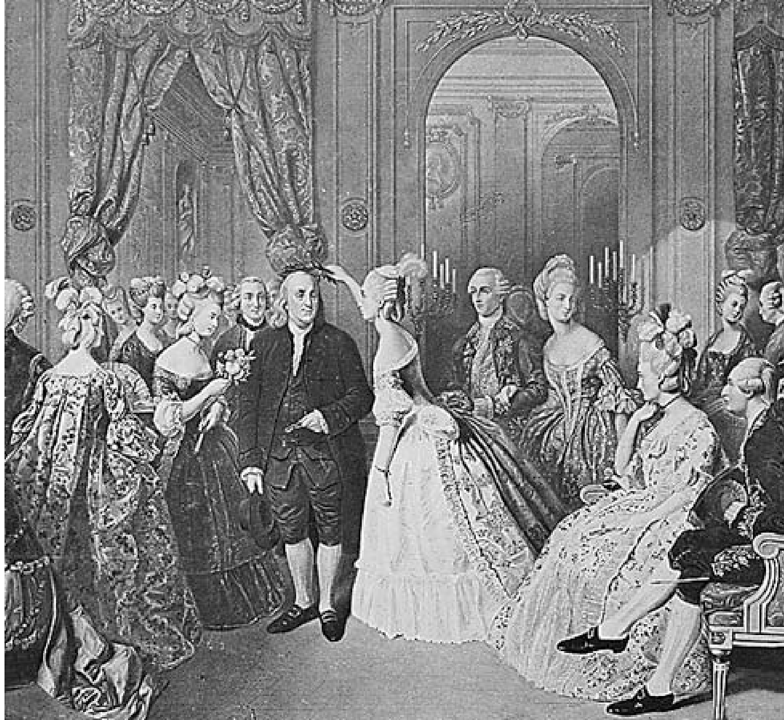
Topic Page: Diplomacy

Definition: **diplomacy** from *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia*



Benjamin Franklin at the court of France, 1778, engraving after a painting by Hobens. Credit:National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Art of conducting relationships for gain without conflict. It is the chief instrument of foreign policy. Its methods include secret negotiation by accredited envoys (though political leaders also negotiate) and international agreements and laws. Its use predates recorded history. The goal of diplomacy is to further the state's interests as dictated by geography, history, and economics. Safeguarding the state's independence, security, and integrity is of prime importance; preserving the widest possible freedom of action for the state is nearly as important. Beyond that, diplomacy seeks maximum national advantage without using force and preferably without causing resentment.

Event: diplomacy

Keywords: diplomacy

Summary Article: **Diplomacy**
from *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*

In its broadest sense, diplomacy refers to the conduct of human affairs by peaceful means, employing techniques of persuasion and negotiation. In the more specific sphere of international politics, through the utilization of such techniques, it has come to be regarded as one of the key processes characterizing the international system and a defining institution of the system of sovereign states—often referred to as the “Westphalian” system after the 1684 Peace of Westphalia. Its usage, however, embraces some important distinctions. First, at the state level, it has frequently been used (particularly in studies of diplomatic history) as a synonym for *foreign policy*—as in “Russian,” “German,” and “Japanese” diplomacy (foreign policy). More commonly, however, it is used to refer to one means

by which such policies are implemented. Second, viewed as an institution of the international system, a distinction can be made between diplomacy as a set of *processes* and as a set of *structures* through which these processes are conducted. Debates about the continuing utility of diplomacy in contemporary international politics frequently reflect confusion between these meanings. In the course of the following discussion, the origins of diplomacy are outlined, together with differing analytical approaches to its nature and significance as a feature of international politics. The changing nature of diplomatic processes is then discussed, followed by an examination of the evolution of the structures through which diplomacy has been conducted at both the state and international levels.

Theoretical Approaches

While the study of diplomacy has a long and honorable tradition dating back to Machiavellian thought, it is only in recent years that diplomatic practice has started to receive detailed theoretical attention. There is a notable absence of conscious theorizing in much of the scholarship on diplomacy. Instead, the bulk of the scholarship offers detailed historical accounts of diplomatic events (diplomatic history) as well as texts on diplomatic practice. Most scholars of diplomacy implicitly choose from a very narrow range of analytical frameworks drawn almost exclusively from the realist tradition in international relations (IR). As a consequence, the orthodox study of diplomacy has been marked by a remarkably unified theoretical approach—something quite unique in political science. There is a surprising ontological consensus about what diplomacy is and who the diplomats are. This consensus arises from the dominant influence of rationalist thinking. The upshot of this dominance is that the range of the scholarship in a majority of studies of diplomacy tends to be limited to analysis of the international realm of sovereign states in the context of high politics. There is little enthusiasm among mainstream scholars to explore the diplomatic world beyond interstate relations or low politics and that relating to the nonpolitical. This is now changing. There is a growing body of work interested in diplomacy not simply as a foreign policy tool of states but as a means of connecting cultures, polities, economies, and societies. This section aims to highlight briefly the orthodox and unorthodox approaches to the study of diplomacy.

Diplomacy and Realism

The realist core of orthodox approaches to diplomacy is undisputed and is clearly evident in a number of key features found in this prevailing approach. The most telling is the focus on the sovereign state as the primary unit of analysis in diplomacy such that the study of diplomacy is confined to the study of the process and content of interstate relations—that is, how sovereign states seek to engage with each other. Prevailing models of diplomacy focus almost exclusively on singular state-to-state relations. The orthodoxy defines diplomacy as processes of communication, negotiation, and information sharing among sovereign states. Diplomatic processes revolve around the activities of professional diplomats—that is, officials of foreign ministries and overseas missions. More common, especially in North American scholarship, is the narrower definition of diplomacy as a foreign policy tool of states—that is, diplomacy as statecraft. This more limited definition has led to a great deal of foreign policy analysis passing itself off as diplomatic studies, despite the fact that it does not consider the processes of interstate relations as its main focus. Both definitions, however, share the view that diplomacy has an ordering role to play in the otherwise anarchic and unstable international system of states—a view that has theoretical roots in realism. Successful diplomacy, it is argued, creates a system of states. It constructs balances of power, facilitates hegemonic structures, and fashions post-hegemonic regimes. When diplomacy fails or is absent, conflict and war usually follow. Indeed, it is the very fact of conflict

between states (a core realist assumption) that warrants the emergence of diplomatic systems.

Beyond Realism

In recent years, however, there have been significant conceptual shifts in the study of diplomacy, and as a result, those studying diplomacy are able to choose from a wider range of analytical approaches. The customary view of what the proper study of diplomacy entails is now contested by scholars who apply analytical strategies drawn from constructivist, postmodern, and critical IR theory to draw attention to the necessity of understanding IR—and diplomacy—beyond the state and the international state system. As a consequence, the study of diplomacy has stepped outside the narrow state-centric security nexus into a world of diplomacy that is more varied but also more difficult to specify. It is perhaps this lack of specificity in what is being analyzed, and why, that explains why unorthodox approaches continue to be marginalized.

Unorthodox approaches are analytically diverse, yet they share a key point of departure from orthodox approaches—a refusal to accept the state as the exclusive unit of diplomatic analysis. Diplomacy is seen as a more open-ended process where diplomatic agency includes not only the state but also a range of nonstate actors such that a sociological concept of diplomacy emerges where diplomacy possesses economic, cultural, social, as well as political forms and functions. A common theme within these approaches is, therefore, the problematic core idea of the foreign ministry and its overseas missions as the sole agent of diplomacy. Unorthodox approaches suggest that the proper terrain of the study of diplomacy includes, and extends beyond, foreign ministries, overseas missions, and the state officials that work in these government institutions and international organizations to potentially include diplomatic networks largely drawn from all sections of domestic and international society covering any number of issues from the environment and e-commerce to avian flu and land mines. An important implication of this is that diplomacy has many modes, including conventional interstate relations, non-conventional intercultural relations or commercial relations, and modes that mix the two. Moreover, the study of diplomacy entails the rejection of the simple reproduction of the status quo of interstate power relations (described as antidiplomacy) at the heart of orthodox studies of diplomacy and, in the case of postmodern approaches, the production of the concept of “otherness,” which, it is claimed, is the core of all diplomatic modes. In this sense, the world of diplomacy is characterized not by the commonality of the material and security interests of states but by differences—different interests, diverse cultures, and varied identities.

While orthodox approaches import analytical tools from realist IR to develop concepts such as summit diplomacy, bilateral diplomacy, and multilateral diplomacy, unorthodox approaches, by contrast, import analytical tools from other social science fields such as political economy, business and management studies, philosophy, theology, sociology, and anthropology to explore diplomatic practice. As a result, new concepts of diplomacy such as catalytic diplomacy, network diplomacy, sustainable diplomacy, and multi-stakeholder diplomacy have been developed to provide analytical means to explain the contemporary diplomatic practice in ways that draw attention to the different interests, cultures, and identities represented by state and nonstate actors and the varied modes of diplomacy that emerge with the dual engagement of this “otherness.” These new concepts also draw attention to the changing character of contemporary diplomatic forms, sometimes casting doubt on the notion of the progressive development of diplomatic systems found in traditional approaches to diplomacy.

In sum, unorthodox approaches to diplomacy do not always tie diplomatic practice to the state or to

the problem of anarchy. Instead, diplomacy is seen as a means of connecting individuals, groups, societies, economies, and states to build and manage social relations in domestic and systemic environments. By moving beyond traditional realism, unorthodox approaches to the study of diplomacy have promoted greater theoretical reflection and created an intellectual multiplicity in the analysis of diplomatic practices, modes, and processes. It is to these practices, modes, and processes that we now turn.

The Emergence and Development of Diplomacy

As the above discussion of the theories of diplomacy indicates, those who study diplomacy remain divided over whether it is essentially a state-based set of political processes or whether it is a set of network-based political processes. Those who maintain that diplomacy is primarily the pursuit of the foreign policy interests of the state in the international system of states argue that diplomacy is confined to a quite narrow set of bilateral and multilateral processes of communication, representation, and mediation focused on the foreign ministry and its overseas missions. Diplomatic processes continue to exhibit some regularity so that functions, institutions, codes, conventions, and cultures of diplomacy are marked by continuity and marginal change and so that diplomatic rules and norms continue to hold in the future. The obvious casualty in this approach is any in-depth analysis of change in diplomatic structures and processes. By contrast, those who conceptualize diplomacy outside state-centric framework, tend to emphasize continual change in the conduct and context of diplomacy. The principle objective of network-based approaches is to highlight and analyze the challenges posed to diplomacy by contemporary changes in the international system. Scholars turn to issues of globalization and regionalization to emphasize the increasingly complex social, economic, and political context of diplomacy (at domestic, regional, and international levels). For these scholars, change and transformation in diplomatic processes and structures is the central concern of analysis, and in this frame, diplomacy is seen to have both formal and informal structures. Diplomatic processes are network based and draw in a range of public and private actors; there is an absence of agreed rules and norms of diplomatic engagement such that new codes and conventions are emerging or in need of development. In short, diplomacy, in terms of both the varying processes through which it is effected and the machinery through which it is conducted, is a closely linked phenomenon that is the subject of differing interpretations. We will now examine how these have developed in response to changes in both domestic and international environments.

The Origins of Diplomacy

The origins and development of diplomacy are frequently equated with that of the European system of states. In this view, it is associated with the system of states that emerged and consolidated its forms and practices in the wake of the 1648 Peace of Westphalia marking the end of the Thirty Years' War. However, diplomacy and its institutions have a much longer, and more complex, pedigree and have been identified as existing in some of the earliest human societies. Rather than being associated with a specific historical era, diplomacy has been seen as a response to a set of needs and requirements—namely, the mediation of separateness between communities and the desire and need to establish modes of communication between them. Thus, the earliest documents recording what we would now regard as formalized diplomatic practices are to be found in approximately 2500 BCE in what is now the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, and one of the most familiar features of contemporary diplomacy—namely, the practice of using resident ambassadors—predates its usage in the modern European context by some 3,000 years. Elements of diplomacy and diplomatic institutions can be

identified in a variety of international systems, including those of Greece, Rome, and China, but none of these possessed what has come to be regarded as the key characteristics of a fully fledged diplomatic system—namely, effective communication, a set of procedures and conventions governing patterns of communication, and a capacity to mediate between diverse cultures. In general terms, the development of diplomacy has been determined by the character of the societies that it has sought to mediate, the international environment, the available modes of communication, and the technologies that determined them.

Thus, in the European context, the medieval era witnessed the growth of diplomatic processes as international relationships became more complex and dense. But this occurred in a period when the sovereign state as we recognize it today had not emerged. Against a background in which universalist ideas represented by the concept of Christendom underpinned by the authority of the Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire were a dominant reality, diplomacy was not yet associated with the state, involving diverse political units. Moreover, while rulers engaged in the sending of missions to one another, so too did other entities—commercial, ecclesiastical, and private—in the medieval landscape. Relative distance underscored by the difficulties of communication meant that the dispatch of diplomatic missions was infrequent, and their success marked by a high degree of uncertainty resulting from the hazards associated with medieval travel. Furthermore, the precise functions of the representative were circumscribed. In the early part of the Middle Ages, the most common diplomatic agent was the *nuncius*, whose function was to act as the mouthpiece of the principal on whose behalf he was acting and whose capacity to negotiate was nonexistent or strictly circumscribed. While this matched the requirements of the period in which it developed, the growing complexity of interactions marking the later Middle Ages required the use of officials (procurators) granted the ability to engage in negotiations. In short, while we can see the beginnings of the European diplomatic environment, this was the presovereign-state phase of diplomacy marked by quite fluid and flexible procedures representative of a period of major social, political, and economic change.

It was during the 15th and 16th centuries that a clear outline of the diplomatic system as it was to develop over the next 200 years became visible. By this time, the collapse of the universal concept of Christendom had been accompanied by the gradual emergence of the sovereign state. This not only required a greater capacity to communicate within a changing political and economic environment and thus the development of ways in which this could be effected but also provided enhanced domestic administrative resources necessary to its operations. It was in Northern Italy that the earliest manifestations of this new phase of diplomacy were commonly identified. Here, an early form of what was to become the European system of states could be seen. Significant factors were the geographical proximity of the Italian city-states, their relative similarity in terms of power and thus an inability to exercise hegemonic power, and a shared cultural environment that facilitated communication.

Modern Diplomacy

Against this background, the practices of modern diplomacy were honed. In institutional terms, the key development was the growing utilization of the resident ambassador. As noted above, it was not that this practice was unknown in earlier periods but that diplomacy by mission for specific purposes was far more common, meeting the perceived requirements of the time. Again, it was a combination of political and social change and the consequent requirements imposed on diplomacy that underlay this development. In particular, while its ceremonial and symbolic functions remained significant, a growing need for the gathering of reliable and continuous information replaced the earlier emphasis on the

exchange of messages. Gradually, the practices developed in this region of Europe were to spread across the continent and, subsequently, would be adopted as key principles for the conduct of diplomacy as the international system expanded beyond its shores.

These principles assumed several forms. On the one hand, as already seen, more regularized and permanent structures were deemed appropriate and necessary. During the ensuing centuries, the exchange of permanent representatives between national governments would become the norm of diplomatic intercourse as its structures and processes were aligned with the state. Consequently, the rules and norms of diplomacy were refined to support the diplomatic system through the consolidation of the principle of immunity for diplomats and the development of protocol—such as the rules of precedent—established at the 1815 Congress of Vienna and codified in the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The growing importance attached to the practice of diplomacy is reflected in the numerous treatises on the necessary qualities required of the ambassador, notably in the writings of Bernard du Rosier, Philippe de Commynes, and François de Callières. Not only did these writings serve as diplomatic manuals for ambassadors, they reflected the ways in which diplomacy was adapting to the realities of a developing system of sovereign states. At the governmental level, enhanced importance was attached to the capacity to process the growing flow of intelligence generated by diplomatic networks. France, under Cardinal Richelieu, is credited with the creation of the first recognizable foreign ministry in the early 17th century and the gradual separation in the conduct of domestic and foreign policy. Thus, by the 18th century, the patterns of diplomacy at both the international and national levels had assumed the shape that would become a familiar feature of the international order in the ensuing centuries.

The 19th century witnessed the consolidation of these patterns but, at the same time, saw considerable change in response to developments at national and international levels. At the national level, the administrative apparatus for the conduct of diplomacy would become larger, more elaborate, and more professional. This not only reflected changes in the role and structure of the state and the consequent need for more sophisticated bureaucratic systems but also mirrored the growing complexity of foreign policy and the demands that this placed on national governments. The emergence of the modern state and the professionalization of bureaucracy affected foreign ministries, as did the profound social change. Although a gradual and uneven process, the image of diplomacy as the preserve of the aristocracy was weakened as recruitment became less a matter of patronage and more a matter of talent. Across Europe, foreign ministries and their diplomatic services developed systems of recruitment, selection by means of examination, promotion by merit rather than patronage, and embryonic training programs. An early form of the latter was the creation of the Oriental Academy (later Consular Academy) established in the Hapsburg Empire in the mid-18th century. From a focus on language training, diplomatic education was to expand in scope to include aspects such as commercial diplomacy as international economic linkages developed. Despite the fact that diplomacy had begun to embrace the middle classes and to lose some of its aristocratic connotations, the ambience that the latter bestowed on it was slow to disappear, particularly in some European states. In France, for example, by the early 20th century, the diplomatic profession was dominated by the middle class, whereas in Germany, the nobility were a dominant presence. One factor that assisted this process of democratization was the recognition that diplomats could not be expected to finance their activities from their own resources, which had, at least in part, been a feature of past practice, and that unpaid attachés seeking an opening in diplomacy were no longer part of a professional service, hence the development of career structures and the grading of salaries, however meager these might be,

https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/diplomacy

alongside. Nevertheless, none of this was to take from diplomacy the air of exclusivity that, to a degree, it continues to possess and that came to be seen as a feature of what would be designated as the “old diplomacy.”

Many of the characteristic structures of the foreign ministry would also be established in this period. One of these was the distinction between geographical and functional organizational principles, the latter a recognition of the growing complexity of IR that cut across the division of the world into geographical regions. It would, however, be incorrect to assume that the foreign ministry was a focus of policy making. Much of its work was of a clerical-administrative nature with foreign policy being made at the political level with direct communications between a foreign minister and ambassadors. Moreover, despite later assertions on the part of foreign ministries that they had once been the gatekeeper between states and their international environments, it was not always the case that they enjoyed the privileged position that this implies. For some states, it was other departments—particularly those overseeing commercial relations—that were regarded as possessing greater functionality and prestige.

Developments at the national level went hand in hand with those at the international level. This was represented by the extension of the diplomatic network. By the latter part of the 19th century, all the great powers of Europe had exchanged missions, thus marking bilateral diplomatic relations conducted through permanent residential posts as the hallmark of the international diplomatic system. Furthermore, the practice had spread beyond European shores. Despite suspicions of, and a reluctance to engage in, what was often regarded as a manifestation of old world ills, the United States began to expand its diplomatic service during the 19th century. Elsewhere, countries as diverse as Japan, Persia, and Brazil would develop the makings of a diplomatic machinery at home and a diplomatic service overseas. But of particular significance was the gradual spread of European diplomatic norms—not least those relating to diplomatic privilege and immunities—of great significance as the international system became global in its scope during the 20th century.

Alongside these developments was the emergence of “conference” diplomacy heralding the growth of multilateral diplomacy in the ensuing decades. One manifestation of this was the shortlived “Congress System” following the end of the Napoleonic Wars, comprising sovereigns and chief ministers. Greater effects flowed from the creation of standing conferences of ambassadors in major capitals dealing with specific issues—such as that set up in London on the abolition of the slave trade after the Congress of Vienna. By the latter half of the century, technological developments, particularly in communications, had prompted recognition of the need for international cooperation in areas such as telegraphic (the International Telegraphic Union created in 1865) and postal (Universal Postal Union created in 1874) communications. This not only generated an awareness of the need for diplomatic activity in this area, it also brought with it two effects that would become themes for diplomatic change in later years. One was the need for technical expertise in diplomacy, and the other was the gradual involvement of “domestic” departments in international negotiations, an early example of which was the representation of the Home Office in the British delegation to the 1910 International Aerial Navigation Conference. By the eve of the Great War, then, not only had the structures and processes of diplomacy assumed many of their modern forms, the challenges that they would confront in the coming decades were equally identifiable.

Diplomacy in the 20th Century

Developments in the 20th century posed just as many challenges to diplomacy as those in the previous century and indeed some developments were to exact a high price on the reputation and prestige of the diplomatic system and professional diplomats. The crisis of the Great War (1914-1918) was one such development, and it holds particular significance since it led to widespread condemnation of the old European-based diplomacy, which had not only failed to prevent war but also had, as many concluded, contributed to its outbreak. One key failing of diplomacy in this period was the abandonment of established diplomatic channels of communication by resident ambassadors in favor of more secretive diplomatic practices. Diplomacy quickly deteriorated into a closed system, where behind-the-scenes bilateralism and propaganda fed an appetite for the brutal pursuit of national interest in an atmosphere of mistrust and rivalry that the diplomats themselves had done much to create. The old diplomacy that emerged at the end of the 19th century had created the very problems that drove the European powers to all-out war within the first 2 decades of the following century, and condemnation of the old diplomacy quickly led to demands for a new, and more open, diplomatic system where diplomats could be held accountable to their executives.

European states' response to these demands was almost universal. Across Europe, the semiautonomous resident ambassador was replaced by a centrally controlled system of overseas permanent missions. While bilateralism remained a core diplomatic process around these new permanent overseas missions, during the Great War period and in the following decade, multilateral diplomacy took off. A significant amount of intergovernmental diplomacy was now taking place outside the more established bilateral diplomatic structures and foreign ministries in the form of intergovernmental conferences of state leaders and other government ministers such as finance and trade. Multilateral diplomacy involving officials from departments across government became a key vehicle for allied cooperation during the war on issues such as food and munitions transportation, as well as intelligence sharing and military coordination.

Important and influential though it certainly was, the Great War did not exhaust the challenges that the so-called new diplomacy would face in the 20th century. Within just a few decades, the European-based diplomatic system would be both overhauled and expanded to other continents as the diplomatic system adapted to two open-ended developments: (1) the growing *interdependence* of states in the international system, which increased the demand for effective coordination of international cooperation in an ever-growing number of policy areas but especially in trade and finance, and (2) the onset of *decolonization and independence* that more than quadrupled the number of sovereign states in the international system by the end of the 20th century.

The Great Depression of the 1930s demonstrated very starkly the economic interdependence of states, and after the end of World War II, financial and trade integration intensified, creating demands on, as well as opportunities for, diplomats to coordinate international economic policy in bilateral, regional, and multilateral relationships. Indeed, the development of the Bretton Woods system created a number of powerful international economic organizations such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade where diplomats would negotiate international trade policies and rules governing trade. Economic interdependence within regions led to a huge expansion in the number of regional organizations in Europe, Asia, the Americas, and eventually Africa and the Caribbean. The vast increase in the number of international organizations from around 40 at the beginning of the 20th century to almost 400 at its end is one of the most significant developments in IR during this period. These organizations would also present both opportunities for, and demands on, diplomacy to work in new

institutional and policy environments and to develop new diplomatic methods in, for example, multilateral bargaining. With the development of nuclear arms and the Cold War from the 1950s and international terrorism from the 1970s onward, strategic interdependence between states became worldwide. Diplomats would populate the increasing number of multilateral and regional strategic organizations from the United Nations Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Warsaw Pact. Diplomats would quickly develop new diplomatic methods in, for example, coercive diplomacy, deterrence, and intelligence gathering, as well as management of new processes such as superpower summitry and international peacekeeping. The development of rapid mass communications in the 20th century linked domestic developments in one country directly with others, again creating opportunities for, and demands on, diplomats to develop new practices in order to influence political and policy developments in each others' countries. These included public diplomacy. Interdependence essentially brought an international dimension to almost all aspects of policy and strategy such that the realm and content of diplomacy during the 20th century covered the entirety of world governance.

While interdependence between societies intensified and deepened as a result of globalization and regionalization processes throughout the 20th century, it was especially so in the latter decades as new technologies expedited and reduced communication and transportation costs. The pattern of IR would change dramatically during this period as transnational relations between nonstate actors developed and new global and regional actors from the private sector and civil society emerged and sought to influence policy and processes at all levels creating demands for open and accountable global and regional governance processes. These developments posed fundamental questions about the role and influence of the state—and hence diplomacy—relative to other actors in the system such as transnational business and global civil society. If the state was indeed in decline, then state-based diplomatic systems would, it seems, have decreasing utility.

These new patterns—whether viewed as the cause or response—went hand in hand with the development of linkage of increasingly complex and technical policy issues. Issues of interdependence, globalization, and regionalization raised practical matters crucial to the continued effective practice of diplomacy. How could the diplomat—a generalist by nature and by training—have sufficient grasp of such highly technical policy issues and how could the foreign ministry continue to manage policy issues that cut across several domestic department concerns?

At the same time that these pressures were raising questions about the effectiveness of the state and state-based diplomacy, the processes of decolonization and independence in the mid- and late 20th century highlighted the continued relevance of the state and the continuing appeal of European diplomatic institutions. Decolonization and independence of the colonial states and the former Soviet states increased the number of sovereign states in the international system and, almost without fail, each of the new states created diplomatic institutions in the image of the European model of a foreign ministry and system of overseas missions and permanent delegations. The expansion in the number of sovereign states raised questions about the diplomatic capacity of the new states, the impact a flush of new states would have on multilateral and regional diplomacy, and the development of bilateral diplomacy between the new states and the old states.

With the exception of India, which had for some time before independence in 1947 acquired a quasi-diplomatic system to represent itself in, for example, the League of Nations, most new states, and in particular African states, had very limited resources to spend on developing a European-style

diplomatic system of an extensive network of overseas missions. Most relied on a handful of diplomats in key international organizations and key capitals, and it became common practice for diplomats from developing countries to provide diplomatic representation in multiple arenas. An African diplomat is often, for example, the permanent delegate to the UN as well as ambassador in Washington and Ottawa. Similarly, the ambassador for Tonga usually fills a number of posts: permanent delegate at the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva and European Union (EU) in Brussels, as well as ambassador in London.

The extent of the newly developed states' involvement in multilateral diplomacy was, inevitably, limited, at least until developing countries began to form strategic alliances such as the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 in the UN. Newly independent states also created their own intergovernmental organizations, such as the Organization for African Unity created in 1963, as a way of managing regional integration and security as well as building collective diplomatic strategies.

The arrival of many new states into the system raised strategic issues for the old states, since they did not always have, or wish to spend, the resources required to establish diplomatic representation in so many new countries. Internal debates ensued about how to keep costs down and retain effective coverage of key strategic countries and regions. Many European governments, for example, faced demands to reduce bilateral missions in European capitals in the wake of the development of very large permanent delegations to the EU.

Contemporary Trends in Diplomacy

Three broad trends in contemporary diplomacy are now evident: (1) *fragmentation*, as the conduct of diplomacy at the governmental level now involves government departments traditionally associated with purely “domestic” issues; (2) *concentration*, as the fusion of domestic and international politics has been accompanied by the expanding involvement of heads of government in international policy; and (3) *diffusion*, as professional diplomats have found themselves required to engage with a growing range of nongovernmental stakeholders in complex policy networks.

The first of these trends, fragmentation, came to be associated from the 1970s onward with the development of an expanded “foreign policy community”—that is, an expanding range of governmental agencies and a multiplicity of channels in the conduct of external relations supplementing and often challenging the role claimed by foreign ministries. One consequence of this has been a growing emphasis on the need for policy coordination at the national level, underpinned by recognition that an uncoordinated stance in international negotiations reflecting various bureaucratic interests has potential costs in terms of attainment of policy goals. This partly explains the trend toward concentration. Awareness of the potential costs of lack of bureaucratic and political coordination and politicization of international policy, combined with a growing international role for heads of government, have resulted in a tendency to centralize the conduct of diplomacy in, for example, prime ministerial and presidential offices. Additionally, the imperatives of coordination have resulted in the merging of departments in the quest for greater efficiency in the management of external relations, notably in the area of external trade relations. Hence, both Canada and Australia merged their foreign ministries and international trade departments during the 1980s.

The third trend, diffusion, reflects the fact that diplomatic processes have increasingly required the development of policy networks as complex policy issues demand that state-focused diplomacy is supplemented by linkages with civil society organizations and, in specific contexts, the business

community. Part of this development mirrors the changing nature of international negotiation as it assumes the character of a management process marked by its technical qualities, complexity, uncertainty, and bureaucratization. In this context, diplomacy has become much more than the trading of concessions in pursuit of a negotiated settlement. Many contemporary negotiations, such as those in the area of the environment, involve processes of mutual learning and the creation and systematizing of new knowledge and mutual education among a group of interests, each of which has contributions to make to the management of policy issues. The impact of this can be seen not only in the growing engagement between actors at the national level but also in multilateral diplomatic environments. Stakeholder engagement has become a watchword in the majority of international organizations, from the UN to the World Bank and the WTO. Underpinning these developments at the national and international levels is the enhanced emphasis on public diplomacy from the late 1990s onward. But from being primarily concerned with image management, public diplomacy strategies are increasingly founded on an awareness that the routes of influence within the international system are changing and that shaping international policy outcomes demand strategies for influencing a much wider range of constituencies than those at the governmental level. Consequently, by the early 21st century, public diplomacy had become one of the primary concerns of foreign ministries. One obvious manifestation of the awareness of the importance of engaging with an expanded audience at home and abroad has been the attention paid by foreign ministries to the use of the Internet and increasingly sophisticated and accessible Web sites. Recognition of the growing demand for interactive processes means that these ministries are now using social networking sites such as Facebook together with YouTube and Twitter to engage in a dialogue with audiences at home and overseas. Hesitant forays into the virtual world, Second Life, have begun. Sweden has established an embassy there and the U.S. State Department has sought to develop its public diplomacy strategies by using this resource to engage with bloggers in the Middle East.

Change has not been limited to the foreign ministry, however. The structure and operations of diplomatic services have undergone significant change, partly as a result of resource constraints but also due to the evolving international order itself. Here, the need to operate more economically has combined with an awareness that patterns of international representation have failed to keep pace with geopolitical and geoeconomic change. In the United States, the announcement by former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice of the Transformational Diplomacy program was stimulated by these concerns. In addition to this, the impact of the twin processes of fragmentation and consolidation has meant that the overseas network of diplomatic posts is now regarded as representative of the entire governmental apparatus and not only of the foreign ministry. Indeed, in some diplomatic posts, the number of traditional diplomats is dwarfed by the presence of officials from a range of “domestic” government departments.

A further significant development is the revolution in communications and the role of the media in international policy. The adoption of e-mail and secure facsimile links between foreign ministries and overseas missions (contrary to the traditional arguments concerning the impact of enhanced communications on diplomacy) has allowed missions to play a more direct role in the policy processes. Simultaneously, the development of the electronic mass media creates pressure on governments to respond to events almost instantaneously and, at the same time, provides opportunities to project their policies to domestic and foreign audiences. Again, this has implications for the respective roles of foreign ministries and diplomats in the field. The enhanced speed of events can often assume as great an importance as the events themselves. Nowhere is this more evident than in natural and man-made

disasters. The growing incidence of terrorist attacks and events such as the tsunami in 2004 has placed renewed emphasis on the consular dimension of diplomacy. The rise of mass tourism and a media ready to judge diplomats by the immediacy of their response to such crises has established a new benchmark by which the diplomatic profession is judged.

Cumulatively, these developments have had a significant impact on the role of the professional diplomat. Increasingly, this is portrayed in terms of a “coordinator-manager” and “facilitator” in complex processes spanning the boundaries between the international and national domains. They also pose questions concerning the traditional norms of behavior associated with diplomacy. To take one significant example, the traditional emphasis on confidentiality and secrecy is challenged by the norms demanded by the need to work with a range of “nondiplomatic” stakeholders in specific policy milieus. The latter, working to their own codes and norms of behavior, do not always respect the traditions associated with the conduct of diplomacy, and establishing mutual understanding and cooperation is one of the major challenges of contemporary diplomacy.

Adaptation and Change in Diplomacy

Several clear themes emerge from this discussion of the emergence and development of diplomacy. The first is that diplomacy has a history and a logic that transcends the system of states with which it is often equated. Just as diplomacy preceded the emergence of the sovereign state, so also it has adapted to the latter's transformation in response to forces associated with globalization and regionalization. The second theme relates to the first: Diplomacy has a capacity to adapt to change. It is something of a truism—and a recurrent topic of diplomatic memoirs—that diplomacy is not what it was. Thus, change runs as a leitmotif through its evolution as the processes of diplomacy and the structures through which it has been conducted have responded to transforming environments. This, however, has been a gradual process, so much so that the frequently used distinction between “old” and “new” diplomacies is misleading, ignoring as it does the inherent adaptive capacity of the processes on which diplomacy has relied over time. Similarly, debates about the “decline” of diplomacy are usually founded on the association of these processes with particular structures or forms—such as the emergence of resident bilateral diplomacy. To understand the nature and significance of diplomacy in its historical and contemporary manifestations we must recognize that there is no single mechanism through which its objectives can be served. Diplomacy's capacity for change ensures that in the early 21st century, where complex agendas require evermore inventive modes of global governance, the processes associated with diplomacy remain a major component of international life.

See also:

Anarchy, Balance of Power, Bilateralism, Economic Statecraft, Foreign Policy Analysis, Globalization, Governance, Global, International Organizations, International Society, International System, Mediation in International Relations, Multilateralism, Networks, Nonstate Actors, Policy Network, Realism in International Relations, Regionalization, State, United Nations, War and Peace, Westphalian Ideal State, World Bank, World Trade Organization (WTO)

Further Readings

- Bátora, J.2008 Foreign ministries and the information revolution: Going virtual? Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Berridge, G. R.2005 Diplomacy: Theory and practice (3rd ed.). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave.

- Cohen, R., & Westbrook, R. (eds.). 2000 Amarna diplomacy: The beginnings of international relations. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Cooper, A., Hocking, B., & Maley, W. (eds.). 2008 Global governance and diplomacy: Worlds apart? Houndmills, UK: Palgrave.
- Der Derian, J.1987 On diplomacy: A genealogy of Western estrangement. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Hamilton, K., & Langhorne, R.2000 The practice of diplomacy. London: Routledge.
- Hocking, B. (ed.). 1999 Foreign ministries: Change and adaptation. London: Macmillan.
- Jönsson, C., & Hall, M.2005 Essence of diplomacy. Houndmills, UK: Palgrave.
- Lee, D.; Hudson, D. The old and new significance of political economy in diplomacy. Review of International Studies, 30, : , 2004.
- Mattingly, G.1973 Renaissance diplomacy. London: Penguin.
- Melissen, J. (ed.). 1999 Innovation in diplomatic practice. London: Macmillan.
- Neumann, I.2002 The English school on diplomacy (Discussion Papers in Diplomacy No. 79). The Hague, Netherlands: Netherlands Institute of International Relations.
- Nickles, D. P.2002 Under the wire: How the telegraph changed diplomacy. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Nicolson, H.1963 Diplomacy. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Rana, K.2000 Inside diplomacy. New Delhi, India: Manas.
- Sharp, P. For diplomacy: Representation and the study of international relations. International Studies Review, 1, : , 1999.
- Watson, A.1982 Diplomacy: The dialogue between states. London: Eyre Methuen.

Hocking, Brian
Loughborough University Leicestershire, United Kingdom Loughborough University Leicestershire, United Kingdom
Lee, Donna
University of Birmingham Birmingham, United Kingdom University of Birmingham Birmingham, United Kingdom

APA

Chicago

Harvard

MLA

Hocking, B., Hocking, & Lee. (2011). Diplomacy. In B. Badie, D. Berg-Schlosser, & L. Morlino, *International encyclopedia of political science*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/diplomacy

SAGE Publications, Inc.

SAGE Publications, Inc.

APA

Hocking, B., Hocking, & Lee. (2011). Diplomacy. In B. Badie, D. Berg-Schlosser, & L. Morlino, *International encyclopedia of political science*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/diplomacy

Chicago

Hocking, Brian, Hocking, and Lee. "Diplomacy." In *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*, by Bertrand Badie, Dirk Berg-Schlosser, and Leonardo Morlino. Sage Publications, 2011. https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/diplomacy

Harvard

Hocking, B., Hocking and Lee. (2011). Diplomacy. In B. Badie, D. Berg-Schlosser & L. Morlino, *International encyclopedia of political science*. [Online]. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. Available from: https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/diplomacy [Accessed 25 May 2019].

MLA

Hocking, Brian, et al. "Diplomacy." *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*, Bertrand Badie, et al., Sage Publications, 1st edition, 2011. *Credo Reference*, https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/diplomacy. Accessed 25 May 2019.