could acknowledge. Missing, however, among practitioners and students alike, was a sense that diplomacy was important to *making things happen* in international relations or *understanding why they happened as they did*. It was widely assumed that if one wanted to act internationally or explain international actions, one should look at structures – be these constituted by the distribution of state power, concentrations of capital and production, or, more recently, the distribution of scientific and technical competencies. More agency-focused approaches could not escape this structural framing, whether of the foreign policy bureaucracy or the cognitive make up of decision makers. And even studies of bargaining focused on the structure of contexts in which sparsely elaborated agents were presented as operating. As may be seen in many of the Handbook's chapters, the *emphasis on structure* continues to leave its mark on both the practice and the study of diplomacy, as indeed it must. What



many of them also reveal, however, is the shift to an *emphasis on diplomatic agency*, its actions and relations and the capacities, both actual and potential, that agents have for shaping international relations and, indeed, producing or enacting the structures which seem to exert so much influence on our sense of what happens and can happen.

The form of this shift of focus draws attention to the second point which needs to be noted about the revival of interest in diplomacy – the description of the process as a *revival*. The implication is that there was once a greater interest in both the practice and the study of diplomacy which went into decline and is currently recovering to something like previous levels. Strictly speaking, this is not the case. Certainly, it was plausible for a relatively small group of people in the fairly recent past to equate what they regarded as important international relations – those conducted between an even smaller group of sovereign states of which they were citizens and some of them represented – with diplomacy. Even so, the diplomatic histories produced between the late eighteenth century and the mid twentieth century missed a great deal of what was going on at the time. Much of what is presented as diplomacy today, however, would have been unrecognizable as such to those who maintained that it consisted of the adjustment of relations between sovereign states principally by negotiations undertaken by their accredited representatives. Rather than a *revival* of interest in diplomacy, therefore, it is perhaps more accurate to refer to an *expansion* of interest, and a double expansion at that. The number of people interested in diplomacy has expanded within and across the discipline of International Relations, and with that so too have conceptions of what people want to mean when they try to talk about diplomacy.

As evidenced in Part IV of this Handbook, the typologies of diplomatic engagement have also expanded, giving us an important laboratory for observations about the cross-fertilization between practice and theory (see chapters by Huijgh, Maley, Avenell and Hastings Dunn,

Viggo Jakobsen, Armstrong, Meerts, Acuto, Conley Tyler and Beyerinck, Wheeler, Gilboa, Okano-Heijmans, Ruël and Wolters, Wellman, Seng Tan, Ali and Vladich, Murray and Copeland in this Handbook). Other chapters in other parts are equally important observation sites of this dynamic (for example see Spies, Navari, Thorhallsson and Bailes, and Calleya in Part III of this Handbook).

Looking across this expansion of types of diplomacy reveals that *the extent of cross-fertilization between practice and theory varies*. Among the reasons for this are that research and scholarship around a particular type of diplomacy also varies. There is frequent acknowledgment among the authors in Part IV, and throughout the Handbook, that more research and scholarly attention is needed to better understand the practice–theory nexus and there are calls for researchers to work closely with those practicing diplomacy (for example, see Avenell and Hastings Dunn in this Handbook) to meet the practical and theoretical challenges ahead.

Nonetheless the overall observation about cross-fertilizations between practice and theory in this Handbook is that the many generalizations, or theoretical claims based on systematic thinking, about particular types of diplomacy require qualifications and caveats and are therefore ‘bounded’ within *temporal and spatial contexts*. To illustrate the point, digital diplomacy (see Gilboa in this Handbook), which is clearly one of, if not the most, recent types of diplomacy being practiced, is an area of study that currently offers generalizations: for example, that the recent means of diplomatic communication, namely the ICTs and Internet, are clearly different from those of the past, many more actors are involved, digital networks are evolving; and that this is having an impact on diplomatic practice. Simultaneously, qualifications are offered: for example, that much of the research on digital diplomacy is based on US experience, that the impact of different actors may well vary depending on such factors as the issue-area and the political system of a country,

that traditional and new instruments of communication co-exist, and that the digital landscape is changing so rapidly that future impacts are difficult to predict, including whether or not such new technologies will change the nature of diplomatic relationships and knowledge. Rather than undermining the practice–theory nexus, such careful qualifications add to its robustness and support the point made earlier that there are many theories of diplomacy, albeit in various stages of maturity, and that the absence of meta-theories is far from holding back our understanding of diplomacy today.

In addition to being mindful of this double expansion illustrated above and elsewhere, we as editors of the Handbook noted gaps in the existing literatures on diplomacy and to engage with some of them we invited our authors as experts in their specialized fields to individually and collectively tackle specific tasks, including the following:

- Offer *perspectives* on the past, present, and possible future activities, roles, and relations between the diplomatic actors of the global society – specifically *who* has power/influence *when, why, and how*.
- Provide a major thematic overview of diplomacy and its study that is both *retrospective* and *prospective*.
- Provide an overview of the field that is *introspective*, self-reflective and critical of dominant understandings and practices of diplomacy.

No one can singly undertake such a massive task. We think the cumulative result is splendid and has certainly fulfilled our own expectations! We also think the result contributes to knowledge about contemporary diplomacy in other recent texts and handbooks (see, for example, texts by Pigman, 2010; Bjola and Kornprobst, 2013; Kerr and Wiseman, 2013; and the handbook by Cooper et al., 2013).

## PERSISTENCE IN QUESTIONING DIPLOMACY

The chapters in the Handbook demonstrate the plural character of how diplomacy may

be understood, but, taken together, we suggest that they provide the Handbook with its distinctive contribution – the advancement of thought about theory and practice and the relationship between them. Looking ahead, a number of challenging ontological, epistemological, and practical questions arise out of the Handbook’s focus on theorizing and practicing diplomacy. We strongly advise students and professionals to pose these questions in different contexts, to make their own judgments, and to act upon them accordingly. For example:

- What does diplomacy mean, what does it mean to be diplomatic and how do the answers to both questions change in different social contexts?
- What are the roles of diplomacy and diplomats in producing, reproducing, and transforming different social contexts?
- Can the diplomatic be examined independently of the political, the governmental, the legal, and the personal – and what is at stake in doing or not doing so?
- How far should the diplomatic identity be extended – and at what cost or benefit?
- To what extent should diplomatic identity be denied – and at what cost or benefit?
- Can, ‘new actors’, for example, the Coca Cola corporation, or the Doctors Without Borders organization, or the Invisible Children campaign cultivate not just transnational but diplomatic relationships?
- Can certain aspects of diplomatic practice be privatized or subcontracted – and at what cost or benefit?
- To what extent are diplomatic immunity and diplomatic asylum important norms or unnecessary privileges in a globalized age?
- To what extent and under what conditions can diplomacy and violence coexist?
- What constitutes diplomatic knowledge, how should it be acquired, and how far should the general public have access to it?
- How do diplomatic relations historically evolve and how are they artfully maintained?
- What are the main issues that traditionally concern particular diplomatic actors, what issues that interest them are regionally and globally sidelined, and why?

- In diplomatic relationships, who has what influence/power, over what issues, during what periods, and through the use of what methods and mechanisms?
- How can the diplomatic practice of particular actors be understood, revisited, and revised when viewed through different theoretical perspectives?
- How are alternative diplomatic cultures, both actual and potential, to be studied and learned from?
- To what extent are we moving into a 'managerialization', 'de-professionalization', or 'trans-professionalization' of diplomacy?

A final word. In the early stages of the process of assembling this Handbook it seemed at times as if we had committed ourselves to creating a veritable Leviathan of diplomacy covering nearly every conceivable aspect of the practice from nearly every conceivable angle. As our work progressed, however, we became increasingly aware of three things: substantive gaps which we will allow our reviewers to identify; a wide range of views on diplomacy which cannot always be coherently related to each other; and, above all, a sense that the collection was producing more questions than answers. Social formations come and go, while diplomacy is perennial. Nevertheless, as social formations change, so too do diplomatic practices, as do the opportunities for diplomacy, in its turn, to enable positive changes in the ways in which people think about and conduct their relations with one another.

At the end of the project, we have a strong sense that we are at the beginning, but just the beginning, of such changes. As you read the following collection, we very much hope that the essays in it encourage you to think about and make your own sense of what diplomacy *is*, what it is *becoming*, and what it *might be*.

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