

Yolanda Kemp Spies

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# GLOBAL DIPLOMACY & INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY



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palgrave  
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ISBN 978-3-319-95524-7      ISBN 978-3-319-95525-4 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95525-4>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018949039

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*This book is dedicated to my students. You are my inspiration, and I work with you knowing that you are the future. Four of you I wish to single out. While I directed a Master of Diplomatic Studies Programme at the University of Pretoria (2008–2016), my personal assistants were always selected from our postgraduate students who worked as junior lecturers. Uyo Salifu (Nigeria) was the first, followed by Faith Mabera (Kenya), Ella Abatan (Benin) and Ngeti Zwane (Swaziland). All of you left footprints in this book and in my life. You are a tribute to Africa's wealth in human potential and the continent's incredible diversity and strength.*

*My appreciation is also due to several student groups for whom I took the liberty of recommending draft chapters as reading material. They include graduate, postgraduate as well as professional groups in Africa and beyond, all the places where I lectured and guest-lectured over the past few years. Of course, I encountered the unbridled (sometimes far-fetched, but more often useful and surprisingly erudite) critique of these young minds. Ah, to be liberated from the cynicism-inducing constraints of age and experience! Their comments forced me to strengthen my arguments!*

*Several people were approached to review draft chapters of this book. I am indebted to Lesley Masters, François Theron, André Stemmet and Dawid du Plessis, for being generous with their time and candid in their advice.*

*For the last two years, I have been fortunate to work at the University of Johannesburg, as part of the SARChI Chair in African Diplomacy and Foreign Policy. The Chair is headed by Chris Landsberg, an academic of irrepressible intellectual energy. He gave me the necessary (much appreciated!) institutional support to finalise the book.*

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## CHAPTER 1

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# Introduction

This book and its companion, ‘Global South Perspectives on Diplomacy’, are all about diplomacy—its context, its theory and practice, and the big themes that drive its evolution. It is not the story of any part of the world; it is not Eurocentric (most diplomatic writing is); it is not complete; and it is not unbiased (is anything?). I’m writing as a former diplomat who now teaches the subject and who constantly has to explain an ancient, maddeningly complex institution to young people.

It took me ten years to finish the two books, which I wrote simultaneously. It was obviously much, much longer than I had hoped it would take. Yet, I do not regret the time spent. When I started, I had just joined the world of academia, and while my practical experience will always be valuable—irreplaceably so—the theoretical perspectives gleaned over the past decade have disciplined my analysis.

Incidentally, the more time I spent teaching diplomacy at university level, the more I wanted to write the books. This is because both diplomacy and the Developing World (or Global South, as some prefer to call it) are understudied within the field of International Relations. It is a bizarre notion, when one considers the perennial and universal nature of diplomacy, and the reality that most of humanity lives in developing countries. Modest change is underway: diplomatic studies are experiencing a surge and the Global South, including Africa is making its collective footprint on the discipline of International Relations. What is still lacking is the nexus: we need much more research on diplomacy from a

Developing World perspective. This book and its companion are small contributions to that objective.

To be sure, even in the Global North diplomatic studies tend to be daunting. For students and lecturers alike the field is intimidating because it is immense: it is interdisciplinary, spans the entirety of human history and is beholden to daily events in a multitude of states, societies and organisations, across the globe. There are few fields of study in International Relations where the practice-theory node is as important as in diplomatic studies, yet diplomatic practice defies easy examination. Formidable government bureaucracies obscure the records of interstate relations and diplomats are subjected to ‘security clearances’ that effectively limit what they may say or do. This is understandable: diplomats have to be totally trustworthy because they become repositories of secrets, confidences and (often simply embarrassing) information about government dealings. Even when they are retired, and thus no longer restricted by government contracts, a career in diplomacy would have made them resolutely ‘diplomatic’: unlikely to seek publicity or controversy and unlikely to ruffle any feathers. Unfortunately, it also makes them less likely to publish or to share their experience with researchers who are willing to do so.

The demand for diplomatic studies has never been greater. More democratic accountability and access to information result in more people wanting to join the practice of, or asking questions about, diplomacy. It is important that this interest should be encouraged. Like Olympic athletes, diplomats represent countries and compete with others who do so. They should therefore be held to the highest standards. If they are doing their jobs, they are securing peace and prosperity for the people they represent. Their diplomatic status gives them unique legal and circumstantial opportunity to do so. If they don’t, they are wasting taxpayers’ money or worse.

One of the reasons that diplomacy is not analysed more thoroughly is that its routine functions are so low-key. Most of its day-to-day activities are utterly unremarkable. This might sound incongruous because there is a public (mis)conception about the profession being ‘glamorous’. In reality, and except for the highest level of international negotiations, diplomats are not supposed to grace the headlines with their names and faces. They are meant to work behind the scenes—analysing, advocating, negotiating, finding solutions and advising principals. Much of their diplomatic skills might actually be used to deal with their own principles—political leaders are not always appreciative of candid counsel!

But if the work of diplomats can sometimes be mundane, the stakes are always high. In today's world, international developments impact more than ever on even the most isolated or poorest state. The weaker the state, the more important its diplomatic representation—diplomatic recognition and relations can be a matter of state survival. Diplomacy is often the most viable (or the only) foreign policy tool with which to counter marginalisation in the gruelling competition of international relations. On the other side of the spectrum, powerful states find that when they scorn diplomacy, they also become marginalised within international society. It is a deeply uncomfortable position to lose the respect of one's peers, and states tend to gravitate back to international society.

The discussion thus far has emphasised states (or 'countries') mainly because the legal and institutional framework of diplomacy supports state-centric relations. The thousands of individuals who travel on diplomatic passports are all *officially* sanctioned to do so and *reciprocally* allowed to do so by other governments. But diplomacy is by no means only a state-centric activity. There are many de facto diplomats in the world—they might not have diplomatic immunities and privileges, but they represent groups or organisations that are for all intents and purposes diplomatic actors.

The state-centric system itself is only a few hundred years old, after all. Diplomacy, on the other hand, is timeless and possibly not even limited to the temporal world. Fans of sci-fi films will know how often diplomacy features in inter-galactic relations! Here on Earth (the only realm that I have experience of), diplomacy takes place whenever representatives interact on behalf of human groups. By its very nature, diplomacy is therefore a continuous *bridging* endeavour. It seeks to connect entities that are dissimilar, removed from one another, in conflict with one another, yet *need* each other. As human beings, we share the planet: its space, resources, problems and bounty. None of us, and no single group of us, can 'go it alone'.

This brings me to the second part of the book's title: the idea of *international society*. More precisely, the idea that diplomacy anchors and foments international society. States and most other international actors share a critical mass of interests and values, prompting them to commit to a *modus vivendi*. Their broad agreement on how to coexist peacefully leads them to develop common, in some cases permanent, institutions. States thus coalesce in a 'society' that manifests extensively at the practical level—even if the society is essentially conjectured; a subjective

and abstract construct. Diplomacy is the glue that holds together this society of humankind. It incubates the society wherever and whenever diplomacy takes place, and the growth of the one drives the growth of the other.

Within International Relations theory, writing on international society tends to conform to a specific, rather narrow paradigmatic template—found mostly in liberal, rationalist and, to a lesser extent, constructivist scholarship. Unfortunately, when one approaches IR theory ‘in silos’ it limits understanding of the world. It can reinforce stereotypes, create tunnel vision and, as many critics warn, marginalise understanding of large swathes of humanity. For these critics (and I agree with them, despite being a proponent of the idea!), international society is an equivocal concept. Their argument lies in the heterogeneity of our world: diversification of the identities and interests of an enlarging pool of actors undermines consensus on the rules of engagement. To use IR jargon: at an ontological level, the inter-subjective processes that constitute international society are increasingly marked by contested normative spaces.

In large part, this is because the history of this particular society is fraught with unresolved tension. A foremost point of contention is the assumption that its inherent norms of civilisation, and its mechanisms to maintain ‘order’, are Eurocentric. The conceptual discourse on international society is therefore prone to the broader fault-lines in IR narratives. Axioms such as the ‘West against the Rest’, ‘parallel universes’ and so forth find their way into diplomatic theory as well. This is not a problem that we should avoid. To the contrary, it is exactly this diversity and evolving landscape that diplomatic studies must address. Diplomacy is the currency of international society and is therefore the key to constructing—and *reconstructing*, as required—the global social commons.

But this is not a book about theoretical battles. On the other hand, it is not a ‘how to’ book either: it is not a manual to learn diplomatic skills such as negotiation, protocol and etiquette, report writing and so forth. Indeed, let me make it quite clear what the book will *not* do, so as to spare the reader a futile search. It does not, as many books on diplomacy do, cover the *content* of foreign policy. Foreign policy and diplomacy tend to be confused, and diplomacy can be tagged with any number of foreign policy concerns: nuclear disarmament, health, human rights, environmental degradation, science and technology—the list is very long, and it keeps getting longer. When the word diplomacy is defined

by one of these prefixes, it indicates a *substantive area of foreign policy specialisation*. A book on such a ‘type’ of diplomacy usually addresses the substance of the issue and the surrounding politics.

Issue-linked diplomacy does not change the fundamental nature of diplomacy because diplomacy per se is a neutral vehicle for any content that might be loaded in it. This is why my book sticks to the basics of diplomacy; those aspects that can serve as a framework for analysis regardless of the ‘issues’ that get into the mix.

Whereas the companion book delves into the modes of diplomacy, this book essentially addresses the contexts in which diplomacy is practised. The first context is *conceptual*: it provides a picture of how the subject of diplomacy is theorised. I only encountered this abstract part of diplomacy—the dreaded ‘diplomatic theory’—when I started to do doctoral studies. I wish I had done so earlier, because it is surprisingly useful! Students as well as practitioners (most people, actually) tend to be intimidated by the idea of ‘theory’, and this is unfortunate. Theory is like using a recipe for baking; one can do so consciously by following set instructions; or unconsciously by relying on experience and common sense. Theories, like recipes, are invented by people to simplify a complex range of variables, to construct a cognitive map. The ‘map’ offers structure and method to guide analysis of real-life events. If it does not do so, it should be amended, reconsidered or supplemented with other theories. What I am saying is that theory should help us understand events (and predict them, ideally). It should not burden or confuse us with incomprehensible prattle.

The second contextual chapter considers the *historical* evolution of diplomacy. I start at the very beginning of humankind and stop more or less at the end of the Cold War—a rollercoaster of an overview!—to arrive at what I call the contemporary era. The demarcation of ‘contemporary’ is subjective, of course, as any historian would be quick to point out, but it felt like the most practical thing to do. It also allowed me opportunity to point out various contributions to the evolution of diplomacy: the prominence given to it by civilisations in antiquity, the institutional structure that is a European legacy, the American-led ‘New World’ emphasis on inclusivity and transparency in diplomacy and the more recent struggle by the Developing World to ‘level the global playing field’ through the use of diplomacy. As is my feeling about every single chapter of this book, the chapter on history really deserves to be a series of books!

After the historical perspective, I turn to the *legal* context. This is particularly important for professional diplomatic practice, and for some or other reason very few books on diplomacy venture into this terrain. Diplomacy is rooted in legality, whether that legality is codified or not, and knowledge of diplomatic law enables us to understand the parameters of diplomatic activity. Legal rules disarm the political rhetoric and remedy the uncertainty of dealing at the global level. There is a good reason why, over the past century, diplomatic law has become one of the most codified areas of international law! It has always been one of its least contentious branches; a poignant reminder of international society's consensus on the imperative for diplomacy.

The fourth context is the *institutional*: the bureaucratic 'architecture' of diplomacy. Like the chapter on diplomatic law, it is also essentially state-centric because it focuses on the way in which individual states organise and regularise their diplomatic practice. The generic structure, replicated by states across the world, is that of a foreign ministry: a separate and permanent state bureaucracy that coordinates foreign policy implementation, inter alia through a network of diplomatic missions in host states or organisations. As is done in other chapters as well, special thought is given to the constraints faced by 'struggling' states.

The last substantive chapter of the book is a discussion on 'diplomatic culture'. Diplomatic culture is like any other human culture in that it presupposes a certain approach to life—it also creates a sense of *community*. Yet unlike other cultures, it *transcends* the diversity that results from humanity's mosaic of cultures. The chapter revisits many of the concepts that are addressed in the conceptual framework and brings us full circle to the idea that diplomacy is a pillar of international society.

On that circular, diplomatic and societal note, I wish you happy reading! Oh, and one more thing: readers are encouraged to contact me with feedback. Even a finished academic book is a work in progress, and this one, as also its companion will (have to) be revised periodically.

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May 1, 2018





## CHAPTER 2

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# The (*Not So Pure*) Concept of Diplomacy

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Diplomacy is an ancient institution, yet it continues to evoke myriad interpretations: some of them sweeping, some so dismissive as to sound cynical. Consult any selection of books where ‘diplomacy’ or ‘diplomatic’ features in the title, and one could be forgiven for confusing it with a bewildering scope of human activity: from the simple act of handling a social situation in a tactful manner to implementing a government’s entire foreign policy agenda. Even in academia, the concept of diplomacy is surprisingly opaque—‘infuriatingly vague’, as Brian White (1997: 250) laments—and often oversimplified to equate it with negotiation or, more equivocally, the conduct of international relations.<sup>1</sup> The latter conceptualisation, albeit sweeping, confirms that diplomacy is considered by many to be a medium through which to understand global human relations in their most comprehensive sense.

Many theorists and practitioners have attempted to condense the concept of diplomacy to a few essential elements. Portuguese Ambassador José Calvet De Magalhães, for instance, upon his retirement wrote a small treatise called *‘The pure concept of diplomacy’*. The name of this chapter is a nod to his title, with due recognition of the many contending theories about what diplomacy entails.

A conceptual analysis usually departs from a definition, but definitions are opinions and can be manipulated to set the agenda for analysis of the wider theme. What is omitted from a definition can tell us as much about

the author's 'paradigmatic persuasion' (or, let's be blunt, preconceived ideas) as the often loaded concepts that are inserted. Indeed, conceptualisation of diplomacy lends itself rather superbly to the sparring among International Relations (IR)<sup>2</sup> paradigms, and among different world views more generally, as we will discover in due course.

But I am going to ignore all of the pitfalls of reductionism and start with a definition right here, at the beginning of the conceptual framework. It is my own 'recipe' for analysis of diplomacy, and it includes the terms I think are key to understanding this elusive concept:

Diplomacy, a peaceful and continuous process of communication, involves international relations among states or other collectivities on the basis of intermediation, reciprocity and formal representation.

The rest of the chapter will be dedicated to separating out the key terms, or at least the implied ideas, in this definition. Is diplomacy always peaceful? Why is the definition not limited to states only—is that not what '*international*' relations imply? What is the significance of a 'basis of intermediation and reciprocity'? And why should diplomatic representation be 'formal'?

To start off, I will look at the body of diplomatic theory: the systematic reflection on diplomacy that, as Geoff Berridge and Alan James (2003: 85) say, 'blends conceptual, ethical, legal and historical analysis'. This will be followed by exploration of the normative debate surrounding diplomacy's credentials; its conceptualisation as intermediation; and the various manifestations of diplomatic representation, a theme that is integral to its existence. The pivotal notion of reciprocity will be examined to establish diplomacy's position *vis-à-vis* foreign policy and its spectrum of instruments. Throughout the discussion, the universal manifestation of diplomacy as a process of continuous communication will be evident. Finally, I will pause to consider diplomacy's (mostly state-centric) reliance on formal authority. Although I will delve into each of these ideas only briefly, the key concepts will insinuate themselves throughout the discussion in the rest of the book.

## 2 SOME REFLECTION ON DIPLOMATIC THEORY

James Der Derian (1987: 4) has identified 'diplomacy's resistance to philosophical comprehension', and Robert Wolfe (1997: 2), more bluntly, has said the institution of diplomacy suffers from 'theoretical

obscurity'. If the concept is so opaque, can any distinct body of theory be credited with comprising 'diplomatic theory'? And if so, who is contributing to it, and from what perspective?

### 2.1 *What Diplomatic Theory?*

Paul Sharp (2009: 6) is more optimistic about the existence of diplomatic theory, and his conceptualisation thereof hints at where such theory originates, where it continues to be found and why it is useful. He defines it as 'the leading ideas of diplomats and those who study them that have contributed to our thinking about diplomacy and international relations'. Based on this description, a logical assumption would be that diplomacy, as a perennial and universal fixture of global relations, occupies considerable space within the broader academic discipline of IR. Yet the opposite is true.

Alan James (1993: 96) makes the point that very few IR writers even mention the word 'diplomacy', and IR textbooks only occasionally feature the term in their tables of contents. It is similarly neglected by scholars in the field of International Law, despite the crucial contribution of diplomatic processes to the code of international behaviour that is universally respected as 'law'. He observes that even the landmark 1961 *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations* barely mentions the word 'diplomacy'. As James (1993: 96) says, 'it is as if each of the two academic disciplines has left it to the other, with the result that it is dealt with by neither'.

The apparent dearth of diplomatic theory seems to suggest that literature on diplomacy is limited in conceptual wealth and de-linked from the development of political theory. One explanation is that the IR field, which developed exponentially after World War Two and during the Cold War, has been heavily dominated by American scholarship—and the USA is historically known for its scepticism about diplomacy. Not one of the three traditional<sup>3</sup> (essentially Western) IR paradigms fully accounts for the dynamics of diplomacy, and their shared emphasis on the structural characteristics of the international system discounts much of the substance and issues, processes and actors that are evident in geopolitical areas outside of the Western world. Some critics<sup>4</sup> have contended that IR's 'bias' against diplomacy, or its neglect of the diplomacy-theory nexus, constitutes a weakness within the conceptual coherence of IR itself, as the latter—at least in its traditional scope—fails to account for

the changing nature of international relations, and specifically the role of diplomacy in that evolution.

Most of the post-war contributions to diplomatic theory have been made by authors who subscribe to (or seem influenced by) the English School (ES) of IR theory, a school of thought that is rooted in classical political theory. Even though the ES is by no means a homogenous intellectual endeavour, as will be discussed in due course, all its exponents (and I count myself among them) embrace the idea of ‘international society’, or a ‘society of states’, in which diplomacy plays a key, fomenting role.

It is fairly recent and still rare for authors to venture purposefully into diplomatic theorising and when they do so, they either go about it very gingerly, trying not to step on any philosophical toes, or by interrogating<sup>5</sup> the subject in an intellectually querulous manner. When James Der Derian confronted the topic head-on in a 1987 publication, *On diplomacy: a genealogy of Western estrangement*, his post-modernist take on the institution caused controversy.<sup>6</sup> But his thesis was symptomatic of a new, post-Cold War vigour in diplomatic thought, with a host of authors, from a range of philosophical perspectives, joining the discourse.

## 2.2 *The Geopolitical Landscape<sup>7</sup> of Contemporary Diplomatic Theory*

As the waning Cold War left behind its bifurcation of international relations, the field of IR was abuzz with speculation about the emerging new world order. Adding to the throng, the community of scholars associated with the ES increased in size and output and revived IR theorising on the idea of international society.

At this point, it is worth noting that the name of the ES is not a geopolitical demarcation, even if British scholarship has undeniably been important to its body of literature (key contributions of authors like Adam Watson, Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight come to mind). Academics from other parts of the world—South African Charles Manning and Australian Hedley Bull, for example—were instrumental in the original establishment of the School, and Bull, in particular, became a towering figure. His 1977 book, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, cemented the Australian intellectual legacy within the ES. Several other Australian scholars (Raymond John Vincent, Pauline Kerr, Geoffrey Wiseman and several more) and many

international scholars (some of whom relocated to Australia, *inter alia* Tim Dunne and James Der Derian) have taken their cue from Bull and made their own critical contributions to diplomatic theory. Fittingly, the Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy (APCD) at the Australia National University campus in Canberra is housed in the Hedley Bull Building. It is one of the few entities in the world that offers a Ph.D. in Diplomatic Studies, and it plays a major role in offering diplomatic studies in the Asia-Pacific region.

In a case of ‘scholarship imitating life’, much of the contemporary body of diplomatic theory originates in what some analysts refer to as ‘middle powers’: liberal, egalitarian democracies that are not (nor seek to be) great powers, yet show leadership in diplomatic settings. Like the middle powers they hail from, authors such as Jan Melissen (The Netherlands), Andrew Cooper (Canada), Rebecca Adler-Nissen (Denmark) and Christer Jönsson (Sweden) advocate for the prioritisation of diplomacy in international relations. They place particular emphasis on inclusivity and transparency in diplomacy and are therefore inclined to promote multilateralism as well as innovative, networked diplomacy that transcends the traditional state-centric theorising on diplomacy.

By the same token, and mirroring their countries’ assertive new presence in the diplomatic arena, scholars from emerging middle powers are making their mark on diplomatic theory. A few examples are Kishan Rana (India); Ayşe Zarakol (Turkey); Jorge Heine (Chile); Andrés Rozental (Mexico); Su Changhe (China); Kishore Mahbubani (Singapore); Oliver Stuenkel (Brazil); Don Nanjira (Kenya); and Chris Landsberg (South Africa). Their very diverse world views (distinct from the traditional theorists and also from one another) are changing the theoretical landscape of diplomatic theory, much as their states are diversifying the profile of global structural power. Yet despite the growing contributions from the Developing World, diplomatic theory remains heavily dominated by Western scholarship, and Africa in particular is lagging behind in its contributions.

The ‘elephant in the room’ remains the superpower of the world. As mentioned, the USA has dominated the IR field but has neglected diplomacy, both in theory and in practice. With the exception of a few impressive authors (James Der Derian, Alan Henrikson, Geoff Pigman and among others) the impact of US scholars on diplomatic theory has been disproportionately small. This is ironic when one takes into account the paradigm-shifting impact that the USA exerted on diplomatic practice in

the wake of the twentieth century's two world wars. After World War One, US President Woodrow Wilson took the lead in pioneering 'new diplomacy' as a move away from Eurocentric diplomacy, and following the Second World War, the USA acted as architect and sponsor of the United Nations.

Wiseman (2005: 410) says the blurring of the distinction between the concepts of diplomacy and foreign policy 'is one reason why diplomacy in general and diplomatic culture in particular are neglected in US academic circles'. The distinct role of diplomacy *vis-à-vis* the other instruments of foreign policy was therefore not sufficiently appreciated. An exclusion from this trend is the bulk of theory on *public diplomacy* that US authors have generated, especially since the global backlash against the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and the post-'9-11' war on terror.

### 2.3 *Categories of Diplomatic Theory*

Three (possibly four) categories can be distinguished within the broad body of diplomatic theory: first, second and third order theory.<sup>8</sup> *First-order* diplomatic theory uses a predominantly historical approach—in essence thus a descriptive narrative (what diplomacy *does*)—to reflect on diplomatic conduct. The origins of this order of diplomatic theory date back more than four millennia. Raymond Cohen (1999: 3) explains that *circa* 2500 BCE, a cuneiform tablet sent from the Kingdom of Ebla to the Kingdom of Hamazi revealed several elements that have endured as essential theoretical components of diplomacy: the role of intermediaries in pursuing a functional relationship between sovereign entities; the recognition of orderly procedure and convention; the communication of such mechanisms by means of an understood medium; the embrace of protocol rules premised on a set of norms guiding acceptable behaviour; and a shared ethic of equality between sovereigns within a broader human community.

Historically and for most of the twentieth century, diplomatic historians enjoyed an 'exalted status' (D'Agostino 2012: 20) that made first-order diplomatic theory dominate the literature on diplomacy. Not surprisingly, the most significant contributions were made by diplomatic practitioners such as Philippe de Comynnes, François De Callières,<sup>9</sup> Harold Nicolson and Ernest Satow, as they focused on the practical aspects associated with the profession: issues such as protocol, diplomatic immunities and functions of diplomats. To a limited extent, normative

elements were therefore also contained in first-order diplomatic theory through the profiling of diplomats and invoking of ideal forms of behaviour.

However, as Paul Sharp (2009: 7) observes, the specific circumstances and priorities of diplomatic practitioners result in such reflections usually being expressed in autobiographies, diaries and historical accounts; forms of literature ‘which do not lend themselves well to the conversations and debates of theoretical discourse’. First-order diplomatic theory therefore tends to be regarded as analytically superficial and subjective by the ‘scientism which views diplomatic literature as redundant and anecdotal’ (Sofer 1988: 196). The latter view is rather short-sighted, and we will revisit the theoretical relevance of diplomatic activity per se.

*Second-order* diplomatic theory, on the other hand, is analytical rather than anecdotal. It analyses the nature of diplomacy—what diplomacy *is*, i.e. it seeks to teach the reader *about* the subject. Much of the discussion on morality in diplomacy draws on second-order diplomatic theory. The field is therefore both empirical (stating the facts) and normative (conjuring up ideals and possibilities). Second-order diplomatic theory became a distinct body of literature during the Modern Age. A surge of diplomatic activity coincided with the emergence of rationalism and the nascent new state system with its *raison d’etat* notions about the pursuit of national self-interest as opposed to honour or faith. During this period, the political thought of authors such as Machiavelli, Grotius and Richelieu on the conduct of international relations spawned cognisant diplomatic theory even if the latter, at that stage, was still ‘weak and stunted in growth’ (Berridge et al. 2001: 2).

Most of the literature on diplomacy draws on these first two orders of diplomatic theory, and as in the case of the first order, former diplomatic practitioners have contributed substantively to the second order. Contemporary examples are the publications of Ronald Barston, Geoffrey Wiseman, Johan Kaufmann, Jovan Kurbalija, Shaun Riordan, Jean-Robert Leguey-Feilleux and Don Nanjira, among others. As former practitioners they have enriched the literature with an integrated combination of practical and theoretical reflection on diplomacy.

The development of post-positivist<sup>10</sup> critiques of traditional IR theory yielded a *third order* of diplomatic theory. This most recent addition to the body of diplomatic theory can be described as metatheory wherein diplomatic theory itself becomes the subject of theorising, often with a theory-building aim such as the construction of typology models.

In Der Derian's 1987 book, for instance, he proposed six paradigms of diplomatic theory: (1) *Mytho-diplomacy* which delves into mythology and religion to find the genesis of symbolic reciprocity between entities that considered each other as 'foreign'; (2) *Proto-diplomacy* which examines the various prototypes of diplomacy that evolved during the Middle Ages; (3) *Diplomacy* which refers to state-centric, post-Westphalian diplomacy; (4) *Anti-Diplomacy* as espoused by idealists with cosmopolitan values, including Christian universalism and utopian philosophy; (5) *Neo-diplomacy* which is the politicised version of anti-diplomacy, such as socialist internationalism; and finally (6) *Techno-diplomacy* which focuses on hitherto unimagined forms of diplomatic interaction, enabled by new technologies. More recently, Stuart Murray in his doctoral thesis (2006) constructed a tripartite typology of diplomatic theory in which he distinguishes among three categories of diplomatic theory: Traditional (broadly aligned to Realism and thus statist), Nascent (broadly aligned to Idealism, with a focus on emerging non-state actors) and Innovative (broadly aligned to Constructivism). These, he claims, have a complementary relationship, are interdisciplinary and cover the entire spectrum of modern diplomacy, both the state and non-state perspectives.

Several theorists have identified a vacuum in metaphysical diplomatic theorising, namely that it has a mutually exclusive notion of theory and practice. In this regard, Costas Constantinou (1996: 17) has proposed (what, in effect, could amount to a *fourth order* of diplomatic theory) a post-metatheoretical approach to diplomacy. He refers to this as *theoria*, a combination of metatheory and theory-as-practice. Constantinou (1996: xii, 53) explains that the modern term 'theory' has been grammatologically effaced because of its either/or distinction from practice. He therefore prefers to use the ancient Greek term *theoria* because of its complex, more holistic denotation of theory as practice: '*theoria* exposes the original, etymological, and philosophical association between theory and diplomacy'. Diplomacy, which is both institution and praxis, is steeped so fundamentally in practical conduct that any theorising thereof that depreciates the activity is in danger of losing sight of the substantive dimension to diplomacy's multidimensional representative role.

Paul Sharp is one theorist who has paid particular attention to this problem. In his *Diplomatic Theory of International Relations* (2009), he applied explicit 'diplomatic thinking' to the main IR traditions. Moving full circle through the various orders of diplomatic theory, he reminds us that the first order should not be dismissed: there is more



rather than less need to reflect on the reality of diplomatic practice in a pluralistic world. As he observed a decade earlier (1999: 51), reflection is required not just on ‘how things are supposed to be’ but also on ‘how they very often actually are’ in the world of diplomacy. This is reminiscent of Wolfe’s (1997: 14) contention that ‘structures ... are reproduced by action. In that sense the practice of diplomacy *is* the institution of diplomacy’.

### 3 DIPLOMACY’S NORMATIVE CREDENTIALS

Evaluation of the nature of diplomacy and its normative contribution to international relations is pervasive but contentious within diplomatic theory. At least four ‘idealistic’ assumptions mark the discourse: first, the idea that diplomacy is a foundational institution of international society; second, that the institution upholds universal values over arbitrary interests; third, that diplomacy mitigates power in the international system; and fourth, that the institution is intrinsically pacifist. I subscribe to the first contention, but have less confidence in the absolute claims of the other three assumptions.

#### 3.1 *Constitutive Element of International Society*

In their book *Essence of Diplomacy*—another recent contribution to the body of theory on diplomacy—Christer Jönsson and Martin Hall (2005: 37) refer to the ‘reproduction of international society’ as one of the three constitutive dimensions of diplomacy (the other two they identify are communication and representation). Conjecture of an ‘international society’ presupposes the coexistence of distinct political communities that recognise a common destiny based on shared challenges, values and interests. The ideas of ‘international society’ and ‘international community’ are therefore linked but not synonymous: as Berridge and James (2003: 140) explain, international community, which implies a collectivity of states, is a term that suggests ‘a greater degree of warmth and harmony than the alternative term, international society’. Richard Haass, President of the US Council on Foreign Relations, confirmed this line of thought when he ‘tweeted’ on 28 August 2013 that ‘international community is a goal, not a reality’.

Rather than relying on common policies, the behaviour of the different political communities within international society is assumed to

be guided by set rules of engagement and common norms. Diplomacy, ‘the most pluralistic organising institution’ of the international system, as John Kelley (2010: 286) phrases it, is the most central and enduring of all international society’s common institutions. It mitigates the complex international environment by promoting norms and ideas. These, Kalevi Holsti (2004: 195) says, ‘help promote confidence, stability, predictability, and the trust that are the foundations’ of a stable international environment.

Diplomacy, in both a practical and symbolic sense, is therefore seen as one of the institutions that maintains order and stability in an otherwise anarchical world. The rules of procedure that evolved through millennia of diplomatic practice have provided normative as well as regulatory coherence and structure to the conduct of international relations. These norms have also allowed diplomacy to transcend the functional realm so as to become an ideational blueprint of what international relations could and should be—what Maurice Keens-Soper (1996: 12–13) calls ‘the constitutional theory of the states-system’. In this sense, the role of diplomacy is symbolic as well. Bull (1977: 166) credits diplomacy with fulfilling ‘the function of symbolising the existence of the society of states’ and says (p. 176) ‘the diplomatic profession itself ... is a custodian of the idea of international society, with a stake in preserving and strengthening it’. Thus, when states invest in diplomacy, they uphold not merely their own interests, but the existence of international society itself.

While international society may be an intangible concept, it manifests in very tangible institutions. The ever-increasing number of international organisations attests to this, as does the significant body of law that has developed from the customs and conventions of international society—codified as diplomatic law and widely adhered to in contemporary international relations. Law, as Malcolm Shaw (2008: 1) observes, ‘consists of a series of rules regulating behaviour, and reflecting, to some extent, the ideas and preoccupations of the society within which it functions’. Just as a national society shares ideals (as expressed in a state’s constitution), international society shares values that benchmark the behaviour of its members, expressed in the charters and resolutions of international organisations.

As earlier mentioned, the ES within IR placed the idea of international society at the core of theorising about IR, and its intellectual legacy informs much of contemporary diplomatic theory. It should be noted, however, that the concept is not undisputed, and the coherence

of this ‘club’, or indeed the centrality of the diplomatic system to the society, is contested by some (Reus-Smit 2004: 275–277). Solidarists tend to be more aspirational (idealistic) about international society, convinced that it espouses a common body of norms and values. Authors such as Nicholas Wheeler (‘Saving Strangers’ 2000) therefore support the new doctrine of Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which renders sovereignty conditional on responsible state behaviour. For pluralists, on the other hand, international society is essentially functional rather than normative—it is a *modus vivendi* that allows very diverse states to cohabit peacefully, guided by rules of international law. For pluralists like Robert Jackson (‘The Global Covenant’ 2000), the traditional principles of non-intervention and sovereignty reign supreme in the practice of diplomacy.

Theorists such as Der Derian (1987: 2–3), Jönsson and Hall (2005: 33) and others have criticised the monolithic conceptualisation of the international system as a ‘society’ and the assumption that the *status quo* reflects any universal normative consensus. The dispute arises from the fact that much of the traditional notion of international society draws on liberal, Eurocentric ideas about global order and codes of conduct. The reality is that, as from the second half of the twentieth century, the vast majority of states in the world are not European, nor even ‘Western’. To these states, the suggestion that they have been converted to European-style good behaviour in the process of becoming socialised into international society is patronising. Rebecca Adler-Nissen (2014: 150) and Ayşe Zarakol (2014: 312) remind us that the history of the contemporary international system is particularly brutal—and the fact that the nineteenth-century European system was exported to the world through colonisation and mercantilism, more than proves that Western agency cannot simply be equated with good norms.

### 3.2 *Value or Interest Driven?*

Literature on diplomacy is replete with notions of conflict management, harmonious coexistence, institution building and communication across political, cultural and other human schisms. However, the extent to which diplomacy facilitates or undermines these outcomes is fiercely debated. Whereas some authors emphasise ‘value-seeking’ (moral) diplomacy, others focus on ‘interest-maximising’ (utilitarian, or Westphalian/balance of power) diplomacy.

Not all commentators think there can be a synthesis between ‘good’ and ‘effective’ diplomacy, and many believe the two concepts are mutually exclusive. ‘Value-seeking’ diplomacy implies that diplomatic efforts are geared towards the creation of a better world for all: notions of democracy, good governance and the rule of law, universal human rights and humanitarian succour are common themes in this perspective on diplomacy. On the other hand, cynics view diplomacy as a mere pragmatic strategy that abuses the opportunities (or alleged threats) of an anarchical world. In the nineteenth century, British statesman Lord Palmerston infamously observed that states have neither permanent friends nor allies, only permanent interests. More than a century later, in a book tellingly called just ‘Diplomacy’, Henry Kissinger (1994: 19) remarked that ‘nations have pursued self-interest more frequently than high-minded principle, and have competed more than they have cooperated. There is little evidence to suggest that this age-old mode of behaviour has changed, or that it is likely to change in the decades ahead’. His comments seem to define the foreign policy of the US Trump Administration, which critics have accused of conducting *quid pro quo* ‘transactional diplomacy’—that is, expecting immediate rewards (rather than building long-term relationships) in the short-term pursuit of international ‘deals’ (Rana 2017).

Even if diplomacy purports to have a normative agenda, it can still be ‘the greatest protector, projector, and defender of national interest and image’, in the words of Don Nanjira (2010, vol 1: 134). This allows for diplomacy to be an elegant pawn of states’ interests, the latter only moderated by states’ expectation of being awarded for adhering to the rules of the international system or being penalised for non-adherence to those rules. Seen from this perspective, diplomacy is used even by dictators and other odious international actors because the use of force opens them up to too many unpredictable and expensive long-term consequences. But not only errant states are to blame. States (typically middle powers) that profess a normative, pro-international society agenda in their foreign policy can also be utilitarian in the use of their diplomacy. Carl Ungerer (2007: 540) says the self-interest of these states ‘is filtered through the practical consideration of when and where middle-ranking states can achieve successful diplomatic outcomes in pursuit of national interests’. In other words, and to use a term coined by former Australian foreign minister Gareth Evans, they pursue ‘enlightened self-interest’ (Ungerer 2007: 551).

It is not surprising that unresolved or escalating international crises elicit accusations of utilitarian diplomacy hiding behind a moral façade. This suspicion is a guiding theme in the diplomatic discourse between the developed Global North and the developing Global South (or core *versus* periphery, as structuralists would express it). States in the latter group, who have experienced the brunt of negative sociopolitical and economic spill-over effects of global politics, have become particularly wary of traditional diplomacy's value-seeking claims. This is not just limited to a 'West against the Rest' discourse—sheer size or influence shields most of the stronger countries against the type of intervention that they would mete out to weaker states. The bitter debate about the extent to which it has become acceptable for the international community to intervene in situations where there are complex humanitarian crises of a political making is a case in point.

At the level of individual agency, the normative dimension of diplomats' work also draws on their representational duties. In the process of projecting an image of their states to the world, they can act as 'norm entrepreneurs', in the sense that they can 'export' norms from their sending states to a receiving state or a wider multilateral audience. But diplomats do not just represent their states to the world, they also 'represent that world back to their respective states' (Sharp 1999: 53). When diplomats work in forums where norms are debated, as typically occurs at conferences or within organisations, they arguably become norm 'importers' as they reflect back to their own sending states the imperatives of global trends, standards and norms. Wiseman (1999: 2) captures this nuance when he says that diplomats are increasingly compelled to "adapt their role as cautious gatekeepers of a narrowly-defined 'national interest' to incorporate a self-perception as innovative change-agents, operating at multiple levels of international discourse and being conscious of 'global interests'".

The notion of 'national interest' is, without a doubt, somewhat problematic. Traditionally closely associated with state-centric diplomacy, many critics dispute the notion of a uniform, demarcated 'national' concern. A term that is gaining ground is 'balance of interests', indicating a more holistic perspective on the stakeholders of such interests. Just like human security has embraced the concerns of individuals, balance of interests presupposes that the interests of individual citizens (including those who are abroad, for whatever reason) should concern diplomats as much as the interest defined by governments (Thakur 2013).

So, is it possible to reconcile interest-maximising and value-seeking diplomacy? The complexity of circumstances that diplomats face in the global arena, their often lengthy sojourn outside of their own states' borders and exposure to pluralistic debate, afford them a more holistic, 'bird's eye' view of their own states' foreign policy. This can make them more patient and pragmatic—more inclined to balance values and interests—than the principals they report to, especially as concerns long-term strategy. Ironically, this is also why diplomats are often viewed (and even distrusted by their own governments) as somewhat more 'liberal' than the governments they serve.

### 3.3 *Diplomacy and Power*

Closely linked to the values-interests debate, are narratives about 'power'—the ability of an actor to achieve its goals by controlling other actors through the use of coercion, persuasion, reward or even just by modelling behaviour. The idea that the need for diplomacy is inversely proportionate to a state's power is an enduring realist view. Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War (fifteenth century BCE) contained this fatalistic adage: 'the strong do what they can [what they have the power to do] and the weak accept what they must [have to accept]' (Thucydides 1954: 118). Power politics within any system—and the international system is no exception—'stresses competition, conflict and supremacy and adopts as its core the struggle for survival and influence' (Shaw 2008: 12).

The realist<sup>11</sup> hegemony in the field of IR has ensured that diplomatic thought itself is replete with the goals of ensuring world order, or equilibrium of power. Realists consider diplomacy, as an integral part of statecraft, to be rational and guided by the logic of national interest. Many accomplished diplomats, at the conclusion of their careers, have expressed a similar sentiment about the relationship between diplomacy and power. At the end of his single term as United Nations Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1999: 198) remarked bitterly: 'Only the weak rely on diplomacy. This is why the weak are so deeply concerned with the democratic principle of the sovereign equality of states, as a means of providing some small measure of equality for that which is not equal in fact'.<sup>12</sup>

This brings us to consideration of 'structural power'—the ability to shape and determine the rules of the international 'game'. The majority

of states in the world are not considered powerful, but diplomatic theory has traditionally been preoccupied with power politics. This bias has led to an over-emphasis of the diplomacy of the industrialised powers, precluding sufficient attention to poorer regions of the world (such as South Asia, Africa and Latin America). As Stephanie Neuman (1998: 2) observes, ‘theory has never quite been borne out by events in the Third World’. Donald Puchala (1998: 150) makes the observation that contemporary ‘First World’ IR theory ‘has had little to offer to explain, or to evaluate the significance of, the embittered tone, the complex motivations, the mythological underpinnings, or the historical dynamics of North-South relations’. And John Rothgeb (1995: 34) refers to the evolving new pattern of international interaction as ‘parallel international universes’ that interact with one another but operate ‘according to different rules and ... involve very different casts of characters’. The Western-centric bias of mainstream IR and diplomatic theory has limited reflection on issues such as identity, development and dependency, intra-state conflict and state-building—considerations that are pivotal to the international relations of developing states. They have therefore insisted on adding these issues to the global diplomatic agenda.

To be sure, the voices from an eclectic range of scholars who operate under a non-realist, non-Western, post-positivist paradigm have been amplified in recent decades and account better for the vexing power-relationships that mark the diplomacy between the Global North and Global South. In order to mitigate the perceived entrenched structural inequalities between the developed and developing worlds, the latter has deftly used a variety of diplomatic strategies in attempts to transform the structure of global power and to devise a more equitable world order or to secure distributive justice within world politics. The theory behind this ‘diplomacy of development’ is rooted in the assumption that international diplomacy exists within the constraints of a capitalist world economy. But a caveat is called for: just as the Global North is not a unitary actor, the Global South is not a homogeneous bloc, even if at a political level many of these states use the aegis of ‘Global South’ to highlight their marginalised status *vis-à-vis* the rich, developed North. Acute stratification based on ideational, political and economic interests is a reality of the ‘Developing World’.

What is clear is that the Westphalian principle of sovereignty—formal equality of autonomous states within the international system—does not, by any means, imply equitable distribution of power.

Economic and political dependency has rendered many states sovereign only in theory. Diplomacy offers these states a medium through which they can participate, symbolically as well as practically, in the society of states. A reverse consideration is that some states are sovereign in practice, but not in law—Taiwan is a good example. Its subordinate place in the world of international diplomacy was given a significant boost when US President-elect Donald Trump, on 2 December 2016, took a congratulatory call from Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen. The simple gesture was hugely symbolic, and raised the ire not only of China, but also of many foreign policy commentators who expressed concern that Trump was undermining international law.

A nuanced take on power that has entered diplomatic theory in recent decades is the idea of ‘soft power’ as Harvard scholar Joseph Nye (1990) labelled it. Challenging the traditional perspective that diplomacy can only be effective if backed by tangible resources such as military and economic strength, soft power implies that the instruments of power are increasingly considered to include moral authority and legitimacy. It is therefore a relational concept; an ability to co-opt and attract others rather than intimidate or coerce them. Soft power is not synonymous with diplomacy, but can inter alia derive from a state’s *prioritisation* of diplomacy. As from 1994, when post-apartheid South Africa chose to emphasise multilateralism in its dealings with Africa despite its own hard power advantages *vis-à-vis* the rest of the continent, the country significantly increased its soft power stature in international relations.

In 2003, Nye (2009) expanded on the idea of soft power by suggesting that a state could use soft power while still relying on the back-up of hard power, thereby wielding more sophisticated, nuanced ‘smart’ power. Of course, sceptics have questioned whether this amounts to anything less than elegant intimidation—the ‘iron fist in a velvet glove’ approach.

But what then is the relationship between diplomacy and power? Canadian Daryl Copeland (2009), who makes a plea for the embrace of diplomacy rather than rigid or knee-jerk responses in US foreign policy, warns that diplomacy should not be framed simply in the context of power, because then it ‘immediately becomes instrumental, a tool to be used in order to have your way with others, rather than as a platform for political communication, social interaction, and intercultural contact’. Sharp (2009: 56) also plays down the diplomacy-power nexus. He notes that diplomacy can be viewed as a ‘multiplier’ rather than an element



of power, because ‘the advantages diplomacy confers are more likely to come from being good at it, rather than possessing a lot of it’.

Sharp (2009: 58) also questions whether the profession of diplomacy is directly linked to power politics and concludes that diplomacy, in itself, is not a career choice for those who want to exercise power directly. Diplomats represent power, however, inasmuch as they represent states with hard and/or soft power, and in that sense, there is a symbolic connection with power, rather than a wielding thereof.

### 3.4 *Diplomacy and Peace*

In the aftermath of the Second World War, British historian Arnold Toynbee (1947: 285) observed that war is the price humanity pays for failed diplomacy. Sceptics, on the other hand, have a more jaded perspective on the relationship between diplomacy and peace. Roman writer Vegetius’ fourteenth-century dictum ‘If you want peace, prepare for war’<sup>13</sup> has resonated through the ages in military as well as diplomatic strategies.

Many see diplomacy as a ruse, used to deflect attention from unilateral, even violent state behaviour. The implication is that it can be and has been used many times as a delaying tactic or even a more instrumental facilitating stage, a means towards a violent end, which often is war—the *ultima ratio regum* of political principals. Hans Morgenthau (1972: 112), in his seminal ‘Politics among Nations’, says throughout history ‘when war was the normal activity of kings, the task of diplomacy was not to prevent it, but to bring it about at the most propitious moment’. The classic but cynical view of diplomacy is that it forms ‘an important part of waging war, often makes the difference in who wins, and nearly always codifies wars’ (Murray 2009: 117).

Even the staunchest proponents of diplomacy would not deny that the line between diplomatic activity and violence can become blurred. Illustrative was the frenetic pre-intervention diplomacy that marked the Security Council-sanctioned, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) led imposition of a no-fly zone in Libya during 2011. In such cases—and regardless of the normative debate that accompanied the intervention—the very institution of diplomacy is cast in a suspect light, and its pacific credentials come under attack.

But the association between diplomacy and peace remains a *leitmotiv* in definitions of diplomacy, and this link warrants special mention from

a conceptual perspective. An enduring assumption is that, in a world that is prone to misunderstanding between diverse groups, diplomacy seeks compromise and persuasion rather than force in resolving conflict. It does so through a process of continuous communication, which in and of itself makes diplomacy a peaceful activity: diplomats do not carry guns, even if they represent those who do! A popular description of diplomatic activity is that it is ‘civilised’—some proponents go even further by claiming, as Satow did in his 1917 ‘A Guide to Diplomatic Practice’, that diplomacy is not just a civilised activity but has a wider socialisation effect of ‘civilising’ international interaction. Satow’s idea was compelling, if one considers that his book was written during the unprecedented enormity of the First World War. His contention inspired generations of diplomatic theorists.

By extension then, diplomacy maintains security, one of the most basic needs of any political community. As Vladimir Petrovsky (1998: 27–30) argues, diplomacy’s inherent nature as an intermediating institution encourages world leaders to pursue economic and political changes in a non-violent, evolutionary and rule-based manner. This allows for *stability in the system*, a condition described by Barston (2006: 206) as:

the level of tension or violence and the corresponding extent to which actor interests can be accommodated through diplomacy, without recourse to violence, on the basis of mediation, rule and norm setting.

Certainly, diplomats are not always appreciated for their pacific inclination, and their efforts to ensure stability in the system can be dismissed as naïve or branded as unpatriotic. Kishan Rana (2004: 390 at fn. 14) recounts how, during a March 1982 British parliamentary debate on the Falklands War, former Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington accused the country’s diplomats of having distanced themselves from the advocacy of ‘real’ British interests in their attempts to safeguard relations with Argentina. Many other diplomats, from all parts of the world and throughout the ages, have suffered similar accusations.

The idea of *new* diplomacy in the early twentieth century introduced the notion that diplomacy can be a proactive *fomenter* of peace, not just a reactive negotiation to end a conflict. In the second-last decade of that tumultuous century, after the Cold War had ended, the field of conflict resolution took on board the extended notion that diplomats can actually engage in ‘peace-building’ to prevent a conflict from reoccurring (Boutros-Ghali 1992). In that sense, diplomacy becomes a long-term, normative project to secure peace.

## 4 DIPLOMACY AS INTERMEDIATION

Seventeenth-century French diplomat and special envoy of Louis XIV, François de Callières (1716/1919 translation: 56), warned that the ‘passions of princes and their ministers govern frequently their interests’. His subsequent advice that those interests should be handled by intermediaries rather than their political principals is a theme that has defined diplomacy throughout its evolution. It predates the state-centric legal framework of diplomacy, permeates the ongoing debate about the *raison d’être* of professional diplomacy and ensures that the profiling of individual intermediaries remains of interest to theorists and practitioners alike.

### 4.1 *The raison d’être of Diplomacy*

Intermediaries have been used since time immemorial by groups who chose representatives to interact on their behalf. For most of history, intermediation was a practical imperative—until fairly recently, it was neither physically safe nor politically secure for leaders to travel long distances so as to conduct in person their states’ foreign relations. Technological advances during the past century obviated many of the physical considerations that made diplomatic intermediation a *sine qua non*, but the political considerations remain as compelling as ever. The danger of a public showdown always looms large during direct contact between political principals. No set rules of engagement and the fanfare and excessive ‘hospitality’ of state visits can inflate expectations of personal rapport between leaders, while such affinity constitutes little of the essence of the long-term relationship between two states. Highly publicised and visible personal meetings also raise public expectations, often unrealistically so, of outcomes.

Political principals with a personal background in diplomacy—leaders such as Otto Von Bismarck, Shimon Peres and George Bush (senior)<sup>14</sup>—have frequently excelled at international relations, but the fact remains that many statesmen have little skill or experience when it comes to diplomacy. Communication channels are at risk of closure when policy-makers who are unschooled in diplomacy attempt to handle what should be entrusted to ‘experts in detecting and conveying nuances of international dialogue’ (Bull 1977: 172–173). This, of course, seldom dampens politicians’ enthusiasm for diplomatic (ad)ventures. They certainly have more leeway than even the most senior of professional diplomats to promise and rescind commitments. This means that leaders of

states have the constitutional authority to take immediate and substantive decisions without consultation (even if the wise among them always do!). And whether or not they answer to a democratic electorate back home, they tend to play to their domestic audience as much as they enjoy the international attention. In some cases, the results are impressive, but hogging diplomacy can also have disastrous outcomes, as Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi found out.

The very nature of diplomatic negotiations, with elusive agreement and no linear progress assured at any stage of the process, requires that the tough negotiations be done at a less visible and controversial level, where conflict is contained by the diplomatic rules of procedure and the fallout of a disastrous meeting can be ‘managed’ discreetly. Most leaders have neither the time nor the political inclination to subject themselves to the risks of complex diplomacy and prefer the hard negotiations to take place at a less visible and controversial level, i.e. at an intermediate, ‘technical’ level. And, when it comes down to it, unsuccessful diplomats can be recalled, replaced or redeployed—not so in the case of a political ruler.

Continuity of effort lies at the heart of intermediation, and it is there that diplomats make their (sometimes mundane, but always indispensable) contribution to international society. Hamilton and Langhorne (1995: 238) contend that the contemporary states system ‘would be almost unintelligible’ if not for the activity of ‘diplomatic intermediaries of some kind or other’. This idea of a continuous bridging endeavour is one of the core conceptual elements of diplomacy. A March 2010 conference hosted by the UK-based Ditchley Foundation to reflect on ‘The functions and purposes of modern diplomacy’ reached consensus that ‘no other profession was required so constantly to adapt and build bridges: between national and multinational interests, between reality and values or between old and new holders of power with a global reach’.

The idea that diplomacy connects people across political, socio-economic, cultural and other schisms—that it reaches out from one reality to another—takes diplomacy beyond state-centric assumptions. Der Derian (1987: 6), in his own working definition of diplomacy, describes it as ‘a mediation between estranged individuals, groups or entities’. The basic argument is that the divisions between human entities with separate identities create spaces that are navigated by diplomats. Sharp (2009: 71) makes the point that diplomacy focuses ‘on the ‘inter’ in international

relations, as opposed to the entities between which those relations are conducted, their preoccupations, or the specific contexts in which those relations exist?.

#### 4.2 *Inter What?*

The idea of diplomacy as intermediation presupposes that there are distinct entities *between whom* the diplomacy is conducted. In the contemporary context, diplomacy is studied within the discipline of IR and the assumption is therefore that it concerns connectivity at the *international* level.

It is important to note that this restriction is both recent and already outdated. The ‘international’ as analytical tool has only gained ground in the state-centric post-Westphalian world order, but the world has become so diverse and complex that many diplomatic theorists now purposefully veer away from conceptualising diplomacy as a mere state-to-state institution. This is because the state- and government-oriented view of the word ‘international’ has become contested (Archer 2015: 1): *intergovernmental* (a term one would use to describe the horizontal, direct relations among ministries of tourism in South-East Asia) is not synonymous with *interstate* (which would describe the nature of the African Union as organisation, because only states can be members). Moreover, at any given moment a massive volume of *transnational* activities take place among individuals and groups across sovereign borders. These relations occur not because there are sovereign states, but despite their existence, and with or without diplomatic participation.

The ‘international’ domain clearly includes relations among a huge variety of actors, state as well as non-state, at many different levels, and for this reason, solidarists (within the scholarship on international society) prefer the term ‘world society’. In this diverse, multidimensional world, diplomacy assumes the role of ‘catalytic’ brokerage, as Brian Hocking (1999) has termed it. He explained that diplomats network among state as well as non-state stakeholders to build issue-based coalitions at various levels, whether domestic, transnational, international or global. In this way, diplomats act as the nuts and bolts of international relations.

There is another, more technical reason why ‘international’ is an imprecise label. The word is derived from the notion of separate and sovereign *nations*, hence the term ‘nation state’ that is used so often in

Western scholarship. The reality is that for the majority of the world's states the political parameters of the state do not coincide with one single nation. In fact, a range of nation and state combinations prevail, as most contemporary states fall in the category of one state-more-than-one-nation: Canada, South Africa, Nigeria and Rwanda are such cases. Then, there are also one-nation-multiple-states (such as the two Koreas, Germany during the Cold War and Ireland), one nation-no state (Kurds, Palestinians, Jews until 1948) and, finally, a unique specimen of one state-no nation—the Vatican!

### 4.3 *Profiling the Intermediary*

Even in primitive societies the representative mandate of emissaries was valued so much that such individuals were selected with considerable care. It comes as small surprise then that the ideal-type profiling of diplomatic intermediaries has historically been a major preoccupation of diplomatic theory—Keens-Soper (1973: 488) calls this a fixation on 'moral physiognomy'. Cohen (1999: 11) notes that as far back as the fifth century BCE, Indian and Chinese diplomatic writings (including the *Arthashastra* and *Tso Chuen*) articulated the qualities of ideal emissaries.

It follows that the earliest formal attempt at diplomatic training, in fifteenth-century Venice, involved the study of sought-after attributes of ambassadors. The theme continued to dominate diplomatic theory well into the Modern Age, as diplomacy became more institutionalised and a spate of new, specialised publications on the institution was published. The preoccupation with the required personal profile of ambassadors gradually moved to espouse a more functional approach to the roles of diplomats, although there was much debate as to whether this profile ought to have a moral component. Some scholars disagreed with the widely held assumption of the time that deception was part and parcel of the art of diplomacy. De Callières in his 1716 *De la manière de négocier avec les souverains* ('Negotiating with rulers') emphasised the serious nature and honour required to conduct good faith negotiations, highlighting personal attributes such as 'dignity', 'courage' and 'self-control'. Other scholars, however, rejected normative profiling. Dutch diplomat Abraham van<sup>15</sup> Wicquefort, in his widely acclaimed *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions* ('The Ambassador and his functions') (1681), advocated utilitarian diplomacy in the Machiavellian tradition. He therefore rejected the

idealisation of moral standards which he thought were complicating and obscuring the practical demands of a specialised occupation.

Contemporary literature on diplomacy is less concerned with ideal-type profiling, but a stereotype of the ‘diplomatic animal’ persists. Bull (1977: 170) points out the enduring impact of this profiling as the ‘modern diplomatic tradition embodies an attempt to sustain behaviour on this model’. This psychometric ‘model’ has permeated the recruitment policies and career-specific training curricula of ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs)<sup>16</sup> regardless of the culture, religion, ideology or developmental status of a specific state. With the exception of greater demographic diversity, the traditional profile has not been altered in any substantive way: the ‘generic’ corpus of required skills, qualities and knowledge has become more universal in its desirability as a result of globalisation and the information revolution, and because diplomats work and compete within a global environment that requires of them to conform to recognised international standards of practice. Personal qualities that allow intermediaries to succeed not just in diverse but also adverse circumstances include intelligence, adaptability, flexibility, level-headedness, tact, discretion, good judgement, endurance and the willingness to make personal sacrifices—to name but a few. Add to that the required skills (such as negotiation, communication and linguistics) and necessary knowledge (interdisciplinary knowledge of own and world history, politics, economics, law, culture, etc.) and it is easy to see how even a functional contemporary profile of a diplomat could conjure up a ‘perfect’ image.

#### 4.4 *The Essence: Communication*

Diplomacy, as any definition of the institution implies, entails the facilitation of a relationship between different entities, and this presupposes *communication*. As Alan James (1993: 100) put it, ‘Any group of persons, whether real or notional, can only behave and be envisaged as a collectivity if its members are able to communicate with each other’.

Effective communication—not just the correct application of vocabulary and grammar but also the sociolinguistic ‘appropriacy’ of what is being communicated—continues to be the most basic skill of a diplomat. It is a historical prerequisite for their recruitment and is ubiquitously taught in diplomatic training courses. Apart from the classic (and rather obvious) diplomatic need for multilingualism, the scope of language

studies in a career that incorporates sensitive politics and public relations at an intercultural, global level is very wide. Expert knowledge and ability are required as concerns verbal and non-verbal, written and oral, formal and informal, interpersonal and intra- and intercultural communications. The goal is for diplomats to be ‘specialists in precise and accurate communication’, as Bull (1977: 173) phrased it.

The contemporary international environment with its emphasis on social media and quick sound bites might have degraded the traditional emphasis on diplomatic writing per se, but Rozental and Buenrostro (2013: 241) point out that it remains a critical skill. They argue that writing needs to be maintained as a cultivated diplomatic skill, because ‘the ability to synthesise, analyse, and convey vast amounts of information on critical issues of the day distinguishes the diplomat from other professionals’.

Diplomats need to understand and prepare appropriate responses to language used not only by their counterparts, but also that of states. The latter can resort to ‘extra-linguistic’ channels of communication—North Korea’s provocative nuclear testing, Russia’s annexation of Crimea—these diplomatic signals ‘do not replace language, rather they complement, illustrate or supplement it’ (Cohen 1987: 1). Whatever the form used, in the diplomatic arena communication requires sophisticated coding and decoding, because the stakes are very high.

## 5 DIPLOMACY AS REPRESENTATION

The issue of representation within IR is becoming more pronounced, perhaps as a result of the growth in constructivist theory. Social constructivism is a recent addition to the realm of IR theory and does not take as a given the identities and interests of social groups. Rather, these are seen as the product of social interaction. This means that social constructs—including institutions such as diplomacy—can change as ideas about them change (Wolfe 1997: 8–10). The significance of constructivism to diplomatic theory lies in its emphasis on bridging endeavours: it connects seemingly irreconcilable paradigms, much as diplomats are expected to reach out across schisms between societies. The representation of interests is a fundamental and pervasive concern in diplomacy, to the extent that a popular synonym used for a diplomat is ‘representative’. Diplomatic representation is, however, a particularly nuanced concept, and I will explain three different dimensions<sup>17</sup> thereof: *symbolic*, *formalistic* and *substantive* representation.



### 5.1 *Symbolic Diplomatic Representation*

During November 2012, the Chinese government issued a new-look microchip-equipped passport with imprints of the map of the country. The symbolism of the act infuriated several of China's neighbours—including Vietnam and the Philippines, because the arbitrary map included disputed maritime borders with these countries. By implication, their officials would be seen as endorsing the Chinese map when they stamp visas into Chinese passports.

Symbolism such as this has always been crucial in international relations, and diplomacy as institution is imbued with all the trappings and manifestations thereof. Perhaps because of its ancient and elitist roots, diplomacy carries with it powerful imagery. Diplomats represent states, and the intentions of these states are objectified through symbols, rituals and ceremonies (Faizullaev 2013: 91). This symbolism at play in international relations can be rather opaque, hence the intricate protocol associated with diplomatic practice to ensure that messages and actions are not misunderstood as disrespectful or hostile.

Symbolic diplomatic representation occurs when somebody or something represents the identity, or existence, of something else. Historically, diplomats represented an individual, namely the person of their sovereign, in a rather literal manner: ambassadors were bestowed with all the pomp and ceremony that would have been accorded their sovereigns. The British have perpetuated this tradition, even if just in name—for example, the British ambassador to France is officially called 'Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador to France'. Representation of the person conferred on diplomats a very high, privileged profile as personal confidantes of sovereigns, but it also implied shifting loyalties based on personal relationships. (In terms of nationality, diplomacy was a much more flexible career in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. Diplomats, like scholars, theologians, could—and often did—align themselves with a different sovereign if they fell out of favour with their own.)

Under contemporary international law, the wider continuous polity encapsulated by states is considered the repository of sovereignty and diplomats are therefore deemed the representatives of *states* rather than of individual heads of state or governing elites. As early as 1928, the Conference of American States in their Havana Convention on Diplomatic Officers had recognised '...that diplomatic officers

do not in any case represent the person of the chief of State but only their Government and that they must be accredited to a recognised Government, and [acknowledged] the fact that diplomatic officers represent their respective States...’.

Three decades later, when diplomatic law was comprehensively codified through the 1961 Vienna Convention, only the terms ‘sending state’ and ‘receiving state’ were used. It is important to note that the Vienna Convention did not use the term ‘government’ even though diplomats are obviously recruited and deployed by governments. In the contemporary era, diplomats are seen as civil servants who are appointed, not elected, and who represent a collective people (the state) rather than a specific government or political party in power. As Bull (1977: 159) explained, diplomats represent their *people*, i.e. the ‘active elements of the country’s political life’. And the ‘people’ is a complex identity to represent. A Yemeni ambassador who attends the National Day reception of an Arab colleague does more than just enjoy (or suffer) the cocktail scene—he acts as *avatar* for his entire country and his presence confirms bilateral (and wider Arab or Muslim) solidarity.

The establishment, continued existence or closure of a diplomatic mission can be done for purely symbolic reasons, conveying a message to the receiving state as much as to the rest of the world. In 2008, frustrated with the deepening humanitarian crisis in neighbouring Zimbabwe and the Southern African Development Community’s mollycoddling of an intransigent Robert Mugabe, Botswana threatened to close its embassy in Harare. The move, albeit not implemented, was hugely significant within a region that is known for its political solidarity (IRIN News 2008-12-05).

The actual closing down of an embassy for symbolic (rather than security or economic) reasons is highly unusual. Diplomacy offers a medium through which states recognise each other’s sovereignty, and diplomacy’s representational role serves as symbolic confirmation of the very identity of states. As constructivists would frame it, diplomacy is thus an intersubjective practice taking place between constructed subjects, ‘whose very construction relies on the intercourse and mutual recognition of diplomacy’ (Constantinou 1996: 25). This process in and of itself nurtures the architecture and order of the international diplomatic arena.

A resident ambassador fulfils a powerful emblematic role of a sending state’s sovereignty, and even revolutionary states that have rejected many other institutions of international society, have embraced the irresistible

symbolism of diplomatic representation. As David Armstrong (1999: 55–56) explains, even if these states had had ideological distaste for the conventions of traditional diplomacy, they found it almost impossible to conduct their formal international relations by any other rules of engagement.

Nowhere has this been as prevalent as among small, weak and especially new states. For the fragile new members of international society, diplomatic recognition carries powerful symbolism: it confirms that they are sovereign, bound only by those obligations to which they willingly consent. Regardless of the practical reality of dependency, they cling to diplomacy to reassure themselves and the world of their existential relevance.

### 5.2 *Formalistic Diplomatic Representation*

Formalistic representation presupposes that the representative relationship can exist only in as much as certain formal requirements are met. In the case of diplomacy, this pertains to the fact that diplomats are official representatives of states.

Even the word ‘diplomat’ is steeped in notions of authority and authenticity. It comes from the word ‘diploma’<sup>18</sup> which in the Roman Empire (in a practice carried over from Greek antiquity) referred to official travel documents, such as passes for imperial roads, which were stamped on double metal plates. In due course, the meaning of diploma was extended to cover other official documents such as treaties with foreign tribes. This formalistic cogitation explains the traditional focus of diplomatic theory on the information contained in official archives (Sharp 1999: 37).

Formalistic diplomatic representation therefore implies that a representative relationship can exist only if certain official requirements have been met and are in evidence. This means that the represented entity must grant authority to its representative who, in turn, must accept the responsibility of the status. This is extended yet further in the sense that the receiving entity must demonstrate reciprocal endorsement—i.e. formal ‘accreditation’ in order for the diplomatic representation to enter into effect. The representation is thus conditional on all parties adhering to its parameters. Moreover, official records, confirmed by physical evidence of representative status, are a legal prerequisite: diplomats have historically been required to carry a symbolic token of their ruler, or a

letter of appointment/credence to legitimise their mission. This has also facilitated their safe passage—a practice that has evolved into the modern use of diplomatic passports.

It is clear that the activity and institution of diplomatic representation embraces a strong legal element. Ludwik Dembinski's (1988: 4) definition illustrates the point. He says diplomacy is 'the institutional body of specialised organs governed by specific rules and of activities entrusted to them with the aim of establishing, maintaining and developing pacific relations of a state with other subjects of international law'. The 'official' nature of formalistic representation confers on diplomats special legal standing that offers, on the one hand, authority to enter into binding agreements, and on a more practical level, immunities and privileges that enable them to carry out their activities within the global arena. Formalistic representation also implies legitimacy and accountability. At a professional level, this accords the profession status and respect, as diplomats are assumed to enact the interests of the people they represent.

Under international law, 'diplomats' are those members of a given sovereign entity's foreign service who, on a continuous and official basis, are mandated to engage in international diplomacy. Common substitutes for the term diplomat—even if these alternative terms are not precise synonyms—are envoy, emissary, ambassador,<sup>19</sup> delegate and *attaché*, and descriptive phrases such as diplomatic agent, diplomatic representative or diplomatic intermediary.

From the perspective of an individual sending state, diplomats belong to a specific bureaucratic pool: the foreign ministry. Only officials in this latter government department, whose careers are built on the actual conduct of diplomacy (excluding therefore administrative, technical and service staff), are considered to be 'diplomats'. In plain terms, these are the civil servants who are on a career path to reach the ultimate foreign service rank of 'ambassador'. However, as Dembinski (1988: 121) explains, from the point of view of international law the professional origin and career path of such individuals is irrelevant. The legal interpretation of 'diplomats' (hence 'diplomatic staff' in the context of diplomatic missions) relies on a reciprocal agreement between a sending and receiving state (or international organisation) regarding the position of individuals. Their designation as 'diplomats' by a sending state (in practice evidenced by the fact that they had been issued with diplomatic passports in order to do official work abroad) is therefore only meaningful (and earns status under international law) when such individuals are *recognised* as diplomats by a receiving state or organisation.

### 5.3 *Substantive Diplomatic Representation*

Substantive diplomatic representation involves the activities that are performed on behalf of the represented entity—in other words, the actual work that diplomats perform. One could call it the ‘technical’ component of the representative role, as opposed to its symbolic and legalistic components.

It is important to note the enormous range of activities that diplomats are involved in, to appreciate the extent to which they act as catalysts in international relations. They do not only fulfil *de jure* (defined in codified diplomatic law) roles and duties, but enact a huge range of additional *de facto* (as it happens in actual practice, whether by right or not) roles and duties. The classical inclination to do ideal-type profiling of diplomats is therefore still relevant—‘inventories’ of practical roles and duties are required to guide the recruitment, education, training and placement of diplomats. Indeed, in the current era the substantive element of diplomatic representation has grown exponentially, along with the agenda of diplomacy.

Explanations of the vast range of activities that diplomats are required to perform are usually restricted to in-house manuals of foreign ministries and therefore not available in the public domain. This makes it even more important that practitioners of diplomacy—the ‘specialist generalists’ of international relations—should contribute to the development of diplomatic studies and diplomatic theory. Diplomatic theory has tended to neglect the routine (some would call it mundane) aspects of diplomacy, because as Wolfe (1997: 3–5) points out, mere description of bureaucrats’ work rarely satisfies contemporary scholarship. The most recent contributions to diplomatic theory have however gone some way in addressing this weakness.

## 6 RECIPROCITY AND DIPLOMACY’S PLACE IN THE FOREIGN POLICY CONTINUUM

The terms ‘diplomacy’ and ‘foreign policy’ are closely related, to the extent that the concepts are sometimes used interchangeably. Morgenthau and Thompson (1985: 565) contend that the ‘tasks of diplomacy are the basic elements of which foreign policy consists everywhere and at all times’. This is particularly true within the American IR lexicon, as mentioned earlier. Semantic obfuscation is reduced when diplomacy is identified as only one of many foreign policy instruments.

Even then, classification of diplomacy as a sub-category of foreign policy belies the fact that the evolution of diplomacy predates—by millennia!—the development of state-centric foreign policy. It also underestimates the extent to which diplomacy *transcends* foreign policy in the sense that it is not, and never has been, limited only to the agency of sovereign actors.

### 6.1 *The Crucial Element of Reciprocity*

Reciprocity implies gestures that mirror each other in recognition of a mutual benefit. This is a cornerstone of diplomatic law and the main reason why there is such wide consensus on the duties, privileges and rights of diplomats. Reciprocity is also a central tenet in international law more widely, because in the absence of a supranational enforcement agency to ‘police’ the world, states commit to international agreements (such as treaties) with the understanding that all parties to it will honour symmetrical obligations.

Diplomatic historian Richard Langhorne (1998: 148) has pointed out that diplomacy, even in its crudest and most ancient forms, evolved as a response to a shared set of needs experienced by political actors. Reciprocity therefore anchors the orderly mechanisms that diplomacy provides: mutually recognised procedure and convention, based on a shared ethic of equal status within a universal community. This allows for prediction, taking the surprise and risk out of international interaction. It is an element of diplomacy that is not negotiable—whatever the underlying agenda, there is no such thing as ‘unilateral’ diplomacy. Much like a marriage (even a desperately unhappy marriage), its existence demands at least two actors who engage in it simultaneously and consciously. Unilateralism, to put it simply, is anathema to the concept of diplomacy.

### 6.2 *A Spectrum of Foreign Policy Instruments*

Foreign<sup>20</sup> policy includes all the actions and attitudes of policy-makers, directed towards their external environment. Analysis of foreign policy can be done at four levels (at least)—individual, state, international and global—and a distinction is ordinarily made between the formulation process *vis-à-vis* the implementation of the same policy. When included in foreign policy analysis, the study of diplomacy tends to be done as part of the *implementation* of foreign policy. It fits into a spectrum of

instruments ranging from peaceful and reciprocal cooperation in various fields to unilateral and violent action, with war constituting the most extreme manifestation of the latter (Calvet De Magalhães 1988: 8–13).

The implementation of foreign policy can be a grey area, and there are several foreign policy tools that can resemble, overlap or coincide with, or simply be mistaken for, diplomacy. One example is *propaganda*: the targeted use of information in order to manipulate or mislead a public or opponent. Ironically, spreading propaganda is literally what diplomats do: the word is derived from the Latin *propagare* which means disseminating, diffusing or spreading (information). Moreover, until the end of the Second World War it was not unusual for European governments to have a dedicated ministry of ‘propaganda’. The word was historically widely used, also by the Catholic Church, and had an innocuous diplomatic application until the first half of the twentieth century, when the term obtained a pejorative meaning due to its association with totalitarian regimes.

The duty to portray a sending state in a positive light or to justify a government’s actions can be considered an integral part of diplomacy. In recent times, this communication aspect has also taken on board the necessity to engage with civil society, not only foreign governments. It is a strategic specialisation that has become known as ‘public diplomacy’. Unfortunately, the term tends to be defined rather loosely and can fade into ‘the background noise of international communication’, as Mark McDowell (2008: 7) cautions, unless the definition contains two distinct components: a government role as well as a conscious message directed at civil society.

The idea that states should *officially* target publics rather than other governments received relatively little attention until the end of the Cold War. Even thereafter, as Jan Melissen (2011: 7) notes, traditional diplomatic theorists (such as Geoff Berridge) remained sceptical about the lofty claims of public diplomacy, viewing it as ‘white propaganda’, i.e. propaganda that is simply upfront about its sources. It cannot be denied that there is a thin line between *bona fide* public diplomacy and the deliberate misuse of information, which would amount to propaganda.

Espionage is another foreign policy instrument that is closely associated, rightly or wrongly, with diplomacy. It involves the clandestine acquisition of privileged intelligence without the consent of the holder of the information. It is universally practised for political, private or industrial reasons, but it is considered unethical or illegal and

therefore outside the realm of what is permitted under international law. Diplomatic law (as expressed in Article 3 of the 1961 Vienna Convention) specifies that collection of information must be done strictly within the legal parameters of a host state. There is, however, a convention among states (not expressly mentioned in international law) of a limited number of intelligence agents operating ‘under diplomatic cover’, with the permission of the host state. In such cases, and once again confirming the reciprocal principle of diplomacy, the sending state would be expected to return the favour.

Foreign policy can also be implemented through other unilateral tools that should not be confused with diplomacy. An instrument that is widespread and controversial is interference in another state’s domestic affairs. In the economic domain, there are numerous ways to wield ‘economic statecraft’, ranging from coercion to rewards. The imposition of tariffs or sanctions is typical of penal measures, while an extreme case of coercion would be the forcible blockade of trade or economic activity. Development assistance, a tool that should be implemented per definition only by mutual agreement, is very often mired in real or perceived agendas of interference. This can be the case whether it is done by individual states, or under the aegis of multilateral bodies such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. A major point of contention is ‘conditionalities’—terms of assistance that demand particular economic or political policy, and thus effectively intervene in a receiving state’s domestic affairs.

Interference can of course also be of a more outright political nature. This can be as mild as a government expressing sympathy for the plight of an oppressed minority in a foreign state (Iran, during 2017, taking the diplomatic lead in building pressure on Myanmar (Burma) over the Rohingya crisis), or as surreptitious as training or equipping insurgents to weaken another diplomatic actor (Iran, since the 1990s, supporting Houthi rebels in Yemen against a pro-Saudi regime). In such cases, diplomacy itself enters a grey area as diplomats are the communicators (or deniers) of their own state’s actions and intentions.

A rather blunt instrument of foreign policy, and one which is often also communicated through the medium of diplomacy, is outright threat of military action. A variation on this instrument is demonstration of military power through military exercises or concentration of troops on a border. Linked to the latter is deterrence, the accumulation of military power in order to weigh upon opponents. Deterrence dominated



the diplomatic agenda of many states during the ideological stand-off of the Cold War and continues to define the diplomacy (or lack thereof) between states such as India and Pakistan; Israel and Iran; and the two Koreas. The most overtly violent and extreme foreign policy instrument is war, historically the alter ego of diplomacy. As Hamilton and Langhorne (1995: 239) wryly observe, diplomacy has always been the ‘godchild, servant and begetter’ of war, in addition to being its alternative and antidote.

Ramesh Thakur (2011: 82) reminds us that until just a century ago, ‘war was an accepted institution with distinctive rules, etiquette, norms and stable patterns of practices’. This changed decisively when the United Nations came into being and under contemporary international law, war is illegal unless justified by self-defence or approved by the UN Security Council. Ironically, diplomacy is always part of the picture. This is nowhere more obvious than in the case of humanitarian intervention, or its more nuanced manifestation in the evolving doctrine of R2P. Regardless of the circumstances, any form of intervention is seen as an assault on state sovereignty, and the diplomacy involved in building coalitions to launch such intervention becomes part of the coercive narrative. The fact that any imaginable international issue can find its way on to a diplomatic agenda in itself causes grey areas in the conceptual demarcation of diplomacy.

### 6.3 *The Unique Role of Diplomacy*

It is evident from the discussion thus far that diplomacy has a nexus across the spectrum of foreign policy tools, of which I mentioned only a few examples. Diplomacy can be used to communicate the use (or threatened use) of any other tool of foreign policy, and this association leaves space for ambiguity. Collins and Packer (2006: 10), in describing their typology of diplomacy, distinguish it completely from coercion and the use of force, ‘while acknowledging that non-coercive diplomacy may well take place in contexts where these factors are present’. They use the term (p. 18) ‘proximate diplomacy’ to refer to diplomacy that occurs in a hostile or crisis environment, and describe it as ‘intense, sometimes aggressive and creative negotiation efforts typified by a demonstrated willingness by the negotiating party or parties to threaten serious sanctions for non-compliance, including the use of military force’. A historical name for this kind of foreign policy behaviour was

‘gunboat diplomacy’. Some commentators refer to it as ‘coercive diplomacy’, but I prefer not to because using the word ‘coercive’ to describe a reciprocal and peaceful activity, is a contradiction in terms.

While it can be difficult to draw the line between a diplomat’s attempt to promote his/her state’s self-interest and the active subversion of another state’s interests, the matter of reciprocity is pivotal to any conceptualisation of diplomacy. If an instrument of foreign policy can be enacted unilaterally, it cannot be *diplomacy*. Regardless of the political differences between the parties that engage in it, diplomacy always requires a consensual interaction.

## 7 DIPLOMACY’S RELIANCE ON FORMAL AUTHORITY

As discussed, diplomacy’s representative dimension is steeped in notions of authority, i.e. official endorsement of the individual representative’s mission and formal acceptance of that mission by the counterpart authorities. It follows that a state-centric approach continues to be important in diplomatic studies, and certainly prevails in diplomatic law. Two considerations are germane in this regard: the *legal* standing of a diplomatic actor and the *legitimacy* of its actions.

### 7.1 *Legality and Diplomacy*

In a well-known traditional interpretation of diplomacy, Satow (1979: 3) describes it as ‘the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the governments of independent states’. His use of the term ‘independent states’ evokes one of the most entrenched principles in international relations, that of state sovereignty. The latter has placed states at the centre of international relations, and diplomacy since the organising principle was launched by the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. Contemporary international law is guided by the principle of sovereignty of *states*, as opposed to sovereignty of individuals or any other groups.

States define the architecture of the global landscape, and there is no decline in this phenomenon: there are today more sovereign states than ever before. Certainly, several more are waiting in the wings: ‘aspirant’ states, or what Deon Geldenhuys (2009: 4) refers to as ‘contested states’, such as Kosovo, Somaliland, Catalonia, Palestine, Taiwan and Western Sahara. Ironically, several of these entities meet the legal and tangible

requirements for states: a permanent population, defined territory, and government entrusted with legitimate force to exercise control over its territory and capacity to enter into relations with the other states. These four conditions constitute the *declarative theory* of statehood, as codified by the 1933 Montevideo Convention.<sup>21</sup> The problem is that they do not comply with the *constitutive theory* of statehood. This theory holds that a state's sovereignty exists only insofar as it is recognised, through diplomatic recognition by their peers—i.e. other sovereign states. The massive disparity in size and capacity of theoretically equal sovereign states (some of them 'failed', some so peripheral to global politics that they are 'invisible' in the literature) is therefore mitigated by a single golden thread, namely diplomatic recognition. It is the pivot on which sovereignty rests. It follows from this *relational* quality that diplomacy and international law have a mutually constitutive relationship.

Nevertheless, by treating states as the primary subjects of international law, the latter does not preclude the activity of other collectivities and their representatives in the domain of diplomacy. International organisations, particularly state-based intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) such as the United Nations, European Union and African Union, are established by means of treaties and are therefore solid subjects of international law.

State-centric diplomacy is however given primacy under international law, in the sense that only the official representatives of sovereign states are recognised as 'diplomats'. It therefore bestows specific status on diplomats to negotiate the legally binding agreements that state enter into, and that the world gets to live with. For that reason, diplomatic law (one of the most codified and non-contentious branches of international law) makes intricate provision for the immunities, duties and privileges of diplomats. But diplomacy always takes place in a political environment and ultimately, some of it will be *de facto* rather than *de jure*. In June 2013, a diplomatic furore ensued when Qatar allowed the Taliban to open a representative office in Doha. The point of contention was not the existence of the office—its existence was supported by international parties to the conflict in Afghanistan, so as to facilitate direct negotiations with the Afghan Taliban. Rather, the issue was that the militant group hoisted their flag next to a banner that read 'Political Office of the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan'—the name they used when they held power in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001. Under diplomatic pressure by Afghanistan and the USA, Qatar ordered the removal of the banner so

as to eliminate the impression that the office was a rival Afghan embassy. The office would instead be called the ‘Political Office of the Afghan Taliban’ (Lederer 2013).

The international legal framework of diplomacy has a domestic counterpart as well, in the sense that all states accommodate the conduct of diplomacy within their own municipal law. The extent to which states institutionalise the conduct of their diplomacy will be discussed in Chapter 5 (‘Bureaucratic management of diplomats and diplomacy’). This bureaucratic framework gives a state’s diplomats legal standing as civil servants and contributes to the ‘legality’ of their actions in the international domain.

## 7.2 *Legitimacy and Diplomacy*

Closely related to the idea of legality is the concept of *legitimacy*. Whereas legality refers to technical accommodation within an existing legal framework, legitimacy is a more subjective, normative term that conjures up wider notions of representation and popular support. Something can therefore be legal while lacking in legitimacy, if it is not seen as conforming to acceptable codes of conduct. South Africa’s diplomacy during the apartheid years complied with international legality, but was widely seen as illegitimate, because a racial minority purported to represent the entire country.

The consideration of legitimacy explains why many contemporary definitions of diplomacy tend to be more inclusive (or deliberately vague) with reference to the actors that are involved in international relations. Increasingly, the issues on diplomatic agendas reflect the widening cast of stakeholders in diplomacy: non-state actors such as civil society groups, subnational governments, transnational entities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and multinational corporations (MNCs), international financial institutions, and even prominent individuals. Until the end of the Cold War, the dominant discourse within diplomatic scholarship was ‘high’ politics: security, military and geopolitical issues. The post-Cold War era has been characterised by a much wider agenda featuring a growing number of issues that transcend national borders: global warming, desertification, diseases, migration, gender ... the list is very long. These policy issues, traditionally deemed ‘low’ politics and outside of the domain of diplomacy, reflect more aptly the reality of contemporary diplomatic practice, and demand participation by a more

inclusive range of stakeholders. In this regard, Langhorne (2005: 339) says the ‘faint outlines of a new international diplomatic system beyond the traditional diplomatic practices of states can be discerned’, a reconfiguration that results from new realities, needs and opportunities.

At the same time, there are compelling reasons why state-centric diplomacy persists and maintains dominance. A key consideration concerns a different perspective on *legitimacy*: diplomats officially represent entire states, including the full range of interests of all the citizens of those states and the spectrum of foreign policy concerns of their governments. The same level of accountability cannot be ascribed to representatives of a narrow-issue interest group (such as an organisation that monitors human rights) regardless of the merit of its mission.

## 8 CONCLUSION

The academic study of diplomacy is integral to IR, yet its theoretical analysis within the discipline is inchoate. This neglect is ironic, given the universality of one of humankind’s oldest and most institutionalised activities. Diplomacy, whether consciously theorised or not, has an enormous conceptual scope, and this chapter did not—could not—cover it all. Such an endeavour would have been not only ambitious but unrealistic and even ‘undiplomatic’, as Constantinou<sup>22</sup> warns. Nevertheless, the broad conceptual demarcation that was done highlighted some key elements in the discourse on diplomacy.

The normative debate surrounding diplomacy’s *raison d’être* reveals some of the most poignant challenges in its conceptualisation. There is broad agreement that diplomacy provides procedural structure within international society and contributes to the regulation of international relations. Proponents consider the practice to be one of the (if not *the*) central institutions of international society. While there is consensus that the activity of diplomacy in itself is peaceful, there is fierce debate on whether diplomats are driven by value-seeking as opposed to interest-maximising (including coercive) objectives—and whether the two goals can be reconciled.

A useful exercise in determining what diplomacy is *not* is to differentiate it from foreign policy. Within the spectrum of foreign policy instruments, diplomacy has a strictly reciprocal identity, even if its ubiquity often associates it with other instruments. It permeates and transcends all aspects of foreign policy and is by far the most versatile of its

instruments, precisely because it is rooted in universal needs. Moreover, diplomacy both predates and transcends foreign policy and therefore does not need foreign policy to exist. The reverse is not true: as Keens-Soper (1996: 12–13) declares, ‘foreign policy could not proceed or be intelligible’ without diplomacy’s rules of procedure.

The fact that diplomacy has always been associated with intermediation—building bridges, (re)connecting estranged groups, creating common ground—explains why traditional diplomatic literature had such a penchant for profiling diplomatic intermediaries. It is a tribute to the profession that contemporary international law dedicates a special enabling environment to diplomatic duties; the ‘substantive’ element of diplomatic representation. At the same time, a legal framework is provided for diplomats’ symbolic and formalistic representation. Both these dimensions are grounded in the reality that (most) diplomats officially represent states, the majority of which need diplomacy as symbolic, practical and even legal (through diplomatic recognition) manifestation of their sovereignty.

This chapter has been largely theoretical in approach, yet it would have been obvious to what extent the study of diplomacy requires a practical perspective. For a profession as old as humanity itself, historical context is essential, and the evolution of the practice of diplomacy will therefore be the theme of the next chapter.

## NOTES

1. An example is Paul Viotti and Mark Kauppi’s (1999: 475–476) definition of diplomacy as ‘the process or art of communication among states and their statesmen in international relations’.
2. Whereas ‘international relations’ is a generic term, the capitalised version ‘International Relations’ denotes an academic discipline.
3. In 1946, British scholar Martin Wight distinguished among three IR traditions: realist (focusing on interests and power, i.e. on how to *survive* the system), Grotian or rationalist (focusing on interests and rights; i.e. on how to *reform* the system) and the Kantian or revolutionary tradition (focusing on power and rights, i.e. on how to *transform* the system). In the 1960s and 1970s, these approaches manifested in the triangular inter-paradigm debate involving realism, liberalism and structuralism (neo-Marxism). Sharp (2009: 7–8) observes that each of the traditions displays a certain perplexity about, even ‘disappointment’ with, diplomacy.

4. See, for example, Hocking (1999: 25), Wiseman (1999: 1–2), Sharp (1999, 2009), and Murray (2006). Lesley Masters, who did a peer review of this chapter, pointed out rather soberly that the problem does not just lie with scholars. She says ‘often practitioners make it very difficult to get to grips with what happens behind the scenes of diplomacy in practice’. Having been in the diplomatic profession myself, I have to agree. Diplomats tend to formulate their communications for official consumption, in some cases as classified material, and are loath to explain their actions to outsiders, lest they betray confidences or come across as unprofessional. The result, unfortunately, is that most of what comprises diplomatic theory is only tenuously rooted in ‘reality’.
5. A word tainted with pseudo-intellectual verbosity—but it explains exactly what I mean: *interrogation* is accusatory, asymmetrical, and the objective is triumphalism.
6. Stuart Murray (2006: 4) observes that Der Derian’s overly philosophical theorising, reminiscent of Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx, Sartre and others amounted to ‘intellectual overkill’ so much so that his work elicited ‘both sycophantic adulation and hostile criticism’.
7. Let me acknowledge, immediately, that I am assessing only diplomatic literature available in English. I am therefore not *au fait* with the contributions of authors writing in Arabic, Spanish, Mandarin and other ‘big’ languages. On the other hand, most authoritative books on diplomacy seek to reach a global audience and are therefore likely to be translated in English, at some or other point.
8. The three levels are based on the distinction made by John Gunnell (1981) in *Encounters of the third kind: the alienation of theory in American political science*.
9. Maurice Keens-Soper (1973) credits François De Callières with being the first author to think systematically about diplomacy as a distinct field of political activity.
10. Post-positivist, reflectivist theories—in the ascendancy since the late 1980s—contend that human theories about the world shape it rather than describe it. They are also post-empiricist in the sense that truth claims about the world are not deemed verifiable, but rather ‘in the eye of the beholder’.
11. Realism, the dominant paradigm of IR, considers the global system to be characterised by structural anarchy and the absence of a central authority to settle disputes. This causes a perpetual proclivity for conflict and necessitates a ‘self-help’ system: states rely on physical power for survival; if not their own, then by association with stronger powers. Although liberal IR diplomatic theory tends to tone down the emphasis of power politics, it is also a liberal conjecture that states can jeopardise each other’s interests, not just through their power, but also through their lack thereof.

12. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in his 1999 book *Unvanquished: A US—UN Saga*, is outspoken about his frustration with, in particular, US power politics. On p. 198 he says: ‘It would be some time before I fully realised that the United States sees little need for diplomacy; power is enough. ... Coming from a developing country, I was trained extensively in international law and diplomacy and mistakenly assumed that the great powers, especially the United States, also trained their representatives in diplomacy and accepted the value of it. But the Roman Empire had no need for diplomacy. Nor does the United States’.
13. The Latin wording is *Igitur qui desiderat pacem, praeparet bellum*—literally ‘Therefore, whoever wishes for peace, let him prepare for war’. This quote by Vegetius (full name Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus) comes from his book *Epitoma Rei Militaris*.
14. In contrast to his son, George Bush (Junior), Sharp (2009: 56) notes that the two Bush Presidents both presided over Gulf wars, but the senior Bush, who benefited from personal experience as a US Ambassador, was decidedly more successful in his related diplomatic endeavours.
15. The French version of his Dutch surname is very often used, i.e. *de Wicquefort*.
16. This term is generically used throughout the book—its various manifestations and appellations are discussed in Chapter 5: Bureaucratic management of diplomats and diplomacy.
17. Marie Muller (1975: 5–7) divided the composite abstraction of representation into four categories, of which three are germane to diplomatic theory: *symbolic*, *formalistic* and *substantive* representation. She noted that her fourth category was not applicable to diplomacy: *descriptive* representation (such as a cartoon or a lapel flag) implies that a certain visible likeness exists between the representative and the primary entity.
18. The etymological root of the term diplomacy is thus Greek: in ancient Greece the word diploma, which literally means ‘folded in two’, referred to a certificate of achievement (or a licence, or privilege to perform a certain act)—a sheet of paper typically folded in the middle. The word diplomat only entered the English language as from the late eighteenth century, following the lead of French use (Berridge and James 2003: XV).
19. The word is generally accepted to originate in the Celtic or German (indistinguishable in Lower Latin) word *ambactus*, meaning ‘servant’.
20. From the Latin word ‘*foris*’, meaning ‘outside’.
21. The Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States was signed on 26 December 1933 by the International Conference of American States.
22. Constantinou (1996: 88) says ‘it would indeed seem very strange, and utterly undiplomatic, to insist that a theory of diplomacy should reach a single or final reading of what diplomacy is or what diplomacy entails’.



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## CHAPTER 3

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# Origins and Evolution of Diplomacy

## 1 INTRODUCTION

An evolutionary perspective on diplomacy is essential in order to contextualise the intellectual and practical pillars on which this international institution is built. These pillars have outlived empires, civilisations and ideologies, and to recount the history in a single chapter is not possible. I will of necessity have to gloss over millennia of evolution—starting with the prehistoric roots of diplomacy and marking only some of the major ebbs and flows in its status as an international institution. Diplomacy's intermittent but inexorable growth up to the twentieth century and its rollercoaster ride through that tumultuous century will be traced in broad terms. The historical process will be reviewed only up to the end of the Cold War (the period since then will be treated as the contemporary, or current, era).

It must be said at the outset that the thematic organisation of this chapter excludes proper attention to the many different geographical regions of the world, the various traditions of diplomacy and the full tapestry of its development. A comprehensive diplomatic history would delve into the sophisticated political structures and diplomatic legacy of the Kingdom of Kush in North Africa, the Tang Dynasty in China, the Aztec Empire of Mesoamerica and the Inca Empire in South America, to name just a few. However, with limited space in mind, what will be extracted in this chapter are those trends that marked either the start of, or major change in, the diplomatic practice that is now deemed current and global.

Thus, after a brief look at the practice of diplomacy during prehistory and antiquity, the chapter will pause to consider in some detail the European contribution, which involved the bureaucratisation and professionalisation of diplomacy. Moving into the twentieth century, attention will be given to the efforts of the ‘New World’ to pry open the exclusive, opaque world of ‘old’ diplomacy, the devastating impact of large-scale ideological experiments and the alternative world view introduced through the diplomacy of development. The chapter will end with a beginning, namely the *tabula rasa* diplomacy of states that were only created in the second half of the twentieth century.

## 2 THE GENESIS: PRE-MODERN DIPLOMACY

The practice of diplomacy is widely accepted to date back to the dawn of humankind. Indeed, wherever human societies distilled around the globe, human instinct generated a need for secure communication among and on behalf of such distinct societies. This is where diplomacy sprang forth, and it is at that ‘beginning’ that I will begin.

### 2.1 *Prehistory, Antiquity and the African Roots of Diplomacy*

Africa, in its capacity as the ‘cradle of humankind’, probably witnessed the earliest expressions of diplomacy. A major catalyst was the development of language as a medium of human communication. Don Nanjira (2010, vol. 2: 119) explains how the movement from nomadism to permanent settlements prompted the development of governance and government in permanently settled areas and initiated contacts and relations across borders. These ‘brought diplomatic ways of settling differences among groups of peoples via alliances, compensatory means of dialogue, cooperation, consensus, compromise and coordination of efforts for development and peaceful coexistence’. A lack of documented evidence limits our understanding of diplomatic practice during the Stone and Iron Ages, but anthropological evidence and oral histories confirm the ‘genesis’ of diplomacy.

The earliest recorded diplomatic interaction was a cuneiform tablet, sent *circa* 2500 BCE from the Kingdom of Ebla (in ancient Mesopotamia, in an area located in contemporary Syria) to the Kingdom of Hamazi (in ancient Sumeria, located in contemporary Iraq). This communication implied specific practical conventions associated with the

practice of diplomacy, including the maintenance of archives, reciprocal gift giving via envoys and elaborate ceremonial planning—practices that implied at least rudimentary domestic organisation of policy towards ‘other’ groups. Geoff Berridge and Alan James (2003: 62) refer to the inter-kingdom diplomacy of the Near East between 2500 and 500 BCE as ‘cuneiform diplomacy’ and observe that the system relied on a common law, protocol and even a common diplomatic language.

Even during ancient times, a universal custom involved the selection of ‘diplomats’ (whether they were called representatives, messengers, envoys or something else) only from the most reputable members of a community. A nascent legal principle that was recognised not just among early civilisations but also among primitive tribes all over the world was that of diplomatic *immunity*. To be sure, some of the earliest expressions of international law were rules that regulated diplomatic relations, and diplomatic immunity (essentially the right to unhindered passage) seemed to have offered an early mechanism to ‘level the playing field’ for interaction among communities that were extremely diverse.

Such diplomatic norms are evident in many treaties recorded during antiquity, generated by societies such as the Babylonians, the Egyptians and the Assyrians. A particular wealth of evidence pertaining to diplomatic activity in pursuit of political or economic interests originates in the Middle East and North Africa. The Amarna letters, for instance, are a rich collection of cuneiform tablets, dating back to as early as 1400 BCE, that contain diplomatic correspondence from within the Amarna system. The letters documented diplomacy at the height of Egypt’s imperial power towards its neighbours to the South (Ethiopia and Nubia); the West (tribes of modern-day Libya); and the East (Babylon, Assyria, Mesopotamia and Canaan). Rob Marsh (2013: 59) mentions a treaty, the oldest known codified peace agreement in history, signed about 1100 BCE between Egyptian Pharaoh Ramesses II and the King of the Hittites (in Anatolia, or modern-day Turkey). The treaty’s purpose had a particularly ‘diplomatic’ ring to it, as Shaw (2008: 14) observes: it was ‘the establishment of eternal peace and brotherhood’.

The Judeo-Christian tradition draws on many cases of Hebrew diplomacy as documented in various Old Testament books. For example, in 1 Kings 5, it is recounted how King Hiram of Tyre (in present-day Lebanon) sent ambassadors to the newly crowned Israeli King Solomon, to ensure that relations would continue to be as cordial as under the rule of his father, King David. Solomon immediately proposed a bilateral



deal for the building of the long-awaited Jewish Temple, and he and Hiram eventually signed a treaty to formalise the peace between their two nations. In another diplomatic act, common to the times, Solomon ‘made an alliance with the King of Egypt by marrying his daughter’ (1 Kings 3:1).

Strategic marriages and high-profile visits are also elaborated on by the Talmud and the Quran. One such visit, captured in many inter-faith legends, concerned the visit to Israel’s King Solomon by the Queen of Sheba. She was, according to several accounts, a ruler of ancient Aksum (in today’s geographical terms coinciding with northern Ethiopia and Eritrea), one of the greatest civilisations of the ancient world. The Aksumite Empire reached the height of its influence during the first century BCE, conducting diplomacy with the kingdoms of the Middle East and beyond. Its vibrant commercial relations (the Empire even minted its own currency) turned it into a gateway on the trade route between the Roman Empire and India.

## 2.2 *Classical Antiquity*

A copious amount of literature bears evidence to the practice of diplomacy in classical antiquity. First in this regard was Greece, which in ancient times consisted of a collective of independent city states. The close proximity of the Greek political units necessitated sophisticated diplomacy to enable coexistence and the construction of alliances as part of an early form of ‘balance of power’ diplomacy. A detailed reference to Greek diplomacy at the start of the first millennium BCE is found in Homer’s epic poem, the *Iliad*, which dramatises the Trojan War. Some centuries later, during 776 BCE, diplomatic negotiations secured an ‘Olympic Truce’ to facilitate free travel of athletes and spectators to participate in the first-ever interstate Olympic Games. It is the oldest example of what is known, in contemporary times, as ‘sport diplomacy’!

Diplomacy among the Greek city states thus acquired a reputation for sophistication and distinguished itself by its continuity throughout peace and war times. Although permanent embassies were not yet known, the Greeks used a system of local representation through ‘honorary consuls’. Maaïke Okano-Heijmans (2013: 475) mentions, for instance, the Greek consuls who worked in Alexandria during the sixth to fourth centuries BCE, to protect the interests of the Greek community in Egypt—the latter community actually employed them.

Greek ambassadors were chosen by the public, based on their oratory ability and skills of persuasion, and were a select, usually elderly, group. In fact, the Greeks referred to their ambassadors as *presbeis*, which means ‘important people’. The Greek city states also produced the earliest evidence of diplomatic debates in public fora (what became known as ‘open diplomacy’ many millennia later). The drawback of this system was, ironically, the very democratic nature thereof: accountability imposed delays in the ambassadors’ negotiations, as a mandate ‘back home’ had to be debated at every turn of events.

A narrative of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE) among Greek city states, written by the ancient Greek historian Thucydides, provides an elaborate insight into the diplomacy of the time. In particular, the negotiations between Athens and the island of Melos shed light on the Greek embrace of diplomacy as statecraft. (The tragic outcome of the *Melian Dialogue*, as it is known, has been quoted by many IR Realists when they make the point that diplomacy is, at most, a utilitarian tool of foreign policy.) Thucydides’ description of an allied conference in Sparta (432 BCE) also reveals that representatives from city states with antagonistic relationships participated in these multilateral conferences, where they were granted opportunity to respond to allegations made by opponents. Nonetheless, the inclusivity of this diplomatic system was restricted to participation by the Greek city states.

In Ancient Rome, both in its early republican phase and successor period, when it morphed into the Roman Empire, diplomacy was an integral institution and much of it was based on Hellenic precedent. The Roman Empire, one of the largest in history, relied on diplomacy as a functional tool to manage long-distance legal and commercial business within the empire and (in the tradition of *realpolitik!*) to consolidate its hegemony. This resulted in the first two centuries of the Empire witnessing unprecedented peace and prosperity, known as the *Pax Romana*. The ‘Roman Peace’ amounted to a kind of collective security system, but it existed within an imperial hierarchy and therefore differed from the Greek ‘balance of power’ system. This vertical distribution of power, and the fact that Rome could impose its imperial will on other political entities, ultimately caused the Romans to neglect diplomacy. As former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1999: 198) has commented, ‘Diplomacy is perceived by an imperial power as a waste of time and prestige and a sign of weakness’ [and therefore] ‘the Roman Empire had no need for diplomacy’. Nevertheless, their penchant for good

administration benefited Roman diplomacy in the sense that it could draw on well-managed archives. And, despite the misgivings of critics, Roman ambassadors (as was the case in Ancient Greece) were individuals who enjoyed a high standing within their communities.

The major contribution of Roman diplomacy was its legal heritage, with its emphasis on a regulatory framework for the business of state. Adherence to contracts, including treaties, was revered—the enduring notion of *pacta sunt servanda*. Moreover, the inviolability of envoys was considered sufficiently fundamental to be part of *jus gentium*. Even though it was unilaterally edicted, *jus gentium* was considered to be of universal application because, as Shaw (2008: 17, 18) notes, its principles were seen as the rationalist endowment of all civilised peoples. This law of nations was the precursor to what is known in the contemporary world as international law. Violation of envoys was regarded as unusual, even among so-called barbarians, and the murder, injury or humiliation of an envoy could be cause for war.

The hierarchical approach to external relations also marked Chinese diplomacy during classical antiquity. During the first two millennia BCE, diplomacy was used extensively to preserve harmonious relations between the central government and the (quasi-autonomous) constituent parts of the Empire. Shaw (2008: 15) explains that ethical values were instilled in the ruling Chinese classes through their education, and this included strict limitations on violence towards innocent civilians. Diplomacy was also conducted, albeit to a lesser extent, between the Empire and the outside world. During the second century BCE, for instance, envoys were dispatched not only to the immediate region but also to Persia, Central Asia and India. However, ‘outsiders’ who visited the ‘Middle Kingdom’ were assumed to be subordinates, if not barbarians, and notwithstanding the application of set protocol rules, foreign envoys were relegated to a tributary relationship. They were forced to demonstrate servile deference through a gesture known as ‘kowtow’<sup>1</sup> which, by implication, acknowledged their sending sovereign’s acceptance of Chinese supremacy. But reticent or not, Chinese diplomacy was by no means unsophisticated.

By the seventh century CE, during the Tang Dynasty, Chinese civilisation was more advanced than anywhere else on earth. As in the case of all superpowers, its sheer cultural and economic gravitas ensured steady streams of diplomatic and trade missions from all over the world, taking the ‘silk road’ to China. The Chinese tendency to be ethnocentric and isolationist, however, meant that the Empire disdained sending ambassadors

abroad, and as a result, the diplomatic footprint of this extraordinary power remained disproportionately small until the contemporary era.

Indian diplomacy of the same era had a well-developed institutional framework and was defined by clear professional parameters. At a philosophical level, it was guided by an ancient Hindu text, the ‘Laws of Manu’, which set detailed prescriptions and norms for social conduct, including interaction with foreigners and envoys. Importantly, the Laws of Manu depicted ambassadors as pivotal intermediaries, bestowed with the ability to negotiate both peace and war.

Unfortunately, the relative sophistication of Indian diplomacy was tarnished by its use as an instrument of war rather than of peace (Calvet de Magalhães 1988: 25). This was articulated extensively by the Indian scholar and statesman Kautilya,<sup>2</sup> who is credited with devising the strategies of war and diplomacy that helped cement the success of the Maurya dynasty. His treatise on statecraft and diplomacy, *Arthashastra* (which can be loosely translated from the Sanskrit as ‘The Science of Material Gain’), was written during the fourth century<sup>3</sup> BCE, and many historians consider it the oldest work on foreign policy, of its kind. The book is a classic that has been compared to the work of Machiavelli and is still used by Indian (and other) scholars of diplomacy. It prescribed diplomatic strategies to pursue national interest by any means necessary, whether espionage, deception or betrayal, but its philosophy was not entirely avaricious: Kautilya upheld perennial diplomatic principles such as the idea of diplomatic immunity (at least from death, if not from hostage taking!) and emphasised the importance of skill and rigour in the profession of diplomacy. As was the practice in other civilisations at the time, Indian ambassadors were selected from an elite group, which in India meant that they came from the priestly (highest) caste, the Brahmins.

As is evident from the above, a common limitation in the diplomacy of ancient civilisations was their exclusivity. In the Roman Empire, for example, subject peoples and colonies were barred from the diplomatic circuit by the fact that Rome would only receive ambassadors from countries where the *jus legationis* (legal capacity to send and receive diplomatic envoys) was recognised. Thus, Shaw (2008: 16) explains that during antiquity, rudimentary international law was limited to a few legal ideals, such as the sanctity of treaties. There was no conception of what we now regard as ‘international society’, where a community of political entities coexist peacefully within a global order with a defined legal and institutional framework. This would take at least a millennium longer, to take shape.

### 2.3 *The Dark and Middle Ages*

Following the collapse of the Roman Empire in the fifth century CE, the international order lost structural definition, resulting in the feudal system of the Dark and Middle Ages. The system blurred the legal distinction between public and private interests, something that complicated legitimate representation of political principals. This fundamental weakness of the system sent diplomacy into sharp decline. The fall of Rome (476 CE) left a diplomatic vacuum, and this space was subsequently filled by the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), specifically through the person of the Pope.

For some time, the communications of the RCC provided the only organic continuation of diplomatic development. The influence of the Church continued well into the Renaissance period (thirteenth to seventeenth century), and ecclesiastical law was applied to all of Europe. An example was the contentious issue of diplomatic precedence. According to the *Ordo Regum Christianorum*, decreed in 1504 by Pope Julius II, the precedence of (Christian) monarchs was determined by the age of their monarchy. Pope Pius IV declared in 1564 that this decree would, by extension, apply also to the ambassadors of those monarchs. His decision provided only a temporary solution and was replaced in 1761 by the *Pacte de Famille* that determined seniority according to the period an ambassador had been accredited to a specific court. This practice, after initial scepticism, eventually spread and evolved into contemporary diplomatic law. RCC's dominance of the diplomatic domain was only diluted by the continent's gradual evolution into a secular state system and the 'Age of Enlightenment' which as from the seventeenth century brought a scientific revolution in Europe.

As the Middle Ages progressed, diplomacy regained some of the stature it enjoyed during classical antiquity, even if religious supremacy prevailed. The Byzantine Empire, in particular, used diplomacy to ensure its longevity through negotiation of security along its extensive, vulnerable borders. Diplomatic historians Keith Hamilton and Richard Langhorne (1995: 14) observe that the Empire's diplomatic activity became a forerunner of the modern system because of 'the expansion of its techniques, its immensely long range and its persistence'. In the same vein, Dietrich Kappeler (2004: 354) credits the Empire with gradually establishing (even before the Italian city states and Holy See did so) the first modern-type diplomatic service. Byzantium thus used 'supple diplomacy

rather than costly warfare' with great strategic effect, as Raymond Cohen (1999: 11) explains. Nevertheless, it limited its own reach because of ethnocentric notions that excluded from its diplomatic club entire regions of the world, including the civilisations of Persia, China and the (by then) rapidly rising Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman Empire represented the political success of Islam, a new monotheistic religious culture that originated in Mecca, Arabia, and spread across the world as from the seventh century CE. With its comprehensive world view and normative guidelines for interpersonal behaviour, Islam impacted diplomacy in a profound manner. According to Shaw (2008: 18), the early Islamic (Moslem) approach to diplomatic law was 'predicated upon a state of hostility towards the non-Moslem world' in contrast to the emphasis of unity among Moslem countries. He mentions, however, that Islam provided for humane rules of war and that 'peoples of the book' (Christians and Jews) were treated with more respect than non-believers. Once it had consolidated its power, the Islamic world developed more explicit diplomatic rules with non-Moslem states. Islamic diplomatic law was based on principles of hospitality and safety, while the ancient principle of *pacta sunt servanda* anchored all international agreements.

As from the thirteenth century, the Islamic world underwent its own 'Golden Age' that rivalled the European Renaissance, with major contributions to science, literature, education and art. As this era gained momentum, the colossal Ottoman Empire started to rise, especially after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The Empire reached substantively into at least three different continents: Africa (in the North and East), Europe (in the South and Caucuses) and Asia (in the South-West and Middle East). In all of these geographical areas, Islamic cultural and diplomatic traditions were imprinted on the pre-existing polities, and the shared religion and jurisprudence facilitated a sense of diplomatic brotherhood that continues in contemporary times.

The Ottoman Empire was renowned for its ethnic diversity, and it embraced a range of religions, languages and cultures. It experienced its zenith during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and lasted until the early twentieth century. Nanjira (2010, vol. 1: 36) notes that during these centuries, the Ottoman Turks acted as intermediaries between East and West, facilitating not just trade but also political and cultural relations.

The influence of the Ottoman Empire was so extensive that it inspired the first-ever bureaucratised attempt to instruct European diplomats

in languages. Hamilton and Langhorne (1995: 77–78) recount how, during the seventeenth century, the neighbouring Habsburg Empire started to train its diplomats to speak Turkish. The Austrian envoy in Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, was mandated to direct a dedicated language institute, the *Sprachknaben Institut*. In 1753, the institute was moved to Vienna where, in due course, it transformed into the first fully fledged diplomatic academy in the world. It is still in existence and known since 1964 as the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna.

While North Africa assumed the diplomatic template of the Ottoman Empire, sub-Saharan Africa's diplomacy was equally vibrant in pre-colonial times: it was conducted among a range of political entities (city states, chieftaincies, kingdoms, empires and more) and was regulated through customary law. Spectacular natural resources attracted traders from other parts of Africa and beyond and ensured the famed wealth of kingdoms such as Zimbabwe (twelfth to fifteenth century) and Mapungubwe (eleventh to thirteenth century) in Southern Africa and the Asante<sup>4</sup> Empire (eighteenth to twentieth century) in West Africa. In a pattern similar to all other regions of the world, international relations on the large continent were shaped by rivalry and conflict (as a result of declared hierarchy and expansionist policies) as much as by diplomacy.

### 3 BUREAUCRATISATION AND PROFESSIONALISATION OF DIPLOMACY: THE EUROPEAN CONTRIBUTION

The Renaissance in Europe ushered in the Modern Age with its tide of scientific and humanistic thought. This dramatic change was equally transformative in the domain of diplomacy. More resources were allocated to diplomatic endeavours, and by the middle of the fifteenth century, the institution assumed much more definition, both theoretically and practically.

#### 3.1 *From City-Centric to State-Centric*

From the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, the city states of Renaissance Italy, which had largely remained outside the feudal system, built on the example of the Byzantine Empire by systemising and modernising the practice of diplomacy. Not surprisingly, this era became known as the Italian system of diplomacy. Common interests and rivalries between city states produced an intricate web of political relations,

navigated by a new professional phenomenon, the diplomatist statesman. The well-documented ideas of diplomatic strategists such as the Florentine diplomat Niccolò Machiavelli (his ideas expressed in ‘The Prince’ of 1513 have become synonymous with *raison d’état* and realist cynicism about morals in diplomacy) and his friend and peer Francesco Guicciardini—who published the seminal *Ricordi civili e politici* (‘Maxims and Reflections: Ricordi’) in 1530—raised the profile and stakes of diplomacy but did not do much to improve its reputation, which remained synonymous with intrigue and conspiracy. Despite this reputation, Italian ambassadors were considered among the most effective and well-connected diplomats of the era. Italian diplomacy was also associated with a refined societal elite, hence the diplomatic deployment of great intellectuals and artists such as Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio.

The *Peace of Westphalia*, concluded in 1648 by means of several treaties after the cessation of the Thirty Years’ War, signalled a watershed in the modern approach to diplomacy. The era that followed became known as the French system<sup>5</sup> of diplomacy and entrenched a system of diplomacy that is still referred to as ‘traditional’ or ‘old’ diplomacy. In short, the establishment of a sovereign state-centric system in Europe meant that diplomacy became preoccupied with the pursuit of national self-interest. *Raison d’état* coincided with the new *raison de système*, based on relations among five greater states: Austria, Russia, Prussia, France and Great Britain—an absence of hegemony and a balance of power that proved especially significant after the Napoleonic wars, when the ‘Concert of Europe’ (or Great Power system) resembled an alliance. The cohesion of the system was fuelled by a common threat to European stability and systemic *status quo*: the contagion effect of revolutionary ideology, as introduced to the world through the American and French revolutions. Diplomacy, as a cooperative mechanism, became the principal ordering device for the international system (Hamilton and Langhorne 1995: 79).

The territorial nation-state concept was not immediately replicated in other parts of the world, where boundaries of nations and states did not (as they still don’t) necessarily coincide as in the case of Europe. China only recognised sovereign equality during the nineteenth century—a delayed entry into the Eurocentric hub of diplomacy that cost it dearly in terms of international prestige and economic development. However, with imperialist Europe exerting global political dominance, the Westphalian system was reproduced, and by the early eighteenth century, the new state-centric diplomatic system was institutionalised worldwide.



As the Renaissance unfolded, the emerging European system yielded many of the ‘staples of modern international life’, as Shaw (2008: 20) observes. Apart from diplomacy, this included notions such as ‘statesmanship’, ‘balance of power’ and ‘community of states’—concepts that attest to the growing state-centric nature of European politics.

### 3.2 *Institutionalisation of the Resident Embassy and Diplomatic Corps*

Building on a trend that began<sup>6</sup> during the Middle Ages, the increase in diplomatic activity among the various Italian political units led to the introduction of the resident ambassador in the fifteenth century. The main reason for this development was a ‘corruption’ in the objectives of diplomacy: as Richard Langhorne (1998: 150–151) explains, whereas previously diplomats were mainly messengers and negotiators sent on ad hoc assignments, the fierce and continuous competition among the Italian city states ignited new political exigencies. Political subversion, rather than war, proved to be an effective strategy to ensure domestic security and economic advantage, and the deployment of astute, well-placed agents was a civilised and economical method to play the political game. More continuity and logistical support were required, and this led to the introduction of permanent (‘resident’) embassies in host capitals. The practice gradually spread to the rest of Europe, and by the second half of the seventeenth century, the resident embassy was a near universal practice. As the Westphalian system spread across the globe, the resident ambassador’s prestige as the ‘sole international extrusion of his ruler’s power and policy’ (Langhorne 1998: 152) was confirmed.

The establishment of resident embassies from numerous sending states had another institutional implication in the cities where they were hosted: as a collective, the foreign diplomats in a host capital assumed an identity as a distinct ‘diplomatic corps’, literally, a body of diplomats. Foreign diplomats, regardless of their diverse origins and often mutually exclusive agendas, shared certain professional concerns, and this fomented a sense of solidarity *vis-à-vis* the host government. Starting in fifteenth-century Rome, such resident diplomatic communities would organise themselves, select a spokesperson (the Dean) and petition the host government when collective concerns presented.

### 3.3 *The Emergence of Foreign Ministries*

Harold Nicolson (1954: 25) has observed that the first actual government department dedicated to external affairs was created within the Byzantine Empire. Building on this practice, and as part of their more deliberate organisation of diplomacy during the Middle Ages, Italian city states gradually started to discriminate between the administration of domestic and foreign policy and to manage the latter in an orderly manner. The Venetians in particular were renowned for the professional organisation of their diplomatic service and their comprehensive diplomatic archives, which included not only a record of diplomatic communications, but also reports written by ambassadors upon completion of their missions. Such meticulous record-keeping provided an essential institutional memory to support the implementation of foreign policy and confirmed the growing perception that continuous diplomacy was an essential component of international relations.

The French refined and expanded on the Italian example when, in 1626, foreign policy was designated an autonomous branch of the French government. This resulted in the institutionalisation of a foreign ministry with political as well as administrative functions. The leadership of Armand Jean du Plessis—better known as Cardinal de Richelieu—who was Chief Minister to King Louis XIII, was instrumental in this regard. As eloquently expressed in his *Testament Politique* ('Political Testament') of 1646, he recognised the strategic importance for France of maintaining permanent, coordinated and regulated foreign relations within the growing community of sovereign states. In order to sustain such relations, not only was a network of resident embassies required but also a domestic nodal point—a well-resourced, professional foreign ministry, which Richelieu commissioned. The model was subsequently reproduced all over Europe.

As secular interstate relations became bureaucratized, so did the profession of diplomacy. By the nineteenth century, diplomacy was entrenched in the various European civil services, with bureaucratic regulation of career diplomats' recruitment, education, remuneration, promotion, retirement and pensions. The USA, on the other hand, took longer—well into the twentieth century—to prioritise the development of a professional diplomatic service. As former US Ambassador Anthony Quainton (2000) has observed, when the modern foreign service of the USA was established<sup>7</sup> in 1924, the country had a mere one hundred

diplomats and 600 consular officers to handle the totality of American diplomacy with the rest of the world. This minimalist approach stemmed from American misgivings about the culture of diplomacy, which was equated with Eurocentric power politics, and the assumption that diplomats—whether American or foreign—were too elitist to share the ideals of the American Revolution.

### 3.4 *Professionalisation Through Recruitment and Training*

Diplomacy's gradual professionalisation since the end of the Middle Ages necessitated commensurate development in the recruitment and training of diplomats. The historical and universal trend to appoint ambassadors from the highest echelons of society meant that such individuals were assumed 'to the manner born'. Training was not a consideration: Who could teach the best of the best anything? Diplomatic philosophers and strategists typically conjured up profiles of the 'ideal ambassador'—the subtext being that recruitment of 'perfect' candidates obviated the need for training.

Nevertheless, Byzantine diplomacy pioneered the practice of training negotiators to serve as ambassadors (Nicolson 1954: 25). The compulsive setting of a conjectured standard also prompted fifteenth-century Venice to introduce textbooks for diplomats. A small treatise that detailed the duties of resident ambassadors, *De Officio Legati* ('On the Ambassador's Office' circa 1490) by Venetian scholar-diplomat Ermolao Barbaro, was a prominent text during the Italian system. Berridge and James (2003: 19–20) explain that this was the first text to explore in detail the duties of resident, as opposed to special or ad hoc, envoys and thus constituted a landmark approach to diplomacy. They note (2003: 233), however, that an even earlier publication by a Frenchman, Bernard du Rosier, can be considered the earliest West-European textbook on the subject of diplomacy. Du Rosier used the word 'ambassador' several centuries before it became common to do so in Europe, in his book *Ambaxiator Brevilogus* ('Short Treatise about Ambassadors'), written in Latin and published during 1436. During the subsequent French system of diplomacy, van Wicquefort's 1681 *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions* became the first functional guide for diplomatic practitioners within the new sovereign state order. Nevertheless, a pre-Westphalian publication by Spanish diplomat Juan Antonio de Vera, titled *El Ambajador* (1620)—translated as the 'Perfect

Ambassador’—remained the preferred textbook of diplomats until the publication in 1716 of François de Callières’ *De la Manière de négocier avec les Souverains* (‘On the manner of negotiating with Princes’, or translated simply as ‘The Practice of Diplomacy’). The latter, which emphasised professionalism in the conduct of diplomacy, quickly became a required textbook of eighteenth-century diplomats and remains a highly regarded study in diplomacy.

Publications notwithstanding, until the sixteenth century there were few deliberate attempts to educate diplomats. Ambassadors made use of private support staff, and their ad hoc deployment resulted in a lack of continuity and institution-building. As of the seventeenth century, bureaucratisation of diplomacy and institutionalisation of foreign ministries prompted more conscious attempts to develop infrastructure, inter alia through training. The proliferation of resident embassies presented a particular need for experienced personnel, more linguistic skills and continuous work methods. As a result, foreign ministries increasingly opted to supply ambassadors with professional support staff, to address concerns that (as De Callières lamented in the first few pages of his 1716 book) inexperienced, untrained and unskilled individuals were sent to embassies and entrusted with the highly complex and sensitive conduct of diplomacy. In-house diplomatic training became more common as from the eighteenth century, starting with the *Académie Politique* that was established in France in 1712 to train diplomats and soon spreading also to other foreign ministries, notably those of Russia and Prussia. The main methodology involved obliging diplomats to study the history of treaties and negotiations. Access to comprehensive, well-managed diplomatic archives, as maintained by the respective ministries, greatly facilitated such studies.

Conversely, professionalisation of the recruitment of diplomats lagged behind the developments in diplomatic training. Historically, and almost by definition, diplomacy was an elitist occupation. Until the Modern Age, envoys were typically handpicked by the rulers they had to represent and were recruited almost exclusively<sup>8</sup> from the ranks of aristocracy. Diplomacy was thus the domain of a select, privileged few, and the inner workings of their occupation were shrouded in secrecy—hence Harold Nicolson’s (1954: 75) labelling of it as ‘freemasonry’. Even within a given state’s foreign service, as we now refer to it, there was social discrimination. Okano-Heijmans (2013: 475) explains how, until the nineteenth century, European states made a strict distinction between the

consular and diplomatic classes, with consuls-general, regardless of their seniority, 'rated in precedence after the most junior diplomat'. They were even issued different uniforms: 'the consular one embroidered with silver, the diplomatic with gold', and the hierarchy was also expressed in formal salutes: 'a consul-general was entitled to no more than the salute given to a British factory (trading station) abroad, while a consul was given even less than the nine-gun salute'.

There were, nonetheless, compelling practical advantages for diplomats to fit into a socially homogeneous group: they were automatically accepted into the royal courts of Europe, where a collective sense of political and cultural supremacy was preeminent and where diplomatic protocol was modelled on the aristocratic code of honour. Moreover, novices were often expected to have an independent income during their diplomatic apprenticeships (a popular substitute for diplomatic training) and only somebody from the upper classes could afford to travel and live in style without being remunerated.

It was not until the proclamation of the French Second Republic, in the wake of the 1848 Revolution, that diplomacy started to morph into a merit-based profession. Still, the democratisation of European foreign services trailed behind other public reforms and diplomats continued to be recruited mainly from aristocratic circles. The domain of foreign policy was seen (as it remains seen, by many contemporary leaders) as 'high politics', with stakes too high to entrust to public scrutiny. As Berridge (1995: 13) explains, the aristocracy of Europe resisted democratic control over foreign policy more vigorously than any other area of governance. But as the emergent middle classes grew in influence and diplomatic relations spread around the globe (and further away from the courtly fraternity in Europe) the aristocratic hegemony in diplomacy was diminished. The ascent of a powerful USA, with its distrust of traditional diplomacy and constitutional prohibition against titles of nobility, no doubt also hastened the demise of the 'aristocrat-diplomat'.

Diplomacy thus entered, albeit slowly, an unprecedented new phase, as the profession assumed a new societal profile: more heterogeneous and more middle-class. Granted, in many instances social exclusivity evolved into academic elitism, with British diplomats, for example, being recruited almost entirely from the 'Oxbridge'<sup>9</sup> pool of candidates, well into the twentieth century.

### 3.5 *Development of a Legal Framework for the Profession*

As has become clear, the practice of diplomacy has always hinged on certain core principles. The most basic of these, the inviolability of envoys, has been implied in all diplomatic codes of protocol, written or otherwise, since antiquity. Paradoxically, the bad reputation of diplomacy as practiced by the Italian city states made it more urgent for diplomats to have well-ensconced privileges and immunities to protect them from prosecution—as it were, they simply did not enjoy much trust. It was not until the sixteenth century, also in Italy, that the principle was subjected to systematic academic scrutiny. This was done in Alberico Gentili's 1584 *De Legationibus* ('Concerning Embassies'), as well as in the 1604 *De la charge et dignité de l'ambassadeur* (an approximate translation would be 'The mandate and dignity of an ambassador'), written by French diplomat-scholar Jean Hotman de Villiers.

A major contribution was Dutch diplomat-scholar Huig de Groot's introduction of the notion of ambassadorial 'extraterritoriality' in his *De Jure Belli ac Pacis* ('On the Law of War and Peace', 1625). De Groot,<sup>10</sup> better known as Grotius, is widely considered to be the father of international law. His work on diplomatic law was complemented by fellow Dutch jurist, Cornelius van Bynkershoek, who in 1721 wrote the treatise *De Foro Legatorum tam in causa civili quam criminali liber singularis* ('The jurisdiction over Ambassadors in both civil and criminal cases'), which Berridge and James (2003: 26) declare is 'undoubtedly the greatest of the classical works on diplomatic law'. The treatise was in part inspired by the (then) recent controversy over the imprisonment of Dutch diplomat, Abraham van Wicquefort. The last of the 'great classical works' on diplomatic law was produced by Swiss diplomat Emmerich de Vattel, who wrote *Le Droit des Gens* ('The Law of Nations') in 1746.

Despite the significant contribution of these works to customary diplomatic law, the debate remained limited in scope. As the practice of resident embassies spread, and with the onset of industrial development, states could no longer exist in isolation and these principles did not provide sufficient clarification regarding the legal parameters within which diplomats worked. Issues that became particularly contentious during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were those concerning precedence and rank among diplomatic agents—disagreements on which even

provoked physical combat between ambassadors. In a particularly bizarre incident, on 30 September 1661, the French and Spanish ambassadors to the court of King James I (England) fought a duel over the order in which their carriages were to proceed (Crawford 2010). Evidently, it had become urgent to reach consensus on universally binding rules about basic diplomatic issues.

As a result, and for the first time in modern history, a formal attempt was made to codify diplomatic immunities and privileges during the 1815 *Congress of Vienna* (convened at the end of the Napoleonic wars). Whereas the conference codified much of existing customary law, diplomatic precedence was finally brought into the secular domain when the Congress made it contingent on the *date* at which an envoy presented his letters of credence. This was a significant departure from the previous European custom whereby the Pope decided on diplomatic precedence. The Congress also established a uniform classification of diplomatic representation by specifying hierarchical classes.<sup>11</sup> Special first-class privileges were bestowed on the great powers, and only they had the right to appoint ambassadors. This entrenched European dominance of global diplomacy.

Consensus on these various aspects of diplomatic law was facilitated by the homogeneity of the international society of the time—the diplomatic actors at the conference were all European, secular albeit with a culture of Christianity and rapidly industrialising. Custom and doctrine (secured by the sanction of reciprocity) rather than codified diplomatic law were sufficient to guarantee compliance among the European states. Evidently excluded from the interstate European norms were the rich, extensive parts of the globe that became colonised by a powerful, mercantilist Europe. Its proprietary zeal was ruthless, and Africa was particularly unfortunate: at the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, the major European powers divided<sup>12</sup> the continent among them, fragmenting Africa along arbitrary boundaries<sup>13</sup> with scant regard for ethnic or other integrity of the colonised peoples. This was the pinnacle of the ‘Scramble for Africa’, and the political map of Africa to this day features the ridiculous straight borders that were, quite literally, drawn with measuring sticks. At the start of the twentieth century, while many territories in Asia and South America had unshackled themselves from the colonial yoke, the bulk of African territory still ‘belonged’ to Europe.

## 4 FROM *OLD* TO *NEW* DIPLOMACY

Traditional or ‘old’ diplomacy—what has thus far been referred to as the French system—experienced its apex during the hundred years that followed on the Congress of Vienna. During this era, Europe seemed invincible—an economic and political juggernaut that gobbled up the world through maritime supremacy. But mercantilism and imperialism came at a heavy political price. The relentless competition for acquisition of wealth and colonies—the three ‘Gs’: glory, gold and God (or gospel)—eventually poisoned relations among the great European powers. The advent of World War I in 1914 marked the final collapse of the Concert of Europe and with it, *old* diplomacy. The ‘liquidation’<sup>14</sup> of Europe was underway.

### 4.1 *The Beginning of the ‘American Century’*

The debate surrounding the causes of the ‘Great War’ sparked an existential crisis in the institution of diplomacy. An intellectual<sup>15</sup> crossroads loomed, as the very nature of diplomacy and the institution’s value as a catalytic element of international society was questioned. European diplomacy was held directly responsible for the cataclysmic war, with the most ferocious criticism coming from American commentators. Their long-held misgivings about European power politics, it seemed, were vindicated and strengthened the independent diplomatic instincts of the young ‘New World’ state. If Europe had hogged the diplomacy of the nineteenth century, then the USA would define the diplomacy of the twentieth century.

US President Woodrow Wilson, himself an intellectual of note, articulated the sentiments of his compatriots when he addressed the US Congress on 8 January 1918. In his famous ‘Fourteen Points’ speech, he enunciated the premises for a fair post-war dispensation and proposed normative parameters for international relations. Deploping the secret nature of *old* diplomacy, he appealed for ‘open covenants of peace, openly derived at’, in other words, transparency in international negotiations. For the many parts of the world that would eventually identify as the ‘Developing World’, Wilson’s doctrine espoused the notions of value-driven diplomacy, liberation from imperialism and an international system based on the principle of self-determination. Ironically, his ideas also found fertile ground in the Marxist ideology of proletarian rule<sup>16</sup> that was gathering momentum in various parts of the world.



Wilson's idealism was not appreciated by everybody, and to many critics, his advocacy of open<sup>17</sup> negotiations seemed naïve, if not dangerous. Many diplomatic practitioners pointed out the capricious nature of negotiation processes: complex and sensitive, often drawn-out, diplomatic projects that require 'incubation time' without the disruptive pressure brought on by an (often) ignorant and (usually) impatient public. Nicolson (1963: 96–100), for example, warned against politicians' penchant for playing to an audience and their inevitable temptation to trumpet diplomatic achievements in order to influence public opinion.

Nonetheless, the doctrine of 'Wilsonianism' inserted powerful new drivers in the evolving new world order, with ideals of democracy and global free trade within the framework of international law (Bouchard and Peterson 2011: 14). Another powerful idea was the outlawing of war, and in this regard, American leadership resulted in the Kellogg–Briand Pact<sup>18</sup> of 27 August 1928. The Pact provided for peaceful settlement of disputes, a collective approach to security and achievement of what its official name indicated: [General Treaty for] 'Renunciation of War as an Instrument of National Policy'. It was initially concluded among Germany, France and the USA but was soon signed by most other states in the world. Even if, like the League of Nations treaty, it was not successful in averting war, the Kellogg–Briand Pact became an important legal basis for the development of doctrine that would, after the Second World War, finally make war a universal crime.

The advent of fully fledged democracies after World War I and the concomitant demand for accountable foreign policy increased the pressure on diplomacy to become more transparent. Symptomatic of this *new*<sup>19</sup> diplomacy was a surge in two very 'visible' forms of diplomacy: summitry and multilateral diplomacy.

#### 4.2 *Summitry*

Throughout the ages, certain individual leaders have shown a predilection for direct meetings with their foreign counterparts, shunning diplomatic intermediation. This has typically provoked dismay on the part of career diplomats, who claim a 'privileging sense of distance' as Paul Sharp (1999: 53) expresses it, from issues that can be emotive in the hands of politicians. However, with global trust in diplomacy at an all-time low in the aftermath of World War I, the incidence of direct diplomacy reached new levels. The vertical rise in 'summitry'

(as Winston Churchill would later label such meetings) began to assume a routine diplomatic profile. Israeli statesman-diplomat Abba Eban (1998: 93) notes that this phenomenon encroached on the symbolic and ceremonial domain of diplomacy. The global depression of the 1930s only contributed to its popularity: the state of the world's economy was of such concern that it required direct, executive attention.

A practical incentive for direct negotiations among politicians was the massive advances in communications and transport technology during the twentieth century. International interaction could be done faster (not least because it avoided bureaucratic constraints!), cheaper and safer than ever before. The spread of democracy also prompted elected political leaders to demonstrate their foreign policy credentials in a more visible and assertive manner. In addition, the omnipresence of mass media provided ample opportunity for 'quasi-diplomats', as Hamilton and Langhorne (1995: 226) refer to them, to impress their domestic audiences with their appearance on red carpets.

World War II dramatically played up the effects of summitry among leaders of the great powers. After the war, the development of weapons of mass destruction raised the stakes of diplomatic negotiations to unprecedented levels—the very annihilation of humanity became a spectre of failed negotiations, or simply misunderstandings, between superpowers. This was not a fiction: during October 1962, a dispute over Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba brought the two Cold War superpowers to the brink of war. The use of 'hot lines' between the heads of powerful states thus resulted because, as Hedley Bull (1977: 172) conceded, traditional diplomatic channels were simply not able to provide the immediate, direct and authoritative communication required to avoid potentially cataclysmic conflicts.

Another catalyst for the growth in summitry was the process of decolonisation. A host of new states demanded visible inclusion in the diplomatic arena, with summitry offering powerful symbolism of leaders being treated as equals. By the same token, the exponential growth of multilateral diplomacy at global as well as regional levels made summitry an ordinary part of diplomatic practice. Ronald Barston (2006: 76) notes that, as a result, the term 'summit' has since the 1960s lost some of its 'sense of high occasion and special purpose' and has in the interim assumed the meaning of relatively routine meetings at the executive level.

Since the 1980s, the proliferation in so-called world summits (high-profile, ad hoc and usually UN-sponsored conferences) to address

global issues has made the nexus between summitry and multilateralism even more pronounced—even if summitry can, per definition, also be done at the bilateral level.

### 4.3 *The Rise and Rise of Multilateral Diplomacy*

The surge in summitry both induced, and was induced by, the simultaneous growth of multilateralism. Multilateral diplomatic congresses (or ‘conferences’) were not new to the twentieth century but had in the past been rare and were usually convened only to negotiate an end to war: the landmark 1648 Peace of Westphalia is a case in point. It sparked the novel idea that multilateral diplomacy could contain war. In 1795, German philosopher Immanuel Kant actually proposed (more than a century ahead of his time) that a ‘League of Nations’ would ensure ‘perpetual peace’ among nations.

Multilateral mechanisms to manage international relations were, however, slow to take root. During the seventeenth century, a limited number of multilateral arrangements were introduced, such as the governance of oceans (Bouchard and Peterson 2011: 13). Yet, it was not until the political and socio-economic transformation generated by the Industrial Revolution that multilateral cooperation became common to the world of diplomacy. The surge in public and private international entities saw a concomitant growth in international law to reflect the dynamics of a changing international architecture, as Shaw (2008: 28) observes.

During the nineteenth century, a range of multilateral treaties were concluded (including the 1815 Congress of Vienna), and even though most of them did not yield permanent organisations, rudimentary global governance was established in certain sectors, with the establishment of organisations such as the International Telegraph Union in 1865 and the Universal Postal Union in 1874. Peter Varghese (2013) says the ‘problem solving spirit’ of multilateral diplomacy allowed for the 1884 establishment of the Meridian at Greenwich, a global standard that would become indispensable to navigation in the modern world. A domain that benefited specifically from the growth in multilateralism was international law as it pertains to warfare (thus paving way for the development of humanitarian law in the latter part of the twentieth century). Efforts to make war more humane found expression inter alia in the founding of the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1863; the

Geneva Conventions that commenced in 1864; and the Hague Peace Conference of 1899 that established the Permanent Court of Arbitration (making the latter the oldest international dispute resolution institution).

At the diplomatic level, during the nineteenth century the Concert of Europe system increasingly saw conferences of ambassadors convened, rather than just summitry of their heads of state/government. But it was only during the early twentieth century, after the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, that multilateral diplomacy assumed permanence and prominence, building on the *new* diplomatic notions of inclusivity and transparency. One of the underlying ideals was that a community of nations could confer within the safety of a permanent institution with universal membership, so as to mitigate any conflict among member states and thereby promote their 'collective security'.

The constitutional scheme for such a 'League of Nations' was captured during 1918 in a small treatise by South African statesman Jan Smuts. In the *Foreword* to his tract, he declared 'the world is ripe for the greatest step forward ever made in the government of man' (Smuts 1918: vi). In the course of 21 propositions, he laid out a blueprint for the organisation and set in motion the process to write the Covenant of the League of Nations, the year thereafter. Heyns and Gravett (2017: 588) note that the idea for a post-war League of Nations had earlier been mooted by Woodrow Wilson, but Smuts' meticulous analysis of the practicality of the League greatly impressed and inspired the American statesman.

Unfortunately, the League failed (manifestly, of course, when the Second World War erupted two decades later) *inter alia* on account of it never becoming the universal organisation it was meant to be. It lacked the crucial support of the two emerging superpowers, the USA and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The absence of the USA was particularly ironic, as Wilson could not persuade his own Senate to ratify American membership of the League. The USSR itself joined as late as 1934, only to be expelled in 1939 following its invasion of Finland. The organisation thus remained essentially European.

Utopian or not, the fact was that more and more substantive diplomatic issues were being discussed at multilateral fora. For instance, Articles 18 and 19 of the Covenant of the League of Nations provided for all new international treaties to be deposited with the League's Secretariat and to be reviewed by the Assembly for compliance with international peace. This, for the first time in history, legislated

transparency in diplomatic deals—the ‘open covenants’ Wilson had appealed for. Political leaders were thereby more inclined to deal with one another directly (further fuelling summitry) in order to reach consensus on matters of vital interest and to lend stature to global and regional alliances.

The Second World War shattered the illusion that any intergovernmental organisation short of universal membership could contain the destructive rivalry of states. As happened during the First World War, the vision of a post-war order began to germinate even as the war was at its most ferocious and apparently apocalyptic. On 14 August 1941, after a meeting between UK Prime Minister Winston Churchill and US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the *Atlantic Charter* was published as a statement of intent for a post-war dispensation. Its goals became the inspiration for several subsequent treaties and organisations: no territorial gains to be sought; no territorial adjustments without the consent of the peoples concerned; the right of all peoples to self-determination; trade barriers to be lowered; global economic cooperation and advancement of social welfare; freedom from want and fear; freedom of the seas; disarmament of aggressor nations; and general post-war abandonment of the use of force. Barely five months later, on 1 January 1942, the *Atlantic Charter* was endorsed by all the Allies in their aptly named ‘Declaration by United Nations’.

The next major multilateral attempt to cement world peace was thus underway. The process fed into the drafting of the UN Charter in the period August to October 1944, at the Dumbarton Oaks conference in Washington D.C. Agreement on the Charter was finalised the year thereafter, from 25 April 1945 to 26 June 1945, at the *United Nations Conference on International Organisation* (UNCIO), more commonly referred to as the San Francisco<sup>20</sup> Conference, named after the host city.

The Preamble of the Charter was drafted by the same African statesman who had outlined proposals for the League of Nations almost three decades earlier, South African Prime Minister Jan Smuts. Christof Heyns (1995: 334) recounts how Smuts had insisted on the explicit inclusion of values in the Charter, which would otherwise have comprised of legalistic and bureaucratic stipulations only. This explains the normative prose of the Preamble. Shaw (2008: 31) points out yet another indication that the Eurocentric era was closing, namely the fact that the headquarters of the United Nations was established not in neutral Switzerland, but in the USA, in the city of New York.

The United Nations became an unprecedented hub of global diplomacy and international institution-building and presaged an era in which multilateral diplomacy would overtake bilateral diplomacy in both quantity and scope. Bouchard and Peterson (2011: 14, 15) credit the leadership of the USA for the ‘spike’ in multilateralism after 1945. They explain how the structure of the UN Security Council originated in the US determination to see unanimity rather than unilateralism in global power politics, hence the US willingness to allow equal status for the ‘great powers’ as encapsulated by permanent membership of (and the power to veto in) the UN Security Council. This normative US instinct to ‘share’ power subsequently became lost in the acrimonious discourse on entrenched hegemony within the Council.

The United Nations, unlike the League, received a mandate that extended to the economic and social domain of international relations. This was a sign, as Martin Wolf (2001: 184) points out, of movement away from unilateral and discretionary policy towards the ‘multilateral and institutionalised policy’ associated with global governance. From a legal perspective, multilateralism in the field of economics saw the expansion of international law into the management of socio-economic issues, in particular that of *development* focusing initially on Europe in the aftermath of the destruction of the war. The result was a host of new legal instruments, most notably the two Bretton Woods<sup>21</sup> institutions: the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), more commonly referred to as the World Bank. The establishment in 1947 of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), designed to enforce global trade rules, also reflected new thinking about the global economic system. The proliferation in multilateral diplomacy was amplified by the diplomacy of development (to be discussed shortly) and attempts by regional organisations across the world to emulate the success of Europe in deepening and widening its integration of common institutions.

#### 4.4 *The Crisis of Multilateralism*

As the second half of the twentieth century progressed, globalisation of human concerns and democratisation of foreign policy processes placed yet more pressure on diplomacy to be conducted in a multi-stakeholder environment. Multilateral venues presented diplomatic hubs where traditional bilateral diplomacy could be conducted alongside

multilateral diplomacy at the regional and global levels. John Ikenberry (2003: 536) notes that in the final three decades of the century the number of international institutions increased by about two-thirds, as reflected in the tripling of the number of international treaties during the same period. Yet notwithstanding the frenetic rise in the quantity of multilateral diplomacy, the 1980s witnessed a decline in the normative reputation of the ‘new’ diplomacy. The overuse of bloc-voting in multilateral settings such as the UN General Assembly backfired, with powerful states resorting to alternative diplomatic strategies, unilateralism and, even more controversially, ‘buying’ of votes. When, as between 1985 and 1991, the US Congress withheld budgetary contributions to the United Nations in protest against resolutions<sup>22</sup> that went against US foreign policy, the United Nations system reeled. In addition, the Security Council was impotent in addressing global peace and security threats, paralysed by the blatant realpolitik of the Cold War. The credibility of multilateral institutions, the UN in particular, was tarnished.

Simply put, multilateralism did not live up to its initial promise as a panacea for global problems. And with the exception of Europe, it did not deliver at the regional level either. This was especially the case in Africa where expectations had been high of post-decolonisation integration. For weaker countries, disillusionment with conference diplomacy lay in the fact that their collective socio-economic position seemed to deteriorate *vis-à-vis* the industrialised states. Miles Kahler (1992: 707) explains that the universality implied by early multilateralism held out the promise of a level playing field, which did not transpire in practice. Rather, what took place was ‘minilateral’ governance whereby a small elite, the group of great powers within a given organisation at regional or global level, actually made the decisions (often reflecting bilateral or regional deals) that were then passed off as multilateral.

## 5 IDEOLOGY VERSUS DIPLOMACY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The enormity of World War I was an ominous portent of the unprecedented scale of conflict that would scar the twentieth century. Much of the social engineering, war and other human misery during this violent century were instigated by political ideology. Ambitious revisionism and programmes to revolutionise individual states, regions and even

the international system as a whole had a deleterious effect on international society. Diplomacy, as one of its core institutions, was damaged by implication.

### 5.1 *Diplomacy at the Service of Ideology*

Despite the lofty ideals of ‘new’ diplomacy post-World War I and the promises held out after World War II by the creation of the United Nations, most of the twentieth century saw diplomacy being devalued. The many states that had experienced communist revolution and fascism in particular marginalised the use of diplomacy: it was either perverted as part of the mission of ideology or scorned outright as a charade of the opposition’s ideology. Diplomats from totalitarian states such as the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany were first and foremost party loyalists (Kappeler 2004: 356). This conditional element in their recruitment trumped the need for international experience or association with a global diplomatic culture.

In the course of the Cold War, ideological rivalry reduced diplomacy to a point of near-oblivion and fuelled realist contentions that diplomacy is a weak instrument of foreign policy, a tool of power politics that is effective only when backed by the threat of brute force. It did not help that diplomats were arbitrarily associated (in many cases correctly so!) with espionage, propaganda and political subversion. This often resulted in self-fulfilling prophesies, because diplomats were obliged to operate within sharply demarcated ideological barriers and rigid strategic concerns. In the domain of diplomatic training, political or ideological studies were prioritised to the detriment of generic diplomatic skills. (The one exception was language skills: the East Bloc states, in particular, invested heavily in linguistics training for their diplomats.) This was mirrored in the resources that (many) governments allocated to their security and intelligence apparatus, as opposed to diplomatic infrastructure. It did not help that embassies in many cases were used as a front for political (even military) support to third states; that is, that diplomatic relations and resident embassies were maintained for political rather than diplomatic reasons.

This was not only true of the East Bloc. Quainton (2000) explains how in the 1950s, the very real threat of nuclear war with the Soviet Union prompted the US Congress to establish three separate intelligence agencies (in addition to the domestic-focused Federal Bureau



of Investigation): the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the National Security Agency (NSA) and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). The fact that American diplomats were ‘constantly in search of reliable information about the dynamics and inner workings of the Soviet system and the intentions of the Soviet government’ had as a result that by the end of that decade, ‘American embassies were already crowded with representatives of these new agencies, who outnumbered the traditional diplomats of the Foreign Service’. Across the world, at state, regional and global level, diplomatic culture was eroded by ideology.

In service of ideology, diplomacy was also used to negotiate proxy battlegrounds for the superpowers and their allies. In Africa, ideological manoeuvring was fuelled by access to resources and facilitated by insecure leaders of new states. African elites were co-opted into choosing sides, and politicians, diplomats and military officers received politicised training in foreign capitals. Ideological patronage was wielded with no regard for the legitimacy of client state governments: dictators and their predatory regimes were rewarded, installed and maintained in power simply for their ideological allegiance. Interference, even blatant intervention, was common, and several popular leaders (examples are Patrice Lumumba from the Belgian Congo and Eduardo Mondlane from Mozambique) were ‘permanently removed’ with the help of foreign intelligence agencies. In Eastern Europe, South America and Asia, similar zero-sum rivalry choked the institution and practice of diplomacy.

The effects of ideology on the diplomatic practice of the (former) superpowers have seemingly become entrenched. Geoffrey Wiseman (2005: 421), in a critique of post-Cold War US diplomacy, recounts how the USA since the end of the Second World War invested progressively more in its national security institutions, to the point that the Department of State became dwarfed in status. In the early twenty-first century, the USA continues to embrace this ‘culture of intelligence over a culture of diplomacy’. The same, I would argue, can be said about the Soviet Union and its successor state, Russia.

## 5.2 *International Society Divided*

The competition of the bipolar ideological dispensation neutralised the diplomatic instinct to find common ground, and this problem was extended to multilateral fora: international institutions were rendered impotent in the face of ideological deadlock. Much of the time

spent in these organisations was on rhetorical bickering, and Kappeler (2004: 359) says that ‘often diplomats of one side were encouraged to shun contacts with their colleagues from the other’.

During the late 1980s, as *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (open-ness) marked the unravelling of the Soviet Empire and with it the restraints of the Cold War, global diplomacy experienced a renaissance. Multilateral institutions, smaller states as well as non-state actors found that they had more opportunity to impact substantive diplomacy, and the agenda of diplomacy widened considerably. As in the case of decolonisation, a large number of new states entered the international domain: the 1991 dissolution of the USSR alone yielded 15 separate republics. The new states were eager to claim their own diplomatic space, and a bustle of diplomacy followed, not only in terms of representation abroad, but also in the development of new foreign ministry infrastructure, research, diplomatic training and so forth.

The end of the Cold War did not completely free international society from the ideological yoke. The decline of communism as an ideological force may have initially marked the moral vindication of liberal capitalism, but many critics claim that the zeal to spread the purported virtues of Western civilisation, including democracy and human rights, has amounted to a new form of intellectual imperialism. In 1999, Samuel Huntington concluded that the West’s enormous economic power had amplified these ideas forcefully through what he called the ‘Davos culture’ and (somewhat prophetically) warned that the majority of people in the world did not share this world view (Huntington 1999).

This ‘majority’ he referred to is the so-called Developing World, and it is to the diplomacy of this vast swath of humanity that I now turn.

## 6 ENTER THE DEVELOPING WORLD

The evolution of the Developing World has been a multidimensional, complex process, with unique dynamics impacting various geographical regions. The scope of this chapter does not allow for a thorough analysis of the process, but a holistic view of diplomacy’s evolution would not be possible without at least some reflection on this extraordinary phenomenon that started in the twentieth century, namely the diplomacy of development.

### 6.1 *'Statetuplets' in the Cradle of International Society*

The entry into the diplomatic arena of a host of newly independent states after World War II, and again after the end of the Cold War, created diplomatic tension within international society. States had emerged (and declined) throughout history, but in the twentieth century, the proliferation dynamics were unprecedented. The USA took particular leadership in this regard, ever since the nineteenth century when the Monroe Doctrine became a defining principle in US foreign policy. The policy,<sup>23</sup> which was declared in 1823 (long before the USA had reached its superpower status), related specifically to European subjugation of foreign territories through colonisation. The latter was a process the USA had staunchly opposed. By means of the Monroe Doctrine, the USA essentially declared a zone of common security in all of the Americas, warning that it would consider aggression against any part of the American continent as an attack on the USA itself. At the same time, it recognised Chile, Argentina, Colombia and Mexico as sovereign states. Its support was an important catalyst in the wave of independence that swept through Latin America during the first half of the nineteenth century, when most of the region distilled into sovereign states with their own distinct diplomatic infrastructure.

Nanjira (2010, vol. 1: 157) explains that the Monroe Doctrine also impacted US support for the 'Back to Africa Movement' that started during the nineteenth century. The wider movement against slavery resonated in the Americas because the trans-Atlantic slave trade had been particularly cataclysmic. The USA therefore revelled in the initiative to found a sovereign country in West Africa, created for settling by freed slaves. Liberia (the name aptly derived from the Latin word for freedom) was promulgated as state in 1847. Despite this prodigious development, most African states remained colonised until the latter half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, out of the current 54 African member states of the United Nations, a mere four—Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia and South Africa—were 'independent enough' in 1945 to be founding members of the organisation.

The devastation of the Second World War forced Europe into introspection and channelled all available resources into its own massive reconstruction. It also weakened the traditional epicentre of diplomacy to the movements in the rest of the world that were mobilising against colonisation. The war had not only shocked the Europeans: the rest of

the world, and notably the colonies, lost trust in Europe's ability to govern its dependent territories.

This sentiment strengthened nascent nationalisms and independence movements and created a domino effect of new states, seeking sovereignty. The decolonisation process gained momentum after World War II, starting with the partitioning of British India into two new states, India and Pakistan, in August 1947. A snowball effect soon took shape, as one after the other former colony—ready or not—was declared a sovereign state. The resultant rapid and large-scale decolonisation was a landmark moment in the evolution of international affairs.

The wave of decolonisation coincided with the escalation of the Cold War. As mentioned, for the many emerging new states, it marked an era of ideologically driven interference by external powers in their political and economic affairs. At the same time, however, the new states actively sought inclusion in diplomatic processes. Visible inclusion of their leaders in high-level multilateralism and summitry thus represented their states' 'coming of age' in global diplomacy. For these states, diplomacy offered one (if not the only) instrument of foreign policy that they could wield at a global level. But their challenges were daunting: 'big men' cultures, state weakness, lack of diplomatic capacity, financial constraints and ignorance about the 'rules of the game' resulted in a very political approach to diplomacy. The tendency to be more belligerent and activist manifested in a diplomatic approach that prioritised group dynamics, something Bahgat Korany (1986: 1) refers to as 'Third Worldism'.

The anti-colonial attitudes of indigenous elites and mass political parties prompted many of the new states to adopt, at least in rhetoric, an anti-Western stance. The East Bloc's fervent support for sovereignty and territorial integrity appealed to the new states and bolstered their quest for political identity independent of their colonial heritage. In practice, though, many of them were unwilling to commit themselves militarily to the objectives of either the capitalist West or the socialist East. In an attempt to distance themselves from the 'either-or' camps, these states started to explore the option of non-alignment,<sup>24</sup> a political position that would allow them to apply various (including hybrid) economic, social and political models as they deemed fit.

This aspiration to counter the divisive dictates of the Cold War was expressed at the 1955 Afro Asian Solidarity Conference in Bandung, Indonesia. Thereafter, the movement gained momentum and took on board the interests of other developing parts of the world as well,

notably Latin America. The establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Belgrade in 1961 gave formal expression to the notion of ‘non-alignment’ and institutionalised it at a diplomatic level. For the remainder of the Cold War, the NAM used diplomacy to pursue a mainly political and ideological agenda, acting as platform for the expression of Developing World concerns and ambitions, foremost among them the eradication of colonialism and apartheid.

Notwithstanding their rejection of the world’s forced division into two ideological camps, many NAM members deftly played the Cold War game. Despite their professed non-alignment, they slipped in and out of diplomatic and economic coalitions with both blocs, in order to maximise economic concessions. Indeed, at a domestic level most NAM states allowed an interesting mix of capitalism and socialism, displaying a pragmatism not found in the two main ideological blocs of the time. Apart from granting new states diplomatic manoeuvring space, the value of non-alignment was mostly symbolic—it played not only to an international peer group but also to a domestic audience, as it conjured up notions of independence and vibrancy.

## 6.2 *The Idea of Another ‘World’*

The diplomacy of the ‘rest’ of the world is an idea that seems to bifurcate international society, and it is therefore helpful to pause for a moment for some conceptual clarification on this phenomenon that emerged in the course of the twentieth century. I prefer the collective ‘Developing World’ (especially in the economic sense) or ‘Global South’, contrasted with the Developed World or Global North (industrialised, ‘First World’, the West). My discussion will be organised around the commonalities of developing states, with the caveat that they are in fact hugely dissimilar in their political and socio-economic profiles. Within their ranks, there is actually diversity to a much larger extent than that found in the Global North.

So what, if anything, did or do these ‘developing’ states have in common? A first shared trait is that they were (at least until the end of the Cold War) ‘outsiders’ when it comes to the main power struggles of the world. This has been exacerbated by the psycho-political sense of subjugation as a result of the history of colonisation that most of them have. The implied sense of alienation prompted French demographer Alfred Sauvy to coin the term ‘Third World’—derived apparently

from the French expression ‘third estate’ which denotes the concept of commoners as opposed to aristocracy or clergy. Writing sympathetically about underdeveloped countries in the French magazine, *L’Observateur* in August 1952, Sauvy famously said ‘because at the end this ignored, exploited, scorned Third World like the Third Estate, wants to become something too’. With the demise of the Cold War, the ideological classification as Third World gradually lost its poignancy, but it remains in the IR lexicon, as does ‘First World’, despite the disappearance of the notion of a socialist ‘Second World’.

The identity of otherness is also rooted in a de facto peripheral position in the global economy. (With its roots in neo-Marxism, the idea of periphery conjures up a marginalised majority, exploited by a rich core to maintain the latter’s entrenched structural superiority.) International political economists mostly agree that this status is a function of economic dependency on the industrialised states and renders development conditional on access to the latter’s investment, markets and technology. While activists sometimes sweepingly refer to the world’s *poor* or *marginalised*, the reality is that the spectrum of these states includes not just the poorest countries of the world (such as Haiti, Bangladesh and Lesotho), but also newly industrialising middle-income countries (Turkey, Brazil and Indonesia come to mind); states such as Nigeria and Venezuela that are comparatively wealthy because of natural resources but have huge developmental backlogs; and even great (if not aspiring super-) powers, such as China. The relative nature of economic hardship necessitated a more nuanced classification, and in 1971 the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) referred to the poorest countries of the world as the ‘Fourth World’, a term the World Bank also started using in 1978. The term *Least Developed Countries* (LDCs) has in the interim become the preferred description.

Related politico-economic terms are *unmodernised* or *pre-modern*. These descriptions are often applied to states that cannot provide basic services to their own citizenries, including so-called failed states where there is no central authority with a monopoly on force. In contrast, as Shaun Riordan (2003: 94) explains, ‘modern’ states represent the traditional nation states and ‘post-modern’ the Western liberal democracies. The term *underdeveloped* (which Sauvy had referred to) was used for the first time in an official capacity in the 1951 report by a Group of Experts appointed by the UN Secretary-General, called ‘Measures for the economic development of underdeveloped countries’.

The term subsequently assumed a derogatory connotation and was replaced by ‘developing’ or ‘less developed’. The very idea of relative development remains problematic, as there are clearly various levels of development and different measures used to determine that status.

One such measure is states’ performance in terms of the Human Development Index (HDI). In 1991, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the first time included the HDI in order to rank countries in its annual Human Development Report. The HDI combines economic indicators (not only *per capita* income, but also the purchasing power of the currency, savings rates, level of investment in industry and distribution of income) with social indicators (inter alia life expectancy, infant mortality rate, number of persons per medical doctor, percentage of children attending school and percentage of adult literacy). In combination, these markers provide a more accurate profile of a given state’s development.

A less empirical and by far more controversial measure is the extent to which a state can be described as politically mature and stable. Ayoob (1998: 33) observes that many peripheral states have in common that their geographical boundaries, state institutions and governing regimes ‘are under challenge to significant degrees’. The position of individual states in the developing category is thus determined inter alia also by political indicators such as governmental stability ratings, propensity for military intervention and frequency of elections (although the latter measure does not guarantee either good governance or democracy). It is important to bear in mind, however, that the ‘rest’ of the world includes flourishing, fully fledged (albeit young) democracies such as Indonesia, South Africa and Brazil.

The not only least disputed, but also most simplistic label for ‘the rest’ of the world, is *Global South*. Most developing states are located in the southern hemisphere, but the label is more political than geographical. Southern hemispheric states such as Australia and New Zealand are most certainly not of a Global South mind-set, and neither can certain states in the northern hemisphere, such as Mongolia or Turkmenistan, claim to be part of the industrialised North. Something that many Global South states share is that they suffer from climatic disadvantages (e.g. mass drought or flooding) without the economic and/or technological means to resolve such crises.

Notwithstanding the range of ‘elastic labels’, in Korany’s (1986: 2) words, what this separate ‘world’ has accomplished is to have inserted

development onto the global diplomatic agenda. It also set in motion an alternative diplomatic narrative that gained momentum towards the end of the twentieth century.

### 6.3 *The Diplomacy of Development (First Generation)*

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, large-scale endemic poverty for the first time thrust the concept of development into the IR field. In response, the USA and Canada channelled massive amounts of development assistance to Europe within the framework of the Marshall Plan.<sup>25</sup> The plan was administered in Europe by the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) which was founded in 1948 and which transitioned to focus on economic issues more broadly, when the Marshall Plan was wrapped up. In 1961, it morphed into the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). By that time, a growing number of non-European states had joined the list of states in need of development assistance.

Within the context of the United Nations, UNCTAD was established in 1964 as a permanent body to formulate policies and advise the UN community on development-related matters such as trade, investment, finance and technology. At the conclusion of the first UNCTAD, the fast expanding group of developing countries launched the G77 (called after the number of founding members) in June 1964. It provided a multilateral caucus on issues of trade and development, what Korany (1986: 20) refers to as ‘the Third World’s Trade Union’ within the United Nations, and subsequently commissioned caucus groupings within other organisations. The G77 increased the political influence of its members, but its sheer size and the diversity of its members in terms of interests and developmental status have limited consensus and mobilisation along common themes.

Although the United Nations had declared the 1960s a *Decade of Development*, and many of the new states showed promising rates of economic growth, the dedicated decade proved to be disappointing. Proxy Cold War conflicts, devastating state-building experiments by insecure political elites of new states, and a host of other challenges slowed down the initial economic promise of these states. An issue at the core of the debate on development was whether or not development in and of itself constituted a fundamental human right. Daniel Whelan (2015) explains



that the idea of a ‘right’ to development was first expressed by Doudou Thiam, the Foreign Minister of Senegal, in a speech to the UN General Assembly on 23 September 1966. Much of the ensuing debate revolved around the nature of official development assistance (ODA).

The term ODA was adopted in 1969 by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD, which had assumed prominence in coordinating the exchange of information and expertise on development aid issues. It defined ODA as:

those flows to countries and territories on the DAC List of ODA Recipients and to multilateral institutions which are: i) provided by official agencies, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies; and ii) each transaction of which: a) is administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective; and b) is concessional in character and conveys a grant element of at least 25 per cent (calculated at a rate of discount of 10 per cent). (OECD 2015)

Since then, the definition has been tightened to exclude *mala fide* aid, such as the provision of military or cultural assistance in *lieu* of economic aid, that increases dependency and indebtedness. Importantly, in 1972 the OECD set an ODA target for donor states, of 0.7% of Gross National Income (OECD 2015).

The 1970s proved to be a particularly difficult decade for the Developing World. In recognition of the importance of this theme, the UN proclaimed the 1970s a second *Decade of Development*, but this undertaking was suspended by the first oil shock of 1973. With the world in the seemingly intractable throes of the Cold War, and drastic increases in fissures along economic lines, the sense grew that nothing less than a ‘New International Economic Order’ (NIEO) would be required to eradicate structurally entrenched poverty. The term NIEO was introduced by President Alvarez of Mexico in 1972 at UNCTAD III in Santiago, when his critique of the prevailing terms of trade encapsulated the concerns of most G77 governments. The following year, at the 1973 Algiers Summit of the NAM, the NIEO was articulated as a comprehensive plan to reform the existing international economic order and to eradicate exploitative global trade and financial relations. In 1974, the UN General Assembly, enabled by the numeric domination of new and developing states, endorsed the idea of the NIEO when it adopted

the *Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States* (CERDS). As Calvert and Calvert (1996: 222) explain, the main (but very ambitious) tenets of CERDS were fair terms of trade for developing countries, a new world currency linked to the price of primary materials and the abolition of IMF conditionality as a requirement for new loans.

Perhaps predictably CERDS was never implemented, and during the remainder of the decade, it became clear that the search for an NIEO was fruitless. Nevertheless, it did leave a lasting imprint on the rhetoric of Developing World diplomacy. As Robert Mudida (2012: 98) says, ‘the NIEO was seen by many developing states not so much as an attempt to fine-tune the existing international economic order but as an effort to elevate the issue of economic development to the top of the international agenda’.

Within the United Nations system, attempts continued to institutionalise the development agenda, even if only symbolically so. From 30 August to 12 September 1978, the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries convened in Buenos Aires (Argentina) and adopted the *Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries* (UN 2017). One of its recommendations was implemented two years later, when the General Assembly established (by Resolution 35/202, of 16 December 1980) a High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries as a subsidiary committee of the General Assembly. Also during 1980, the independent Brandt Commission proposed (in vain) a large transfer of resources from the Developed to the Developing World by means of a ‘global income tax’ (Calvocoressi 1991: 162). The Report echoed some of the 1969 recommendations of the Pearson Commission on International Development, which examined the effectiveness of the World Bank. Both Commissions made a strong case for mandatory development aid and the global management of such aid by international institutions with a more pronounced input into the process by recipient states.

The remarkable foresight of these pioneering reports was lost in the acrimony that had become associated with the global debate on development assistance. The ODA narrative was invariably loaded with subtexts that suggested an asymmetrical, patronising relationship between donors and aid recipients. Development aid, at least from the perspective of the recipients, was seen as unilateral and reminiscent of historical relations.

The polarisation of the Cold War impacted the aid debate as well. Laura Neack et al. (1995: 5) explain that the modernisation-developmental model was transformed into ‘the formula by which Western states, especially the US, examined, judged and intervened in developing states to protect them from the dangers of the mass politics of the left being exported by the Soviet Union’. By the same token, critics note the similar extent to which the Soviet Union and other East Bloc donors used development assistance to subsidise proxy wars in the Developing World.

Much of the controversy around the development debate stemmed from the issue of conditionality: the fact that the granting of assistance by donors in the Developed World was subject to prescribed reform—both political and economic—in developing countries. For most recipient states, conditionalities (whether implied or blatant) were offensive, especially when norms were purportedly exported in this ‘normative hierarchy’. The fact was that conditionalities created opportunity (whether sought or not) for political and economic intervention. Not only donor states, but also international monetary and financial institutions, operating on the basis of the so-called Washington Consensus—the standard package of economic policy prescriptions imposed by Washington D.C.-based institutions such as the World Bank, the US Treasury and the IMF—could coerce impoverished states into implementing structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) at huge social and political cost.

The 1980s saw an ODA crisis. The sudden escalation of the Latin America debt crisis in mid-1982 and its massive domino effect posed unprecedented problems of management for the international community. No existing institution seemed equipped to cope with the required scale of debt restructuring or renegotiations. The debt crisis coincided with ‘aid fatigue’ (or ‘donor fatigue’) based on the evidence that aid recipient countries had regressed economically in spite of (some critics even claimed *because* of) the assistance they received from donor states. Aid recipients were accused of exacerbating their own woes through bad governance, and the voting publics in donor states questioned the altruistic, but seemingly futile, use of their taxes. This convinced many economists to explore the developmental significance of trade, rather than aid. On their part, developing countries were questioning the qualitative value of existing ODA, in addition to rejecting the ‘strings’ attached to such ‘charity’.

Concerted Developing World pressure to realise their right to development continued, unabated, and during the last two decades of the twentieth century, the concept was entrenched in a host of global and regional declarations. A breakthrough was the 1986 adoption by the UN General Assembly of the *Declaration on the Right to Development*, which described development as an ‘inalienable human right’. The fact that development had to be seen as a global challenge was strengthened the year thereafter, in April 1987, when the Brundtland Commission released its report ‘Our Common Future’. The report encapsulated years of research under the expert leadership of Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway, and brought the new concept of ‘sustainable development’ to the fore.

Development was becoming embedded in the narratives of international society. The United Nations, for all its shortcomings during the Cold War, succeeded in maintaining and increasing Global South concerns on its agenda. Admittedly, this was facilitated by the Developing World’s numerical domination, but as Johan Kaufmann (1998: 12) points out, it could not have happened without the global authority of the United Nations, derived from the organisation’s universal membership.

#### 6.4 *State Diplomacy from Scratch*

While the Developing World had some success in organising itself into a diplomatic collectivity, most of the individual states in this category were much less successful at conducting bilateral diplomacy. In many cases, accession to statehood was merely nominal and not indicative of a state’s capacity to function without continued financial and technical assistance from its former colonial master. Hamilton and Langhorne (1995: 210), in their excellent overview of diplomatic history, discuss a few exceptions to this scenario. India, for example, already had a quasi-foreign service before its independence in 1947. It had been a member of the League of Nations and had nationals who gained experience in staffing of missions in neighbouring states and territories. Likewise, Malaysia had been represented in other Commonwealth countries during the final years of colonisation. In the case of Ghana, Ghanaians were included in the governor’s 1954 advisory committee on defence and external affairs, which sponsored the recruitment and training of diplomats prior to political independence in 1957. In Nigeria, the creation of an external affairs

department four years before the country's independence in 1960 gave opportunity to Nigerians to work in representative offices abroad.

Apart from such exceptions, the majority of new states were ill-prepared for the speed with which decolonisation accelerated during the 1960s. Especially in sub-Saharan Africa, post-colonial states were left with scant resources and time to develop diplomatic services. Most African states were *decreed* sovereign on a particular date, whereas states in the rest of the world had centuries to *evolve* into sovereign units. Instant states required instant diplomats, poorly trained individuals who had to represent states with an inchoate identity. Kappeler (2004: 357) explains their predicament:

...the first batches of diplomats of newly independent countries were trained in the coloniser's foreign service. The diplomatic culture instilled into them was largely of the traditional sort and frequently not adjusted to new international realities. The result was often that such new diplomats either felt ill at ease and tried to copy an alien approach or, on the contrary, revolted against traditional diplomatic attitudes and attempted to follow 'authentic' values.

To make matters worse, most of the new states were ethnically fractured, and ruling elites—and the diplomats they deployed—often had more history in common with peers in neighbouring states than they did with the 'nationals' they represented. By way of illustration, the abaHutu in the Great Lakes region of Africa are dispersed among three different states: Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo—alongside the abaTutsi, who are found in the same three states as well as in Uganda and Tanzania. It stands to reason that (especially in the period immediately after independence) the diplomats from these states would have had difficulty separating their identity from that of cultural kin in the neighbouring states—all the more so if those kin were under threat.

With inadequate infrastructure and a dearth of indigenous bureaucratic expertise, many of the new states could not anchor their foreign policy-making and implementation in professional bureaucracies and as a result struggled to establish the necessary diplomatic representation abroad. Hamilton and Langhorne (1995: 210) cite the case of the (Belgian) Congo which gained independence after a preparation period of only six months and therefore had little capacity to manage its internal, much less its external, affairs of state.

Recourse to multilateralism offered one way of addressing their diplomatic deficit, in that poorer nations, by joining international organisations, could multiply their opportunities for participation in global diplomacy. This was also the case at regional level. During the 1980s, partly as a result of the failure of the NIEO in the previous decade, developing countries all over the world committed themselves to intensified efforts at regional integration initiatives. This offered a step down from their global and continental ambitions. It provided a more customised, manageable multilateral mechanism to boost economic development by pooling resources and markets and harmonising policy to give momentum to individual state development.

## 7 CONCLUSION

With its genesis firmly in Africa, pre-modern diplomacy had a checkered reputation: it was variously eschewed by exclusive, ethnocentric politics, used brazenly as an instrument of war rather than of peace, drawn into a quagmire of obfuscated public and private interests and corrupted in the process of religious or ideological imperialism. It was not until the end of the Middle Ages that diplomacy assumed ‘institutional density’, as Maurice Keens-Soper (1996: 9, 11) refers to it. The institution itself gained more theoretical and practical definition, indicating growing consensus that diplomacy was essential to the very existence of the international system. With national interest emerging as a prime driver of international relations in an emerging state-centric world order, extensive systemisation of diplomacy took place. It was this incremental bureaucratisation and professionalisation that became the enduring European contribution to the evolution of diplomacy.

The Eurocentric system was rocked to its core by the two world wars of the twentieth century. The secretive and exclusive, mainly bilateral ‘old’ diplomacy was seen as a catalyst of rivalry rather than cooperation, and across the world, calls were made for diplomacy with universal norms of conduct. Led by statesmen from an increasingly assertive ‘New World’ and the USA in particular, ‘new’ diplomacy emphasised transparency, more flexibility and inclusivity, not just for a greater range of stakeholders (through multilateralism) but also for the public to have a greater say in the institution. Summitry became a defining element of diplomacy, as leaders utilised new breakthroughs in travel and communication technologies and as they played to the audience of their voting

publics. Global management of international challenges effected a surge in multilateral diplomacy that reached new momentum at the end of the Second World War, with the establishment of the United Nations. Its universal membership ensured an unprecedented hub of diplomatic activity, but its impact was neutralised by the almost simultaneous onset of the Cold War. This bitter ideological feud threw a dark shadow across the second half of the century and marginalised the practice of diplomacy.

The scourge of marginalisation was also a leitmotiv in the diplomatic awakening of a swathe of the globe that had previously been excluded from traditional, Eurocentric diplomacy. The quantum leap in the number of new state actors, most of them post-colonial, saw the rise of a 'Developing World'. The huge number of new states that would otherwise have very little in common in terms of their ideational, political and economic interests shared a common developmental deficit. This united them in the pursuit of 'diplomacy of development': a conscious and collective effort to use diplomacy in order to challenge the entrenched structure of a deeply asymmetrical international system.

Despite a veritable crisis of multilateralism in the 1980s, an increasing number of international organisations and ad hoc world summits sought to address shared global problems. As the twentieth century drew to a close, and in the face of many new challenges created by changing geopolitics, scientific invention, a burgeoning world population and potential environmental calamity, the main trend in diplomatic practice seemed to be geared towards cooperative management of the problems of humanity, whether at the subnational, transnational, regional or global levels.

Crucial to this evolution of diplomatic process was another key institution of international society, namely international law. In the next chapter, I will look specifically at the branch of international law that underpins diplomatic practice.

## NOTES

1. The literal meaning of kowtow, in Chinese, is 'knocking the head', i.e. bowing so low that the forehead touches the ground. Hence, the contemporary idiom for grovelling.
2. In India, Kautilya is also known as Chanakya or Vishnugupta.
3. However, some scholars believe the Arthashastra might have been written or edited later than the fourth century BCE.

4. The Asante Empire is also known as the 'Ashanti' Empire.
5. As dubbed by Harold Nicolson (1954: 53).
6. Milan was the first to establish permanent embassies in other Italian city states and soon extended the practice outside of Italy as well. However, as Cohen (1999: 4) points out, the first resident ambassadors in recorded history, at the court of Hammurabi, predated the Renaissance by 3000 years.
7. Through the *Rogers Act* of 1924.
8. In Russia, for example, during the second half of the nineteenth century, the diplomatic service officially prohibited entry by a range of groups that were identified as socially 'inferior'. The list included Jews—with the exception of those that held medical degrees! (Hamilton and Langhorne 1995: 101).
9. 'Oxbridge' is an informal way of referring simultaneously to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, or the associated intellectual class.
10. Grotius famously served not only as a Dutch Ambassador, but after falling foul of the Dutch authorities, also as a senior Ambassador of Sweden. This individual switching of diplomatic service was possible before state-centric nationality became a diplomatic service conditionality.
11. The classes were as follows: (1) ambassadors, legates and nuncios, (2) envoys extraordinary and other persons accredited to the head of state, (3) ministers resident (this class was added by the 1818 Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle) and (4) *chargés d'affaires*. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the distinction between ambassadors and envoys became blurred and the class of ministers resident disappeared entirely.
12. Like many other non-European territories inhabited by indigenous peoples, Africa was considered *terra nullius*, i.e. 'nobody's land'. This term is as offensive as the idea that Europeans 'discovered' their various colonies.
13. During 1964, just a year after the organisation was founded as an expression of pan-African sentiment, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) ratified the continent's colonial-era boundaries. It was a strategic compromise to prevent ongoing territorial wars, but not successfully so, of course, as the template was already set for geopolitical conflict.
14. In the 1918 words of South African General Jan Smuts, 'Europe is being liquidated and the League of Nations must be the heir to this great estate' (p. 11 of his tract called 'The League of Nations: a practical suggestion'). Smuts' use of these words would later be repeated by US President Woodrow Wilson.
15. Indeed, IR as a separate discipline was born in the ashes of World War I. The first Department of International Politics was established at Aberystwyth, Wales, in 1919.



16. In this regard, the newly formed Soviet Union seemed the most likely candidate to apply the rules of the *new diplomacy*, but as Sofer (1988: 200) observes, was 'soon disillusioned, reverting to traditional methods of diplomacy'.
17. Wiseman (2005: 420) observes that this particular norm is 'of course, an idealised one, as Wilson's own reliance on closed-door negotiations shows'.
18. The Kellogg–Briand Pact was called after its architects, US Secretary of State Frank Kellogg and the foreign minister of France, Aristide Briand.
19. Some commentators do not subscribe to the differentiation between old and new diplomacy. Nicolson (1934: 184) includes both concepts in a continuum of change, referring to 'a stage in [diplomacy's] long process of adjustment', with the essential principles of diplomacy unaltered. And Sofer (1988: 195) expressed the opinion that the divisive distinction between *old* and *new* diplomacy was 'simplistic and inaccurate', inferring revolution when the profession was really undergoing continuity and evolution. According to Calvet de Magalhães (1988: 45), the distinction had created intellectual confusion between foreign policy and its instrument (diplomacy)—a lack of distinction that remained, in his opinion, evident in the works of many American theorists.
20. San Francisco proudly named one of its main public spaces after the event: the 'UN Plaza' is a square adjacent to the city's Civic Center.
21. So-called after the US resort in New Hampshire, where the institutions were negotiated during 1944.
22. A specific bone of contention was General Assembly Resolution 3379 (1975) which determined that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination. The Resolution was effectively repealed by General Assembly Resolution 4686 adopted in 1991. Thereafter, US budgetary contributions to the UN resumed.
23. As in the case of all foreign policy, there are commentators who are cynical about the altruistic intentions behind it: critics assert that the Monroe Doctrine was just a way of demarcating and solidifying the US zone of dominance.
24. 'Non-alignment' should not be confused with 'neutrality' which is a legally entrenched international position.
25. Officially the European Recovery Program (ERP), the Marshall Plan took its popular name from US Secretary of State George Marshall.

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## CHAPTER 4

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# The Law of Diplomacy

## 1 INTRODUCTION

As indicated by the Latin term *Jus Inter Gentes*, international law (IL) is the body of rules that govern relations between states. It follows that states (together with international organisations) are the main subjects of IL. This body of law is one of the key institutions of international society and has always been closely related to diplomatic studies, given the extent to which diplomacy relies on consensus about rules of international engagement.

The IL field can broadly be divided into ‘public international law’ and ‘private international law’, the latter dealing with international cases where municipal<sup>1</sup> laws come into conflict. A third discipline within IL concerns supranational law: the laws that emanate from entities (like the European Union) to which states have ceded some of their sovereignty. Over the past century, the number of specialised domains within IL has increased significantly, in reflection of the scope of human concerns that require regulation at the international level: international human rights law; refugee law; the law of the sea; treaty law; air and space law; and international humanitarian law are just some of these areas.

Diplomatic law is one such specialisation. As a branch of public international law, it is rooted in the rationalist assumption that states are the primary actors in international relations and their political sovereignty ensures their equality before the law. The law is therefore horizontal,

implying that it exists *among* states rather than *above* them, and is the product of custom and consent rather than coercion and dictate. There are no guarantees that individual states will not transgress the international norms that inform diplomatic law (and they do, from time to time!) but for the most part, states fear sanctions and isolation if they do so. This is important because in practice diplomatic law ‘suffers’ from the same limitations as its parent body of international law: there is no supranational authority to enforce<sup>2</sup> it. Implementation of the law therefore hinges on the voluntary participation of international actors. The fact that its principles are determined by consensus means that the law may on occasion be more malleable (hence subject to revision) than municipal law. This raises the inevitable question of whether international law can really be considered ‘law’.

While there is neither a supranational entity nor a coherent system of sanctions to enforce international law, the unique characteristics of international society arguably allow for a more effective law ‘enforcer’: the compelling consideration of reciprocity. This also explains why most of the provisions of international law are adhered to. Dembinski (1988: 5) observes that diplomatic law represents such a complete convergence of values and ideals within international customary law that its provisions were strictly enforced even during the carnage and global mayhem of the two world wars. As a result, diplomatic law is one of the most codified branches of international law, and one of its least contentious. This confirms wide consensus on its indispensable role in regulating interstate relations and providing order and predictability in an increasingly complex international system.

This chapter will start by tracing diplomatic law’s historical evolution from custom to treaty law, the latter manifesting mainly through the various Vienna Conventions that govern diplomatic relations. Brief attention will be given to evolving aspects of international law in so far as diplomatic practice is concerned, and the phenomenon that some of the fundamental aspects of international law are being interpreted to an unprecedented extent through ethical lenses.

For a contextual background, the *de jure* functions of diplomatic missions will be listed and the narrower, more technical area of consular functions will be explained. Thereafter, the chapter will explore the various privileges and immunities that are stipulated under codified diplomatic law, with attention also to their limitations and counter-obligations. In the latter part of the chapter, the concepts of state immunity

and diplomatic protection will be explained, as well as the disputed legal notion of diplomatic ‘asylum’. Finally, some consideration will be given to the (rather haphazard!) codification of law that pertains to multilateral diplomacy.

## 2 SOURCES OF DIPLOMATIC LAW

As in the case of international law more broadly, the sources of diplomatic law are diverse: the body of law has developed through *jus cogens*<sup>3</sup> and custom and has expanded incrementally through doctrinal writing; treaties<sup>4</sup>; comity<sup>5</sup>; diplomatic correspondence; judicial precedent; and—increasingly since the end of World War Two—the charters and resolutions of international organisations.

### 2.1 *Codification of Diplomatic Custom*

The customary<sup>6</sup> tradition of diplomatic law is truly ancient: it is one of the earliest expressions of international law and has evolved through millennia of practice and doctrine. Its codification is fairly recent, however, and as mentioned in the previous chapter, was initiated at the 1815 Congress of Vienna. The legal deliberation on precedence (an agreed ranking order) and official rank in diplomatic practice was symptomatic of a wider expansion of international law during the nineteenth century, but as Malcolm Shaw (2008: 39) reminds us, this body of law was ‘founded upon Eurocentrism and imbued with the values of Christian, urbanised and expanding Europe’. Implicitly, it reflected the subjugation of huge parts of the world that remained outside the state-centric diplomatic club of Europe. The many new states that emerged during the twentieth century demanded greater clarification of diplomatic law and their needs and interests made it imperative that diplomatic law be codified based on universal consensus.

In the wake of the First World War, with a surge in multilateral activity and renewed intellectual focus on outlawing war through institution-building, ways were sought to strengthen the institution of diplomacy and various entities undertook research into the codification of diplomatic law. In 1924, the League of Nations established a *Committee of Experts for the Progressive Codification of International Law* to consider, inter alia, revision of the 1815 and 1818 classification of diplomatic agents and their diplomatic prerogatives and immunities.

At the same time, the (mostly Latin American) republics of the Conference of American States<sup>7</sup> commissioned research in the same field, resulting in two landmark conventions, both adopted in 1928 at the Sixth International Conference of American States in Havana: the *Havana Convention on Diplomatic Officers* and the *Havana Convention on Consular Agents*. The political significance of these conventions was that they reflected a common and enduring diplomatic concern of (what in due course became known as) the Developing World, namely the need to limit the *carte blanche* diplomacy of the great powers: an attempt, so to speak, to ‘level the diplomatic playing field’.

A notable (and also non-European, if still ‘Western’) contribution was made by Harvard University in the USA. The *Harvard Research in International Law* project investigated thirteen areas of international law that required codification, and in 1932 it published its proposals in the form of draft conventions. In the case of diplomatic law, a comprehensive *Draft Convention on Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities* was prepared.

Despite its lofty founding ideals, the League’s initiatives to codify diplomatic immunities and privileges proved unsuccessful, probably as a result of the deep divisions within the League and the absence of major powers from its membership. When the League failed to prevent the Second World War, the liberal (and legal) principles that drove the ‘diplomatic project’ were manifestly sidelined. Nevertheless, by the end of the War, international law had evolved to the stage where the legitimacy of violence as a tool of foreign policy was bankrupted, paving the way for it to be outlawed by the UN Charter. This unprecedented milestone revived diplomacy’s theoretical monopoly and presaged several decades of intense codification of diplomatic law.

## 2.2 *The United Nations Charter*

The United Nations Charter sets out the organisation’s structure and objectives and is as close as the world has ever come to having a single, supranational constitution. The Charter is legally binding on all its signatories, i.e. all its member states, and in terms of Article 103 overrides any other conflicting international agreement. This is a compelling obligation on member states to ensure that their foreign policy does not venture beyond the normative parameters of the UN’s founding philosophy.

The universal membership of the UN (in contrast to its predecessor, the League of Nations, where states could withdraw and rejoin as they chose)



enables the organisation to serve as a permanent diplomatic conference, with its various resolutions continuously setting precedents and demarcating the evolving legal boundaries of diplomacy (Berridge 1995: 1). Importantly also, the UN is numerically dominated by *developing* states, and this has meant that the content and scope of the various declarations and resolutions emanating from the General Assembly contain a record of the ‘fears, hopes and concerns’ of developing states, as Shaw (2008: 40) puts it.

The UN Charter provides for six main organs of the organisation: the General Assembly (Chapter IV); the Security Council (Chapter V and VII); the Economic and Social Council (Chapter X); the Secretariat (Chapter XV); the International Court of Justice (ICJ) (Chapter XIV); and the Trusteeship Council (Chapter VIII). (The latter Council has been dormant since 1994 when the last of 11 original Trust Territories, Palau, obtained its independence.) Each of these organs has played a role in the development of international law, whether in its interpretation, application or codification.

### 2.3 *The International Law Commission*

An important source of diplomatic law, as in the case of international law more widely, is the opinion of leading authorities. It was for this reason that the League of Nations established its *Committee of Experts for the Progressive Codification of International Law*, as mentioned earlier. The Committee comprised of 17 members, all of them esteemed legal scholars, whose task was to identify problematic or ambiguous issues within international law and recommend remedies to address such matters.

When the United Nations Charter was drafted, it included a similar provision for legal scholarship to be solicited. Article 13(1.a) of the Charter mandated the organisation to ‘initiate studies and make recommendations for the purpose of ... encouraging the progressive development of international law and its codification’. Thus, on 21 November 1947 the General Assembly adopted Resolution 174(II) calling for the creation of an *International Law Commission* (ILC)—i.e. not just a ‘Committee’—so as to meet the provisions of the Charter. It was decided that the Commission’s 15 members would be nominated by member states of the UN and elected by the General Assembly, but that they would serve in their individual capacities ‘as persons of recognized competence in international law’ (ILC 2018). The Commission serves

the greater UN community and works in close cooperation with the organisation's judicial organ, the ICJ.

During 1981, the General Assembly decided to increase membership of the Commission and to structure it upon geographic lines, 'Reaffirming the importance of the International Law Commission as the main permanent subsidiary organ of the General Assembly entrusted with the promotion of the progressive development of international law and its codification'. Henceforth, total membership of the Commission would be 34, and 21 of these members would be nationals of Afro-Asian and Latin American states (UNGA Resolution A/RES/36/39 of 18 November 1981). This change confirmed the growing importance that international society vests in representative legitimacy.

In the 70 years of its existence, the pooled legal expertise of the ILC has contributed significantly to the codification and clarification of evolving diplomatic law. The most momentous contribution to date was the Commission's work on the substance of the Vienna Conventions.

#### 2.4 *The Vienna Conventions*

As momentum towards mass decolonisation built up during the 1950s, pressure built to codify diplomatic law. The pressure was increased by the political tension of the Cold War. In the late 1950s, for example, as relations between Stalin and Tito deteriorated, the government of Yugoslavia complained to the United Nations about the Soviet Union's abuse of 'diplomatic mail' sent to its Embassy in Belgrade. The accusation was that the mail bags contained items other than official diplomatic correspondence (ILC 1957, Volume 1: 77).

On 5 December 1952 the UN, which had inherited the League of Nations' mandate to convert customary diplomatic law into codified law, formally requested the ILC 'to undertake, as soon as it considered it possible, the codification of the topic 'Diplomatic intercourse and immunities' and to treat it as a priority topic' (UNGA Resolution 685, VII).

The result was the 1961 UN Conference on Diplomatic Intercourse and Immunities, which adopted the *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations* (VCDR). It was followed by the 1963 *Vienna Convention on Consular Relations* (VCCR). In combination, these landmark conventions (in particular the 1961 VCDR, which I will concentrate on in the rest of the chapter) serve as the fundamental legal instrument that regulates international diplomatic relations.

Both conventions have been ratified by a vast majority of states and are therefore considered universally applicable. As Alan James (1993: 97) observes, the VCDR is ‘generally regarded as indicative of what is now the customary law—which means that it binds even those few states who have not formally adhered to it’. Their significance is both functional and political: at the practical level they have confirmed, as Geoff Berridge (1995: 22–23) phrases it, the ‘unambiguously functional approach’ accorded to diplomatic privileges and immunities by modern diplomatic law. The functional approach constituted a significant move away from traditional diplomatic theory’s inclination to base privileges on a purely *representational* claim—as implied by the now defunct claim that diplomatic premises are ‘extra-territorial’.

The political significance of the conventions lies in the fact that they clarified many of the diplomatic rules of engagement (such as immunity) that constituted a *de facto* legal system within the older states’ system, but which were not understood, or proved to be ambiguous, to new states who did not share the history out of which the rules evolved. The consensus that allowed for adoption of the conventions thus ensured adherence to the rules of diplomacy by states that were previously outside the European tradition. The conventions not only codified existing customary law, but also established rules so as to provide maximum clarity on the legal parameters of diplomatic practice. This included, for example, clarity on the immunities of junior diplomatic personnel (Denza 2008: 401).

As in the case of other international conventions, the states that are signatories to the Vienna Conventions may augment the treaty stipulations by adopting municipal laws that provide more detail about implementation in that particular state, as long as such additional detail does not contradict the letter and spirit of the conventions. Where issues are not expressly covered by the conventions, they continue to be regulated by customary international law. During 2005, the ICJ confirmed<sup>8</sup> that the Vienna Conventions remain valid in relations between states even in cases where a state of armed conflict exists between states concerned.

At this point, it should be noted that under international law there is no right or obligation on a state to establish diplomatic relations with any other state(s): relations exist by mutual consent only. The reverse may be an obligation, however, specifically if the UN Security Council decides that diplomatic relations are perpetuating a threat to international peace and security. Thus, in 1992 the Council (by means of

Resolution 748) imposed sanctions on Libya in order to force the country to hand over suspects related to the 1988 bombing of an aircraft over Lockerbie, Scotland. The Resolution called on states that hosted Libyan diplomatic and consular missions to order a reduction in the staff size of the Libyan missions, and to restrict the remaining staff's movement. This essentially forced all UN member states to reduce their diplomatic relations with the North African state. In 2003, Libya finally accepted responsibility for the Lockerbie bombing and paid out compensation, after which the Security Council sanctions were lifted and the country was 'rehabilitated' back into international society.

Eileen Denza (2009: 1) explains succinctly why the VCDR could claim to be 'the most successful of the instruments drawn up under the United Nations framework for codification and progressive development of international law'. She says:

Its success is due not only to the excellence of the preparatory work by the International Law Commission and the negotiating skills of State representatives at the Conference, but also to the long stability of the basic rules of diplomatic law and to the effectiveness of reciprocity as a sanction against non-compliance. (Denza 2009: 1)

### *2.5 The Courts of Public International Law*

A number of international courts are responsible for the application of public international law, and their work can and often does impact diplomacy. Two permanent courts will be discussed briefly, selected for their universal stature and reach: the International Court of Justice (ICJ) which adjudicates disputes among states, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) which is tasked with the execution of international criminal law.

The ICJ is the principal judicial organ of the UN, and its Statute is therefore an integral part of the UN Charter; this in turn means that all member states of the UN are necessarily parties to the Court's Statute. The court itself is located in The Hague, the Netherlands, and this makes it the only one of the six main organs of the UN *not* to be based in New York City. Its members are 15 judges who are elected by the General Assembly (endorsement by the Security Council is also required) for nine-year terms each.

Like its predecessor, the League of Nations' Permanent Court of International Justice (popularly known as the 'World Court') the ICJ

was created to settle legal disputes between states—and only *states*, not individuals, companies, etc. It is important to note that the ICJ is competent to entertain a dispute between parties only if the states concerned have accepted its jurisdiction. This dependence on states' consent means that throughout its history the Court's dispute settlement has been restricted to cases that were not politically contentious.

Even though Article 94 of the UN Charter places an obligation on all UN member states to comply with ICJ judgements that affect them, the Court has no enforcement capacity and states can qualify the Court's jurisdiction or even repudiate a negative judgement. The USA did so when the ICJ in its Nicaragua judgement of 1986 ruled that the USA was in breach of its international legal obligations. More recently, in May 2010, Australia approached the Court to issue a ruling on Japan's whaling programme in the Antarctic. During March 2014, the Court issued its findings and supported Australia's contention that the programme was commercially driven, and not primarily for scientific research as claimed by the Japanese government. Japan was ordered to cease all related whaling activities in that region,<sup>9</sup> a decision it initially accepted and agreed to abide by. However, Japan subsequently and controversially announced that it would resume whaling—for 'scientific purposes'—in the Antarctic.

The other main function of the ICJ is to give *advisory* opinions to the UN, its organs and its specialised agencies. The Court's advice is consultative in nature and therefore not binding, but is nevertheless sought after, and for the most part implemented, because of the stature of the Court. It also offers a mechanism for states to bring contentious matters to the Court without having to obtain the consent of the opposing party. A supporting opinion issued by the ICJ can give much-needed political gravitas to the cause of the aggrieved state.

A recent institutional addition to the realm of international public law is the ICC. It was established through the 1998 Rome Statute which came into effect on 1 July 2002. It was borne out of developments in humanitarian law and the changing profile of international conflict and sought to fill an institutional gap in international justice, aimed at ensuring criminal liability for the perpetrators of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. In the past, such crimes were addressed by ad hoc tribunals such as the Nuremberg trials immediately after World War Two, and thereafter the tribunals established inter alia for Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

The ICC is the first permanent international criminal tribunal. Its establishment was a major achievement in international law, all the more so because the Court has legal standing to prosecute individuals, including incumbent heads of state, and subnational or transnational groups. However, it is limited in two important respects: in the first place, it can only adjudicate crimes that were committed *after* the Rome Statute came into effect, i.e. as from July 2002. This means that the perpetrators of horrific mass killings, such as the genocide in Matebeleland (Zimbabwe) in the late 1980s, are outside its reach. Justice for older crimes therefore has to be pursued in an alternative way and relies on the sheer tenacity of victims and their backers. One sustained campaign to hold a political leader accountable involved former Chadian dictator Hissène Habré. He allegedly presided over torture, war crimes and genocide until his regime was toppled in 1990 and he took up exile in Senegal. The African Union was finally persuaded to request the establishment of a temporary court by Senegal—the Extraordinary African Chambers (EAC) in Dakar—and Habré’s trial commenced during July 2015, a full quarter of a century after he fled Chad.

In the years since its inception, the ICC has addressed an impressive number of cases, inter alia humanitarian atrocities committed in Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Kenya and Darfur, but the almost exclusive focus on Africa—in the light of the membership profile of the ICC—has caused political controversy. This raises the second important limitation of the Court: unlike the ICJ, the ICC is not a UN institution and states are therefore not automatically members. They have to become parties to the Rome Statute for the Court to have jurisdiction over their territories and nationals. While most African states are members, three of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (the USA,<sup>10</sup> Russia and China) are not members of the ICC, and many other states have refused to join. The Court therefore does not have universal jurisdiction, but (and this adds to the controversy) the situation in any state can be referred to the ICC by the UN Security Council. This happened when the situation in the Darfur province of Sudan was referred to the ICC in 2005 despite the fact that Sudan is not a member of the Court. It resulted in the indictment of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir on account of crimes against humanity and genocide—an indictment of which the legality is disputed by the African Union.

The permanent members of the Security Council, by virtue of their veto power, can however ensure that the Council will not refer them

(or their allies) to the ICC. Another anomaly is that the ICC, unlike the ICJ, has members that are not (yet) allowed to be fully fledged members of the UN: Palestine, for example, joined the ICC in April 2015. The institutional tension in the international public justice system, created by political contradictions, undermines diplomatic conciliation (diplomacy being dependent on an international legal framework) but at the same time creates exciting new challenges for diplomats and crafts the normative parameters of evolving international society.

## 2.6 *Regional Deviations in Codified International Law*

Despite its name, international law is not always universally applied: customary law within a certain region can impact the interpretation of international law, and aspects of ‘universal’ law can be ‘customised’ in region-specific treaties. Distinct approaches between regions are usually diplomatically managed when contradictions present, but can be problematic when courts become involved. The issue of diplomatic asylum, as discussed in Sect. 5.3 of this chapter, is a case in point. It is not universally accepted but it is an integral part of the diplomatic culture in Latin America, a region that has cultivated a very particular approach to international law.

A matter that typically causes legal contradictions is when a state is not universally recognised as sovereign. A limited number of states or a specific region might apply diplomatic law to the representatives of the contested state, but outside that club of states, the laws would not apply. The membership of the African Union involves such a dilemma. The organisation, which came into being during 2002, inherited the membership profile as its predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). During 1982, the OAU took a political decision to admit the contested state of Western Sahara<sup>11</sup> as a full member, but when the latter took up its seat in 1984, Morocco withdrew in protest. Until January 2017 (when Morocco was readmitted<sup>12</sup> to the AU after an absence of 33 years), the AU had 54 members, including Western Sahara but excluding Morocco. At the same time, 54 African states were members of the UN, including Morocco but excluding Western Sahara. The application of diplomatic law *vis-à-vis* Western Sahara is therefore completely different within the contexts of the AU and UN, something that is immediately evident when one compares the official AU political map of Africa (where Western Sahara is indicated as a sovereign state) with an official UN map.

### 2.7 *Evolving Legal Doctrine and Diplomatic Practice*

As members of international society, states are subjects of international law—a status that denotes symmetry between rights and duties. International law, just like diplomacy itself, evolves and so do the normative rules of engagement. In the contemporary era, there is an increasing emphasis on states' adherence to legal obligations in their domestic affairs as much as in their transnational and international relations, and this legal accountability to international society raises the polemic spectre of 'conditional' sovereignty.

The traditional (Westphalian) cornerstones of international law, sovereignty and non-intervention were reaffirmed in the 1945 UN Charter through Article 2(7): '*Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorise the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state*'. Yet the same Charter made history by legalising unprecedented rights for an organisation to trump state sovereignty.

As expressed in Article 24 of the Charter:

In order to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations, its members confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf.

The UN Charter was designed, however, for a world where states had a monopoly on organised violence, and peace could be guaranteed by tying states into a treaty. Since then, and especially since the end of the Cold War, the old consensus on the rules of interstate engagement has been under scrutiny. As humanitarian catastrophe proliferated and con-founded diplomatic attempts at resolution, calls were made for reinterpretation of the sacrosanct idea of state sovereignty. This culminated in the doctrine of *Responsibility to Protect* (R2P). R2P replaced the notion of an automatic *right* accruing to statehood, with an intrinsic *responsibility* and holds that in situations where a state is unable or unwilling to protect its own people, the principle of non-intervention yields to responsibility borne by the wider international community to protect such a population.



During September 2005, at the UN's 60th anniversary summit, the guiding principles of R2P were unanimously endorsed by the largest gathering of world leaders ever assembled. In their Outcome Document (par. 38), they agreed that 'each individual State has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity' and undertook to 'accept that responsibility' and to 'act in accordance with it'.

While the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit effectively rendered R2P part of international law, the implementation of R2P has been hugely controversial. For weaker states, especially new states that jealously guard their hard-won sovereignty, R2P is a ruse for big power intervention. Their concerns are supported by many states in the non-Western world, which see the enforcement of human rights as yet another liberal Western Trojan Horse. The practical experience of UN-mandated R2P interventions has only added to the controversy. A particularly bitter experience was the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)-led intervention in Libya during 2011, initially widely supported by UN member states because of (seemingly) imminent genocide in Libya. The intervention however exceeded its mandate and ended up becoming a mission to enforce regime change. The aftermath of the intervention—complete collapse of the Libyan state—prompted US President Barack Obama to refer to the lack of planning for post-intervention conditions in Libya as the 'worst mistake' of his two-term presidency (Tierney 2016).

In terms of diplomatic law, the intervention in Libya caused consternation. As the intervention started to unfold, Libyan diplomats across the world found themselves in a legal vacuum: the sudden violent removal of their government coincided with recognition (by some states but not all, and without UN consensus) of the rebel opposition as the legitimate government of Libya, but without that same opposition having been installed in power. Moreover, the anarchy and violence that marked post-intervention Libya prevented its diplomats from returning home. Many Libyan diplomats promptly pledged allegiance to the opposition, but all over the world, their legal diplomatic status was suspended in a political morass: Whom were they representing, with what authority and legitimacy, and based on what reciprocity? The remainder of the chapter will demonstrate how these considerations inform the essence of diplomatic law.

### 3 DIPLOMATIC VERSUS CONSULAR FUNCTIONS

This chapter will skim over the issue of consular work, in favour of a more general perspective on diplomacy. This is a choice of focus and does not negate the centrality of consular work to foreign service. The consular system developed millennia ago as a result of the bureaucracy associated with international trade, and the phenomenon of resident consular posts is therefore actually older than that of resident diplomatic missions. In the twenty-first century, consular work continues to be a specialisation, made ever more technically and legally complicated by the increasing volumes of commerce, trade, tourism and other human endeavours across national borders. From a diplomatic law perspective, it is necessary to point out certain differences between diplomatic and consular functions.

#### 3.1 *Diplomatic Functions*

Until the fifteenth century, most diplomatic missions involved temporary visits to foreign destinations where a specific assignment had to be carried out. As from the sixteenth century, resident (permanent) diplomatic missions became the norm and this reality necessitated a consensus on the role and mandate of such entities. The 1961 *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations*, in Article 3, codified the functions of a diplomatic mission in a host state as follows:

1. “Representing the sending State in the receiving State;
2. protecting in the receiving State the interests of the sending State and of its nationals within the limits permitted by international law;
3. negotiating with the Government of the receiving State;
4. ascertaining by all lawful means conditions and developments in the receiving State and reporting thereon to the Government of the sending State; and
5. promoting friendly relations between the sending State and the receiving State and developing their economic, cultural and scientific relations”.

These are the *de jure* (as stipulated by law) functions. The *de facto* (as is evident in practice) scope of diplomatic functions has not just increased but is expressed in various modes other than bilateral diplomacy, notably in multilateral diplomacy.

### 3.2 *Consular Work: An Extension of Public Service*

Consular functions involve the performance of bureaucratic assistance as part of a state's public service. Embassies and other diplomatic missions often have specialised staff to perform these functions, which include (among many others) notary and civil registry services—such as passport and visa provision, birth and electoral registration—that are provided to own nationals, as well as assistance with immigration of, and issuance of visas and permits to, foreign nationals. Thus, while the diplomatic functions outlined in Article 3 of the VCDR speak to the official relations between states, executed at governmental level, consular functions concern private citizens and their relations with foreign governments as well as foreign private citizens. Although these services are not expressly covered by the 1961 Convention, they are inherent to the *raison d'être* of diplomatic missions and are dealt with extensively in the 1963 *Vienna Convention on Consular Relations* (VCCR).

Consular duties are performed within a strict and prescriptive legal framework. It follows that consular officials require specialised knowledge of matters that straddle the international-municipal legal spectrum, such as citizenship, migration and asylum. They therefore have to be aware of existing and evolving international law, as captured in treaties and other instruments. This includes the growing body of law that is generated by regional intergovernmental organisations. A consular officer who works at the Consulate-General of Tanzania in Mombasa, Kenya, and who is investigating a matter involving children, would therefore need knowledge of the stipulations of the (International) *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) as well as those of the *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child* (1990). In addition he/she would have to understand the domestic legal provisions of Kenya and Tanzania, respectively.

Consular offices may also (as in the case of diplomatic missions generally) promote commercial, economic, cultural and scientific relations between their own and the host state. This explains why consular missions are not only based in the political capitals of host states, but in some cases are found in several other cities as well. Within the territory of Nigeria, for instance, many states maintain consular offices in Lagos to augment the work of their embassies in the capital, Abuja. Lagos is a financial, commercial and cultural hub where large numbers of expatriates from across the world are employed, and many foreign states therefore have an interest in being represented there.

*Consular protection* allows a state to safeguard the rights of its nationals or bodies corporate while they are outside of its territorial jurisdiction. The concept is often misunderstood, especially when it is confused with *diplomatic protection* (see Sect. 5 of this chapter). Whereas with *diplomatic protection* a state can insist on compliance with its own (municipal) law and can seek redress for a violation of international law; *consular protection* can only be done in accordance with the municipal law of the foreign state where the individual or corporate entity needs assistance. When a state's nationals are detained in a foreign state, consular officials can demand access to them, find them lawyers and can petition the host state to improve the conditions of detention. However, they cannot stop or change the judicial process, and neither are they allowed to give legal advice or investigate crimes (Switzerland FDFA 2008: 7). Consular protection therefore amounts primarily to moral support, with practical and legal support done only within strict limitations of law and respect for host state sovereignty.

Most of the immunities that apply to diplomatic premises and property also apply to those of consular missions, but consular agents and premises do not enjoy the same degree of immunity from receiving state jurisdiction as their diplomatic colleagues. This is because consular work is administrative rather than political, and the related immunity is therefore purely functional: while diplomatic agents enjoy full immunity, the immunity of consular agents extends only to actions performed in the exercise of their official duties.

Another restriction is territorial demarcation: whereas diplomats have immunity in the total territory of a host states, consular agents are restricted in terms of the *exequatur* issued by the host state: this is the official authorisation document specifying the areas where the consular staff may operate, and where their immunities will apply as concerns official duties. The privileges and immunities of consular staff are expanded on in the VCCR (1963).

According to the *Vienna Convention on Consular Relations*, consent to diplomatic relations implies (unless expressly specified otherwise) that consent to consular relations has also been given. Maaïke Okano-Heijmans (2013: 476) explains that, interestingly, the VCCR at the same time emphasises that the severance of diplomatic ties does not ipso facto mean that consular ties have also been severed. This makes it possible—although unusual, as she points out—for states to maintain or initiate consular relations *without* first having agreed on the establishment of diplomatic relations.

## 4 PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF DIPLOMATS

With international law resting on the legal principle of state sovereignty, diplomats—as official representatives of those states—have rights derived from the same principle. Beyond the symbolism, it is also a practical necessity: in order to perform their duties within the territorial constraints of a foreign sovereign jurisdiction, diplomats require ‘immunity’. In simple terms, *immunity* implies the condition under which a state may *not* exercise its sovereign jurisdiction, i.e. not apply its own domestic laws. Diplomatic *privileges*, on the other hand, are not immunities, but rather special facilities, prerogatives and tax exemptions that are accorded to diplomats.

### 4.1 *Rights Tempered by Obligations and Context*

Diplomatic immunity is the basic principle of diplomatic law, and as the Secretariat of the UN observed in the 1950s:

The rules relating to diplomatic immunities ... originate in the conviction that the absolute independence of the diplomatic agent in his dealings with the sovereign to whom he is accredited is an indispensable condition for the accomplishment of his mission. It is from this principle that the various immunities enjoyed by the diplomatic representatives of States derive. (UN Secretariat 1956: 134)

The underlying principle of *reciprocity* ensures that all states abide by these conditionalities because their own diplomats abroad need exactly the same protection. The justification for immunity thus has two dimensions: on the one hand, the functional necessity for diplomats to do their jobs, and on the other hand, because they represent sovereign states, the symbolic, egalitarian confirmation of the principle of state sovereignty. (It follows that, as Article 31(4) of the VCDR reminds us, diplomats are not immune from the legal jurisdiction of their own sending states.)

Importantly, diplomatic privileges and immunities are contingent on ethical obligations to a receiving state. Article 41 of the VCDR (and Article 55 of the VCCR) spells out the duty of diplomats to respect the laws and regulations of a host state and forbids them to use their special status in order to interfere in the host’s domestic affairs.

Also included in Article 41 is a procedural obligation that ‘all official business with the receiving state, entrusted to the mission by the sending state, shall be conducted with or through the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the receiving state or such other ministry as may be agreed’. This means that only mutually agreed, designated official channels may be used for diplomatic business between the two states. Article 41 is therefore an implicit code of conduct for diplomats and implies an obligation for diplomats to know the legal framework that determines the functional and ethical parameters of their profession. If they transgress, the state that hosts them may insist on their immediate recall, and they have no ‘right’ to stay on.

Diplomatic privileges and immunities which originated in customary international law were comprehensively codified by the Vienna Conventions of 1961 and 1963, but customary law continues to be used when a matter falls outside the ambit of official treaties. Additional or conditional privileges and immunities may also be stipulated in bilateral agreements between states, states and organisations, or between organisations. Sub-state entities, such as the US Peace Corps, can also negotiate legal agreements to provide for privileges and immunities for their own staff in a host state. These bilateral agreements are often of a consular nature and can be contained in other agreements (e.g. on commerce and navigation). In such cases, the immunities and privileges that are outlined apply only to that specific relationship. For the purpose of our discussion, I will focus on the ‘universal’ diplomatic privileges and immunities, as contained in the Vienna Conventions.

#### 4.2 *Inviolability of the Premises*

Article 22 of the VCDR stipulates that the premises of a diplomatic mission are *inviolable*. This means that local authorities, i.e. agents of the receiving state, may only enter diplomatic premises with explicit permission from the head of mission. The explicit nature of the required permission speaks to the inherent reciprocity and voluntary nature of diplomatic relations. Even implied consent, for example when fire-fighting is required, is controversial. When consent is not sought, a diplomatic crisis usually ensues.

Not only is the receiving state prohibited from infringing on the inviolability of diplomatic premises on its territory, but the Vienna

Convention actually places a proactive duty on the host state to *protect* such premises. This duty covers the full spectrum of violations, from violent attack to unsolicited intrusion, infringement of dignity (such as graffiti painted on embassy walls) and indeed any disruption of the work of embassy staff. For this reason, in some countries (like the USA) there are statutory restrictions on the physical distance from an embassy's outer perimeters that demonstrators have to observe.

Since the 1970s, deliberate defacement of embassy premises has developed into a major international problem. Perhaps the most flagrant breach of diplomatic law was presented by the Iran Hostage crisis, in the wake of the Iranian (Islamic) Revolution. During November 1979, the US Embassy in Teheran was invaded by hundreds of militant student supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini, evidently with full support of Iran's Revolutionary Council. While some staff were set free (mainly women and African American staff members, for symbolic reasons) fifty-two diplomatic and consular officials—'guests of the Ayatollah' as they were called—were dispersed<sup>13</sup> to correctional facilities across the country and kept as hostages. In addition, the Embassy archives and other property were seized.

A chorus of international condemnation ensued, and in 1980 the ICJ declared that it was Iran's categorical duty to protect the US Embassy, not only under the provisions of the 1961 VCDR (and analogous provisions of the 1963 VCCR) but also under general international law. The Court made it clear that the immunities of diplomats and inviolability of diplomatic premises and property had to be observed even when two states were in conflict, or when diplomatic relations had been severed. The crisis dragged on for a full 444 days, causing worldwide outrage and massive sanctions against Iran. The country was effectively isolated, until the regime freed the hostages in January 1981.

Another incident that caused international tension happened in 1999 when the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade was bombed by the USA during the NATO's Kosovo campaign. The bombing, which had been accidental collateral damage, according to NATO, created a diplomatic crisis and rioting in China itself, where the US embassy and consulates were damaged in public retaliation. Eventually, compensation was paid by both sides.

Unfortunately, deliberate attacks on diplomatic premises have become commonplace. In some respects, it is a symptom of the new profile of international conflict, which is marked by significant non-state-centric,

asymmetrical violence. In many instances, the attacks are a demonstration of public dissatisfaction with a foreign state's behaviour and sometimes the public sentiment is silently endorsed, even orchestrated, by agents from the host state. In this regard, real or perceived illegal activity on the diplomatic premises may be used to justify violence. Such acts are strictly forbidden by the Vienna Conventions, but at the same time, it should be kept in mind that Article 41 of the VCDR forbids diplomatic premises from being used in way that is incompatible with the functions of a diplomatic mission, as outlined in Article 3. Harbouring terrorists, stockpiling weapons, smuggling drugs and so forth contradict the diplomatic code of conduct and destroy the crucial good faith that underpins a state's accommodation of foreign missions. The corollary is that diplomatic premises enjoy inviolability only while being used for their intended purposes.

A related concern is the legal status of abandoned premises. A precedent case in this regard concerns the closure in 1975 of the Cambodian Embassy in London, when staff fled after Pol Pot came into power in their country. The premises remained abandoned because the UK refused to recognise the new regime of Cambodia. Squatters started living there and objected when they were evicted, claiming that the premises were inviolable under diplomatic law. However, as Shaw (2008: 757) explains, the abandoned premises had been made subject to Section 2 of the UK's Diplomatic and Consular Premises Act<sup>14</sup> and 'the Secretary of State vested the land in himself', i.e. the land was repossessed. The court found in favour of the UK government and held that its action was justified because diplomatic relations were broken off and the premises had been abandoned. By the same token, Iranian and Vietnamese properties have at different times been in the custody of the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Suspicion that embassy premises are being abused has caused a number of diplomatic spats, especially when the sending state denies any wrongdoing. The most compelling justification for unauthorised entry by local authorities is threat to human life (Denza 2008: 150). Thus, in 1973 the government of Pakistan allowed its special forces to search the Iraqi Embassy in Islamabad.<sup>15</sup> Its suspicions were proven correct when large quantities of arms were found, allegedly destined for Balochi separatists. As a result, the Iraqi ambassador and some of his staff were declared *personae non gratae* and had to vacate their posts.



### 4.3 *The Diplomatic Bag*

Commonly referred to as the ‘diplomatic bag’, the containers used to transport official communication material, such as documents and literature, are considered inviolable. This is in line with Article 27 of the VCDR, which provides that the ‘receiving State shall permit and protect free communication on the part of the mission for all official purposes’. A sending state and its diplomatic agents must therefore enjoy unhindered and continuous communication. This means, as Article 27(3) explicitly states, that the bag ‘shall not be opened or detained’. By extension, the courier of a diplomatic bag enjoys personal inviolability, and where temporary in-transit residence is required, his/her accommodation is also inviolable. Blanket inviolability of the diplomatic bag has been controversial, however, and upon signature or ratification of the VCDR, several states (mostly Arab, among them Bahrain, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar and Saudi Arabia) entered reservations to the Vienna Convention, insisting that diplomatic bags might be opened in cases of suspect content, albeit only in the presence of diplomats from the sending state.

Since the early 1960s when the Vienna Conventions were adopted, advances in technology have made it easier to screen containers such as diplomatic bags, even without the knowledge of the courier. Less developed countries predictably feared that states with a technological advantage would use their superior resources to subvert the inviolability principle. Tasked by the United Nations with investigating the matter, in 1989 the International Law Commission declared definitively that diplomatic bags ‘shall be exempt from examination directly or through electronic devices’, and in the absence of mutual agreement on opening it, that it should be sent back, unopened, to its origin.

According to Article 27(4), a diplomatic bag must ‘bear visible external marks’ and ‘may contain only documents or articles intended for official use’. This caveat raises the all-important subtext, omnipresent in diplomatic law, that privileges and immunities hinge on mutual agreement and reciprocal behaviour. When this delicate trust is lost, it inevitably causes an incident. Thus, the concept of ‘diplomatic bag’ assumed a rather unusual profile in the notorious Dikko case that unfolded after a military coup took place in Nigeria during 1983. Transport Minister Umaru Dikko, fearing arrest by the new regime, fled to London but was apprehended there during July 1984 by Nigerian secret services (allegedly with the support of the Israeli Mossad). Dikko was kidnapped,

drugged and locked in a crate that was presented as ‘diplomatic freight’ (without official stamp but accompanied by a diplomatic official) to be transported back to Lagos. Before departure from Stansted Airport, UK security agents forcibly opened the crate and found Dikko. A diplomatic crisis ensued, and the Nigerian High Commissioner (Ambassador) in London was promptly declared *persona non grata*.

The case is reminiscent of an incident in 1964 when officials at Rome airport became suspicious of two ‘diplomatic mail’ containers belonging to the Egyptian Embassy. Inside they found a drugged Israeli agent and an ‘accompanying’ Egyptian intelligence agent. This prompted the authorities to expel a number of Egyptian diplomats from Italy.

Such extreme cases are rare, but in diplomatic practice, the subtle abuse of the bag is common—a mechanism of transporting small goods safely, without the bureaucratic intrusion of foreign customs officials, can be irresistible to diplomats who miss small comforts from home. A more disturbing abuse is the transport of illicit drugs, currency, etc. especially when it is done systematically by the authorities of the sending state. The diplomats from a state that is suffering the impact of comprehensive international sanctions, as South Africa, Libya, Iran and North Korea (among others) have experienced, often operate with a siege mentality, and in some cases they might regard legal transgressions as a way of self-preservation. North Korean embassies have an unfortunate record in this regard, and there have been numerous incidents where their diplomatic bags were opened, confirming suspicions that they contained contraband destined to shore up the beleaguered state’s reserves.

#### 4.4 *Diplomatic Property Immunity*

The Vienna Convention ensures that the premises of the mission are inviolable, together with ‘...their furnishings and other property thereon and the means of transport of the mission’ and that all these are ‘immune from search, requisition, attachment or execution’ (Art. 22.3). Article 23 provides for mission premises to be generally exempted from national, regional or municipal dues and taxes, except for dues that are payment for services rendered, or as specified per contract entered into. The idea is that a host state should facilitate, not obstruct, the ability of a diplomatic mission on its territory to carry out its diplomatic functions.

As part of operational property, bank accounts are also immune, but only if used for day-to-day running expenses to meet formal duties. By

the same token, embassy vehicles may not be searched. In August 2013, a scandal surrounding the abuse of a diplomatic vehicle prompted the Brazilian foreign minister Antonio Patriota, to resign his position. The Brazilian Embassy in neighbouring Bolivia had infuriated the host country by smuggling a Bolivian dissident into Brazil. The dissident, former Bolivian senator, Roger Pinto, had spent more than a year in the Brazilian embassy in La Paz, after seeking asylum amidst claims of persecution by his own authorities. He was smuggled in a diplomatic car to the border of Brazil, an act that so outraged the Bolivian Government, that Patriota took the fall to defuse the situation.

As in the case of the diplomatic bag, the documents and archives of a diplomatic mission are inviolable ‘at any time and wherever they may be’ (Article 24, VCDR). The drafters of the Vienna Conventions had no idea, however, that the advances in information and communications technology (ICT) would soon revolutionise access to and storage of official data, which is increasingly done electronically across the world. Hacking of government databases and subsequent mass publication of classified diplomatic cables has become a new tool to embarrass governments and to influence domestic or foreign policy. The diplomatic-bureaucratic implications of this will be discussed in the chapter that follows.

#### 4.5 *Personal Inviolability*

The idea of *don't shoot the messenger* is the oldest expression of legal immunity. The categories of Individuals who are entitled to immunity and the extent of their immunity were therefore codified in detail by the 1961 and 1963 Vienna Conventions. As in the case of embassy premises and property, the host state has an obligation to ensure the safety of foreign diplomats. However, since the adoption of the Vienna Conventions, several incidents of diplomats being attacked, kidnapped or killed have shocked the UN community. It prompted the General Assembly to adopt, in December 1973, the *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents*. The term ‘internationally protected persons’, created by the Convention, refers to heads of state and government, foreign ministers, ambassadors, diplomats and their accompanying families. Included, therefore, are the individuals who are expected to travel abroad in order to represent states in an official capacity. The Convention expanded on states’ duty to protect these individuals,

by adding that when such acts could not have been prevented, states have the duty to ensure that jurisdiction over the crimes is established.

Personal inviolability means that a diplomat (and his/her accompanying family members; provided they are not nationals of the receiving state) may not be submitted to any form of arrest or detention. Furthermore, he/she enjoys complete immunity from the *criminal* jurisdiction of the courts of the host state. Their immunity from the legal system of the receiving state also means that diplomats cannot be obliged to testify in judicial proceedings in a host country. Their personal baggage is also exempt from inspection. If serious grounds for concern are presented, Article 36(2) allows for inspection as long as it takes place in the presence of the diplomat or an authorised representative. In terms of Article 30(1) of the VCDR, the private residences of diplomatic agents enjoy the same level of inviolability as the mission premises.

Immunity is also extended to civil and administrative jurisdiction, and diplomats are exempt from a host state's taxes (albeit not from indirect taxes) and social security obligations. However, Article 31(1) qualifies civil and administrative immunity in circumstances related to a diplomat's private immovable property, involvement in litigation on succession matters and unofficial or commercial activity.

In terms of Article 10 of the VCDR, the foreign ministry of a receiving state should be notified about the appointment of all new members of a diplomatic mission, including information about the members of their household, such as family members and private servants. (In the case of Ambassadors, and as indicated in Article 4 of the VCDR, explicit permission, known as *agrément*, must be obtained from a receiving state before an ambassador is sent there. If the receiving state denies permission, reasons for refusal need not be given.) Notice must also be provided to the host state of the final departure or the termination of diplomats' duties at the mission. With the understanding then that a host state has been made aware of the identity of diplomats from a sending state, the personal immunities and privileges take effect as soon as a diplomatic agent enters the territory of the host state. The diplomat also enjoys immunity while in transit in a third state. Immunity ends when a posting is completed and the diplomat leaves the receiving state.

By the same token, and as provided for in Article 9, the receiving state may declare any member of a foreign mission on its territory *persona non grata*. This means that the host state deems an individual as no longer acceptable (e.g. as a result of having committed a crime), and

wants him/her recalled by the sending state. If the sending state fails to act, the host state may then expel the person. This may be done at any stage, regarding any member of a diplomatic mission, and no reason needs to be provided. Nonetheless, under most conditions and for the sake of ongoing bilateral relations and public diplomacy, a state that actually expels a diplomat will provide a reason for doing so. Thus in March 2014, after South Africa expelled several Rwandan diplomats, the South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation briefed the media on the circumstances. She explained that the decision was taken ‘based on evidence that the diplomats were involved in cases of murder and attempted murder on South African soil’. This followed the December 2013 assassination of former Rwandan intelligence chief Patrick Karegyeya, in Johannesburg, and several other attempted assassinations of Rwandan exiles (SA: Brand SA, 19 March 2014).

Declaration of a diplomat as *persona non grata* is an extreme measure, and in most cases bilateral attempts will be made to have the issue resolved before such a declaration, inter alia by having a delinquent diplomat voluntarily withdrawn by the sending state. Usually this happens when the transgression is of a personal nature and both governments want to set the incident behind them and proceed with friendly relations. This was the case in April 2013, when a brawl in a Lima supermarket between the Ecuadorian Ambassador to Peru and two Peruvian women, attracted widespread media attention. Following several weeks of allegations and counter-allegations of assault, and behind-the-scenes efforts to resolve the diplomatic impasse, on 2 May 2013 the foreign ministries of the two countries announced they would recall their respective ambassadors and nominate replacements. Ecuadorean Foreign Minister Ricardo Patino effectively drew a line under the incident, saying ‘One isolated incident will not affect the excellent relationship between our countries’ (Reuters, 2 May 2013).

In other cases, an expulsion may be unrelated to the behaviour of the individual diplomat, i.e. he/she might be a mere pawn in a political altercation between the two states. This happens rather frequently, sometimes as reciprocal action by a state when its diplomats had been expelled from another state. In the example of South Africa–Rwanda mentioned earlier, the Rwandan government immediately retaliated by expelling several South African diplomats from the Embassy in Kigali.

When a diplomat has been declared *persona non grata* because he/she broke the law in a host state, it is the choice of the sending government

either to recall the diplomat, or to have him/her face justice in the host state. If the latter choice is made, the sending state waives the immunity of its diplomat (Article 32 of the VCDR), thereby effectively stripping him/her of immunity and allowing the individual to face criminal charges. (Another, separate, waiver is required for implementation of the judgment.) It is important to note that only the authorities of a diplomat's *sending state* may waive immunity—he/she cannot do so in a private capacity, and neither can it be done by the host state. According to the VCDR, waiver must be *express*, in other words, in writing. It also has to be done voluntarily by the sending state; it cannot be forced (Denza 2008: 345).

In comparison with diplomats, as mentioned earlier, consular, administrative and technical staff (and their families) have more limited personal immunity on account of the fact that they are not responsible for political relations. Their immunity is therefore only linked to actions taken in the actual performance of official duties. Determining what distinguishes an official act from a personal one, however, can be a grey area in diplomatic law, and where disputes arise they are usually resolved by means of bilateral negotiations, without taking recourse to the courts. Even so, some incidents degenerate into public spats.

During December 2013, a diplomatic storm erupted between the USA and India, over the treatment of India's Deputy Consul-General in New York, Devyani Khobragade. US prosecutors alleged that she had lied to authorities about the working conditions of her housekeeper, and accused her of visa fraud. She was handcuffed upon her arrest, detained and strip-searched, sparking a massive outcry and anti-US protests in India. The US State Department noted that she qualified for limited consular immunity which did not shield her against prosecution for this kind of crime. The Indian government, furious about the incident, promptly transferred Khobragade to its other office in New York, India's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, where her new position would entail full diplomatic immunity. US Secretary of State, John Kerry, had to diffuse the tension between the two states by personally expressing his regret over the issue.

#### 4.6 *Ad Hoc (Special) Missions*

Most states, on an ad hoc basis, employ special missions to deal with a specific issue or aspect of relations to countries where they may or may not already have resident missions. This practice predates the institution

of resident missions, and in terms of customary diplomatic law, envoys involved in such temporary missions are accorded immunities and privileges on a par with those of diplomatic staff attached to resident missions. While the VCDR and VCCR provide comprehensive immunities and privileges related to *resident* missions, the special circumstances related to diplomats on ad hoc or special missions were not clarified.

This prompted the UN General Assembly to adopt, on 8 December 1969, the *Convention on Special Missions*. The Convention draws on the analogy of the Vienna Conventions to make the latter's provisions, where appropriate, applicable to any temporary diplomatic mission from one state to another, with the caveat that the size, composition, leader, mandate, timing and location of such a mission have to be mutually agreed, prior to the mission being established. It also allows for such missions to take place, by mutual consent, even in the absence of official diplomatic or consular relations.

## 5 STATE<sup>16</sup> IMMUNITY AND DIPLOMATIC PROTECTION

As discussed in Chapter 2 (Conceptual Framework), the legal principle of state sovereignty is a pillar of interstate relations. The recognition of a state's sovereignty by other states is a *political* decision by the community of states; so sought after that Richard Langhorne (2005: 333) refers to it as 'the holy grail of legitimacy'. Once a state is recognised as sovereign, it accrues certain immunities under international law, and these are also extended to the state's organs and its executive representatives. The sovereign state, moreover, has the right to protect, to a prescribed extent, its interests and nationals even when they are outside its territorial realm and on the territory of another state. This is referred to (somewhat confusingly) as the exercise of *diplomatic protection*.

While state immunity and diplomatic protection are not part of diplomatic law per se, I have included the discussion in the chapter because diplomats are so often involved in related cases.

### 5.1 *The Doctrine of Restrictive Immunity*

Until the twentieth century, states enjoyed general immunity within the sovereign jurisdiction of other states. State immunity was therefore *absolute*, in the sense that it covered all acts of a state. As states became more involved in commercial activities, private enterprises began to balk

at the fact that they could not pursue legitimate claims against governments. Customary international law thus started to reflect the doctrine of *restrictive immunity*, which implies immunity only for a state's *public* (or '*sovereign*') activities in the international domain.

Restrictive immunity is primarily geared towards commercial transactions and financial loans that involve the state or state-owned corporations (central banks are an exception: they enjoy a special status under international law). States can waive their own immunity when entering a contract but cannot be forced to do so, and this leaves many policy-makers with the conundrum of attracting direct foreign state investment while also protecting private business from unfair treatment.

The doctrine of state immunity (whether absolute or restrictive) continues to defy universal consensus. David Gaukrodger (2010: 5) refers to it as an 'unsettled area of law', and this means domestic courts are often faced with a grey legal area when foreign governments are involved in litigation. The problem is that a state's public and commercial acts can be conflated. By way of illustration: Does the financial investment of a sovereign wealth fund (or a public pension fund) constitute a public or commercial act?

There have been several international attempts at codification, but none of them has been conclusive. A comprehensive approach was adopted when on 2 December 2004 the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on Jurisdictional Immunities of States and Their Property, but the Convention is not yet in force—as of 23 September 2017 only 28 states had signed the Convention and only 21 (out of a required 30) states had ratified it.

Disputes in this regard have even been brought to the ICJ, as Equatorial Guinea did in 2016 after French prosecutors ordered the seizure<sup>17</sup> of property belonging to Vice-President Teodorin Obiang (the son of President Obiang, Africa's longest serving ruler). The property included a mansion in a wealthy neighbourhood of Paris, several luxury cars, vintage wines and other collectables, which French authorities claimed were bought with embezzled state funds. Equatorial Guinea requested the ICJ to halt France's punitive measures against Obiang, saying that the country's sovereign immunity had been breached by France and insisting that the seized building was used as diplomatic premises.

During December 2016, the ICJ issued a ruling on preliminary measures in the case. It partly vindicated the protest by Equatorial Guinea when the Court's judges confirmed the diplomatic immunity of the



building that had been seized, making it off-limits for the French authorities to enter it (again). However, the Court also declared that it lacked the jurisdiction to grant Equatorial Guinea's request for it to suspend the French money-laundering case against Teodorin Obiang (Reuters, 7 December 2016). During October 2017, a French court found him guilty of embezzlement. It ordered his personal assets to be seized and handed down a three year suspended jail sentence.

## 5.2 *Diplomatic Protection as a Right of States*

Under international law, all states are responsible to treat foreign citizens in accordance with a minimum standard of justice. When unprovoked acts that are contrary to international law—such as unlawful detention or confiscation of property—cause an injury to a citizen or property of a foreign state, it is formally regarded as an injury to the state itself. If that is the case, the injured state may resort to *diplomatic protection*, ‘international law’s oldest mechanism for the protection of aliens abroad’ (Dugard 2013: 2). A state can therefore intervene on behalf of its nationals, whether they are individuals, organisations or companies.

Such incidents are fairly common and usually involve considerable diplomatic effort behind the scenes in order to limit the political fall-out of the situation. During May 2013, for example, Taiwan reacted strongly to the death of a Taiwanese fisherman, shot by the Philippines coast guard in an area of the South China Sea claimed by both countries as their exclusive economic zone. In protest, Taiwan suspended the hiring of Filipino workers (whose remittances are an important source of income for the Philippines) and recalled its envoy from Manila. Amidst a diplomatic<sup>18</sup> stand-off, Taiwan threatened to suspend all high-level exchanges between the two countries, discouraged its citizens from visiting the Philippines and conducted a military exercise in the disputed area. The Philippines eventually apologised and agreed to compensate the fisherman's family.

Even when an injury to a state is not caused by the authorities of another state, diplomatic protection can be invoked. In South Africa during April 2015, xenophobic attacks on foreign Africans flared, and several diplomatic missions in the country (including those of Nigeria, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Malawi) took measures to protect their own citizens. This included emergency evacuations and

negotiations with the South African government to ensure that all possible was done to protect foreigners within its territory.

It should be pointed out, however, that although diplomatic protection is a right of states and not of the individual(s) affected, there is no corresponding legal obligation on states to take diplomatic protection measures: it is a discretionary option under public international law. On the other hand, if a state chooses to exert its right to diplomatic protection, its actions must be in compliance with its own law and practice, i.e. it cannot expect treatment for its nationals that exceeds what they are entitled to in their own state. Moreover, under international law diplomatic protection can only be extended to a state's own nationals, and such protection should only be considered once the national has resorted to and exhausted all local remedies (legal and practical options) in his/her attempt to obtain redress for the prejudicial action (Switzerland FDFA 2008: 12).

It is interesting to note that diplomatic protection has never been codified in a diplomatic convention (treaty), despite citation by the ICJ, and the practice being a recognised part of customary international law. South African legal scholar John Dugard, who was Special Rapporteur for the International Law Commission and drafted articles for the Commission on the issue of diplomatic protection, explains why:

As a branch of law with relatively settled rules and a rich jurisprudence to support these rules, diplomatic protection was an obvious candidate for codification by the International Law Commission (ILC). The subject is, however, closely related to that of State responsibility and this resulted in diplomatic protection suffering the same fate as State responsibility in respect of codification. (Dugard 2013: 2)

He says notwithstanding the lack of treaty codification, diplomatic protection is used by states across the world, including developing states—despite the practice having at one stage acquired a reputation ‘as a procedure used by rich, developed nations to interfere in the domestic affairs of developing nations’. It became particularly problematic during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first few decades of the twentieth century, when Western entrepreneurs flocked to Latin America (wealthy in natural resources and rapidly industrialising at that stage) and frequently ended up having disputes with the local authorities over personal and property rights. The diplomatic protection that was exerted by

Western powers in response to the disputes was often perceived by Latin American states as a form of bullying.

### 5.3 *Extraterritoriality and Diplomatic Asylum*

The diplomatic law that guides the inviolability of diplomatic premises is sometimes confused with the idea of ‘extraterritoriality’, which would (erroneously) assume diplomatic premises to constitute part of the sending state’s territory. Shaw (2008: 752) notes that the extraterritoriality theory is rooted in some historical debate within international law, but that it is ‘not of practical use’. It is certainly not codified in the Vienna Conventions. Conflation of the two concepts also feeds into the debate on so-called diplomatic asylum on the premises of a sending state.

From time to time a national from the host state (or a third state) seeks refuge on the diplomatic premises of a foreign state. Often, such a refugee(s) will request political asylum in the foreign state. All such cases are politically contentious, because the mere fact that refuge is sought, implies that the host state is unable or unwilling to provide the necessary protection or legal process to that person. This occurred when Julian Assange, controversial founder of WikiLeaks, during June 2012 sought refuge in the Embassy of Ecuador in London and requested political asylum in Ecuador, which he was subsequently granted during August of that same year. As motivation he cited his imminent extradition by the UK to Sweden to be prosecuted on rape charges, and the possibility that Sweden, in turn, would extradite him to the USA, where he could potentially face the death penalty for his deliberate leaking of highly classified US government information.

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office responded to the situation by threatening to revoke the inviolability of the premises, claiming that it was not being used for its intended purposes. This provoked the Organisation of American States (OAS) to call a special meeting of its foreign ministers to discuss the crisis caused by the UK threat. The US Department of State dismissed the need for the OAS meeting, observing that the USA ‘does not recognise the concept of diplomatic asylum as a matter of international law’ (US DOS, 16 August 2012). Ecuador proceeded to try and negotiate safe passage for Assange, but the UK authorities insisted that it was under legal obligation to extradite him to Sweden, and would do so the moment he left the Ecuadorian Embassy premises. During February 2016, the United Nations Working Group

on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD) found in favour of Assange, but both the UK and Sweden rejected the pronouncement. Swedish prosecutors subsequently (during May 2017) dropped the rape investigation, but the UK police indicated that their arrest warrant for Assange, on charges of contravening his bail conditions, was still in force. The UK Foreign Office rejected a request, presented in January 2018 by the Ecuadorian authorities, to grant Assange diplomatic status. As of April 2018, Assange remained in the Ecuadorian Embassy and the stand-off continued.

The verbal stand-off speaks to a grey area within international law: under customary international law, there is no consensus about the right to ‘diplomatic asylum’, but the concept has been codified in regional treaties, specifically the 1954 OAS Convention on Diplomatic Asylum (to which the USA is not a party). Latin American jurists have played a key role in developing the doctrine of asylum, influenced by the distinctive political history—until recently, many unconstitutional changes of government through revolutions and *coups d’état*—of the region. As a consequence, the practice of foreign embassies granting refuge to asylum seekers is more common in Latin America than anywhere else. A case in point is the 1973 *coup d’état* in Chile. Hundreds of Chileans fled into exile from the incoming Pinochet regime via the embassies of Mexico, Panama and Venezuela—and their ‘diplomatic’ exit from the country was allowed by the regime.

Shaw (2008: 758) observes that an embassy’s granting of refuge to a person who is wanted by the host state could be interpreted as intervention in the sovereign affairs of the host. In principle, therefore, ‘refugees are to be returned to the authorities of the receiving state in the absence of treaty or customary rules to the contrary’. The Vienna Conventions do not make mention of ‘diplomatic asylum’, and cases that occur outside the realm of regional or bilateral treaties, therefore remain essentially political rather than a matter of diplomatic law.

## 6 DIPLOMATIC LAW AND MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY

Thus far in this chapter, all the diplomatic privileges and immunities that were discussed pertained to bilateral missions. This is not an oversight—in fact, the entire subject of multilateral diplomacy is weakly codified in diplomatic law, an incongruity if one considers the fact that, in the course of the twentieth century, multilateral diplomacy provided the

opportunity and legitimacy for unprecedented codification of diplomatic law. Moreover, the vast web of global governance, spawned by multilateral diplomacy and impacting all sectors of human activity, has become a powerful legal driver of diplomatic practice.

### 6.1 *Codification, but Haltingly*

When the Vienna Conventions were drafted during the course of the 1950s, the prevalence of IGOs with permanent diplomatic headquarters—the ‘epicentres’ of multilateral diplomacy—was not yet so large as to warrant a separate treaty to address the immunities and privileges associated with multilateral diplomacy. Of course, during subsequent decades this situation changed dramatically and as soon as the VCDR and VCCR were adopted, efforts commenced to plug the gap in the legal framework. The process culminated in the 1975 *Vienna Convention on the Representation of States in their Relations with International Organisations of a Universal Character*. The 1975 treaty basically mirrored the 1961 Vienna Convention by extending similar rights, privileges and duties to diplomats who are accredited to an *organisation* rather than a state, and the staff employed by the organisation.

However, the 1975 Convention has received only a lukewarm response. Critics are uncomfortable with the high level of immunities the Convention provides, and find the analogy with diplomatic agents of bilateral missions to be inappropriate. They point out that the 1975 Convention far exceeds the provisions made by the 1946 Treaty that catered for the UN’s operational requirements, the *Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations* and the related 1947a *Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialised Agencies*. These conventions augmented, in very basic and functional terms, the provision made in the UN Charter that ‘[t]he Organisation shall enjoy in the territory of each of its Members such privileges and immunities as are necessary for the fulfilment of its purposes’ (Par. 1 of Article 105). The implication, in terms of customary law, is that it should suffice for an international organisation to conclude an agreement with the host state, in which immunities and privileges are mutually agreed. Thus in 1947, the UN concluded an agreement with the USA, as host state, and this *Agreement Between the United Nations and the United States Regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations* United Nations General Assembly was duly approved by the General Assembly (A/Res 169 of 31 October 1947b).

As of September 2017, the 1975 Vienna Convention had still not entered into force because the required minimum<sup>19</sup> number of UN member states has not ratified the Convention. The Secretariats of IGOs have therefore simply continued, as per customary law, to negotiate with governments of host states/cities and to ensure that the provisions of the 1961 VCDR are incorporated into municipal law so as to cover the staff of the organisation, and accredited diplomats. This explains why in 2008 the African Union concluded an agreement<sup>20</sup> with the Ethiopian government to ensure that diplomats accredited to the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa enjoy the same legal status as other diplomats also based in Addis Ababa but accredited (bilaterally) to the government of Ethiopia.

The growing international legal presence of IGOs also prompted the International Law Commission to develop an extension of the 1969 *Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties* (which deals with treaties between states, and entered into force in 1980), that resulted in the 1986 *Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties between States and International Organisations or between International Organisations* (VCLTIO). Though not yet in force (as of September 2017) the provisions of this treaty are widely recognised as a reflection of international customary law.

## 6.2 *Host Cities and Undiplomatic Diplomats*

The unease with which the 1975 *Vienna Convention on the Representation of States in their Relations with International Organisations of a Universal Character* was received reflected tellingly in the identity of the states that abstained when the Convention was voted on. Austria, Canada, France, Switzerland, the UK and the USA—all hosts to headquarters of international organisations—were clearly not convinced that a universal Convention could be applied to the myriad organisations, each with a different membership profile, mandate and interests, that are proliferating across the world and seeking headquarters typically in cities where local taxpayers subsidise the infrastructure and services.

The largest diplomatic corps in the world is based not in any capital city, but in the US city of New York, host to the UN headquarters. The city is known for its cosmopolitan, no-nonsense attitude to all who dwell there, but even so, successive mayoral administrations have been frustrated by the petty abuse of diplomatic privileges and immunities.

Until 2002, unpaid parking fines was a particular irritant to New York taxpayers, and the problem persisted despite successive city administrations and the State Department trying various remedies. Shaw (2008: 766, footnote 379) mentions an attempt in 1994 to curtail the problem through US legislation: section 574 of the *Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs Appropriations Act 1994* provided for 110% of unpaid parking fines and penalties to be withheld from an errant state's development aid. Notwithstanding this provision, in a period of just more than five years, between April 1997 and November 2002, an amount of \$23 million accrued in unpaid New York City parking summonses (Saul 2014). By 2002, pressure from exasperated New Yorkers moved the City Administration to clamp down on offenders. With the assistance of the US State Department, the diplomatic number plates of offending individuals were either confiscated or not renewed, thereby rendering the use of their diplomatic vehicles illegal.

### 6.3 *Diplomatic Law and Multilateral Versus Bilateral Politics*

One of the reasons the 1975 Vienna Convention was drafted was to ensure that diplomatic law would apply universally to all states that belong to a given international organisation, i.e. regardless of whether all the member states of the IGO have diplomatic relations with the state that hosts the organisation. The headquarters of the United Nations, for example, is in New York City but North Korea, a member state of the UN, has no diplomatic relations with the USA, which acts as host state.

Bilateral politics are less prominent in the case of a neutral host state, such as Switzerland, but the USA is far from neutral. Indeed, its position as global superpower means that every member state of the UN is acutely aware of its own bilateral relations, whether negative or positive, with the host of the UN; and from time to time, a bilateral issue threatens to upset the delicate legal equilibrium that the UN enjoys.

During April 2014, for example, US President Barack Obama signed into law a prohibition against any UN diplomat whom the USA regards as having engaged in terrorist activity, reserving the right to deny such an individual a visa and thus preventing him/her from assuming duties in New York. The USA had earlier denied a visa to Hamid Aboutalebi, the designated Iranian Ambassador to the UN, on the grounds that he was involved in the takeover of the US Embassy in Tehran in 1979. Aboutalebi, a senior Iranian diplomat who had previously served as

Ambassador to Belgium, Italy, the EU and Australia, in response claimed that he had been a mere translator for the hostage-takers, rather than an actual member of the group.

Iran immediately lodged a complaint with the UN's *Committee on Relations with the Host Country*, claiming that the USA had breached its obligations under international law because, in terms of the 1947 Headquarters Agreement [Article IV] it was generally required to grant visas to individuals posted to, or invited by, the UN in New York. Even though Iran reiterated its complaint subsequently, it relented and nominated a different individual (Gholamali Khoshroo) for the position during January 2015, thereby signalling that having an ambassador in that pivotal post was more important than winning the legal tussle with the USA, especially given the delicate stage in the negotiations around its nuclear disarmament, and the fact that it did not have a bilateral embassy in Washington, DC.

## 7 CONCLUSION

Diplomats practise their profession in conditions of huge international pluralism. Their operating environment transcends national custom and legislation, and they work therefore within the realm of international law, specifically diplomatic law. This legal framework is indispensable because the order, predictability and egalitarian implementation that are inherent to an international legal order, ensures that diplomats—even those from the weakest states—enjoy a guaranteed status. By extension, diplomatic law confirms the legal equality of states.

Diplomatic law, which is one of the earliest expressions of international law, became the most codified branch of international law during the twentieth century. Codification was accelerated by the surge of multilateral diplomacy and the efforts of states that had previously been outside the European tradition to build universal consensus around the rules of diplomacy. The Vienna Conventions of 1961 and 1963 were landmark treaties and confirmed a functional (rather than purely representational, i.e. symbolic) claim to diplomatic privileges and immunities. Since the 1960s, this legal framework of diplomacy has remained largely unchallenged, despite dramatic systemic change in international relations and the heterogeneity of the international community. The remarkably established legal framework of diplomacy is testimony to near-universal consensus on the standards and norms, and in particular the enduring relevance, of diplomacy as an institution of international society.



The universal acceptance of diplomatic law is a result of two main factors: its history of custom, which confirms its embrace of tried and tested working methods and global values, and its fundamental rule of reciprocity: all states have an interest in maintaining it because they are all equal ‘stakeholders’ in the advantages it confers. As Sasson Sofer (1988: 201) explains, diplomatic law is perceived—even by revolutionary governments—to be ‘a gateway to legitimisation and participation in international society’.

Diplomatic law might be largely uncontentious, but the public remains intrigued by what diplomats can ‘get away with’, interpreting privileges and immunities as a licence for diplomats to act above the law. This perspective underestimates the fundamental behavioural code that sets diplomacy apart from other institutions. When diplomats act in bad faith—when they push the boundaries of rules that rely on consensus—they betray the trust placed in them to behave in a manner that is representative, legitimate and above all, reciprocal. Diplomatic law provides the objective parameters that make it possible for diplomats (all diplomats!) to do their work in a dignified, professional and uncontroversial manner.

The importance of international law to diplomacy is demonstrated by the fact that most foreign ministries, and the secretariats of international organisations, have a permanent legal section staffed with international lawyers. Diplomatic law therefore permeates the very bureaucracy of diplomacy. It is to the bureaucratic management of diplomats and diplomacy—the broader institutional framework—that I will now turn, in Chapter 5.

## NOTES

1. Municipal law is the set of domestic laws of a particular state.
2. Notwithstanding the role of the UN Security Council, which under international law and in terms of the UN Charter is entitled to commission the use of force if international peace and security is threatened. Coercive action by the UNSC is very rare, and almost invariably contentious—witness the intervention in Libya during 2011.
3. *Jus cogens* is ‘peremptory’ or ‘compelling’ law. It refers to a fundamental principle, accepted throughout international society as a norm from which no derogation permitted. An example is the inviolability of envoys.

4. A treaty is an agreement concluded between states, or between a state and an international organisation. Related concepts (denoting an agreement with international legal status) are convention, final act, declaration, pact, exchange of letters and protocol. (The latter term differs from the popular use of ‘protocol’: in the legal sense, it denotes an international treaty that is complementary to a main treaty, e.g. the additional protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1949.) Conventions are also treaties and are the ‘standard term for multilateral agreements concluded as a rule in the framework of an international organisation, and which regulate issues concerning international relations and international law’ (Switzerland FDFA 2008: 8).
5. Comity refers to courteous behaviour.
6. Customary law is a set of informal yet commonly and widely accepted rules—derived from tradition and a history of consistent practice—that states consider binding upon them as a matter of law (*opinio juris*). Codified law, on the other hand, is formal: it requires codification by legislators or legal agreements such as treaties that place clearly formulated obligations on the contracting parties. Neither customary nor codified law should be confused with *natural law*, which refers to the rights and obligations that are assumed to be ‘ordered by nature’: these are basic, inalienable rights that are determined on a moral and ethical basis.
7. The Conference(s) of American States started in 1889, subsequently morphed into the Pan American Union and, as from 1970, operates as the Organisation of American States.
8. As emphasised by the ICJ in its ruling of 19 December 2005 in the case of *Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Uganda*. ICJ Reports, 2005: 168, 274.
9. ICJ citation, 31 March 2014: Whaling in the Antarctic (Australia v. Japan: New Zealand intervening), Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 2014: 226.
10. Bouchard and Peterson (2011: 23) recount how the USA, during negotiations on the Rome Statute, ‘sought permanent exemptions and reservations for American soldiers’. The argument was made that the USA plays a special role in providing stability and security as global public goods, a role that compelled the USA to take on additional military risks. However, the counter-argument was that a special dispensation for US soldiers would contradict a *sine qua non element of the ICC* as multilateral entity, namely its non-selective enforcement of justice. The USA signed the Rome Statute but failed to ratify it, and subsequently, in May 2002, officially ‘unsigned’ the treaty, signalling that the USA would not become party to it.
11. Western Sahara’s government in exile refers to the territory as the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. As of April 2018, it is still not a member of the United Nations.

12. Morocco formally applied to join the AU again, after an absence of 32 years, during July 2016. In a letter addressed to the AU Chair, King Mohammed VI said that ‘Morocco wishes resolutely and unequivocally to regain its place within its institutional family’ (Morocco 2016). The AU readmitted the Kingdom of Morocco on 30 January 2017.
13. This was done to make rescue by special US forces even more difficult. An attempt in that regard did take place, Operation Eagle Claw of April 1980, ordered by US President Jimmy Carter, but its failure caused humiliation for the US Administration. The 2012 film *Argo* was a fictionalised version of the CIA’s actual rescue (with the assistance of the Canadian Embassy) of six American diplomats from Iran during this time. The film was promptly banned in Iran.
14. In terms of this act, the UK ‘Secretary of State has the power to require that the title to such land be vested in him where that land has been lying empty, or without diplomatic occupants, and could cause damage to pedestrians or neighbouring buildings because of neglect, providing that he is satisfied that to do so is permissible under international law (section 2)’ (Shaw 2008: 757).
15. According to some reports, the arms cache was found in the Iraqi Consulate in Karachi, rather than in the Embassy in Islamabad.
16. Some texts use ‘sovereign immunity’ as a synonym for ‘state immunity’. The former is a much older, but also more restricted, legal principle namely that a ruler/government enjoys legal immunity in his/her own jurisdiction. It derives from the common law maxim *rex non potest peccare*—‘the king can do no wrong’. Through the centuries, this principle has often been respected internationally as well, but it is not a principle of international law and in municipal law, it is subject to constitutional provisions.
17. US and Swiss authorities had taken similar steps against the jet-setting vice-president.
18. The fact that Taiwan’s sovereignty is contested means that the level of representation in each other’s capitals is at a level less than diplomatic—but this does not stop the relations from offering a de facto diplomatic communication. Taiwan’s disputed sovereignty, and the Philippines’ relations with China, also explain why the border between its own economic zone, and that of the Philippines, has never been officially agreed upon.
19. As per the Convention (Article 89), a minimum of 35 parties are required before it can enter into force. When Paraguay ratified the Convention in 2008, it became the 34th state to do so; the entry into force will therefore happen as soon as one more state ratifies.
20. The Agreement between the AU and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia on the Headquarters of the AU, signed on 25 April 2008, was concluded in accordance with the AU’s Constitutive Act (2000) that spells out, in Article 24(1), the ‘Headquarters of the Union shall be in Addis Ababa in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia’.

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# Bureaucratic Management of Diplomats and Diplomacy

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The institutional framework of diplomacy—or ‘architecture’ of diplomats’ operational environment—concerns the institutions specifically established to facilitate and regulate their daily work. The performance of diplomatic functions by organised agencies, i.e. the development of a professional diplomatic apparatus, is of relatively recent origin: as discussed in Chapter 3, it is only since the seventeenth century that specialised bureaucratic structures have been dedicated to manage states’ implementation of foreign policy. These ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs), as they will be referred to generically throughout the book, are found in all sovereign states. They operate within two distinct physical spheres: *domestic*, with a head office located in the administrative capital of the state, and *foreign*, because the head office presides over a network of diplomatic missions abroad. This dual and extensive reach makes their work complex, in a policy domain that is fluid and deeply political.

In this chapter, the nature and role of MFAs will be explored first, followed by discussion of their external component, the resident diplomatic missions. All foreign ministries work within certain constraints, and these challenges will be analysed from a generic perspective (those shared by most foreign ministries, regardless of their political context) and the more particular context of developing states. Thereafter, some consideration will be given to the contemporary responses of foreign

ministries—the manner in which they have adapted, and in some cases been forced to adapt, to the tasks they face.

A double caveat should be mentioned at the outset. First, this chapter is limited to analysis of *state-centric* bureaucratic organisation and will not explore the host of other entities that are increasingly present in the diplomatic arena. The reason for this seemingly exclusive approach is practical: the international legal framework of diplomatic practice is (still) rooted in the formalistic parameters of state-sponsored diplomacy. Second, a one-chapter discussion of some two hundred (de jure and de facto) foreign ministries across the world must of necessity generalise the facts. The alternative would be an entire book on the subject, or more likely, a series of books!

## 2 NATURE AND ROLE OF FOREIGN MINISTRIES

Foreign ministries are generally<sup>1</sup> considered ‘flagship’ institutions of their respective governments; the ‘face’ of that country to the outside world. The individual political heads of MFAs, generically referred to as ‘foreign ministers’, are therefore mostly senior members of government and in some cases the portfolio is considered so sensitive that the head of government (or a deputy) might personally preside over the state’s MFA. In Kuwait, for example, the Deputy-Prime Minister is also the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and in Latin America, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is often referred to (as is officially done in Bolivia) as ‘Chancellor’. Typically, the marketing material of MFAs, including websites and other social media profiles, is designed to convey a message not just about the ministry but about the country itself, and therefore project a national identity—‘branding’ the state, in popular corporate jargon.

### 2.1 *What Is in a Name?*

In practice, MFAs are known by an array of names. ‘Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ is the most common, as are slight variations that are actually just synonyms for the same concept. ‘Ministry’ could be referred to instead as ‘office’, ‘department’, ‘secretariat’ and so forth, depending on bureaucratic jargon. Similarly, ‘foreign affairs’ could be substituted for ‘external relations’ or ‘international relations’. Singapore’s ‘Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ is therefore the equivalent of the Philippines’



‘Department of Foreign Affairs’. Slight variations on these concepts are sometimes used interchangeably when the MFA’s name is translated into English or other languages, from the state’s official language. In English, Angola’s *‘Ministério das Relações Exteriores’* can be referred to as either ‘Ministry of External Relations’ or the ‘Ministry of External Affairs’.

In some cases, the name of the foreign ministry is tailored around a specific policy preoccupation of that state. One example is official state religion: Costa Rica’s MFA is the ‘Ministry of Foreign Relations and Worship’ and likewise Argentina’s is the ‘Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship’. For the UK, its ‘Foreign and Commonwealth Office’ retains a trace of the country’s grand imperial past. By including ‘Commonwealth’ in the official name of the MFA, the UK emphasises that it continues to prioritise a special relationship with its former colonial<sup>2</sup> domain. The name of a state’s MFA can also be indicative of foreign policy *aspiration*, rather than reality. Montenegro has a ‘Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration’ and in Africa, several MFAs have the words ‘African integration’ (or ‘regional integration’) in their titles—Côte d’Ivoire, Benin, Ghana and Mauritius, among others.

Some states amalgamate their foreign ministries with other domestic ministries that impact foreign policy to a significant extent. Since the 1970s, international trade has been a popular linked domain. Thus Australia (since 1987) and Ireland (since 2011) both have a ‘Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’. In some instances, the bureaucratic marriage is annulled after a few years, for reasons specific to that state’s bureaucratic development. South Korea, for instance, in 1998 changed its foreign ministry officially to the ‘Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade’, but de-linked the merger and reverted to being the original ‘Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ in 2013.

The traditional elitist inclination of MFAs *vis-à-vis* the broader civil service—and the sense that diplomats (like top athletes) represent their country among the *crème de la crème* of other states—can bestow much prestige on a foreign ministry. The Brazilian MFA, popularly known as ‘Itamaraty’, is described by Andrew Hurrell (2004) as being an institution ‘with a strong self-image and a very powerful institutional mythology’. The fact that MFAs are so profoundly associated with state identity means that any change in an official name is scrutinised by analysts for clues about possible changes in that state’s projection of interests into

the global policy space. Canada's MFA has had a bumpy transition over the years (*inter alia* taking on board international trade and development) as the country has sought, first of all, to establish a foreign policy identity separate from that of the UK, whose head of state it still shares. Increasingly, it has also sought to distinguish its own emphasis on soft power in foreign policy from the more unilateralist inclinations of its superpower neighbour, the USA. In the process, the Canadian MFA has undergone several name changes, each arousing some controversy because of the bureaucratic and financial implications and the notion that the state's foreign policy is somehow weakly defined. The most recent change was made in November 2015 by the incoming Trudeau Administration, which announced that the MFA would henceforth be known as 'Global Affairs Canada'.

A recent trend, especially among developing countries and new states with a developmental agenda in foreign policy, is to bring the element of *cooperation* into the MFA name. In 2009, South Africa renamed its 'Department of Foreign Affairs' to 'Department of International Relations and Cooperation'. By the same token, new states such as the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and the Republic of South Sudan established, respectively, a 'Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation' and a 'Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation'.

MFAs also generate their fair share of nicknames. The name could be an honourable association, often the name of its head office building: 'Itamaraty' in Brazil—the name of the original palace, in Rio de Janeiro, that housed the foreign ministry; and 'Wisma Putra' in Malaysia—the name of the lavish building where it is housed, which in return was named after the founding father of Malaysia's independence. The name can also be light-hearted: since 1947, when the US Department of State (DoS) moved into a suburb of Washington DC called 'Foggy Bottom', the latter name stuck to the DoS, by association.

## 2.2 *Functions of Foreign Ministries*

In the contemporary world, as it has been historically, the promotion and protection of a state's interests in the external environment are the main *raison d'être* of MFAs. From this overarching role, a number of subsidiary functions can be distilled.

(i) *Monitoring events in the external environment*

MFAs constantly analyse foreign policy challenges and opportunities at the bilateral, regional, multilateral and global levels. If they provide a professional service, they also keep abreast of global and regional trends and the related evolution of norms within international society.

(ii) *Advising own government on foreign policy-making*

The analysis generated by an MFA is used to provide advice on foreign policy making and implementation to the executive and legislative branches of a state's government, as well as any subnational government or quasi-state agencies that might be involved in foreign policy implementation.

(iii) *Institutional memory of the state's international life*

Christopher Hill (2003: 77) reminds us that a major function of MFAs is to serve as an institutional memory for the state's relations with the international community. Keeping records of diplomatic relations is crucial in order to maintain continuity (or at least rational progression) when a succession of political parties and leaders try to imprint their own legacy on foreign policy. A foreign ministry is therefore a repository of a country's 'behaviour as a state' among its peers in the global arena.

(iv) *Coordinating foreign policy implementation*

MFAs have traditionally been custodians of foreign policy implementation. However, the ever-increasing range of state interests that transcend the boundary between domestic and international politics, and the involvement of broader government 'has ended the foreign ministry's gatekeeper role and near monopoly of foreign policy' (Hocking et al. 2013: 2). The role of the MFA is thus to coordinate, rather than control, the activities of other domestic foreign policy actors 'to make sure that their endeavors serve an overarching and coherent strategy' (Talbot 1997: 81). They also assist other government entities with the practical conduct of international relations by providing agency services (e.g. serving and certification of legal documents) and facilitating, where required, transnational diplomacy and subnational diplomatic links.

(v) *Management of international legal obligations*

Foreign ministries interpret and approve (and very often negotiate) the various treaties, agreements and covenants to which a state commits itself. By way of illustration, if a given state negotiates with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), officials from its Ministry of Labour would be assisted by legal experts from its MFA. While the Ministry of Labour would probably employ its own cohort of legal experts, the MFA is uniquely positioned to ensure that any new legal commitments comply with existing bilateral and multilateral treaty obligations and international law, and that such commitments serve the broader goals of the state's foreign policy.

(vi) *Rendering protocol services*

Management of official state protocol is a core task of a foreign ministry, whose 'clients' include the executive of government and any branch of government that interacts officially at the international level. This involves the management of incoming as well as outgoing visits at official and 'state' level and ceremonial events such as executive signing of international agreements and attendance of state funerals. For this purpose, the MFA section dealing with protocol commands a unique pool of resources and expertise. It will, *inter alia*, compile and maintain an executive database with names of the world's heads of state/government and foreign ministers; act as a 'post office' for official diplomatic communication (such as *notes verbales*) that are addressed to, or generated by, the foreign ministry; issue congratulatory messages or condolences on behalf of the Head of State/Government to his/her counterparts in the rest of the world; and manage similar incoming official messages; keep and update a 'flag bank'; maintain and staff protocol lounges at major ports of entry into the country; and operate the official guest house(s) that belong to the state.

(vii) *Administering, staffing and guiding the state's diplomatic missions*

All matters related to the external component of a foreign ministry—the web of diplomatic missions that are maintained outside the state's borders—are the responsibility of that state's MFA. Foreign ministry staff

typically rotate among head office and missions, and the deployment of staff (diplomats as well as administrative and technical personnel) is part of the MFA's continuous strategic positioning. Moreover, the head office component of the foreign ministry acts as anchor, guide and fount of authority to the missions. It does so by providing analysis of domestic developments and sending continuous policy directions to diplomatic missions, who then in turn implement those directions in the foreign environments where they are based.

(viii) *Managing the locally based foreign diplomatic corps*

This function involves accreditation and bureaucratic management of, as well as continuous liaison with, the local diplomatic corps. The corps includes representatives of states as well as international organisations that are accredited to the government that the MFA serves.

(ix) *Liaison with an own public*

Liaison with a state's citizens has always been a function of diplomatic missions, through their rendering of public service (consular services, travel advisories, etc.) outside the state's borders. This function has more recently come to include liaison with an own public within the state itself—a recent addition to MFA functions that derive its importance from contemporary notions of accountability and transparency in governance. The purpose is to seek public participation in foreign policy deliberations and to explain foreign policy positions to the wider population.

(x) *Recruitment and training to support foreign policy implementation*

When foreign ministries recruit and train their own staff, they effectively capacitate the state's foreign policy implementation. This is why MFAs frequently train other civil servants as well, not only those that will be seconded to diplomatic missions, but also the increasing number of public servants who are based within the state and who are tasked with international liaison. In-house diplomatic academies can be very prestigious and some of them develop into (or are established from the beginning as) fully fledged universities. Azerbaijan's Diplomatic Academy (ADA) is an example, and so is the Foreign Affairs University of China.

### 2.3 *Foreign Ministry Organisation*

All states, regardless of their size or relative power, tend to maintain MFAs with clearly demarcated organograms and hierarchy of responsibility (Riordan 2003: 13). This phenomenon is replicated in the structure of diplomatic missions, as will be discussed later. The organisational structure of an MFA's headquarters flows from its functions, and most have distinct sections dealing with political, protocol, legal and administrative issues. All foreign ministries also have specialised divisions dealing with consular matters and media relations.

Substantive diplomatic work—what is generically referred to as ‘political work’—might be organised according to geographical areas, relations with particular multilateral organisations and thematic concerns. Geographical areas could, for instance, be divided into specific regions of the world, and a state's immediate neighbours are usually a priority area. In some cases, relations with a single foreign state are so important that a large team of officials work on bilateral relations with that specific state. Thus in the South Pacific, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Samoa's crucial ties with the regional hegemon, Australia, necessitate large ‘space’ for bilateral relations with Australia within their respective foreign ministries.

Thematic concerns imprint to an increasing extent in the structural organisation of MFAs, and issues are institutionalised by means of dedicated political ‘desks’, ‘sections’, ‘offices’ or ‘divisions’—whatever the bureaucratic jargon used. On the one hand, the issues that dominate the global diplomatic agenda (such as human rights and the environment) are ‘imposed’ on all foreign ministries, and those that have the resources make the thematic areas a permanent part of their foreign ministry operations. The same applies to a given region's diplomatic agenda. The Middle East, with its disproportionate share of intractable conflict, makes it virtually impossible for states in the broader region *not* to have foreign ministry resources devoted to problems such as refugees, arms proliferation and the destruction of heritage sites.

Thematic areas will also reflect the domestically rooted foreign policy concerns of a given state. South Korea and North Korea have both institutionalised their long-standing, volatile armistice in the structures of their MFAs; for Mexico and the USA, the politics of cross-border migration has been moulded into their foreign ministry operations; for France, the maintenance of cultural diplomacy, intricately linked to promotion of the French language, is a major MFA ‘space’; and for Islamic states

such as Mauritania, relations with the rest of the Islamic World get pride of place in the structure of the MFA. The specialised *foci* within a foreign ministry allow its functional divisions to monitor the work of other domestic stakeholder agencies and to provide coordination in pursuing related foreign policy objectives.

### 3 THE EXTERNAL COMPONENT: DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS

The external component of an MFA comprises its network of representative offices: its permanent diplomatic missions located in other countries. This network—arteries connected to a single, central MFA heart—is often referred to as a country's 'foreign' or 'diplomatic service'.

Since the 1950s, the absolute number of diplomatic missions worldwide has increased exponentially, largely because of the numerical increase in new sovereign states that establish diplomatic networks and the reciprocal action by older states. The number has been swelled by multilateral diplomacy, with states accrediting missions to international organisations, and those same organisations establishing diplomatic missions in individual states and at other organisations.

#### 3.1 *Existence and Location of Diplomatic Missions*

States decide individually on the location and number of diplomatic missions they establish. They implement their decisions, of course, strictly in agreement with host states. Great powers commonly have widespread representation, on the one hand, because they can afford to maintain many offices abroad, and, on the other hand, because their political and economic power diffuse their strategic interests across the globe. However, there is not a single state in the world—not even the world's superpower, the USA, or a politically neutral state such as Switzerland—that can boast universal diplomatic representation. It is simply too expensive and strategically simplistic for any one state to have representation in every other sovereign state.

The establishment and continued maintenance of diplomatic missions result from a complex mix of historical, strategic, ideological, cultural, religious, geographic and economic reasons. Prestige, leadership and the wish to reciprocate another state's diplomacy for symbolic reasons could also play a part in determining a state's priorities. For every state, there is usually a discernible core group of countries—those that

‘matter most’—that dominate its bilateral relations. The prioritisation of diplomatic relations does not necessarily imply positive relations: a diplomatic mission in a hostile country could be of critical strategic importance; an unstable neighbour could warrant diplomatic vigilance and a former colonial master, even if resented, could be a gatekeeper to crucial development aid, or access to an expatriate community. For example, throughout its (mostly fractious) post-colonial history with the UK, Zimbabwe has maintained its resident embassy in London.

It is also common for states to reduce the size or number of their embassies, or to open new embassies, for reasons of changing political or economic realities. Kenya only opened a diplomatic mission in Latin America when it established an embassy in Brasilia during 2006—testimony to the global rise of Brazil during the first decade of the twenty-first century, and its concerted effort to strengthen ‘South-South’ relations.

### 3.2 *Types of Diplomatic Missions*

Diplomatic missions—the most generic name for an MFA’s offices in foreign countries—can be differentiated into various types, depending on stature, location and functions, and their names can be somewhat confusing.

#### *Embassies (Including High Commissions, Permanent Missions and Apostolic Nunciatures)*

An ‘embassy’ is the primary (often the only) diplomatic mission of a sending state in a receiving state and is located in the administrative capital (the centre of government) of the receiving state. Thus in Nigeria, foreign embassies are located in Abuja, not in Lagos, even though the latter is a much larger city and the economic hub of the country. When both the sending state and the receiving state are members of the Commonwealth of Nations, they refer to their embassies in each other’s capitals, as ‘high commissions’. The Embassy of Malaysia in Colombo, capital of Sri Lanka, is therefore known as the ‘High Commission of Malaysia’, while Sri Lanka reciprocates with the ‘High Commission of Sri Lanka’ in Kuala Lumpur. For all intents and purposes, high commissions are identical to embassies. In another deviation from the name, but having exactly the same stature, the embassies of the Holy See (Vatican) are known as ‘apostolic nunciatures’. And, in the case of an embassy



accredited to an intergovernmental organisation such as the UN, the embassy itself is called a ‘permanent mission’.

### *Consulates and Trade Offices*

When a sending state maintains more than one diplomatic mission in a receiving state, the secondary mission(s) must resort under the hierarchical authority of the embassy. This means that a sending state may have only one embassy<sup>3</sup> to a host state—additional diplomatic missions are designated (in descending order of size and mandate) as consulates-general, consulates, vice-consulates, consular agencies or trade offices.

The number and location of such additional missions are determined by the extended and decentralised foreign policy interests of the sending state, such as a large Indian expatriate community in California’s ‘Silicon Valley’, which necessitates an Indian Consulate-General in San Francisco; and Nigeria’s maintenance of a Consulate-General in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, to look after the many Nigerian citizens who participate in the Haj to Mecca.

A multitude of consulates indicates an unusually large extent of expatriate interests in the host country. According to Andrés Rozental and Alicia Buenrostro (2013: 230), the Mexican presence in the USA is the world’s largest consular presence of one country in another: no fewer than 50<sup>4</sup> Mexican consulates, in addition to its embassy in Washington DC, spread across the USA. Rozental and Buenrostro note that the fees collected at its US consulates contribute a full 25% of the Mexican MFA’s budget.

### *Honorary Consulates*

Many states appoint honorary consuls in foreign countries, and the purpose is to fill a diplomatic gap, i.e. when the sending state has no or insufficient diplomatic representation to take care of its interests in the host state. Honorary consuls may or may not be paid an honorarium by the sending state, but they (and their offices) *have no legal diplomatic standing*—they do not have diplomatic privileges or immunities and do not travel on diplomatic passports. Such individuals can be citizens of the host state, or expats from the sending state, or even nationals of a third party. But they usually have some or other link to the sending state, and that link provides opportunity for a mutually beneficial relationship to be established. They could, for example, assist in giving travel, visa and commercial information to the general public, and usually advise the sending state about challenges and opportunities in the host country.

*Representative Offices: de facto (but not de jure) Diplomatic Missions*

The sovereignty of some states is contested, and this is typically reflected in such states not being allowed fully fledged membership of the United Nations. The State of Israel is somewhat exceptional in the sense that it has been a member of the UN ever since 1949 (following its declared statehood in 1948) and has remained so even though more than 30 UN member states—mostly the Arab block—do not recognise it as sovereign.

When contested states are not members of the UN, their diplomacy can be described as *de facto* rather than *de jure*. Some of them might enjoy full diplomatic recognition—hence ‘normal’ MFA deployment of diplomatic missions to receiving states—in a limited number of states that do recognise it as sovereign. Taiwan (‘Republic of China’) is a case in point. As of April 2018, it had official embassies in only 20 capitals—all the states that recognise the island nation as a sovereign entity. In the rest of the world (where successfully negotiated), the Taiwanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintains one or more *representative offices* in states where it has interests. Thus, Taiwan has an Embassy in Mbabane, the capital of Swaziland (one of only two official embassies in Africa), while in neighbouring South Africa the contested state maintains two liaison offices, respectively, in Cape Town and Pretoria. The exact same Pretoria office building had been the ‘Taiwanese Embassy’, until 1996 when South Africa announced its decision to switch diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to the People’s Republic of China.

Under diplomatic law, Taiwan may not call its representative offices ‘embassies’, even if the work performed by them is exactly what embassies do. Instead, a range of names is used for these offices: ‘Liaison Office’, ‘Commercial Office’, ‘Economic and Cultural Office’ and so forth—a generic name without any reference to diplomatic relations. While unofficial representative offices fall outside the ambit of diplomatic law, in most cases the host state will extend rather similar courtesies to the ‘unofficial officials’ as those bestowed on recognised foreign diplomats.

### 3.3 *Composition of Diplomatic Missions*

All diplomatic missions adhere to a strict hierarchy of rank, and it is the prerogative of the sending state to grant its own officials their particular ranks. The receiving state merely acknowledges the rank when it allows

**Table 1** Generic transferred staff profile of a large embassy

<i>Diplomatic mission</i>	<i>Embassy</i>
Head of Mission	ambassador (only one) (a <i>chargé d'affaires</i> must be appointed in absence of the ambassador)
Transferred staff, in hierarchical rank	minister plenipotentiary (usually only one) minister (any number of) minister-counsellor (any number of) counsellor (any number of) first secretary (any number of) second secretary (any number of) third secretary (any number of)
Specialised additional transferred staff	senior attaché (any number of) attaché (any number of) assistant attaché (any number of)
Transferred technical and service staff	Any number, but these staff members do not have diplomatic rank or status

(at its own discretion) such an official to take up his/her post. Mission staff may comprise a combination of transferred officials from the sending state and locally recruited personnel, all of whom may be assigned to distinct sections dealing with political, consular, administrative and other technical matters.

In terms of the *transferred* staff component, a generic staff profile of a large embassy could resemble the following model (Table 1).

This staff profile can be contracted in the case of smaller missions. A single head of mission is the bare minimum of the transferred staffing component, and there is no obligation on the sending state to send any additional diplomats to that mission. Some embassies consist of only two or three officials: for instance, the ambassador might be joined by a third secretary and a trade attaché. Note that third secretary is a diplomatic rank and does not depend on the presence, at the same embassy, of a first secretary and a second secretary. The ambassador could even be the only transferred official—in which case the embassy would be referred to, not surprisingly, as a ‘micro mission’.

In yet another variation, known as non-residential accreditation, an ambassador can be based at head office while being accredited to one or more states; or be resident in only one host state while being simultaneously accredited to other states as well.

### 3.4 *Authority and Rank in a Diplomatic Mission*

A diplomatic mission is headed by a single, named individual. This is customary diplomatic law and codified in the *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations* of 1961, which repeatedly references a singular person in discussion on the head of mission. During 1979, in a gesture of revolutionary spirit, Libya declared its embassies *peoples bureaus* to be run by *revolutionary committees*. What the country called its own embassies was nobody's concern, but in practice it was not allowed to replace individual Libyan heads of mission with 'committees'. In a well-documented case, the UK demanded (and obtained) the nomination of a named person as the head of the Libyan mission (Shaw 2008: 753). As in so many other instances under Muammar al-Gaddafi's dictatorship, Libya's idiosyncratic foreign policy had to genuflect to the universal norms that guide diplomatic conduct.

The official designation of a head<sup>5</sup> of mission is directly related to the name and status of the particular diplomatic mission: an 'ambassador' will be the head of an 'embassy', a 'high commissioner' will head up a 'high commission', a 'permanent mission' (to an IGO) will be headed by a 'permanent representative', and an 'apostolic (or papal) nuncio'<sup>6</sup> would be the head of an apostolic nunciature.

As concerns subsidiary missions (those ranking below an embassy), the head of mission's title is also linked to the status of the mission: thus, a 'consul' would head up a 'consulate', a 'consul-general' would be in charge of a 'consulate-general', and a trade representative would head up a trade office. (Somewhat confusingly, and not related to resident diplomatic missions, is the US practice of appointing a Trade Representative (USTR), who is an ambassador based in the USA with full Cabinet-level authority).

The second-most senior person in a mission is popularly referred to as 'deputy head of mission', but this is not an official diplomatic rank (and neither is 'deputy ambassador'). It is therefore an informal term, but nevertheless frequently used to clarify seniority in a mission. Any diplomatic rank can assume the deputy head of mission position, and in small missions, it could be a junior diplomat. In large, strategically important embassies, a diplomat with the rank of 'minister plenipotentiary' might serve as the deputy head of mission. The rank of 'minister' indicates that the person has a senior designation in his/her foreign ministry and might have previously served as head of mission (even as an ambassador) in another mission. The addition of 'plenipotentiary' to the rank

indicates even more seniority, literally ‘full power’, i.e. a representative mandate similar to that of an ambassador. This rank is common in large missions where the ambassador is a political appointee, and it is understood by the diplomatic community that the minister plenipotentiary does the bulk of the managerial duties—as a prime minister would act *vis-à-vis* a ceremonial president.

In the absence of an ambassador—because the post is temporarily vacant, or because the ambassador is outside of the host state on other business or otherwise prevented from executing his/her duties—a caretaker head of mission must be appointed. Known by the French name *chargé d'affaires*, this person is usually the second most senior staff member of a diplomatic mission, who takes charge while the head of mission is away. The advantage for junior staff in a small embassy is that they get to do tasks that in a larger embassy (where there is the full component of ranks, even several in each category) might never befall them. A third secretary might for example be appointed as *chargé d'affaires* from time to time and represent the embassy at meetings or receptions alongside the ambassadors of other states.

The MFA of the host state must be made aware of a head of mission’s temporary absence, and the arrangements regarding a specific *chargé d'affaires* must be conveyed—confirming the fundamental importance of formalistic representation and reciprocity in diplomacy.

In most cases, a *chargé d'affaires* fulfils an ad hoc and temporary role, what is referred to in full as ‘*chargé d'affaires ad interim*’. A *chargé d'affaires* can, however, be appointed for an extended period of time to head up a mission, because the ambassador is based elsewhere or because, for whatever reason, a sending state is not appointing an ambassador to that post. The term *chargé d'affaires en pied* (or ‘*chargé d'affaires en titre*’) is used when such a diplomat is appointed from the outset as the head of mission, usually when a country chooses to keep its diplomatic relations below the ambassadorial level relations. The appointment of a permanent *chargé d'affaires* is often reciprocated by the other state and can be a sign that the bilateral relations are not quite cordial or deteriorating. As from 2004, when South Africa established official diplomatic relations with Morocco’s nemesis, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR—otherwise known as Western Sahara) and allowed the SADR to open an embassy in Pretoria, South Africa and Morocco maintained *chargés d'affaires en pied* in each other’s capitals. The situation was only normalised 12 years later, in 2016, when Morocco embarked on a campaign to strengthen its intra-African relations.

### 3.5 *Attachés*

In larger or more important embassies, a contemporary practice is to supplement transferred MFA staff with representatives seconded from other government departments and agencies. At the domestic level, many foreign policy priority areas such as trade, tourism and defence are handled by specialised officials that do not build a permanent career within their state's foreign service. Because these officials do not fit into the usual diplomatic ranks when they are seconded to diplomatic missions, they are 'additional to the establishment' and thus referred to as attachés. For example, at their respective embassies in Tel Aviv (Israel), Nigeria employs a finance attaché, while India employs a defence attaché.

Some sending states choose to accord the rank of attaché to transferred MFA staff who would otherwise not benefit from full diplomatic immunities and privileges as a result of their administrative or technical specialisation. Another variation on the use of the rank is for entry-level diplomats: certain countries, notably states from the former Soviet Union, refer to the most junior diplomats at their diplomatic missions as 'attachés'. Embassies of these states would differentiate between a junior diplomat and a specialised representative from another government ministry by defining the latter descriptively, for example, as a 'senior defense attaché'.

### 3.6 *Locally Recruited Personnel*

Most diplomatic missions recruit a number of staff members in the host state. These individuals may be citizens of the host state or a third state or of the sending state (if they happen to be resident in the host state). Under international law, they have no personal diplomatic privileges or immunities, and their designation is always distinct from that of the transferred staff. Various services refer to them as 'locally recruited personnel' (LRP), locally engaged staff (LES), locally recruited staff (LRS) and so forth. For a sending state, there are distinct advantages to this practice: locally recruited personnel do not require the often exorbitant costs involved in transfer from a sending state, and their residency in the host state means access to, and understanding of, the local cultural, political and bureaucratic environment. Moreover, the fact that they need not be transferred 'back home' after a few years in the posting, allows for crucial continuity in an environment notorious for its constant turnover

in staff. Some LRPs remain in their positions for decades and can ‘tutor’ even senior diplomats who are new to their positions in the host state.

Just as there are distinct advantages to locally recruited personnel, the obvious disadvantages are that they do not identify with the sending state’s interests as much as a diplomat who represents it, and they may bring political agendas to their jobs—infamously, the spectre of espionage. States with a dominant security dilemma, such as Israel, therefore limit their use of LRPs. They make more extensive use of spouses of transferred officials to do LRP work, seek own nationals to do the work or subject foreign LRPs to very stringent background security checks. On the other hand, a country like India keeps a relatively small (but very well trained) professional diplomatic service and complements its activities by expanded use of locally recruited personnel.

## 4 GENERAL FOREIGN MINISTRY CHALLENGES

Foreign ministries differ enormously in size and process, depending on the state they serve. But across the world, regardless of geographical region or political dispensation, certain phenomena and challenges seem to be innate to the role they perform.

### 4.1 *Public Accountability*

The foreign policy of a state projects its political values into the global arena, and as the face (*cum* tool) of that projection, a foreign ministry is extremely sensitive to the state’s political climate. This extends even to the recruitment and deployment of individual MFA staff: as Robert Wolfe (1997: 14) says, the institutions, responsibilities and political and social dogmas of a state all impact the profile of its diplomats.

The type of social contract between citizens and their government, whether enshrined in a formal constitution or not, will determine the degree to which the public will have a say in the conduct of foreign relations. But public opinion is important even in the most repressive of autocracies and totalitarian states, where rulers will play to an audience at home as much as to the audience abroad. In this regard, the foreign ministry of North Korea is an extension of the eccentric regime and should a dramatic change in government take place, it would necessitate a total rebuilding (recruitment, training, etc.) of its foreign service.

Just as foreign policy makers increasingly have to do, foreign ministries need to contend with an ‘intermestic’ environment, where domestic imperatives have to be reconciled with the opportunities and challenges of the external environment.<sup>7</sup> In democracies (in particular, though by no means exclusively), foreign ministries are increasingly scrutinised for responsiveness to ‘stakeholder needs and the quality, effectiveness and appropriateness of service delivered’ (Jaques 2003). Reflecting a worldwide trend for the increased oversight of legislatures, Kenya’s 2010 Constitution introduced greatly enhanced provision for the country’s parliament to debate and approve foreign policy matters (previously the almost exclusive prerogative of the political executive), including the appointment of ambassadors.

However, the output of MFAs is much more difficult to measure than, for example, that of a ministry of education or a ministry of trade. The UK-based Ditchley Foundation concluded in 2010 that it is difficult and unrealistic to try and quantify diplomatic outputs, with so much of the success of diplomacy hinging on judgements, contacts and decisions that require ‘tactical independence’. Nevertheless, it is possible to describe accurately what the tasks of MFAs and their network of diplomatic missions are, and in that sense the activities can be monitored and the mandate amended as required.

Democratic oversight of foreign ministries has surged in the past few decades, and it is now common for legislatures to have a standing committee that scrutinises the work of the MFA. In the USA, both the Senate and Congress have special, permanent committees to fulfil this role. When a September 2012 terror attack on the US Consulate in Benghazi (Libya) killed four Americans including US Ambassador Chris Stevens, the US Congress even voted to establish an additional ‘House Select Committee’ to investigate the State Department’s handling of security measures at US diplomatic missions. Questions about accountability continued to dog then Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, as she campaigned in the run-up to the 2016 US presidential election.

In the UK, where normal parliamentary oversight is done by the House of Commons Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, parliament’s role in foreign policy was boosted when, during August 2013, the House of Commons unexpectedly voted against the government’s proposed military intervention in Syria. More than ever before, MFAs need to heed the element of public accountability in the work they do, and this must also be reflected in the policy advice they provide.



## 4.2 *Bureaucratic Coordination of Foreign Policy*

As discussed earlier, the global institutionalisation of the sovereign state system was accompanied by the consolidation of distinct government ministries with a mandate to focus on foreign policy implementation. Guillaume Devin and Marie Törnquist-Chesnier (2010: 61–62) refer to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the ‘Golden Age’ for foreign ministries, which were bestowed with ‘undivided authority on the definition of public foreign guidelines and their implementation through a body of well-controlled agents’. However, in the contemporary era MFAs are typically rivalled by several other governmental entities that seek to assert themselves in the foreign policy domain, in aspects as diverse as agriculture, defence, fiscal policy and health. These departments and agencies pursue policy dialogue at the international and transnational levels, and their engagement challenges the MFA’s traditional role as gatekeeper of foreign policy (Hocking 1999: 2–5). But, as Devin and Törnquist-Chesnier (2010: 62) observe, the challenges to MFA authority are not new, or even recent: they give the example of the 1919 Versailles Peace Conference where only a quarter of the French delegation comprised of foreign ministry staff.

In the contemporary era, the authority and mandate of MFAs are challenged at four different levels: from ‘below’; at a horizontal level; from ‘above’; and in private parallel.

### (i) *From ‘below’: Subnational diplomacy*

In 1985, American political scientist John Kincaid coined the term ‘constituent diplomacy’ to refer to the growing international presence of sub-national authorities. Developments since the end of the Cold War have supported his argument, with evidence of steady encroachment ‘from below’ on the mandate and authority of MFAs. Fritz Nganje (2014: 69) says the phenomenon has contributed to the ‘democratisation’ of foreign policy because:

The proximity of [sub-national governments (SNGs)] to local communities, the territorial decentralisation of elements of foreign policy, or paradiplomacy, has the potential to engender greater citizen awareness, interest and participation in international affairs.

In the past, subnational diplomacy was associated with decentralised federal systems in developed countries, such as the foreign relations of Quebec, a province in Canada. The practice has spread globally and is also found—even encouraged—by first-tier government in centralised unitary states. Nganje (2014: 105 at footnote 34) gives the example of provinces in China that are instrumental in executing Beijing’s development cooperation programmes in Africa, ‘thereby contributing to consolidating a grassroots presence necessary for deepening Sino-African relations’.

At the second tier of national governance, there are many examples of provinces, regions or federative states that have established representative offices abroad. German *Länder* even maintain representative offices at the headquarters of the European Union in Brussels. Jessica Mathews (1997: 61–62) notes that whereas only four US federal states had a commercial representation abroad in 1970, by 1997 nearly all of the 50 states had foreign trade offices, and all of them had obtained official standing in the World Trade Organisation (WTO). California is a good example: Geoff Pigman (2010: 47) explains how the state’s economy became the 7th largest in the world (measured against actual sovereign states) in the 2000s, and how its Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, ‘engaged foreign counterparts directly on issues of energy and environmental policy, visiting and receiving foreign dignitaries and making cooperation agreements within permissible bounds under the US Constitution’.

Tridivesh Singh Maini (2012), writing about the changing nature of India’s interaction with the international community, claims that the country’s diplomacy ‘is no longer spearheaded by New Delhi’. He recounts how the economic diplomacy of Indian federative states such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Bihar became proactive in the aftermath of economic liberalisation during the 1990s, with Gujarat and Bihar even organising global summits to attract potential investors from around the world.

Even in parts of the world where subnational diplomacy has not been formally institutionalised, its practice stems from geographical necessity. In Southern Africa, the Omaheke Region on Namibia’s eastern border and the North-West District of Botswana are contiguous, and their shared interests in matters such as tourism and environmental management result in constant subnational diplomacy between the respective local authorities.

Subnational diplomacy is also conducted at the third tier of government by the executive managers of urban municipalities. While ‘city diplomacy’ actually predates sovereign state diplomacy by millennia (Acuto 2016: 512), contemporary city diplomacy manifests in twinning agreements, even representative offices abroad and the visible international liaison of mayors, not only with their counterparts but also with world leaders. During May 2016, Sadiq Khan was elected as Mayor of London—the first ever Muslim mayor of a major Western capital—and his comments on foreign policy were immediately scrutinised by the international media. Various heads of state or government congratulated him on his election, while some leaders (such as then US presidential hopeful, Donald Trump) did not waste time engaging him on matters of bilateral foreign policy.

Subnational authorities represent local and regional interests (notably economic but also cultural and other) in the international domain and their ‘diplomacy’ questions the ability of MFAs to tend to such parochial needs. Rather than being an ad hoc, temporary occurrence, subnational diplomacy has thus evolved in both frequency and sophistication and is resulting in ‘the emergence of networks of SNGs attempting to influence global policy debates in areas such as sustainable development, aid effectiveness and global economic governance’ (Nganje 2014:69).

(ii) *At horizontal level: Other government departments*

Strobe Talbott (1997: 77) says cooperation between the US departments of State and Defense is a historical reality—as he puts it, ‘there is nothing new about vans shuttling back and forth across the Potomac between Foggy Bottom and the Pentagon’. He explains that in the post-Cold War environment of democratic accountability the relationship is more nuanced and institutionalised than ever before. Indeed, the military is a traditional rival of MFAs, almost universally benefiting from generous resources and projecting a parallel state image (and much, much more focused national interest!) to the rest of the world. Christopher Hill (2003: 82–84) notes that in addition to the military, economic ministries and intelligence services are the other two clusters of domestic ministries that pose the biggest competition to MFAs. Of the three, the intelligence services are the ‘most difficult to control and the least able to make policy and negotiate at an international level. Frequently Foreign Ministries are blamed for the mishaps of the intelligence service’.

The US decision to invade Iraq during 2003 was intelligence-led rather than DoS-led and the negative, long-term fallout of the war was an expensive lesson in foreign policy management.<sup>8</sup>

Across the world, foreign ministries now have to interact with just about every other domestic ministry of their own states. In the twenty-first century, there is hardly a domestic issue that does not have international or transnational resonance. Government departments of all kinds increasingly have a dedicated international relations division, and in addition more and more officials interact directly with their counterparts across the world in the course of trans-governmental relations. As Ernst Sucharipa (2003) says, it is a false assumption that domestic and foreign affairs are conducted in two separate political arenas. MFAs, rather than monopolise foreign affairs (a herculean task!), therefore need to add value to a state's international relations by ensuring that a central strategy (foreign policy objective) guide the myriad interactions generated by the state bureaucracy with the outside world.

(iii) *From 'above': Political elite, state executive and beyond the state*

A state's MFA advises and supports the executive, as does the rest of government bureaucracy. The foreign ministry domain, however, is particularly attractive to the executive and throughout the ages political leaders have appropriated foreign policy as a personal or party-political project. Worldwide, heads of state and government tend to have personal advisors on foreign policy, and in some cases, this can marginalise the role of the foreign ministry. In single-party states such as China, the political party is the locus of foreign policy-making and the advisory role of the MFA is therefore relatively small. This also happens in states with a history of single-party domination. In South Africa, both during apartheid (under the National Party) and after apartheid (under the African National Congress) the state's foreign policy has been a direct reflection of policy developed and negotiated within the ruling party. The situation is 'bureaucratised' with the deployment of party stalwarts to senior positions within the foreign ministry, including ambassadorial postings.

Another challenge that MFAs experience 'from above', and something that is beyond national government, is the impact of global governance. As Sucharipa (2003) points out, states are increasingly likely to be members of IGOs 'to which they delegate—to varying degrees—the administration not only of foreign policy but also of economic, social,

environmental issues and other areas hitherto exclusively in the domain of domestic politics'. The UK's shock decision during 2016 to leave the European Union (the so-called Brexit) was in part a reaction against the EU's intrusion into foreign policy issues, such as migration. But foreign ministries across the world contend with a growing body of international norms, conventions and regulations imposed on them—even if the organisations, whence the guidelines come, are not strictly speaking supranational in authority.

(iv) *Private parallel: Citizen diplomacy*

A fourth level of foreign ministry competition is more difficult to fit into a hierarchy and can perhaps be described as 'parallel' diplomacy in the private domain—the increasing involvement in foreign policy matters by civil society. It is a function *inter alia* of the vastly expanded agenda of issues that MFAs deal with—socio-economic, scientific, ethical, environmental, etc.—in addition to the traditional 'high politics' they were originally intended to handle.

### 4.3 *Getting and Keeping Resources*

The vibrant competition experienced by MFAs has a deleterious effect on their monopoly as employers of diplomats: individuals with diplomatic experience (foreign language skills in addition to knowledge of the international arena and issues) are 'internationally able' and are sought after by a growing number of other entities. As a result, their career-paths have become more flexible. Training and a first posting of a diplomat, which can be seen as an extension of training, are enormously expensive and MFAs lose many officials not just to other state entities, but also to the private sector, where salaries are typically more attractive.

Gustav Lindstrom (2002: xii), in a thesis on the management of diplomats by the US State Department, notes that the DoS 'traditionally had few direct competitors and could rely on the prestige of the Foreign Service to attract candidates'. But this is changing, as more and more employers offer talented young professionals the opportunity of international exposure. Thus, 'with growing competition for talent, there is a strong need for effective recruitment and retention policies'. Retention policies are complex in the case of MFAs: the fact that their employees serve in a variety of postings abroad present problems that other

domestic departments need not worry about: the difficulty of (or prohibition against) employment for spouses that accompany diplomats; continuity in education of dependent children; and health and security issues in ‘hardship’ postings, to name but a few, could prompt highly skilled diplomats to leave the foreign service. Moreover, their physical location in missions around the world also brings diplomats into contact with many more potential job opportunities.

Apart from challenges related to getting and keeping human resources, foreign ministries are also faced with stiff competition when it comes to allocation of financial resources.<sup>9</sup> Diplomacy tends to be perceived as an ‘expensive as well as esoteric’ business, as Peter Marshall (1997: 140) puts it. It can therefore seem detached from the immediate domestic concerns of ordinary citizens. The fact that MFAs retain a certain air of elitism (the idea of civil servants living the ‘good life’ abroad, courtesy of taxpayers) makes them easy prey in times of economic austerity. Richard Langhorne (1998: 147) notes that ‘the urge to save increasingly hard won tax revenue was backed up by the sense that foreign services needed modernising—which tended also to mean minimising’. The unquantifiable quality of diplomacy makes it more difficult to convince finance ministers to allocate additional resources to foreign ministries and to persuade them not to cut existing resources when economic pruning takes place. Talbott (1997: 74) explains how the US State Department’s budget over the course of a single decade (starting 1985) plummeted by 50%, a situation that led to its closing down 32 of its embassies and consulates. Hocking et al. (2013: 4) emphasise the extent to which MFAs are ‘tempting targets for fiscal conservatives’ and give the example of Spain’s Foreign Ministry budget for 2011–2012, which was slashed by a massive 54% following the global economic crisis.

#### 4.4 *Demographic Profiles*

The ‘demographics’ of a foreign ministry concerns the statistical profile of the staff in the foreign service. A first consideration is citizenship. Hamilton and Langhorne (1995: 101) recount that up until the nineteenth century, diplomats were recruited with scant regard for their nationality. Tsarist Russia, for example, often employed diplomats who were not Russian. In the contemporary era, however, states appoint diplomats only if they are nationals of the same sovereign state, as confirmed by Article 8 of the *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations*.

A less quantifiable yet pervasive characteristic of MFAs across the world is their historical tendency to employ the elite of society. Foreign ministries have universally been slower to implement the ideas of democracy and meritocracy that became associated with civil service after World War One. Thus, even though diplomatic practice has experienced a shift of emphasis from form to substance during the past century, diplomats are not yet universally recruited on the basis of professional merit. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, large parts of the world remain under non-democratic rule, with diplomacy regarded as an elitist preserve and diplomats recruited based on ideological, religious or other affiliation of arbitrary importance.

The most universal bias within diplomatic practice has historically been gender-based. Indeed, institutional MFA discrimination against women was fairly universal until the second half of the twentieth century. The reasons were not necessarily a reflection on women's intellectual and mental aptitude for the profession and were often simply practical (albeit patronising). Dictating against a woman's career in the foreign service was her physical vulnerability (especially before long-distance travel became quick and easy); her assumed responsibility to act as primary caregiver to children; the traditional imperative to prioritise the career of her breadwinner husband; and her expected absences from work due to pregnancy and childbirth. The institutionalised assumption that male spouses should not sacrifice a career to accompany female diplomats abroad, forced women to choose between marriage and a career. In the case of the US foreign service, until 1971 a woman had to resign when she married (Lindstrom 2002: 112). In South Africa (unmarried only), female diplomats were allowed to take up postings abroad for the first time in 1968, and only to serve in subordinate (administrative, secretarial or research) positions (Babb 1974: 11; Vale 1993: 34). Notwithstanding the feminist revolution and globalisation of human rights, in large parts of the world (particularly but certainly not exclusively in the non-Western Developing World) institutionalised discrimination against female diplomats continues.

If women have had an uphill battle to join the foreign service, people with overt same-sex orientation have been even more widely and rigidly shunned. Traditionally, acknowledged homosexuality was a universal taboo in foreign services, and diplomatic etiquette still adheres to a conservative, binary male–female template. The problem is by no means limited to the Developing World.

During 2008, France nominated a gay diplomat to be its ambassador to the Holy See (Vatican). Pope Benedict XVI failed to extend *agrément*, and the French were so upset that they insisted on the Vatican withdrawing its Papal Nuncio to Paris. Relations seemingly returned to normal, but just seven years later, in 2015, another brouhaha ensued for exactly the same reason: the French nominated a homosexual French ambassador to the Holy See. Laurent Stefanini had excellent credentials—a seasoned diplomat who had *inter alia* served at the French Embassy to the Vatican before (in a more junior position), he was the incumbent chief of protocol at the French Presidential (Élysée) Palace. After a protracted stand-off, France gave up on its attempts and decided, in protest, to leave its ambassadorial position at the Holy See vacant.

#### 4.5 *The ICT Revolution*

The core business of foreign ministries pivots on information handling and communication at the international level. This means that information and communication technology (ICT) impacts the work of MFAs even more pervasively than that of other government departments.

The idea of ‘knowledge management’ can be used to summarise several of the MFA functions listed in Sect. 2.2; and in the contemporary era, the easy, universal access to information has eroded the traditional MFA monopoly on its flow. With vast amounts of information available to a global public, foreign ministries have to ensure that their staff are able (a) to access, share and archive the necessary information through appropriate technology and (b) communicate within the ministry and beyond through secure, effective ICT infrastructure.

Information might be abundant in the ‘information-age’, but it has a mercurial quality. Dietrich Kappeler (1998: 44–45) notes that ‘duplication, hierarchy and authenticity’ of information have become major concerns for foreign ministries. Arguably, the most pertinent issue is that of security. The idea of the Internet or a given MFA’s intranet being sabotaged (by cybercrime, terrorism, non-state activism or state-sponsored cyberwar) is as unnerving as a physical bombing raid. During 2010, the large-scale leaking of classified US State Department cables by the whistleblower organisation WikiLeaks served as a wake-up call to foreign ministries around the world to tighten their ICT security.

As the Fourth Industrial Revolution gets underway, foreign ministries are facing a compounded challenge. The spread of artificial intelligence



(AI) into all domains of human life and the increasingly independent ‘smart’ technologies that are embedded in day-to-day communications open up new, previously unforeseen opportunities and risks for foreign ministries.

## 5 ADDITIONAL FOREIGN MINISTRY CHALLENGES IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

In addition to the ‘generic’ challenges faced by foreign ministries worldwide, the MFAs of poor, new and weak (what I will refer to as ‘struggling’) states have to contend with a set of unique challenges. Many similar problems are shared by states that are in constitutional transition.

### 5.1 *State Weakness and Bureaucratic Immaturity*

Diplomats that represent ‘strong’ states—states that are sovereign not just in theory but also in practice—take for granted their constitutionally protected public institutions, accountable and effective bureaucracies, inviolate geographical boundaries and governments’ monopoly over the use of force within those territorial parameters. The representatives of weak states are not so fortunate. In large parts of the Developing World, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, state institutions are undeveloped and even those that are fully operational could suffer from lack of legitimacy. Recurring political instability can further inhibit the development of the infrastructure and professional culture required to anchor the conduct of state diplomacy. MFAs do not operate in isolation, and the weakness of broader civil service leaves a foreign ministry starved of crucial domestic support and networks.

While not all poor countries are unstable, in most struggling states foreign ministry staff work in the operational context of inadequate bureaucracies. In such circumstances, terms and conditions of employment are not properly regulated, leaving employees vulnerable to instability and political interference. This can seriously impede their professional confidence and can render them obsequious for fear of censorship or dismissal.

By the same token, when posted abroad diplomats are dependent on the ‘health’ of their sending state and, by extension, its foreign ministry. Weak or erratic national currencies, and the real possibility of government bureaucracies malfunctioning, can have a devastating impact and

in extreme cases, diplomats receive only sporadic<sup>10</sup> payment. Financial insecurity has an erosive effect on morale and can also encourage private (illegal under diplomatic law) enterprise as a means of survival.

## 5.2 *Centralisation of Foreign Policy*

Foreign ministries, like the wider civil service bureaucracy, tend to be weakened when they are cut off from interactive decision-making. This is common in highly centralised head of state type systems (rife in weak states) where the basis of policy formulation is narrow, fickle and exclusive, and where personal power is stronger than institutional power. The diminished role of an MFA becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy: as the organisation struggles to build up expertise and legitimacy, both domestic and foreign agencies shun its counsel in favour of dealing directly with political principals. Veteran Dutch Ambassador Johan Kaufmann (1998: 41) explained the problematic scenario when a negotiating partner is not convinced that ‘legislative or other organs [in a weak state] will complete the necessary approval or ratification of the results of the negotiations’. And Ronald Barston (2006: 21) adds that the disconnection between an MFA and the nucleus of policy-making spills over to the state’s diplomatic representatives. They tend to echo only the rhetorical aspects of policy, resulting in ‘brittle international agreements or arrangements that are subject to frequent reinterpretation’. Moreover, inordinate reliance on a single individual authority causes bottlenecks in foreign policy decision-making and implementation processes (Barston 2006: 17; Eban 1998: 96–97).

When diplomats of other states assume that anybody below the position of head of state is simply not empowered to take decisions, they tend to insist on *summitry* to address even routine issues. This assumption can be shared by the state itself. Retired Ghanaian ambassador and Commonwealth consultant on diplomatic training, Ebenezer Debrah (1996), recalled a period in West Africa when francophone countries did not exchange resident ambassadors because it was assumed that heads of government met regularly enough to address the spectrum of interstate relations.

In struggling states, political executives typically entrust foreign policy coordination to entities that report directly to a head of state. It can be a pragmatic response to lack of diplomatic infrastructure, but it can also be political distrust. Insecure heads of state are often unwilling to entrust

implementation of their foreign policy to MFAs, whose staff might lack the desired ideological or party-political commitment. When officials were trained by a predecessor regime or former colonial masters, this is a pertinent concern. Andrés Rozental (1999: 141) gives the example of Mexican President Echeverría who, during the 1970s, ‘created a parallel foreign policy team within his own office to supervise – and often contradict – the foreign ministry, which he basically mistrusted’.

The role of an MFA in the conduct of foreign policy can also be deliberately marginalised by an iconoclastic political executive. In the case of Malaysia, its foreign ministry in the 1980s and 1990s was undermined by the personality cult around Prime Minister Mohamad Mahathir. Zakaria Ahmad (1999: 119–120) explains how Mahathir, after he assumed power in 1981, immediately centralised foreign policy in his own office and relegated the foreign ministry to a subordinate position. Wisma Putra ‘initially resisted the shift in locus but gradually took on the role of willing partner (detractors might want to use the term ‘able sycophant’) in pursuit of what has been [Mahathir’s] ‘high-profile’ diplomacy’. The prime minister even established a diplomatic training academy, directly attached to his office, with Wisma Putra officers working there only on secondment (Ahmad 1999: 126).

Personal appearances in the global diplomatic arena are universally attractive to politicians because of the projected image of prestige and popularity. As Eban (1998: 45, 94) expresses it, many leaders (and not only from states that struggle with development!) have preferred the ‘facile satisfactions of international and continental diplomacy’ to the ‘dull prose of economic planning’. When leaders from struggling states spend their time walking red carpets and embracing peers, it conveniently detracts public attention from domestic crises.

### 5.3 *Deficient MFA Capacity*

Generally speaking, the foreign ministries of struggling states are inadequately capacitated and under-resourced. Those of ‘new’<sup>11</sup> states (countries like South Sudan, Namibia and Timor-Leste that for the first time assume a sovereign international identity) face even more critical challenges. These include the establishment, in its entirety, of a foreign policy infrastructure, the large-scale, immediate need to recruit staff at all levels of that infrastructure and the probability that few, or even none, of those recruits will be sufficiently trained for their positions.

Africa is replete with examples. In Swaziland, during the early years of the small Kingdom's independence, there existed no defined foreign service career. The Swazi MFA (1996) recounts how 'diplomats' were sent to staff missions not from the foreign ministry, but directly from the home civil service. They returned to those other domestic ministries only to be replaced in their postings by other serving officers from the home civil service, 'who saw their home not in the foreign service but in their parent ministries'. This practice made it very difficult to build up a foreign ministry *esprit de corps* and to ensure continuity in its management.

It is difficult to overstate the enormity of challenges faced by such newly established MFAs: they have no institutional memory or culture of foreign service to nurture new recruits. These problems are replicated in their diplomatic missions. Diplomacy is an expensive and extensive enterprise even for well-developed states, and struggling states can afford only a limited number of diplomatic missions abroad. Hamilton and Langhorne (1995: 212–213) give the example of Western Samoa which, after independence, relied on New Zealand for diplomatic services for fourteen years before opening up its first foreign mission, a high commission in Wellington, in 1976. Indeed, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) across the world struggle to maintain a diplomatic footprint. For example, as of April 2018 Barbados had bilateral embassies in only eight countries, and two multilateral missions, respectively, in New York and Geneva. It had no representation whatsoever in Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia or Australasia, and a single diplomatic mission (Embassy in China) in the Far East. Many other struggling states face a similar predicament of under-representation.

Where missions do exist, their capacity might be attenuated. Poor states cannot afford to maintain large missions, placing disproportionate pressure on personnel to tend to the full spectrum of functional and/or geographic responsibilities<sup>12</sup>—including, often, simultaneous accreditation to many other countries. The Seychelles, an archipelago in the Indian Ocean and an 'African' state in geopolitical terms, has<sup>13</sup> only two diplomatic missions on the mother continent. The two embassies, in Pretoria and Addis Ababa, have to service diplomatic relations with all 53 of the 'other' African states—and they have to take care of all the Seychelles' multilateral relations with Africa, *inter alia* its membership of the African Union and the Southern African Development Community. Botswana (MoFAIC 2017), a stable Southern African state, maintains embassies in only 19 countries. Most serving ambassadors of

Botswana are therefore accredited to several states at the same time: in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the Embassy of Botswana is responsible for bilateral relations with the host state as well as with Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. But the same embassy is also a multilateral mission: it serves as Botswana's Permanent Mission to the African Union and is also accredited to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). The diplomats of states such as Seychelles and Botswana literally have to do 'more with less', i.e. perform with far fewer resources than their peers in developed states.

Poorly resourced MFAs can struggle to recruit well-qualified candidates but the opposite happens, too: sometimes, a career in the foreign service is seen as an opportunity to escape domestic hardship, in which case the diplomat's patriotic dedication comes into question. The problem starts with recruitment from a small tertiary-educated pool and weak incentives for such graduates to go into government service. To make matters work, their attrition rate is high, as candidates with diplomatic experience are sought after in the private sector.

A common capacity problem for struggling foreign ministries relates to ICT. Information is a strategic, fundamental resource, and an inadequate level of ICT infrastructure and connectivity leaves the foreign ministries of poorer states on the wrong side of a development gap known as the 'digital divide'. In 1994, just after the end of the Cold War, Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1994: 102) referred to this schism as an economic-technological 'iron curtain'. Information poverty inhibits the ability of states to benefit optimally from a knowledge-driven world economy, and the diplomatic domain is affected to the same extent.

#### 5.4 *Politicisation of MFAs*

An issue that negatively impacts on professional staffing in many struggling foreign ministries is *cronyism*. Especially in politically unstable countries, MFAs are obliged to recruit from political elites, while party-political (or other exclusive) affiliation facilitates promotion. The appointment of incompetent or corrupt party-political allies in diplomatic posts does little to foster confidence in a state's diplomacy. Thus, the Addis Fortune (2013) lamented that the foreign ministry of Ethiopia, a state that in recent years had been 'flexing its international muscles, and expanding its network of diplomatic missions abroad', was still crippled by political manipulation. A 2013 editorial in the paper

alleged that ‘political loyalty is given priority over other indicators, in the appointment of mission heads and members. Upward mobility of professionals is sluggish and hardly merit-based’.

Ironically, even when diplomats in unstable states are appointed by objective standards, their professional integrity might be questioned because their governments are known to install party loyalists. Jorge Pérez Otermi (1992: 22–25) cites the example of Uruguay’s 1973 *coup d’état* that led to 11 years of dictatorship. Many professional diplomats lost their jobs and were replaced by party loyalists. He adds, however, that even in the midst of such ‘institutional bankruptcy’, there were still individual diplomats who managed to perform their duties with professional acclaim.

In states such as Myanmar (Burma) and many post-colonial states in Africa that (have) had military governance for extended periods, the foreign service has seen an unhealthy intake of military staff. This is problematic because the training and inclination of career diplomats *versus* military staff differ fundamentally. Diplomats seek compromise and build bridges between seemingly incompatible positions, whereas the military instinct is much simpler, a win–lose mentality. As Barston (2006: 71) explains it, military personnel in diplomatic positions result in the classical functions of embassies being impaired or not carried out at all.

### 5.5 *Dearth of Diplomatic Training*

Skills training would seem an obvious remedy for many of the ills suffered by struggling MFAs. Yet for the least developed countries of the world, dedicated diplomatic training centres are few and far between: the problem ranges from the complete absence of diplomatic training facilities (either within MFAs or provided by non-state entities) to cases where nominal infrastructure exists but delivers only rudimentary services due to insufficient training material, curricula, staff and instructors. This is in stark contrast to the emerging economies of the Developing World and the industrialised states of the Global North, where diplomatic training has become a growth industry and where MFA recruitment processes pare down an abundance of suitably qualified candidates, who then receive additional in-house diplomatic training when they join the ministry.

Poorly capacitated (especially new) states have had little alternative but to rely on donor states’ offers to train their diplomats. In the majority of cases concerning least developed countries (LDCs), such states have

continued to rely on foreign training and have failed to develop a domestic capacity for diplomatic training. This dependency has a number of implications, *inter alia* inconsistent and even clashing in-house styles of operation; insufficient knowledge of an own state's foreign policy (yet immersion into the donor state's foreign policy environment); and the reality that only a small elite has access to training—some of them benefiting from repeated opportunities. This stretches the disparities among staff in a recipient MFA and erodes *esprit d'corps*. Moreover, the reality of diplomatic training as a form of development assistance is that it is unreliable—it is completely dependent on the changing foreign policy priorities of the donor state (Spies 2005: 303–306).

Even when funding is available, resources are not necessarily dedicated to training, which is often relegated to the least of an MFA's priorities. Another problem is that within broader government service, the 'production' of diplomats is simply not deemed important in comparison with other civil servants. In many states, generic civil service training is provided but domestic ministries compete for opportunities, as a result of limited funds. Botswana's foreign ministry has conceded that even though its officials qualify for training by the Directorate of Public Service Management (which handles recruitment and training for the whole government) 'training is rather provided for engineers than for diplomats' (Botswana DFA 1996).

The problem is most acute in Africa, and in sub-Saharan Africa the majority of foreign ministries have no in-house diplomatic training whatsoever. This unfortunate reality is mirrored in attendance profiles of the annual meetings of the International Forum for Diplomatic Training (IFDT), where heads of diplomatic training institutes and academies exchange perspectives on best practice in the education of diplomats. In my own experience of attending this forum, I have observed that the 54 African states are vastly under-represented at the annual Forum, with only South Africa attending regularly. This glaring absence increases the distance between networked best-practice diplomatic training in Africa, as compared to the rest of the world.

### 5.6 *States in Democratic Transition*

The foreign ministries of states that are in the throes of democratic transformation are presented with an additional layer of challenges. In the aftermath of the Cold War, many countries in Africa, Latin America,

Southern Europe and Asia (including most of the former East Bloc) witnessed the demise of dictatorships and totalitarian rule and embarked on a process of democratic transition. In some instances, the structural implications have been momentous: states that simultaneously obtained sovereignty, such as the Baltic states, had to establish foreign ministries from scratch. In some cases, as when Czechoslovakia was divided into two sovereign units, the original foreign ministry was faced with painful 'divorce' proceedings.

The bureaucratic politics within a transitioning MFA can be fraught with tension: compromise and reconciliation are required when 'before and after' staff are working together. This happened in Uruguay after its return to democracy in 1984. Otermi (1992: 22) recounted how those candidates that were banned from competing for foreign service posts during the *de facto* regime, upon the return of the country to institutional normality, were allowed back into the ministry and allowed a new start in their career, while those that were recruited during the reign of the previous regime were not removed for that reason. By the same token, those diplomats removed from the MFA for political reasons during the same period were reinstated and compensated.

A state in democratic transition typically enjoys greater visibility and more reconstructive involvement by the international community and usually expands its international representation due to its rehabilitated international status. South Africa is a case in point: its celebrated transition to democracy during 1993–1994 induced a quantum leap in the country's foreign relations. Whereas before the transition South Africa had diplomatic missions in only 30 states, by June 1997 it had established diplomatic relations with 160 countries and maintained 96 foreign missions. During the same period, the country joined over 70 international organisations.<sup>14</sup> The transition necessitated a dramatic overhaul of its MFA, the (as it was known until 2009) Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). No fewer than six *de facto* foreign services had to be amalgamated into one foreign ministry (a blessing in disguise if one considers the massive recruitment needs to meet the country's diplomatic expansion!). These included the MFAs of the four nominally independent 'homelands'<sup>15</sup> within South African borders and the formerly exiled foreign representatives of the major liberation movements.<sup>16</sup> Thus, at all levels of seniority, large numbers of officials with divergent levels of experience and skills, not to mention incompatible political socialisation, suddenly became colleagues in the same foreign ministry.



## 6 FOREIGN MINISTRY RESPONSES

The past few decades have seen foreign ministries being criticised for wasting resources and being unable to navigate the ever more complex and competitive international arena. While some MFAs have responded by ‘burying their heads in the sand’ (Riordan 2003: 9), many others have recognised the need to bolster their performance and image and have undertaken self-imposed transformation. The process has met with resistance from traditionalists and old-school practitioners who believe that diplomacy is a highly sensitive, unquantifiable domain best kept away from the corporate insolence of bureaucrats. Nevertheless, like diplomacy itself, MFAs are constantly moulded to changing global circumstances and the changes that are discussed, hereunder, reflect the drift in global practice.

### 6.1 ‘Corporate’ Management

In response to democratic imperatives for accountability, transparency and productivity, the global trend is for MFAs to professionalise their internal management processes. This is done *inter alia* by adopting management techniques that mirror private sector paradigms of efficient client service delivery. Many foreign ministries have adopted the ISO 9000 package of quality management systems standards, launched in 1987 by the International Organisation for Standardisation, which assists organisations to meet service delivery objectives while also complying with the relevant statutory and regulatory requirements. Rana (2004: 389) mentions that Thailand, for example, has obtained ISO 9000 certification for its consular services. Administrative streamlining has also been enhanced by means of more extensive ICT support to make the output of MFAs more cost-effective and internationally competitive.

More stringent recruitment and employment regulations have been adopted to counter accusations of nepotism in a sector of government service that is very attractive to the ‘socially mobile’. Moreover, diplomats—in their capacity as civil servants who are also national representatives—are increasingly held *individually accountable* for their performance. In many countries, performance agreements for MFA staff have become a standard requirement. By the same token, many foreign ministries require diplomats to sign an internal code of conduct (‘service delivery charter’, or equivalent) to facilitate disciplinary steps if they are found to have acted unethically.

A recurring theme is that of ‘management’ and as Richard Langhorne (1999) notes, this has permeated all levels of foreign ministries. Managerial skills are essential because contemporary diplomats act as coordinators within horizontalised structures in the domestic, transnational and international domains. This is in stark contrast with the strict, vertical command structures of old. Contemporary foreign ministry training involves not only traditional aspects of management (delegation and supervision of personnel) but also time, stress and workload management, labour relations, financial management and project management of events such as conferences, exhibitions and official visits.

Enhanced organisational standards and more detailed reporting on the management of MFAs have streamlined the oversight of legislative branches of government. In the process, foreign ministries have been prompted to do their own financial planning in cycles, i.e. to draft ‘business plans’ as to facilitate annual expenditure reviews. This activity has added a thick layer of bureaucratic activity—and quantification of output—to the traditional job description of diplomats.

## 6.2 *Restructuring and Rationalisation*

Under pressure of national budgets and public scrutiny, MFAs all over the world have been trying to reduce operational costs. This has included scaling down employment benefits and reducing or outsourcing functions that can be performed more cost-effectively by other agencies. Another method has been attenuation of diplomatic representation abroad by decreasing the number of non-essential missions, or by down-scaling the size of individual missions: by reducing the size of the transferred staff component, in some cases by extending the use of locally recruited personnel. This has been an option when states have had to expand diplomatic representation while simultaneously curtailing expenses, prompting the use of ‘micro-missions’, staffed by a single diplomat with support from locally recruited staff.

MFAs have also increasingly resorted to structural reforms. As discussed earlier, this has included the institutional amalgamation of foreign ministries with other domestic ministries that are involved in foreign policy implementation. In Norway, the foreign ministry merged with the ministry responsible for development aid, during 1990 (Neumann 1999: 157). And in the case of aid recipient states, MFAs have had to implement appropriate organisational structures for the formulation

and implementation of development strategies, as Barston (2006: 18) observes.

Increasingly since the end of the Cold War, the panoply of new issues on the global diplomatic agenda has prompted structural changes in foreign ministries through the creation of new head office-based divisions dedicated to specialised functional areas. At the beginning of the Bill Clinton Administration in the USA, in 1994, a new position was created at the State Department, namely *Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs*.<sup>17</sup> This senior appointee would oversee cross-cutting thematic areas such as environmental protection, democracy and human rights promotion, law enforcement and management of population and migration issues. Talbott (1997: 74) says the effect was ‘to elevate the attention those goals receive in the policymaking process and in diplomacy’. Such issue areas invariably require a long-term strategy, with internationally coordinated approaches at bilateral as well as multilateral levels.

### 6.3 *Changing the ‘Face’ of a Foreign Ministry*

Democratic concessions to demographic profiles have affected MFAs as much as any other area of government—indeed even more pertinently, because a foreign ministry presents the *face* of a country to the outside world. Many MFAs have therefore, and increasingly so over the past few decades, sought to redress minority biases within their services, whether related to racial, ethnic, disability, gender, caste, sexual orientation, religion or even geographical identities.

Several governments, in an effort to shed images of exclusivity, have adopted proactive policies in compliance with this imperative. Countries such as Canada, India, Malaysia, South Africa, Sweden and the USA have gone to considerable lengths to ensure that their foreign services are demographically representative, by implementing affirmative action (positive discrimination) to achieve employment equity. Thus, under legislative scrutiny, MFAs in these states ensure that their recruitment, career progression and training policies allow for more diversity in the diplomats that represent the state.

In the USA, for instance an active programme of ‘diversity recruitment’ has sought to redress racial imbalances in its foreign service, since the early 1970s. Lindstrom (2002: 112) reminds us that in the 1960s, the Department of State employed only 17 Black foreign service officers, among an employee pool of 3732. Likewise, in New Zealand,

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade prides itself on efforts to draw more Maori candidates into the foreign service. The process starts with recruitment at the vocational level: candidates from previously disadvantaged groups are given access to supplementary educational opportunities to allow them to compete, at a later stage, on a merit basis (NZ MFAT 1996).

But employment equity legislation is not always successful. Nigeria, a multiethnic country with some 470 ethnic groups spread over 36 federal states, has an explicit anti-discrimination clause in its 1999 Federal Constitution to ensure that the public service is not dominated by any minorities or federal states. Yet as Jibrin Ibrahim (2006: 4) comments, ‘the politics of patronage that is practiced [in Nigeria], and the lack of functional transparency and accountability mechanisms make it difficult to implement affirmative action policies’. Like so many other social policies, implementation of employment equity hinges on political will.

Where a foreign ministry reflects the demographic reality of the state, it can be a powerful representation of national identity. In Ludwik Dembinski’s (1988: 5) opinion, ‘diplomats of this new breed may better represent and express more forcefully the real interests and aspirations of their countries than their elders were ever able to do’. Growing respect for universal human rights has also facilitated recruitment to foreign services of individuals with same-sex orientation. This is the case in (still only) a few but increasing number of liberal democracies such as the UK, Canada, South Africa and Australia, where MFAs recruit candidates regardless of sexual orientation and acknowledge ‘life partners’ as *de facto* spouses.

But ironically, the ‘face’ of a state is not always universally appreciated. The main difference between foreign ministries and other government agencies is that MFA staff routinely work in foreign postings, some of which have social environments that are less than tolerant of diversity, and where the sending state’s equity legislation does not apply. One only has to look at the tiny minority of female ambassadors accredited to states such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, to know that MFAs are not as free to *deploy* their diplomats as they are to recruit them.

#### 6.4 *Embracing Technology*

MFAs have their staff and work literally scattered around the world, and their core duties are anchored in information and communication. They

have therefore benefited enormously from the use of electronic communication, data transfer and data storage unrestricted by time zones, bureaucracy, geographical distance or physical space.

The growth of virtual diplomacy has flattened the hierarchies of traditional diplomatic communication, increased possibilities for team working and broadened networking within and beyond foreign ministries. It has also offered significant opportunities for MFAs from smaller states to ‘leapfrog’ their competitive deficit in the global arena, by using innovative ICT tools such as open data platforms, social media and e-services (Cucos 2012; Sucharipa 2003). Many MFA and embassy websites allow for interactive or online services. Public ‘e-services’ have overhauled the way in which consular services can be offered, making it possible for even very small countries to switch to an electronic visa service. Moldova did so in 2011, as part of the eTransform Initiative (ETI) for governments, supported by the World Bank.

Because of their focus on the international community, it is now custom for foreign ministries to have their own, dedicated Internet websites (and other social media identities) where people from across the world can access information on the ministry and its network of missions (staff, location of diplomatic missions, consular services, etc.) and information on the country (national events such as elections, hosting of international conferences, policy speeches of the executive, inbound or outbound state visits, etc.). MFAs and their various foreign missions now invest in Internet websites as diligently as they would traditionally spend on furnishing physical offices and ensure that interactive forums such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram or LinkedIn (a proliferating list) are serviced and monitored. MFAs also oversee the social media visibility of their network of diplomatic missions to ensure that the ‘corporate identity’ and foreign policy objectives of the state are reflected consistently and coherently.

Away from the public eye, the use of closed, internal networks (‘intranets’) offers important virtual forums where MFA staff can communicate one-on-one or in groups, read updates and circulars and have access to institutional databases. The US State Department, for example, has an in-house version of the popular online encyclopaedia Wikipedia. It is called Diplopedia, and staff are encouraged to contribute to the constant expansion of the database. The US DoS also uses a form of ‘crowd sourcing’ through its intranet to harness the ideas of its employees, for instance, regarding cost-cutting initiatives (Hanson 2012: 15).

But diplomatic intranets are not only used by individual foreign ministries: multilateral groups of states can also share an exclusive diplomatic intranet. The best known is possibly the European Union's *Correspondence Européenne* (COREU) which is used for exchange of information, communication and policy formulation related to the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). COREU connects all the foreign ministries within the EU with each other, the General Secretariat of the Council and the European Commission. The system has also supported the creation of the European External Action Service that was launched in December 2010 (Bicchi and Carta 2012: 465).

A major effect of ICT advances has manifested in the training of diplomats. Distance education in diplomacy was pioneered by the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies at the University of Malta (MEDAC) which established a Unit for IT and Diplomacy during 1992. Spearheaded by a former Yugoslav diplomat, Jovan Kurbalija, the initiative prompted the founding of DiploFoundation, a Swiss-funded, non-profit foundation that runs training programs to build capacity in Internet governance and conducts research on the impact of ICT on diplomatic practice.

ICT innovation offers exciting opportunities for MFAs to broaden long-distance, continuous diplomatic training offerings, a natural option for staff that are dispersed geographically. For struggling foreign ministries, whose personnel abroad may be unable to travel to head office for sporadic training courses due to workload or financial resources, the 'virtual' option of ICT-assisted training is even more opportune. In addition, it allows serving diplomats to participate in international training programmes offered by institutions such as the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

An increasing number of individual foreign ministries use ICT-assisted training for in-house diplomatic training. The Canadian Foreign Service Institute (CFSI) has been at the forefront of setting international standards in this field and has specially designed software to create a 'virtual campus' that every Canadian diplomatic mission can access via a dedicated server (Canada DFAIT CFSI 1997; Kurbalija and Baldi 2000: 141). This allows the foreign ministry to train much larger numbers of staff than would otherwise be possible—during 2010–2011 alone, a total of '9,900 employees participated in either online or classroom courses' (Global Affairs Canada 2016).

The diplomacy-ICT nexus is so crucial that the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies commissioned a special investigation into its implications. An *Advisory Panel on Diplomacy in the Information Age* (Burt and Robison 1998) published a lengthy report in 1998, advocating for a total ‘reinvention’ of diplomacy in the information age. The State Department itself launched a *Taskforce on eDiplomacy* during 2002 and institutionalised it during 2003, through the establishment of the DoS *Office of eDiplomacy*. Fergus Hanson (2012: 1) who was awarded a Professional Fulbright scholarship to investigate the State Department’s use of eDiplomacy notes that the DoS has become the global leader in this field and (as of March 2012) ‘now operates what is effectively a global media empire, reaching a larger direct audience than the paid circulation of the ten largest US dailies and employing an army of diplomat-journalists to feed its 600-plus platforms’.

### 6.5 *Maximising Human Resources Capacity*

Maximisation of human resources capacity within MFAs requires strategic planning to ensure that the processes of recruitment, training, deployment and promotion are coordinated, professional and conducive to the pursuit of a state’s foreign policy agenda. Starting at the vocational and recruitment level, MFAs in the early twenty-first century generally have a much wider catchment area than ever before. This is not just a ‘window-dressing’ exercise to placate advocates of democratic representivity, but a response to the incredibly varied roles and functions of modern diplomats. Recruitment is also of growing strategic importance at the lateral level, with foreign ministries allowing entry by experienced professionals from other government departments and the private sector so as to strengthen functional areas in the ministry.

Various MFAs have acted on the realisation that diplomatic training is an essential investment in the future of a state’s foreign service, just as the acquisition of capital goods and new technologies are. Training needs to be compulsory, continuous and tailored to changing domestic as well as global realities. States such as Canada have attempted to emulate private sector standards in terms of investment in staff training. The Canadian MFA (then called Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade) in 1997 observed that it had commissioned an investigation which found that the *per capita* expenditure on Canadian diplomats trailed behind that of the private sector, in some cases

amounting to a mere fraction of what was spent by certain companies, such as IBM, on training of employees.

Diplomatic training has also been used to play a wider political role in the transformation of foreign ministries. States in transition typically seek an independent diplomatic identity, and this can manifest at a practical level through an own diplomatic training facility. Following the end of the Cold War, in 1991 Mongolia established its own *School of Foreign Service*, an initiative replicated by most of the other Eastern European countries whose diplomats had previously been trained in Moscow.

For countries in democratic transition, diplomatic training has assisted in the reorientation of their diplomats to a new constitutional order and the changed international profile of the state they represent. The Moscow State Institute for International Relations (MGIMO 1998) noted that after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it placed ‘transitology’ at the core of its diplomatic studies. Thus, ‘the priority direction in the academic and scientific activity of MGIMO [became] the adaptation of the existing plans and programmes to the changes taking place both in and outside the country’. For Russian diplomats (and for the diplomats of the rest of the former East Bloc), re-training in subjects such as international economic affairs was required because they had previously not been sufficiently educated in the theory of free market economics (MGIMO 1997).

### 6.6 *Reconceptualising the National Foreign Policy System*

The discussion thus far has made it clear that the traditional hierarchical monopoly of foreign ministries in managing state-to-state relations has been eroded. This places a huge management burden on MFAs, who are expected to compose coherent national foreign policy advice while being rivalled by a growing number of other foreign policy stakeholders.

Daryl Copeland (2014: 3) does not mince his words about the outdated nature of foreign ministries: ‘Rigid and highly stratified, such agencies are almost always characterised by internal silos and a profusion of levels. More than a few have become ossified and sclerotic, with a heavy reliance upon titles and designated ranks, established procedures, and authoritarian, command and control style social relations’. MFAs, he alleges, have their ‘backs to the capital, face to the world’.

The spectre of marginalisation has seen many foreign ministries starting a process of repositioning. The inevitable redefinition of their role



sees them moving in the direction of ‘being a node in the interdependent network which is world politics’ (Neumann 1999: 153). This role requires constant and wide-ranging consultation within the domestic foreign policy community, as well as routine inter-departmental policy strategising, an activity Paul Meerts (1999: 90) calls ‘inter-civil-servant negotiations’.

A practical way of improving intra-bureaucracy cooperation is staff exchanges: this can happen as ‘revolving door’ opportunities among domestic ministries, even involving the private sector, and the placement of experienced diplomats in other ministries, office of the president/prime minister and federative units to provide policy advice. States such as Mexico, Brazil and the Philippines have traditions of seconding diplomats to various other sectors of government, on the one hand, because it is an educational experience for the individual diplomat and, on the other hand, because it fosters greater cooperation with other agencies that are involved in the execution of foreign policy (Jaques 2003). In the case of Brazil, Hurrell (2004) notes that the participation of diplomats in the reorganisation of the state’s security and intelligence policy in the 1990s demonstrated how cross-sector cooperation could be embraced by the foreign policy bureaucracy. He says (pre-empting the criticism of more conservative diplomatists) that this policy has succeeded without sacrificing the identity and *esprit de corps* of Itamaraty.

India has taken the domestic diplomatic exchange quest to the sub-national level of governance. During October 2014, the foreign ministry established a new head office desk, the ‘states division’, to facilitate cooperation between the Indian foreign service, foreign actors and the governments and businesses of India’s federal states. A few months later, in 2015, the ministry started to ‘post’ some of its diplomats to various Indian federal states for short sojourns in order ‘to identify and connect foreign countries and investors with the specific development and investment objectives of Indian states’. In the long term, those diplomats are expected ‘to remain in touch with the states’ governments and bureaucracy, as well as industry representatives, throughout their career to ensure that their information about the states remains updated’ (Roche 2015). India’s approach seems to echo a proposal by Copeland (2014: 3) that a foreign ministry should actually establish ‘branch offices’ across an own country, to ensure that they represent the state’s national interests in their diversity and entirety.

To an extent, the ‘domestic foreign service grid’ is already projected onto diplomatic missions. In most services, it has become routine for a range of attachés to operate alongside career diplomats. Hamilton and Langhorne (1995: 232) contend that diplomats don’t just have ‘to achieve and maintain a *modus vivendi* amongst the representatives of competing agencies and departments’ but are also expected ‘to introduce a sense of common purpose into the several negotiations upon which they may have embarked’. The tighter intra-bureaucratic integration/cooperation takes on added significance when the diversity of embassy staff is considered. As far back as 1997, Talbott (1997: 78) observed that the majority of staff at US Embassies—63%—were *not* State Department employees. This asymmetry, he predicted, would only increase over time. Hocking et al. (2013: 2) agree that the ‘internationalisation of domestic policy’ is the reason why career diplomats are a minority in so many embassies.

Beyond the intra-governmental sphere, MFAs also reposition themselves by strengthening their cooperation with civil society and non-state actors. A major shift in the work of foreign ministries has seen public diplomacy being elevated to its core business. In 2002, a specially established *Independent Task Force on Public Diplomacy* of the US-based Council on Foreign Relations noted emphatically:

An essential starting point is to recognise that U.S. foreign policy is weakened by a failure to include public diplomacy systematically in the formulation and implementation of policy. (Peterson 2002: 77)

Based on the research done by the Task Force, the US State Department was advised to develop a coherent strategy for public diplomacy that would see communications with the public changed from the convention top-down one-way messages to an interactive dialogue *and more involvement by the private sector* in foreign policy initiatives. Indeed, private involvement in diplomacy is a growth area and many foreign ministries now allow NGOs to participate in the drafting of conference documents and national position papers. In some instances, they even include NGO representatives in official delegations.

While state-centric approaches to diplomacy continue to portray the MFA as central to the contemporary institution of diplomacy, globalist theorists downplay this role. In a critique of contemporary foreign ministries, Jonathan Moses and Torbjørn Knutsen (2002) have proposed that

the (Norwegian) MFA should be a ‘much smaller coordinating body, a Bureau of Foreign Affairs’, which is directly accountable to the executive. This, they argue, would help to remove some of the redundancies of the MFA and the overlap it has with other parts of the state’s bureaucracy.

The idea of a smaller, suppler MFA was also broached by the participants in an international conference ‘Futures for Diplomacy’, held at Clingendael in The Hague on 14 March 2013. Summarising the deliberations, a panel of authors recommended that foreign ministries ‘in a post-western world of fragmenting rule sets and contested values, [should] serve as the GPS both to government and society as a whole’. They offered a positive interpretation of the contemporary MFA dilemma and concluded that the new positioning of foreign ministries would ‘liberate’ them from their traditional roles (which are becoming obsolete) and allow them ‘to shape the parameters of foreign policy through the networked tools of its implementation’ (Hocking et al. 2013: 1). According to Ron Ton (2017) Director of the Clingendael Academy, the Netherlands subsequently started to ‘flat-structure’ its foreign service, guided by a 2014 project called ‘The modernization of Dutch diplomacy’. The aim was to do away with strict hierarchy in function, management and operation so as to make inter- and cross-sectoral coordination more effective. Their re-conceptualisation of the global diplomatic arena has manifested in a flexible network organisation, and the strengthening of diplomatic capacities in staff and policies at the diplomatic missions. Missions are equipped to be flexible and responsive to their unique host environments, without veering away from the overarching principles of Dutch foreign policy.

With foreign ministries under pressure at all levels of operation, it seems as though there is consensus that they should concern themselves, as Copeland (2014: 2) proposes, with articulation of more elevated and emerging ‘grand strategy’.

## 7 CONCLUSION

The incremental institutionalisation and professionalisation of diplomacy have manifested in bureaucratic management within states that is replicated across the globe: foreign ministries that preside over networks of resident diplomatic missions. MFAs are a universal phenomenon, even if they represent states that are extraordinarily diverse. Their core function

is also universal and an extension of statehood: they promote and protect states' interests in the environment beyond their national borders. As veteran UK Ambassador Peter Marshall (1997: xv) observed, 'whatever its size, whatever the extent of its international involvement and whatever the scale of its professional diplomatic activity, every country is at the end of the day faced with the same facts of international substance and process'.

But contemporary foreign ministries seem to be under siege and are subjected to unprecedented public and political scrutiny to justify the resources spent on them. At a normative level, they have to deal with the democratic imperative of being socially representative, the opposite of their traditional inclination to be elitist and exclusive. Certain practical challenges are also shared by all foreign ministries: how to nurture and keep their sought-after human resources, and how to be beneficiaries rather than victims of ICT. Generic MFA challenges are compounded in the case of 'struggling' states—those that are weak, nascent, unstable or simply desperately poor. Struggling foreign ministries typically deal with a lack of infrastructure and resources and are easily manipulated or scorned by ruling elites. The political and economic problems of struggling states are anathema to the core role of their MFAs, and the resultant insecurity of their staff is a major obstacle to the states' diplomatic footprint in the global arena. The challenges experienced by MFAs from developing states take on new dimensions when such states are newly established, in democratic transition, or undergo a combination of these circumstances.

Whether a particular foreign ministry is part of a sophisticated bureaucracy in a developed state or just barely functioning in a struggling state, in the contemporary era its traditional functions are rivalled at multiple levels. From 'below', it is challenged by the international relations of subnational authorities at second and third tiers of governance, as also in private parallel by the foreign involvement of a throng of private actors. The activities on both these levels reflect the territorial decentralisation of foreign policy and challenge any monolithic approach to national interest. Something that is already widely reflected through the presence of attachés within diplomatic mission structures is the rivalry that MFAs experience at a horizontal level, generated by the rest of the central government bureaucracy. Encroachment in the foreign policy domain is also common, worldwide, from 'above'—by ruling political parties, the political executive and, in a more recent development, from beyond the state by entities that assume supranational authority.

All of this congestion in the foreign policy arena makes it tough (actually increasingly impossible) for foreign ministries to retain a monopoly on their traditional role. In response to these challenges, MFAs have been under pressure, in some cases self-imposed, to adjust to the realities of a larger, more diverse and less predictable foreign policy community—much of it domestic. Many have undertaken structural reform so as to be more accountable, more representative, more ‘tech-savvy’ and more aware of the responsibility to recruit, train and deploy the individual agents of foreign policy implementation. In the process, the bureaucratic ‘management’ of diplomacy is being reconceptualised.

## NOTES

1. This is not universal: in some states, for example China, the foreign ministry is less highly ranked in the hierarchy of government (Hocking et al. 2013: 5). China’s situation might change, however, as the country becomes more outward-looking and uses diplomacy to build its international image and influence.
2. The original ‘British Commonwealth’ has evolved into the ‘Commonwealth of Nations’, an intergovernmental organisation consisting of the UK and most of its former colonies (53 members, as of April 2018). In recent years, the organisation has admitted members such as Mozambique and Rwanda that were not British colonies, but which claim an indirect link to the Commonwealth’s *raison d’être*.
3. That is, an embassy accredited to the host state. An additional ‘embassy’ (permanent mission) of a sending state may be physically present in the same host state, but accredited to an IGO, rather than the host state. Thus, France maintains an Embassy in Brussels to handle its bilateral relations with Belgium, while at the same time maintaining a Permanent Mission in Brussels, to manage relations with the European Union.
4. This number was still valid, as of April 2018.
5. Under diplomatic law, all heads of mission are not equal, and Article 14 of the 1961 VCDR specifies three ‘classes’ of heads of mission: (1) ambassadors or nuncios accredited to heads of state and other heads of missions of equivalent rank; (2) envoys, ministers and internuncios accredited to heads of state; and (3) chargés d’affaires accredited to ministers of foreign affairs. The VCDR reduced the number of classes of heads of mission that had been established by the 1815 *Congress of Vienna*, from four to three.
6. The word is derived from the Latin *nuntius*, which means ‘messenger’. Nuncios usually have the ecclesiastical rank of titular archbishop, and in terms of the 1961 Vienna Convention, have the same status as ambassadors.

7. In 1988, Robert Putnam postulated that foreign policy executives constantly need to reconcile domestic imperatives with the opportunities and challenges of the external environment. He referred to it as a 'two-level game'.
8. See Geoffrey Wiseman's excellent 2005 article Pax Americana: Bumping into Diplomatic Culture. *International Studies Perspectives*, 6, 409–430.
9. This is a trend with few exceptions—among the latter are emerging powers such as India, Brazil, Turkey, China and Indonesia that Daryl Copeland (2014) says have not downsized their foreign services.
10. During the four years I spent in the Republic of Korea (1997–2001), the Ambassador of a certain sub-Saharan African state was continuing diligently with his diplomatic functions in spite of the fact that he received no remuneration whatsoever from his government. He was financially supported by colleagues from various other African states with representation in Seoul.
11. New states can emerge from the disintegration of a larger state (e.g. Azerbaijan from the USSR); secede from another state (e.g. South Sudan from Sudan); obtain independence after colonial domination (such as Timor-Leste); or be the result of existing states merging (such as North and South Yemen's merger to form Yemen).
12. A study by the South African Human Science Research Council (1990: 123) observed that 'in all too many cases [in small embassies] the economic and political officer, i.e. the consul, and the administrative officer are embodied in a single person. In addition, this diplomat with multiple functions may also serve as military *attaché*, press officer, intelligence station chief, student advisor, and trade representative for the country of his appointment'.
13. As of April 2018.
14. Author's own records kept in service as South African diplomat during that period.
15. Transkei, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana and Venda, in spite of the absence of international recognition of their sovereignty, all maintained their own MFAs and had embassies in each other's (and South Africa's) capitals, with additional consulates in major cities. In terms of the multiparty negotiated South African Constitution of 1993 (which guided the transition to democracy during 1994, under supervision of the Transitional Executive Council) the TBVC administrations were treated similarly to other sub-national public services, all of which would be incorporated in the national structures of the 'new' South Africa.
16. The foreign representatives of the formerly banned African National Congress (ANC) and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), as well as foreign representatives of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), were all considered de facto South African diplomats and were therefore absorbed into the post-1994 foreign ministry.

17. As from January 2012, the Office of the *Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs* was renamed the Office of the *Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights*.

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# Diplomatic Culture

## 1 INTRODUCTION

It is well-nigh impossible to consider any field in the humanities without being confronted with some or other perspective on *culture*. From history and anthropology to philosophy, sociology, politics and law—any study of socialised human behaviour demands consideration thereof. So what exactly is ‘culture’? Geoffrey Wiseman (2005: 411) provides a useful definition, describing it as ‘identifiable and self-identifying evolving mindsets, beliefs, assumptions, values, and worldviews of very large categories, such as a “civilisation”, down to very small ones, such as a “family”’. Diplomacy, as the foundational practice of international society, has accrued its own culture with distinct conventions and rules of engagement.

Diplomatic culture<sup>1</sup> is unique, however, because it straddles all the other cultures that carve up humanity. Critics are divided on whether its conventions are norm-driven, hence Ole Sending’s description of diplomatic culture as ‘thin’. According to him (2011: 643), the premium that diplomacy places on communication and the management of conflict can be achieved only ‘in the absence of shared values’. This view is opposed by English School theorists—the traditional proponents of ‘international society’—who are convinced that diplomatic culture has a moral core. Hedley Bull (2002: 304), for example, defined diplomatic culture as ‘the common stock of ideas and values possessed by the official representatives of states’. He (2002: 160) explained that it evolved through the

centuries as a result of the shared customs and practices of diplomats that produced a distinctive code of conduct used within international society.

Regardless of the extent to which this code of conduct embraces values and norms, commentators agree that its institutions and rules transcend the political differences associated with humanity's mosaic of cultures. As a supra-culture it hinges on connectivity among its constituent parts, and communication is therefore a perpetual, fundamental endeavour. This leitmotif is complicated (and necessitated) by the influence of many different political cultures, and certain states and regions deviate evidently from the diplomatic culture mores that are otherwise considered universal. This chapter will not explore the enormous spectrum of political culture in the world, but the phenomenon of *relativism* in diplomatic culture, and the more extreme occurrence of anti-diplomatic culture, will be considered because these anomalies give texture to the theory and practice of diplomacy.

Foreign service, even at its most mundane, lends itself to a peculiar lifestyle and professional culture that is shared by diplomats from across the globe, and this distinctive way of life will also be discussed before, finally, some thought is given to the 'making' (if that is possible!) of diplomats—the training that inducts individuals into the broader and universal culture of diplomacy.

## 2 A CULTURE (UN)LIKE ANY OTHER

Diplomacy is not just a profession; it is a way of life. The idea of diplomatic culture presupposes that diplomats, regardless of their individual cultures, ethnicity, religion or political persuasion, have a socio-professional identity that transcends (rather than replace or threaten) other aspects of their identity. Importantly, individuals as well as states *choose* to subscribe to this culture where the *form* of doing things is paramount.

### 2.1 *Diplo-Speak*

Diplomacy without communication is inconceivable—it lies at the heart of the intermediation *that is* diplomacy—and once individuals become socialised in diplomatic culture, they join a cadre of communicators who use language in a particular way. On the one hand, there is a stock of formal terms that are used in the formulaic written communications

among foreign ministries across the world: *note verbale*, *aide mémoire*, *bout de papier*, *démarche* and so forth. Diplo-speak (or ‘diplo-lingo’) also includes quaint phrases—expressions such as ‘seized of the matter’, a fulsome way of saying something is receiving attention—and the eloquent forms of salutation in written and oral communications.

On the other hand, diplomatic idiom, regardless of the language (tongue) in which it is conveyed, has always been known for excessive use of *euphemisms* and *ambiguity*. As Donna Marie Oglesby (2016), a former US career diplomat and diplomatic communications expert, frames it:

Diplomats choose words to be precise enough to communicate clearly to diplomatic counterparts yet elastic enough to plausibly suggest the alternative meanings the diplomat’s political masters at home need to manage their increasingly entangled domestic and international politics.

The elasticity that she refers to, in other words the proclivity of diplomats to use ambiguity so as to leave room for manoeuvring, understandably attracts the criticism that diplomacy is prone to duplicity and theatrics. To be sure, diplomatic double-speak has historically generated criticism as well as wit: consider the old adage that a diplomat never says ‘no’, because ‘yes’ means ‘maybe’ and ‘maybe’ means ‘no’. In 1969, the outspoken diplomat-economist John Kenneth Galbraith observed: ‘There are few ironclad rules of diplomacy, but to one there is no exception: when an official reports that talks were useful, it can be safely concluded that nothing was accomplished’ (Freeman 1995).

Of course, euphemism is to be expected in a profession that prioritises caution and civility. The very high stakes of international politics confer portentous weight on diplomatic communication, hence the need for wily speech craft. Thus, ‘war’ could be referred to as ‘kinetic military action’, an option that would be considered ‘unfortunate’—meaning that it could have dire consequences. Diplomatic culture prioritises certain procedural and normative concepts, and for that reason diplomatic language is infused with a particular, sometimes subconscious, nomenclature. Cooper and Hocking (2000: 37) quote a US commander of the Iraq and Somalia interventions who observed:

If you say ‘C-2’, for example, a military officer thinks ‘command and control’. A relief worker or diplomat would bristle at those terms, maybe preferring ‘cooperate and coordinate’.

The vocabulary spawned by diplomatic culture is extensive: terms like accreditation, appeasement, credentials, pact, plenipotentiary, immunity and many more have enriched the broader discourse on international relations. Several terms found their origins in the techniques used at multilateral forums: ‘lobbying’, for example—the act of trying to influence another actor to pursue a certain course of action—literally came from the fact that diplomats seek informal contact in the lobbies of organisations. The contact can be in cafeterias, back rooms, anywhere outside of the formal venues where their interactions are recorded.

In diplomacy ‘off the record’ does not, however, mean ‘informal’: the latter concept is anathema to a profession so steeped in formality. When the dress code on a diplomatic invitation is indicated as ‘informal’, one’s attire is supposed to be just semi-formal, and definitely not ‘casual’. A recent practice that seems to demonstrate more informality is the phenomenon in some African countries<sup>2</sup> to start a speech with the phrase ‘all protocol(s) observed’. It clears the speaker from having to acknowledge the correct order of precedence of ranking members in the audience. The use of this phrase is not officially prescribed in any African country, however, and teachers of protocol and etiquette wince at its usage.

Nonetheless, the social media that are growing with the twenty-first century have a universal ‘informalising’ impact on communications, including for diplomats who use these platforms for more convenient communication with peers. Still, diplomatic jargon finds its way into their ‘texted’ conversations. To illustrate the point, Jon Alterman, a former policy planner in the US Department of State, explains that the use of ‘emojis’ is evolving as a diplomatic shorthand. The full array of national flags are available to indicate country-specific positions, and a picture of shaking hands can symbolise a concluded deal, as a dove can signify peace (Borger et al. 2016). Even Twitter, with its 140-character limit, serves as a diplomatic tool. The short messaging service does not exactly lend itself to diplomatic nuance, as Nick Bryant (2012) points out, ‘but its abbreviated form, in harness with its hashtag hieroglyphics, can also make it powerfully direct’.

## 2.2 *Navigating the Tower of Babel*

Diplomacy, as a profession that communicates across nationalities, sovereign borders and cultures, represents all of the thousands of languages spoken by humanity. Clearly, an essential diplomatic skill would therefore

be proficiency in foreign languages. Diplomats have historically been polyglots, and it is no surprise that the first ever formal diplomatic training institute (the *Sprachknaben Institut*, or Oriental Academy, established in 1754 by the Habsburg Empire for its diplomats in Constantinople) was a language institute.

Deficiencies in this regard can be a strategic weakness. A 2013 report by The British Academy (suitably titled ‘Lost for Words’) made the point that the UK’s capacity for global influence was being undermined by persistent deficits in foreign language skills within its diplomatic apparatus, and even beyond that within Government more widely. It cited evidence from government departments and agencies as well as higher education institutions that linguistic acumen was not being properly sustained and evaluated. The recommendations were as expected: more investment in foreign language training was required, to build strategic advantage in international relations (The British Academy 2013).

Naturally, language is a major component of culture, and throughout history, it has been politicised in the sense that dominant cultures expect their own language to be spoken by everybody. As a result of the historical authority of the Catholic Church in Europe, in combination with the prioritisation of classic texts in European scholarship, Latin used to be the *lingua franca* (common language) of diplomacy. This was the case until as recently as the eighteenth century, and all diplomats had to be well versed in the language. The use of a ‘dead’ language contributed to the exclusivity and opaque image of diplomacy, but also confirmed the nexus between diplomacy and law. A further advantage was that it did not ‘belong’ to any specific state or political group. The series of treaties that made up the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, for instance, was drafted in Latin.

French gradually overtook Latin and by the middle of the eighteenth century had become the unofficial, but universal, diplomatic *lingua franca*. This was due in no small measure to the efforts of the French themselves, who through pioneering establishment of a foreign ministry at that stage made a large impact on the practice of diplomacy. This explains why the Congress of Vienna (1815) was conducted in French, throughout. However, by 1918 at the Paris Peace Conference, the English text of the Treaty of Versailles was recognised as ‘equal’ and thereafter English rapidly became a diplomatic working language. It was at least partly in reflection of the rising influence of the USA as a superpower (Hamilton and Langhorne 1995: 157). But French expressions



are still used widely, especially when it comes to protocol and formal diplomatic communication: most of the formulaic terms mentioned earlier (*note verbale*, etc.) are derived from French.

Over the past century, diplomacy has become influenced by a more 'democratic' international system with a greater diversity of states. Accordingly, the trend evolved for diplomats, especially at multilateral events, to communicate in their own national languages, with simultaneous interpretation for the sake of other diplomats. At the UN, there are six official working languages, with proceedings simultaneously translated into Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. Arabic was not initially a UN language, but was added to the five original official languages after the oil shocks in the 1970s: a clear-cut instance of the interplay between language and power in diplomatic culture.

### 2.3 *Diplomatic Form: Protocol*

Diplomacy has always relied heavily on codes of acceptable behaviour. At a social level, diplomats need to heed etiquette, which are directives for courteous comportment. Just as these rules guide polite behaviour during social interaction among individuals, there are rules that guide official interaction also—this we refer to as *protocol*. So, protocol in the diplomatic sense is really etiquette at the level of interstate relations.

Protocol literally offers official guidelines for procedure in the handling of state affairs. It is therefore an essential regulating function of diplomacy, because it codifies the rules of ceremonial procedures. When ambassadors present their credentials, when treaties are signed, when a speaking order in the United Nations is determined, protocol is employed. It is transparent, understood by all, and pertains to all aspects of communication and representation: written, oral as well as non-verbal. As such, protocol guides the *form* rather than the substance of intergovernmental relations. The obvious advantage is that it reduces the burden of discrimination on individual diplomats and governments. An example is consensus on the hierarchy of attendees and their public 'recognition' at official events, for which purpose all foreign ministries maintain an official 'Order of Precedence'. Precedence, in short, predetermines the right of representatives, based on their official designation, to take up certain procedural positions, for example in seating arrangements at diplomatic events.

Another advantage is symbolic: protocol signals the sovereignty and legal equality of states. It therefore 'levels the playing field', a very

important consideration for states that consider themselves marginalised in the hierarchy of structural power. Thus, rather than being antiquated (as casual observers might think) protocol offers functional egalitarianism, something that is arguably even more important in an era where diplomacy is no longer the exclusive preserve of a European club.

It is easy to see why protocol is one of the least controversial (yet one of the most important) aspects of diplomatic culture. It is included in diplomatic training programmes across the world and has become one of the generic courses taught to other public- and private-sector clients who deal in international relations. Non-diplomatic actors in the global arena also benefit from understanding the rules of engagement in the diplomatic arena. Protocol makes interaction predictable and safe so as to avoid misunderstandings and allows practitioners to concentrate on the substance of their work. Without it, diplomatic practice would be a minefield of potential *faux pas*, or worse.

The strong emphasis within diplomatic culture on consensual procedure and formal custom is one of the reasons that the institution has endured (and grown) throughout history. As Sending (2011: 643) says, ‘diplomats are attentive to form in a way that other actors are not, and ... this feature also helps account for its resilience’.

#### 2.4 *A Sense of Community: The Diplomatic Corps*

Culture creates a sense of community and belonging, it instils pride and camaraderie, and diplomatic culture does exactly that. Diplomats from vastly different ethnic, religious and political backgrounds share a certain ‘us’-ness wherever they congregate in the world. This is well illustrated, in a microcosm of diplomatic culture, in the phenomenon known as ‘diplomatic corps’.

The resident foreign diplomatic missions in a host city collectively constitute the local diplomatic corps. Diplomats who live in the same foreign space share interests based not just on their legal status and representative mission, but also as a result of the socioeconomic and political conditions that prevail in the host state. This reality, and the constant interaction of the members of the diplomatic corps, foments a communal identity and a shared worldview, distinct from their principals in the various sending states.

Mai’a Davis Cross (2007: 1), who has researched the history of the European diplomatic corps, contends that a given diplomatic corps also

constitutes an *epistemic* community. Its collective professional expertise and specialised knowledge allow the corps to have agency in the shared political environment. Hence, the identity and interests of a diplomatic corps become imprinted on the solutions it proposes to (and which often, even if not always, are implemented by) a host government. An example is the lobbying by the diplomatic corps in South Africa during the 1990s, when a spike in violent crime plagued the country. The efforts of the diplomatic corps convinced the authorities to create a dedicated diplomatic protection unit within the South African Police Service (SAPS).

The symbolic significance of a diplomatic corps is that ‘it facilitates the visible representation of world society in a national capital thereby reaffirming a sense of international solidarity’, as Chané Rama Dahya (2015) phrases it. And, at a practical level, liaison among foreign diplomats in a host capital allows diplomacy to flourish beyond a given state’s relations with the host government: diplomats interact with representatives from a number of other states, providing the basis for long-term diplomatic networking. Subgroups of a given diplomatic corps can even address a multilateral agenda, notwithstanding the fact that the individual ambassadors are bilaterally accredited to the host state. In Seoul (South Korea), as in many other capitals, the diplomatic corps has regional caucuses, among them an African one. At its regular meetings, the African Ambassadors discuss common concerns related to their work in South Korea and have opportunity also to talk about African continental relations and Africa’s international affairs more generally.

The diplomatic corps is presided over by a dean/doyen, who is usually the ambassador who has been based there the longest. Other systems of selecting the dean/doyen might also be used, as long as there is consensus about it. Many Roman Catholic countries give special precedence to the papal *nuncio*, and this can include him being recognised as the dean of the diplomatic corps (Switzerland, FDFA 2008: 11). The dean/doyen acts as the spokesperson for the diplomatic corps at official ceremonies and conveys shared concerns to the host MFA.

Some cities (mostly capitals, but also other major metropolises) are renowned for their large diplomatic population, i.e. the size of their resident diplomatic corps. In some cases, the diplomatic popularity of a city is a result of the host state’s relative power: most states would want a diplomatic presence in the heart of the world’s superpower, or in the capital of a former colonial power or a regional hegemon. It could also

be because an intergovernmental organisation is headquartered in the city. Some capital cities (Washington, DC, Paris, Addis Ababa) or other large cities (New York, Geneva) host bilateral diplomatic missions *as well as* missions attached to the headquarters of an IGO (or even more than one IGO). This greatly increases the size of the diplomatic corps in such a city.

For a host city, there are economic advantages. Diplomats are middle- and upper-class clients with good spending potential, and they attract or facilitate visits—official as well as private—by their compatriots. In addition, a large foreign diplomatic presence adds to the stature of a city and its institutions, enhancing the city’s cosmopolitan image. Granted, there are also increased security risks (the diplomatic presence of certain states attracts terror), and the sheer weight of administrating a large number of foreign representatives can bog down a host city’s officials. As discussed in Chapter 4, petty abuses of diplomatic privileges and immunities, on a large scale, can be very burdensome to municipal authorities.

Two African cities that have surprisingly large<sup>3</sup> resident diplomatic corps are Cairo, the capital of Egypt, and Pretoria, the administrative capital of South Africa. These two cities (respectively at the ‘head and feet’ of Africa), despite their own relatively small economic and political power on a global scale, offer a gateway to a continent with 54 UN member states. Many states from the rest of the world maintain just a few or even a single embassy in all of Africa. As of April 2018, both Mongolia and Latvia had only a single embassy on the continent in Cairo, while Suriname and Guyana each maintained their only embassy in Africa, in Pretoria. Their ambassadors are accredited to multiple states from the selected ‘hub’, which was chosen for obvious reasons of networking within a large resident diplomatic corps.

### 2.5 *Diplomacy as Currency of International Society*

As discussed in Chapter 2, diplomacy is a defining—even *constitutive*—institution within international society. This structure-giving role is encapsulated by Berridge et al.’s (2001: 1) description of diplomacy as a ‘bulwark against international chaos’. Most analysts, while perhaps not making such a sweeping claim, agree that diplomacy is one of the institutions that help the world maintain order and stability. This is true in a practical as well as symbolic sense and explains why even the most radical of regimes never manage to shun the institution for more than

a transitory period. Any state is free to terminate bilateral relations with another state, or to withdraw from an international organisation, but such diplomatic interruptions are usually temporary. Diplomacy is the ‘currency’ of international society—the means to buy into and operate within the system.

States that fall foul of diplomatic culture pay a heavy price, regardless of their relative hard power. Geoffrey Wiseman (2005) explains how, in the aftermath of the ‘9/11’<sup>4</sup> terror attacks, US foreign policy took an ideological turn. The superpower became alienated from international society when it breached diplomatic culture by resorting to unilateralism. The ‘war on terror’ and the 2003 invasion of Iraq were justified as pre-emptive self-defence, but evoked the superpower’s historical inclination towards isolationism and its claim to international exceptionalism. In the process, the USA disregarded the principles that Wiseman identifies as norms of diplomatic culture: the use of force only as last resort, transparency, continuous dialogue, multilateralism<sup>5</sup> and civility.

But diplomatic culture, as mentioned, has a certain magnetism and states are therefore drawn (back) into international society. The USA quickly realised that the diplomatic fallout (and the long-term military costs) of its unilateralism was a price to dear and, still under the presidency of George W. Bush, returned to multilateral strategies. It was, quite simply, not possible for the USA to fulfil its foreign policy objectives by means of hard power only.

Nevertheless, the world’s superpower lags behind when it comes to investment in diplomacy. During February 2013, US Secretary of State John Kerry said as much when he made a speech to the University of Virginia and lamented the fact that US spending on diplomacy comprised ‘just over one percent of our national budget’. It is worth quoting here from his address:

In fact, the real domestic constituency for what we do, if people can see the dots connected and understand what we’re doing in its full measure, is really large. It’s the 314 million Americans whose lives are better every day because of what we do, and who, deep down, when they have time to stop and think about it, know that our investment abroad actually makes them and our nation safer....And remember – boy, I can’t emphasize this enough; I’m looking at a soldier here in front of me with a ribbon on his chest – deploying diplomats today is much cheaper than deploying troops tomorrow. We need to remember that. As Senator Lindsey Graham said, “It’s national security insurance that we’re buying”.

Kerry's plea resonated with wider concerns about the US' lack of commitment to diplomacy as a *continuous* endeavour. As Israeli Ambassador Abba Eban (1998: 101) observed, the USA tends to interpret diplomatic relations as 'a reward for good conduct or a penalty for misdemeanour', and this fickle approach contravenes the spirit of diplomatic culture. The need for continuity was admitted in an unusually candid press release by the US White House on 17 December 2014. Announcing that diplomatic relations with Cuba would be resumed, the White House acknowledged the futility of a five-decade-long unilateralist policy:

It is clear that decades of U.S. isolation of Cuba have failed to accomplish our enduring objective of promoting the emergence of a democratic, prosperous, and stable Cuba. At times, longstanding U.S. policy towards Cuba has isolated the United States from regional and international partners, constrained our ability to influence outcomes throughout the Western Hemisphere, and impaired the use of the full range of tools available to the United States to promote positive change in Cuba. Though this policy has been rooted in the best of intentions, it has had little effect – today, as in 1961, Cuba is governed by the Castros and the Communist party. We cannot keep doing the same thing and expect a different result.... Today, we are renewing our leadership in the Americas. (US White House 2014)

## 2.6 *A Professional Code of Ethics*

The Vienna Conventions highlight the overwhelming *utilitarian* purpose of diplomacy, and the pragmatist instinct within diplomatic culture is widely accepted. As Cooper et al. (2008: 2) describe it:

the preference is for concentrating on what is doable – the choice of the possible over what is 'right'. Ends are shaped by a cautious sense of pragmatism, with acute recognition of the boundaries of action. Emotionalism, along with transparency, is subordinated to patience and discretion.

I would argue that this pragmatism is strengthened by a professional code of ethics within diplomatic culture. Having served as a diplomat myself, I know how fundamental professionalism and especially *trust* is in diplomatic liaison. Regardless of how odious their respective governments' foreign policy might be, individual diplomats gain respect for being true to their word, for being respectful and considerate and professional, and for showing collegiality within a diplomatic corps.

The long-term networking that diplomats nurture requires that confidences must be protected. This in itself builds diplomatic culture.

Effective diplomats understand that their adherence to an unwritten professional code of ethics is essential. When they do so, their actions are driven by reasons of state as much as by reasons of *system*—the nurturing of international society (Freeman 1995).

### 3 RELATIVISM IN DIPLOMATIC CULTURE

Like all other domains of international relations, diplomatic culture has experienced the effects of globalisation and interdependence. These effects according to Shaw (2008: 41) increase the ‘traditional tension between universalism and particularism’. Another way of expressing this dichotomy is to think of it as cosmopolitanism (one model applicable to all) versus communitarianism (parochial mutations of the model). The question, simply put, is whether there exists one single, generic ‘diplomatic culture’, or different versions of that culture?

#### 3.1 *Diversification of Diplomatic Culture*

Analysis of culture within international relations invariably conjures up notions of separateness or exclusiveness, with the culture of major powers, classes and religions often equated (fairly or unfairly) with hegemony. The politicisation of distinct cultures accounts for terms such as different ‘worlds’ and ‘parallel universes’ (Rothgeb 1995: 34). In November 2001, the UN General Assembly declared ‘that a common humanity unites all civilisations and allows for the celebration of the variegated splendour of the highest attainments of this civilisational diversity’. Despite this normative sentiment, the name of the particular resolution—*Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilisations* (A/56/6)—seemed to echo Samuel Huntington’s (1993) hypothesis of a ‘clash of civilisations’. The latter, controversially, contends that conflict in global politics is determined by fault lines between civilisations.

Diplomacy itself has been the subject of purported fault lines and even within the dominant European tradition of diplomacy there has been diversity. Dietrich Kappeler (2004: 358) says one only has to compare the institutional cultures of the British and French foreign services, to see considerable contrast; differences that were passed on to their colonial empires. The dozens of states that achieved independence from

France, Britain, Portugal and other powers have all perpetuated aspects of the diplomacy that sets each of the former colonisers apart.

This is particularly glaring in Africa, where colonial rule lasted longer than anywhere else in the world. The entrenched interests of former colonial powers manifest in their ongoing influence in the areas of the continent they used to rule; *inter alia* through a shared official language, military bases, large ex-patriate communities and economic investments. In the practice of diplomacy, the impact is evident in inherited bureaucratic style and the widespread practice that African diplomats (like their political elites) are trained in colonial ‘alma maters’. Rifts between the linguistic regions of the continent play out in the continent’s multilateral forums, the African Union specifically, and are testimony of a divisive template of colonial tutelage. During 2011, when Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma (from South Africa) campaigned successfully to become Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the continent was abuzz with the tension of an Anglophone candidate challenging a Francophone incumbent (Jean Ping, from Gabon) who had expected to serve another term.

The legacy of French colonial patronage is nowhere more evident than in voting behaviour within the United Nations, where France’s ex-colonies tend to toe the ‘Paris line’ on policy issues. In contrast, the British diplomatic legacy is less pronounced. It could be—as Huliaras and Magliveras (2016: 402) argue—because British colonial rule tended to be more indirect and therefore left more space for the development of a distinct African diplomacy.

But if there have been elements of continuity in historical diplomatic culture fault lines, the contemporary era is marked to a far greater extent by *plurality*. The massive expansion of international society in the course of the past century has made the practice of diplomacy less homogenous than ever and has rendered diplomatic culture itself, at a global level, less elitist.

Kappeler (2004: 358) makes the interesting observation that the practice of public diplomacy has contributed to the dilution of diplomacy’s exclusive image. In public diplomacy, the tone is more direct and even casual because it is aimed at a broad public rather than governing circles of a host country. Through their public diplomacy, diplomats therefore try to ‘blend in’, and they become involved in discourses on a host state’s domestic issues that were traditionally off-limits for foreign diplomats. Kappeler (p. 359) bemoans this trend, which he says threatens



the inherent virtues of ‘restraint, politeness, tolerance, patience, empathy and mutual confidence’ that are associated with diplomatic culture. Wiseman (2005: 414) is somewhat more positive about the trend. He cites the down-to-earth, functional approaches of diplomats from states such as Australia and Sweden and says they ‘view diplomatic culture not as a declining relic of European aristocratic networks, but as reinventing itself as a transnational, or at least international, professional epistemic community’. This is arguably the case in ‘middle power’ diplomacy more generally.

### 3.2 *The Impact of Political Culture*

*Political culture* is a major determinant of relativity in diplomatic culture. It is rooted in a state’s peculiar history, its system of government and bureaucratic traditions, the developmental level of the society and the confluence of sociocultural identities such as language, religion and ethnicity. Political culture infuses and is in turn impacted by, the international relations of a state: its regional geopolitical dynamics, membership of and profile within international organisations; and its relative power within the global diplomatic arena.

A marked influence on diplomacy is evident when the state in question has an authoritarian political system. Many states in the Developing World have veered towards authoritarian rule in the aftermath of independence, and some of them are still struggling to achieve democracy—or have had only intermittent experience thereof (Hamilton and Langhorne 1995: 211). In weak, poor or insecure states, this kind of governance is marked by a high-handed diplomacy that is ‘rigid, blustering, coarse, filled with invective and, above all, untrustworthy’ (Holsti 1988: 184). It is most pronounced when ‘closed’ states have expansionist<sup>6</sup> foreign policy behaviour (e.g. the former Soviet Union, and Iraq during the 1980s and 1990s) or when states are diplomatically isolated by the international community (Libya, North Korea, Iran, etc.). Their diplomatic style changes and becomes more conventional as their diplomatic objectives become more pragmatic—usually in the pursuit of economic growth.

In authoritarian states, the loyalty of citizens is demanded, even enforced, and neutrality is not an option. This impacts fundamentally on the behaviour of diplomats, who (by definition) are supposed to be politically neutral towards successive regimes. Moreover, diplomats that

represent authoritarian states tend to be recruited based on political affiliation, and they will therefore serve the regime in the knowledge that any perceived criticism could lead to their dismissal. This makes objective reporting and honest policy advice less likely (Ahmad 1999: 126; Eban 1998: 97).

Political culture is demonstrated very visibly when it comes to negotiation behaviour—something that fascinates analysts because it can cause frustration and conflict, and can sway the outcome of diplomatic negotiations. Raymond Cohen (1991, 1997) has done pioneering work in this regard, investigating the different negotiation ‘paradigms’ that present in diplomatic practice. He juxtaposed the Western and non-Western traditions (broadly speaking, the Developed World or Global North as opposed to the Developing World or Global South). In the Anglo-Saxon tradition of the Western World, the communication approach is predominantly explicit and ‘low context’ or individualist, and the equality of individuals is a norm. This style places emphasis on rational behaviour and isolates people from the problem, therefore the objectives are defined in material rather than psychological terms. Legality is more important than emotions, therefore the material outcome of a diplomatic process—the physical *document* that is produced—is more important than how people *feel* about it. Perceptions of time are ‘monochronic’ and thus have a linear, progressive implication: setting and sticking to deadlines are important, as is punctuality. Emphasis is on the future rather than on the past. In communication, accuracy (the ‘truth ethic’) is the highest virtue, substance is therefore much more important than form.

Cohen has explained succinctly what the antithesis is of the Western paradigm, and his ideas are in line with those of other authors on the subject, such as Puchala (1998), Reychler (1996), Rothgeb (1995), Korany (1986), Chong (2016) and Mahbubani (2013). He describes the implicit, high-context (interdependent) style of communication of non-Western societies, where a *collectivist* ethos is prioritised. This means that individual freedoms are curtailed by the wider societal imperatives. The approach to time is ‘polychronic’, which means that the long-term relationship between negotiating parties, rather than any immediate issue, is prioritised. Diplomatic strategies therefore seek to ‘save face’, build trust and are heavily guided by symbolism and status. Importantly, all relationships are framed by deference to the past rather than the future. The impact of the non-Western approach can be seen

in organisations such as the Non-Aligned Movement, African Union, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, all of which show a high degree of organisational flexibility, informal agreements and the use of time-consuming decision-making processes to ensure consensus rather than a clinical (and, from a non-Western perspective, divisive) majority. For non-Western political cultures, *form* in diplomacy can be as important as substance, if not more so.

### 3.3 *Regional Diplomatic Subcultures*

Geographical regions tend to have their own distinct diplomatic subcultures. Much has been published on the European tradition and the formidable diplomatic culture spawned by the European Union, and I will therefore just briefly mention some other regional trends.

South (and the wider Latin) America offers an interesting case of diplomatic subculture, given the fact that the region has not experienced a major international war since the late nineteenth century. As Andrew Hurrell (2004) explains, the region was plagued with intrastate as well as interstate wars for the first 50 years after decolonisation, a situation that seemed to portend long-term post-colonial instability. Yet, ‘despite the existence of large numbers of protracted and militarised border disputes, many cases of the threatened use of force and of military intervention by outside powers, high levels of domestic violence and political instability, and long periods of authoritarian rule’ the incidence and severity of interstate wars in the region have remained remarkably low. The explanation for this, according to Hurrell, lies in the nature of South America’s regional international society and its attendant diplomatic culture, which is very strong. In particular, the interplay between law and diplomacy is profound and this lends more legitimacy to the common institutions of the region. Shaw (2008: 2) points out that Latin America has a unique regional approach to international law, in the sense that the states of the region have agreed on a set of rules that apply only to them. One example is the granting of diplomatic asylum, practised in Latin America to a greater extent than anywhere else in the world.

Traditional international society values such as sovereign equality, non-intervention and implementation of *uti possidetis juris* (to stabilise borders) are sacrosanct in Latin America. However, despite the general trend within international society to outlaw the use of force, Latin America has developed a very particular approach to interstate armed

force to deal with its remaining border conflicts. Hurrell (2004) says military coercion is common but it is used in a very limited capacity, not to seize territory or to win a dispute definitively, but rather, as in the 1990s border spat between Ecuador and Peru, ‘as an instrument to force an issue on to the diplomatic agenda’. With both sides committed to a strong diplomatic culture, military posturing is done to ‘gain concessions at the diplomatic negotiations that, as both sides knew, would inevitably follow – typically after diplomatic intervention by the US and/or regional powers’.

Southeast-Asia is another region that has developed a distinct diplomatic way of dealing with conflict. The security situation in the region is tenuous: Thailand–Cambodia border issues and Myanmar (Burma) ethnic tensions that spill over into Bangladesh are just two symptoms among many in a very unstable geopolitical area. US-China rivalry in the region increases the potential for interstate conflict, and China in particular has demonstratively built up its maritime power in response to disputed areas of the South China Sea. To complicate matters, the region’s main multilateral umbrella, ASEAN, until recently embraced the full spectrum of sociopolitical systems in its ten<sup>7</sup> member states. It ranged from absolute monarchy, totalitarian communist regime and military dictatorship, to varying degrees of democracy. Small wonder then that ASEAN, since its formation in 1967, has used a conciliating form of decision-making to ensure harmony within its ranks. This is why ASEAN’s 2007 Charter provides for all its decision-making to be done on the basis of ‘consultation and consensus’, something that distinguishes the organisation from most other IGOs.

In what has become a well-known regional diplomatic approach, the ‘ASEAN way’, as it is referred to, provides for international norms such as human rights to be implemented with consideration of ‘specific cultural, social, economic and political circumstances’ in the region (ASEAN 1993: par 16). In all its interactions, ASEAN emphasises concepts such as ‘moderation’, ‘flexibility’ and ‘middle path’. In this context, Indonesia’s policy of ‘dynamic equilibrium’ is as assertive as member states express themselves. The pragmatism of ASEAN has allowed the region to prioritise developmental imperatives and supranational gains, despite a precarious lack of political unity.

The continent of Africa has spawned its own particular ‘brand’ of diplomacy when one considers the relative youth of its sovereign states. The legacy of colonialism, combined with the damage caused by

Cold War proxy wars, has infused the continent's diplomacy with an acute collective memory of subjugation and marginalisation. A historical context is therefore essential to understand Africa's contemporary diplomacy. Recurring themes include a preoccupation with pan-African unity and integration, as well an abhorrence of international prescription and interference. The new states learnt very early on that their diplomatic success lies in collective action, and Africa therefore tends to place a high premium on multilateral diplomacy.

Something that has bemused critics is the almost blind solidarity among incumbent leaders. It is evident in African voting behaviour in multilateral forums, where diplomats tend to vote in sympathy with each other's regimes, rather than according to independent policy. A recent example is the African Union resolution adopted on 1 February 2017 that encourages the continent to withdraw<sup>8</sup> collectively from the International Criminal Court, in protest against the Court's indictment of incumbent leaders of the Sudan and Kenya. The resolution enjoyed majority support despite the fact that most African states are members of the Court—more so than from any other region of the world.

Many states in Africa are led by former liberation movements, and such parties are inclined to emphasise *ideological* rather than pragmatic elements in their foreign policy. It follows that foreign services of these states tend to be heavily populated with political appointees, and comradeship among them transcends political borders. Interstate relations are conducted at an inter-party level and the 'party-diplomacy' is often stronger than the bureaucratic ties among the governments of the same states. In Southern Africa, for example, the Forum for Former Liberation Movement (FLM) (now including other social democratic parties) plays a key role in setting the regional diplomatic agenda.

It would be foolish, however, to think of African diplomatic culture simply as a post-colonial phenomenon. The continent is the birthplace of humanity *and* of diplomacy, as I discussed in Chapter 3. Over the millennia, a core of traditional African values has endured in the diplomatic culture of the continent, foremost among these the emphasis on communities rather than on individuals. African philosophy expressed by the Swahili concept of *Harambee* ('pulling together') and the Nguni concept of *Ubuntu* ('humanity') both emphasise societal cohesion, inclusivity and selflessness, and the community focus is complemented by a predilection for consensus-building in decision-making processes. Even though the concept of Ubuntu is not unique to South Africa (the Nguni family of

languages straddles southern Africa), the country has chosen to call its own diplomacy after the principle. Hence the title of South Africa's 2011 foreign policy 'White Paper' ('Building a better world: the diplomacy of Ubuntu') and the name chosen for the South Africa's full-time public diplomacy radio service.

Another African value is veneration of cultural tradition and hierarchy, in particular the wisdom of elders. This is evident in the African Union's institutionalisation of a *Panel of the Wise* as part of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). As Jo-Ansie Van Wyk (2016: 58) explains, the *Panel of the Wise* differs from similar institutions in the UN and EU in the sense that it incorporates operational as well as *normative* elements of traditional African governance. It thereby solidifies its own *sui generis* diplomatic role. In a speech to the *Panel of the Wise* at a 2014 meeting, AU Commissioner Smail Chergui (2014) explained that the AU had created the structure:

at the heart of the organisation ... inspired by the centuries' old practice of African elders' centrality in dispute and conflict resolution in our communities. Indeed, in creating a Panel of the Wise, the AU has in many ways recognised the importance of customary, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and roles and the continuing relevance of these mechanisms in contemporary Africa.

To be sure, respect for the elderly (like any other value) can be manipulated by wily, intransigent leaders. During September 2016, when Botswana's (relatively young) President Ian Khama called on Zimbabwe's ageing (then 92 year old) President Robert Mugabe to step down, Zimbabwe's information minister, Chris Mushowe, immediately took him to task. Khama was excoriated for expressing sentiments that are 'taboo in African etiquette and diplomatic parlance'.

### 3.4 *Developmental Deficit and Diplomatic Culture*

The substance as well as style of the 'diplomacy of development' is heavily influenced by a perception of *asymmetry* in the global diplomatic arena, and the idea that the 'haves' of the Global North are exploiting the 'have nots' of the Global South. Donald Puchala (1998: 151) says '*struggle* is the [Developing World's] mode of International Relations; it is omnipresent, dynamic, incessant and permanent'.

A major manifestation of diplomacy in ‘struggle mode’ is the heavy use of political rhetoric: utterances that are verbose, strident and brimming with condemnation of real or perceived past injustices. Diplomatic statements are designed to reach a global audience, not just an ad hoc diplomatic interlocutor. Invoking Satow’s famous definition of diplomacy, Bull (1977: 168) noted that this kind of diplomacy is not devoid of intelligence and tact, but is less interested in conciliation of divergent interests than in amplifying a specific agenda. The ‘flashy approach and high profile postures’ can be part of what John Rothgeb (1995: 39–44) describes as ‘anti-core’ policies: the rhetoric is intentionally defiant of the foreign policy relationship that is perceived to be dominated by another party.

The overuse of bombastic rhetoric can lead to embarrassment, as caused by newly elected Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte in August 2016. The United Nations had warned that he was promoting extrajudicial killings through his violent campaign against drugs, and Duterte reacted furiously to the criticism. He threatened to leave the UN and to establish a new multilateral organisation, ostensibly in cooperation with African states and China. His country’s foreign ministry quickly atoned for his belligerence and confirmed that the Philippines had no intention of leaving the organisation (Reuters, 22 August 2016).

But developing states are not the only ones to use diplomatic ‘mirages’. They can be at the receiving end of diplomatic rhetoric in multilateral diplomatic meetings when their concerns are glossed over. As Kaufmann (1988: 61–62) warned in the late 1980s—before the second generation of development diplomacy gained momentum—the wording of IGO resolutions concerning development was often sufficiently vague or generic to provide a ‘built-in escape clause’ for the rich countries, especially when there were financial implications (e.g. in the commitment of aid as a percentage of GDP). Resolutions of the General Assembly, he noted, tended to ‘have not much more than moral value, or, more precisely, have such value as each member state is willing to accord them’.

Developing countries’ pursuit of a collective ‘cause’ tends to add an element of political advocacy to their diplomacy and involves tactics that are aimed at wearing down diplomatic opponents. ‘Advocacy diplomacy’ challenges the traditional behavioural norms of diplomatic culture (the low-key, courteous interaction that takes place out of public sight). It is expressed in a sustained and confrontational campaign to confront hegemony in the global arena—chastising the rich industrialised world

for its ongoing excesses, emphasising its moral debt to the Developing World, and championing the rights<sup>9</sup> of the world's poor. Some states in the Developing World do so in their individual capacity, and Brazil is a foremost example. Eduardo Brigidi de Mello (2014: 251) describes the country's diplomacy as 'globalist protagonism', implying that Brazil seeks global social justice and equality not just for itself, but for the Global South as a collective.

At a multilateral level, the various blocs of developing countries, banding together in forums such as the General Assembly, have used the rules of parliamentary diplomacy—their 'chosen means of struggle', as Sasson Sofer (1988: 201) has labelled it—to build a web of international legislation on matters of development. In that sense, advocacy diplomacy resembles the 'class action' lawsuits that occur within municipal law, where lawyers try to prove the rationale or fairness of a group of clients' plea for redress. According to Paul Sharp (2009: 25), there is good reason why such efforts continue unabated, even if the world's structure appears to withstand the pressure: [developing countries] 'keep trying because the problems that bother them do not go away, but also because previous efforts have not been without results'.

The stubbornness of diplomacy coming from the Developing World can catch the more developed countries by surprise: witness the dramatic collapse of multilateral negotiations within the WTO during 1999 in Seattle and again during 2003 in Cancun. The obstinacy can be attributed to the fact that diplomatic stakes are proportionately higher for weaker countries. They have fewer foreign policy instruments to choose from, certainly not the hard power options, and they rely therefore almost exclusively on *diplomacy* to change their material position in the world. Puchala (1998: 153) makes the interesting point that the struggle-like approach to diplomacy might be an advantage in the emergent IR environment, because it makes the practitioners thereof more resilient, determined and increasingly morally self-assured.

Indeed, it would be a mistake to brush off the diplomacy of Developing World leaders as generally immature. Much of it is done with sophisticated strategy, some of it discreetly so. K.K. Katyal, writing in *The Hindu* during November 2003, noted that the establishment of the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) forum was a result of sober 'quiet diplomacy', in contrast to the verbose diplomacy associated with many other Developing World initiatives. To be sure, many leaders of developing countries are astute diplomats. Thabo Mbeki, then President



of South Africa, attended every single G8 summit from 2000 to 2008. Shaw et al. (2009: 37) observe that his tenacious lobbying resulted in Mbeki attending more of the meetings than did George W. Bush, leader of the most powerful G8 member. Mbeki, like his peers at the time (including President Lula da Silva from Brazil, and Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad) demonstrated the diplomacy that is typical of second-generation nationalist leaders from the Global South. As Adam Habib (2009: 145–147) explains, these leaders balance principles and pragmatism in their diplomacy. They are calculated, sophisticated and very proactive in their aspiration to change the structure of power relations in the global arena, but they also know that they need to play by the rules of the game until such time as they are in a position to change them.

#### 4 (ANTI)DIPLOMACY—THE RADICAL APPROACH

In extreme cases, diplomatic actors can blatantly contravene diplomatic culture. True to his world view as an international society proponent, Hedley Bull (1977: 164), questioned whether diplomacy had any chance of survival in states where ‘foreign policy is conceived as the enforcement of a claim to universal authority, the promotion of the true faith against heretics, or as the pursuit of self-regarding interests that take no account of the interests of others’. The section that follows will look at anti-diplomatic impulses in the global diplomatic arena, because despite the apparent contradiction in terms, radical diplomacy has played a role in shaping as well as *strengthening* diplomatic culture.

##### 4.1 *Revolutionary Diplomacy*

Some of the most extraordinary utterances in diplomatic history have come from states such as Cuba under Castro, Iran under Khomeiny, Indonesia under Sukarno, Guinea under Touré and Libya under Ghaddafi. This is because the states in question were (some still are) styled as ‘revolutionary’: rejecting the existing world order and the norms of international society, and professing to work towards the construction of an entirely new order.

Such an ambitious objective in foreign policy requires that all available state resources—diplomatic infrastructure included—are dedicated to the mission. Diplomacy is seen as a means to an end, and that end is ideological in nature. The end might even ‘legitimate the systematic abuse of

the institution', as Armstrong (1999: 47–52) says. In practice, this has manifested in revolutionary states breaching diplomatic law with much greater frequency. They might also attempt to set aside diplomatic conventions, such as Libya's announcement in 1979 that its embassies would be called 'people's bureaux' and that individual ambassadors would be replaced with 'revolutionary committees'.

The diplomats of revolutionary states (are trained to) conceive of the world in transnational rather than interstate terms. This informs their claim to represent social classes (or religion) rather than merely states—an unavoidable conflict with the conventional conception of diplomats as representatives of sovereign states (Armstrong 1999: 44–46; Holsti 1988: 183–186). José Calvet de Magalhães (1988: 82) quotes a textbook on international law from the former Soviet Union that stated: 'In the Soviet Union ... diplomacy for the first time in the history of mankind wholly serves the interests of the working people, not only of the USSR, but also of all other countries'.

The situation is similar in the case of totalitarian theocracies. Islamic regimes, for example, invoke divine authority and martyrdom to sanction their international actions. When those states style themselves as 'revolutionary', as in the case of Iran, their diplomats display an almost missionary zeal to spread the revolutionary cause. Diplomatic techniques include the use of propaganda, frequent reservations in the wording of treaties and conference outcomes, simulated irrationality, delaying mechanisms, threats of imminent departure from negotiations and constant referencing of the Palestinian plight in speeches at multilateral gatherings.

Revolutionary diplomacy combined with public diplomacy has had a compounded corrosive effect on diplomatic culture. Barston (2006: 72) explains that Islamic states such as Iran have used 'government-to-people diplomacy' to prioritise direct links with Islamic groups in other (both Islamic and non-Islamic) states. The involvement is not necessarily 'diplomatic'—Sharp (2009: 31) mentions the involvement of Iranian consulates in distributing money and weapons to allies in Afghanistan, the Lebanon and Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union.

The problem is that, rather than embracing diplomatic culture, 'revolutionary diplomats' are taught to use diplomacy to engage with, and ultimately deceive, their peers from non-revolutionary states. They are therefore not driven by the international society impulse of seeking long-term harmonious coexistence in the global arena, but rather see their role as *subversion* of that same arena.

#### 4.2 *Diplomatic Pathology*<sup>10</sup>: *Killing the Messenger*

In the most extreme cases of anti-diplomacy, diplomatic law is deliberately, even triumphantly, scorned. The institution of diplomacy is directly targeted by means of terrorism, violent disruption of international diplomatic gatherings, hostage taking of diplomats, destruction of state symbols and the use of diplomatic channels for criminal activities. Examples are the frequent incidents of North Korean diplomats smuggling contraband; also the state-sanctioned offences committed against foreign diplomats in China during the Cultural Revolution of 1966/67 and in Iran immediately after the eviction of the Shah in 1979. Such acts are designed to attract maximum public attention and are illegal under international law.

Of course, diplomacy has historically been marked by an element of danger. The symbolically representative status of diplomats makes them particularly vulnerable to politically motivated attack, hence the detailed provision under diplomatic law for their protection. International society's staunch embrace of diplomacy has meant that the deliberate harming of diplomats has always had severe consequences. Former UK Ambassador Charles Crawford (2010) explains how the Thirty Years War in Europe was sparked by an incident that happened in 1618, when a group of enraged Protestants threw two representatives of the Holy Roman Emperor from a high window in Prague. If it is not the representation itself that puts diplomats in danger,<sup>11</sup> it is the proximity to political executives who happen to be the main targets. During 1981, Cuba's Ambassador to Egypt was among a group of VIP spectators at a military parade when Islamist soldiers assassinated Egypt's President Anwar el-Sadat. In the violence of the moment, the Cuban Ambassador was inadvertently also killed.

The USA, in its capacity of superpower, has had an inordinate share of attacks on its diplomats in the past half-century. The most high-profile, protracted and state-orchestrated attack on the USA was the 1979–1981 Iran hostage crisis, when the Embassy was forcefully invaded and 52 US Embassy staff members were held hostage for more than a year. In unrelated incidents, US Ambassadors were intentionally murdered, some of them kidnapped prior to being executed. This happened in Guatemala (1968), Lebanon (1976), Sudan (1973), and Afghanistan (1979), and more recently in 2012 when Christopher Stevens, the US Ambassador to Libya, died in an attack on the US Consulate in Benghazi.

The danger is not limited to the ‘obvious’ international hot spots. Former US Ambassador Anthony Quainton (2000) recounts that during his own tour of duty in Peru ‘the Embassy was twice rocketed and our home bombed with loss of three lives and over \$300,000 in damage’. The USA has been forced to fortress its embassies as a result of bombings such as those in Beirut and Kuwait during the 1980s and the deadly attacks in 1998 on embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. As Quainton (2000) says ‘A visitor to the State Department or any of our Embassies today will enter a world of barriers, barbed wire, metal detectors and cameras, where security is tighter than at most military installations’.

The USA has branded state sponsors of terror as ‘rogue states’, which Brigid Starkey (2000: 1) explains are ‘hostile Third World states with large military forces and nascent weapons of mass destruction capabilities ... bent on sabotaging the prevailing world order’. States such as Cuba, Sudan, North Korea, Iran, Iraq (pre-2003) and Libya have at times been grouped in this category. From their side, predictably, the ‘rogue’ states counter that their opposition to the USA is a reaction to the hegemonic, unilateral and illegal US actions in the global arena—a reality they claim leaves them no choice but to act outside of conventional diplomatic methods (Puchala 1998: 135; Riordan 2003: 37).

### 4.3 *Diplomacy, Nevertheless ...*

Sharp (2009: 19–20) argues that it is an oversimplification to assume that the radical tradition necessarily has an antagonistic relationship with the institution of diplomacy, even though diplomats are generally seen as ‘enemies of revolution’ because they uphold the prevailing system. According to Sharp, radicals<sup>12</sup> approach diplomacy more as a *symptom* than a cause of systemic malaise. He (2009: 24) also points out that there are different kinds of revolutions: not all are intended to overthrow the international system; some have a purely domestic goal. The Palestinians, for example, want to be represented as a normal country within international society, but reject their abnormal domestic system. The revolution they seek is therefore *to be mainstreamed* rather than a rejection of global order. This differs from the internationalist agenda of the Bolsheviks or the so-called Islamic State (a.k.a ISIS/ISIL/Daesh).

History has shown that even the most revolutionary of states eventually accepted diplomatic culture and embraced the ceremonial, formal<sup>13</sup>

and traditional roles of diplomacy (Sofer 1988: 201). In many countries that went through revolution (China, Indonesia and Iran are examples) the immediate post-revolution phase was marked by total rejection of Western norms in diplomatic practice. Nevertheless, all of these states continued to engage other states diplomatically and eventually ‘normalised’ their diplomatic practice. They realised very soon that the institution is a practical imperative, because a ‘system of states implies or dictates a very narrow range of ways of relating to one another’ (Sharp 2009: 23).

## 5 FOREIGN SERVICE ‘CULTURE’

Within the wider realm of diplomatic culture, and notwithstanding the relativism brought on by national, regional, religious, linguistic and other influences, there is yet another dimension of diplomatic culture to consider, and this is the culture of foreign service. Foreign service breeds a certain kind of professional, a patriotic nomad who often has more in common with other ‘global citizens’ than with his/her fellow patriots.

### 5.1 *Culture Shock: The Foreign and the Own*

Most foreign ministries provide some form of preparation for diplomats who are posted abroad—language training, briefings, even full-scale training courses, to prepare them for the environment they are about to enter. The hope is that the individual diplomat will ‘hit the ground running’. There is much to acclimatise to; from different political systems, history, geography, cultural, ethnic, religious and other sensitivities, to quaint traditions and customs. The most ordinary aspects of life can become daunting: driving on the ‘wrong’ side of the road, shopping for goods that might not exist, communicating all the time in a foreign language. Countless books have been written on the subject of culture shock, and diplomats share this challenge with the increasing numbers of expatriates working in foreign locations around the world.

The difference is that diplomats expect to be sustained and anchored, ‘facilitated’ one might say, by their sending state’s foreign ministry. It comes as a shock therefore when they realise that their own head office is part of their ‘alienation’. Sir Percy Cradock, who was the British *chargé d’affaires* in Peking, China during the late 1960s, said he was led to formulate ‘*Cradock’s First Law of Diplomacy*: It is not the other side you need to worry about, but your own’. This was his conclusion after futile

attempts to explain the difficulties of British nationals in China during the violent Cultural Revolution. He was, *inter alia*, present when the chancery<sup>14</sup> was attacked and set on fire during August 1967 (Hoare 1999: 85). Colleagues ‘back home’ can seem indifferent, or try to impose bureaucratic rules that just do not fit into the circumstances of the host state. An instruction to obtain three different quotations for the purchase of office furniture might seem perfectly reasonable to administrative officers in Pretoria, while the serving diplomat in Nouakchott, Mauritania, might face the possibility of there being only one single provider in that entire country.

Diplomats are also not prepared for ‘reverse’ culture shock, when they return home after a lengthy period abroad. They might have grown accustomed to an entirely different culture, climate or language, and the mundane reality of civil service in a home country can hardly compare with the privileges of diplomatic life. Returning heads of mission tend to have the most difficulty to adapt to head office. They go from ‘the top’ (chauffeur-driven, catered for by a personal chef at home, received on red carpets, ‘wined and dined’ by the political elite of the host state) to a middle-ranking position in a foreign ministry where there are layers and layers of ‘bosses’.

A similar challenge awaits diplomats who served in very small or remote, ‘hardship’ missions. Whereas conventional postings have a predictable routine, diplomats in micro-missions have to multitask and be ready for any eventuality. They bear all the responsibility but also all the glory of the post, and it is therefore simultaneously more demanding and more satisfying. One of the great pleasures of such a posting is the high level of autonomy. Head Office colleagues are unable to micromanage or do the kind of hands-on monitoring that is possible when a mission is more established. Unconventional postings suit the more adventurous and eccentric diplomat, but he/she can also become ‘addicted’ to the independence. Needless to say, returning to a bureaucratic, hierarchical head office is a major culture shock for these diplomats.

## 5.2 *The Extended Diplomat: Partners and Families*

Family members of engineers, teachers, doctors—most professions—do not consider themselves part of that particular profession, just by association. This is different in diplomacy, and most diplomats serve in their postings abroad accompanied by family members. Spouses

(or life partners) and children are part of a representational ‘package’, hence their entitlement to diplomatic passports and diplomatic immunities. Their conduct and utterances while abroad reflect on the image of a sending state as much as those of the official whom they accompany, and many foreign ministries therefore provide training to diplomatic spouses in preparation for a sojourn abroad.

Ordinarily it is required that spouses of diplomats also be (or become) citizens of the same country. In fact, some countries do not allow their diplomats to marry non-citizens, or special permission at a political level is required. Komachi (1999: 116) notes that in the case of Japan, as part of modernisation at the cusp of the twenty-first century, the foreign ministry abolished the nationality clause which forced foreign spouses of Japanese diplomats to take Japanese nationality.

A problem that has grown rapidly in recent times is that diplomats are unwilling to accept postings where their spouses/partners will be relegated to subordinate positions. In the case of dual-career families, postings can mean interruption, even termination, of spouses’ personal careers, with long-term financial and psychological implications for the family involved. Various countries have therefore introduced measures to compensate spouses for sacrificing careers, including the conclusion of bilateral agreements with host countries to allow diplomatic spouses to seek employment in the local economy. Other measures include special financial allowances, unpaid leave from institutions that they had worked for and educational sabbaticals. Some foreign ministries—Israel’s for example—try to absorb spouses in their staff component of ‘locally recruited personnel’. However, in many cases spouses are not accommodated at all, and the resulting frustration can force diplomats into very difficult career choices.

Dependent children present a different set of challenges: when they accompany diplomats abroad, a major concern is their schooling, health care and social bonding. Children sometimes adapt more easily than their parents who are more set in their ways, but this can make it more traumatic for them to be uprooted when the serving diplomat is posted back home or to another mission. Also, diplomats’ children tend to be ‘third culture’ children, meaning that they feel like a breed apart: they cannot fully identify with any of the series of countries where they spend just a few years of their formative years. While some children thrive on the cosmopolitan lifestyle, many struggle to deal with the sense that they are ‘aliens’ everywhere they go—even when they go home.

### 5.3 *Political Versus Career Diplomats*

Sofer (1988: 206) says diplomacy is a unique profession: experience and skills are essential for success, yet the highest achievement for any diplomat—that of becoming an ambassador—can be obtained by somebody who has not spent a single day in the public service. The prospect of being called ‘Your Excellency’ and hobnobbing with foreign leaders and elites entices ambitious, socially mobile individuals—and politicians fit that description exactly.

The practice of placing political appointees in ambassadorial posts is widespread and certainly not limited to countries with a ‘democratic deficit’—in the foreign services of South Africa, the USA, Singapore and many Latin American states, political appointees make up anything between a quarter and two-thirds of ambassadors. In Europe, this practice is diminishing, and states such as Belgium, Denmark and Austria allow only career diplomats to be promoted to ambassadorial positions. In South America, Brazil has done the same. The reasoning is that the position requires *public service* and should be filled only by individuals who have the requisite training and experience. Above all, they should be beholden to no interest group other than the *public* of their own state.

But the use of political appointees is not necessarily a function of nepotism or disregard for professional human resources. Despite his sardonic comment quoted earlier, Sofer (1988: 206) himself pointed out that the necessity for expertise in an extensive range of spheres—economics, science, politics and military—has made the participation of ‘non-professionals’ in the diplomatic process ‘somewhat inevitable’. This is particularly true in the case of poor states, where a small pool of available qualified human resources makes recruitment from political circles almost inevitable. Jorge Pérez Otermi (1992: 20) then Director of the Artigas Institute of Foreign Service of Uruguay said in 1992 that a politically ‘sterile’ diplomatic corps:

... would prevent a president from appointing personnel of his absolute confidence to certain embassies that he considers of key importance during his period of government ... [This] is a utopian hypothesis that could even conspire against achieving the professionalisation of the foreign service.

In the case of Japan, the foreign ministry commissioned an investigation into the post-Cold War shortcomings of the Japanese foreign service.



One of the recommendations of the 1991 *Seshima Report* was that ‘in appointing ambassadors, efforts should be made to recruit the best available human resources, including those from other ministries, as well as from the private sector’ (Komachi 1999: 109). There are many individuals, outside of MFAs, who make excellent ambassadors, on account of their personal expertise, reputation, international experience and networks. Also, certain bilateral relationships are so politically charged that they require a very close working relationship between a serving ambassador and the incumbent heads of state of the sending and receiving states.

Many foreign ministries use a pragmatic approach to the incidence of political appointees—they strengthen them in technical matters by providing them with efficient MFA support teams. But whatever the reason for their appointment, political appointments tend to irk professional diplomats, who have to rise through the ranks in a very competitive, hierarchical institution, before they reach the required seniority to become heads of mission. It is difficult for them to see their own career progression limited for reasons of political expediency, and such prospects can stifle motivation among junior diplomats. Rozental and Buenrostro (2013: 238) say the ‘best solution for a professional foreign service is to ensure that its diplomats are politically sensitive and sufficiently specialised so as not to need political appointees’. If political appointees are nevertheless brought in purely for reasons of political patronage, it is demoralising especially for senior, experienced and respected diplomats.

#### 5.4 *Fitting in Too Well*

The necessity for diplomats to acclimatise easily in the most alien of environments and to communicate effectively with a host state’s citizens has the unintended (but rather natural) consequence that they might internalise the foreign environment *too much*. This condition is referred to by a range of pejorative terms. ‘Localitis’ is one, and another is ‘going native’. The latter, as Sharp (2009: 24) explains, is an old European term, referring to colonial officers adopting the customs of the local peoples whom they administered. It has always been a concern in foreign services, because diplomats who associate too closely with a host state’s culture and world view start to be unduly sympathetic to the interests of that state.

The concern, in some cases, is that diplomats become part of a cosmopolitan, elitist group. Hamilton and Langhorne (1995: 181) recount Hitler's speech to a group of newspaper editors during November 1938, as Germany was preparing for war. He complained that diplomats '... do not represent their countries, but an international Society clique'. Hitler's subsequent actions certainly waged war on international society, from which he effectively ejected Germany for a number of years.

Hamilton and Langhorne (1995: 215) also describe how during the Cultural Revolution, China's rulers recalled over forty of the country's ambassadors and denounced them for having 'succumbed to Western decadence'. Half a century later, the Chinese are still concerned about Western influence on diplomats. When veteran Chinese Ambassador Wu Jianmin died unexpectedly in a car accident during June 2016, it sparked a rare debate within the otherwise closed Chinese foreign policy circles. Wu, who had headed China's Foreign Affairs University in Beijing (which was, until 2016, responsible for the training of Chinese diplomats), was an outspoken foreign policy 'dove'. He had warned against parochial nationalism in Chinese international relations and urged caution and humility in diplomatic ventures. Not surprisingly, his critics accused him of being 'too nice to Americans' (Ni 2016). US diplomats have also been criticised by their own politicians for 'liberal-minded, appeasement-prone biases and of unhealthy fraternisation with foreign elites' (Wiseman 2005: 415).

In extreme cases, diplomats can gain the confidence of a host government so effectively that they are drawn into that government's policy-making processes. Sharp (2009: 67) explains that in some instances this is 'because their respective countries enjoy a quasi-imperial relationship in which the ambassador takes on some of the characteristics of a pro-consul'. He gives the examples of the US Ambassador in Iraq after the 2003 invasion, and Soviet Ambassadors in East Bloc countries, during the Cold War. To these examples I can add the imposing presence of French Ambassadors in francophone Africa. They seem to know more about the policy processes of their host states than just about anybody—including senior officials of the host state.

While the French government might be encouraging its ambassadors to be intrusive, many other governments have less trust in their own diplomats. Sharp (2009: 22) says the diplomats of revolutionary states have the biggest problem in this regard. In order to fulfil their mandate, they need to fit into environments that are pluralistic and

materialistic—anathema to the world view of their own societies—and this leaves them in a professional *Catch-22*.

To counter ‘localitis’, foreign ministries use different strategies. The most common is to rotate their diplomats frequently: the average diplomatic sojourn in a host state is just three to four years. Another strategy is to make use of ad hoc negotiation teams. Knowing that the long absence from home can dull diplomats to the realities of their own states, MFAs sometimes choose to conduct negotiations on major (or complex) deals by sending the negotiation team directly from head office. The team then returns directly after the negotiations, leaving their colleagues who are resident in the host state, to deal only with preparatory and follow-up work (Kappeler 2004: 456).

Another way to deal with localitis is to connect diplomats with their own people. Despite the worldwide democratisation of the diplomatic profession, it is a fact that diplomats still tend to come from elite sectors of their own societies, and this can leave them out of touch with their own culture and domestic challenges. Israel has addressed this problem by requiring of diplomatic trainees to spend time on a kibbutz in order to develop an understanding of grass-roots issues in their own country. Former Israeli Ambassador Gideon Rafael recalled a conversation on this matter that he had with Prime Minister Nehru of India, in 1961. Nehru asked him how Israel with a population two hundred times smaller than India’s managed to find so many suitable candidates for ambassadorial positions. The Israeli replied:

quite a few of Israel’s Ambassadors had graduated from Kibbutzim rather than from Diplomatic Academies ... the man behind the plough was familiar with the ways of modern rural economy, understood to get along with his Arab neighbours and to negotiate loans with hard-headed bankers and thick-skinned bureaucrats and was at least as good Ambassadorial material timber as the diplomat reared in the precincts of academic exclusivity. (Rafael 1997)

The foreign ministry of Thailand also counters the ‘disconnection’ problem by sending diplomatic trainees to rural areas. They spend two weeks immersed in local culture, and this helps them to understand the people and interests they have to represent (Phetcharatana 2017).

It is important for diplomats to ‘take their home with them’ to the host state, to display and use items that show pride in their own heritage.

In March 2005, Ghana's designated Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Akwasi Osei Agyei assured the Parliamentary Appointment Committee that it had become official policy for Ghanaian ambassadors to furnish their homes and chanceries with furniture and artwork from Ghana (Modern Ghana 2005). Certain other states have similar policies in place, but it is (unfortunately) not universal practice. Many chanceries and diplomatic residences look smart, but culturally 'generic' (like international hotels)—thus an opportunity for visible 'representation' is lost.

## 6 THE MAKING OF DIPLOMATS: TRAINING

A prominent element in the professionalisation of diplomacy has been the worldwide widening and deepening of career-specific training. The fact that diplomacy is practised within a global culture means that training objectives are determined by universal norms and standards. The growing emphasis on training also reflects appreciation of the increasing—and increasingly complicated—roles that contemporary diplomats need to fulfil.

### 6.1 *Can Diplomacy Be Trained?*

For most of history, diplomacy was considered to be an *art* rather than a *science*, and many commentators still believe that it 'cannot be distilled in the abstract and taught, like biology' (Hemery 2002: 141). Certainly, 'diplomatic' attributes (like tact, patience, discretion and good judgment) and skills in areas such as communication, negotiation and representation were historically not *taught* but *sought*: suitable candidates were assumed to possess these skills by virtue of personal aptitude and social status.

While there is disagreement over the number of personal qualities that can be acquired by means of diplomatic training, it is now generally accepted that most can be nurtured or enhanced through skills training. The latter has become a necessity because contemporary diplomats require competencies that were not traditionally emphasised. Competencies that have become part of their de facto roles include *inter alia* the use of ICT, budget management, social media interaction and practical techniques in public, economic and multilateral diplomacy.

Over the past half-a-century, most MFAs have institutionalised an internal training division, and many of these have developed into

prestigious ‘diplomatic academies’. The UK, which traditionally paid scant attention to formal diplomatic training (it recruited excellent candidates from prestigious academic institutions, provided them with a short induction course and thereafter gave them ‘on the job’ training) joined this trend during February 2015, when the Foreign and Commonwealth Office established a fully fledged Diplomatic Academy. Likewise, China inaugurated the ‘China Diplomatic Academy’ in Beijing on 1 March 2016. Until then (and since 1955), the state’s diplomats had been educated at the China Foreign Affairs University (PRC, State Council 2017). Interestingly, the Chinese have embraced a move away from the (exclusive) theoretical study of diplomacy, to become more practice-focused. Dayu Qi (2017), Executive Vice President of China Diplomatic Academy, has observed that most of the lecturers at the China Diplomatic Academy are career diplomats rather than academics, because ‘diplomats teach diplomacy’.

State practice in prioritising diplomatic training is mirrored increasingly, and worldwide, by academic institutions and non-governmental organisations that offer studies in diplomacy. The majority view is clearly that diplomats can be ‘made’, and that it is a lucrative trade because diplomacy is a growth sector. Alan James (1993: 92) has however identified a negative side to the proliferation of diplomatic studies, cautioning against the ‘money-spinning’ nature of many taught Master’s degrees. He says many clients are attracted to ‘an MA with “diplomatic” in its title’—they see it as an entry ticket to their countries’ foreign services or an intergovernmental organisation such as the UN or EU.

## 6.2 *De-Elitisation of Diplomacy: Merit and Training*

Until well into the twentieth century, diplomats were selected from small social and intellectual elites and professional requirements were merely, as Kappeler (1998: 39) notes, ‘an excellent general education, perfect manners and of course full fluency in French’. As diplomacy became more professionalised, it necessitated more objective standards. Academic rather than social requirements became the more important prerequisite, with certain fields of study, notably law, considered sufficient preparation for the profession. Beyond that, graduates just had to pass an entrance examination to their respective foreign ministries, if at all. Formal diplomatic training only became common during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, even in the Western world,

most diplomatic training centres were founded only after World War Two—the Foreign Service Institute of the US Department of State is an example.

The global inclination (but not yet universal practice) is to ‘de-elitise’ diplomatic recruitment, emphasising individual merit rather than social class, and to do away with party affiliation and political patronage. Stuart Harris (1999: 30–31), a former Permanent Secretary of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, observed that his country had started in the 1980s to pursue proactive policies in order to break down the sense of elitism in the Australian foreign service. As part of this process, ‘more demanding’ diplomatic training was introduced and recruitment as well as promotion procedures became standardised and transparent. In the case of Uruguay, Article 8 of the Constitution requires that the country’s career diplomats be selected by means of examinations and with the utmost impartiality so that there cannot be ‘any other distinction between them other than that of talents and virtues’ (Otermi 1992: 20).

However, despite the demise of the ‘aristocrat-diplomat’, and the purported efforts by foreign ministries to become more egalitarian, diplomats in many parts of the world still fit an elitist image—whether by virtue of social standing, academic exclusivity or political association. Universally, it seems that foreign ministries continue to recruit the best calibre of candidates, as a matter of national pride. Babb’s (1974: 9) observation in the 1970s that ‘the French have not succumbed to the universal cries for the ‘diplomat representative of all the people’ but have sought uninhibitedly the most talented’ remains valid. Kyoji Komachi (1999: 109) has noted that even the meritocratic approach can be seen as a form of elitism. The tradition of the ‘diplomat as intellectual’, much cherished by the Brazilian foreign ministry (*Itamaraty*), comes to mind (Hurrell 2004).

### 6.3 *Standardisation of International Training*

Standardisation of diplomatic training, a global trend, is cultivated through bilateral and multilateral cooperation among states. ‘Cross-pollination’ in diplomatic training allows MFAs to benchmark their performance and to improve the quality and relevance of their programmes. In addition, ‘sister institutions’ often have bilateral cooperation agreements that offer them opportunity to pool resources and to exchange

lecturers and even students. Standardised training ties diplomats, regardless of their origin, into the universal culture of diplomacy, and fosters a sense of professional fraternity in practitioners.

Cooperation in diplomatic training is most needed by new or poor states and countries in democratic transition, so as to catch up with international practice. Foreign assistance in setting up or strengthening diplomatic training programmes invariably results in replication of training practices. Many international organisations (the European Union is a leader in this respect) have exactly this objective and offer diplomatic training for member states so as to build common standards and approaches. The generic training and ad hoc courses (on subjects such as the legal aspects of debt management, economic diplomacy and multilateral negotiation skills) offered by organisations such as the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the Economic Development Institute of the World Bank also contribute to synthesis of trends and standards in diplomatic training.

#### 6.4 *An Enlarging Clientele: Non-diplomats*

A growing and universal phenomenon is the extent to which non-diplomats are receiving diplomatic training. Certain foreign ministries (Azerbaijan, New Zealand and India are examples) insist on the development of 'crossover' skills, to ensure greater versatility within their services. This means that administrative and technical staff receive diplomatic training, and vice versa. As mentioned earlier, many foreign ministries also provide training for family members of diplomats, in recognition of their complementary role when abroad.

Beyond the foreign ministry, civil servants tasked with international liaison are the most obvious officials to be offered diplomatic training. Certain government departments and agencies have an obvious international role (international trade and finance, defence, tourism and so on) but in the twenty-first century, it is difficult to find any sector of government without some or other international interface. Official diplomatic training becomes imperative when officials from other sectors of government are seconded to diplomatic missions as attachés.

Beyond government, a growing number of non-state entities have an interest in diplomatic training. Multinational corporations, NGOs, think tanks and other private-sector entities network with diplomats and in some cases participate directly in the negotiation of interstate deals.

On account of their expertise and skills, former diplomats are actively recruited by these organisations. When they cannot recruit ‘ready-made’ diplomats, they seek some form of diplomatic education for the staff who will be expected to perform de facto diplomatic duties. Some of the larger national diplomatic training academies (such as those of Russia and Canada), and certain NGO s and training divisions of international organisations, offer diplomatic training to paying clients outside the public sector. The presence of ‘non-diplomats’ in diplomatic training programmes can be beneficial for all participants: it creates networking opportunities and allows for participants to learn from one another’s practical experience.

A reverse form of non-diplomats’ training takes place when career diplomats do revolving-door stints outside the foreign ministry. These periods can be spent in the private sector or in another area of government, or by means of a ‘sabbatical’ at a research institution. Many universities have a ‘diplomat in residence’ (or ‘ambassador-in-residence’) programme that attracts accomplished diplomats to spend some time there doing research and teaching. The USA has several such programmes, at colleges and universities throughout the country. The submersion of these diplomats in, and networking with, an intellectual community allows for cross-pollination between theory and practice: the diplomat can complement theoretical classes with his/her practical experience, and vice versa. They also act as professional role models to students and, of course, they recruit prospective candidates to the foreign service.

### 6.5 *Training the Competition: Foreign Diplomats*

A novel practice, one that is on the rise, is states’ official training of *foreign* diplomats. At the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, only one-third of places are reserved for Austrian diplomats. It is a matter of pride for the Academy that ‘since 1964, more than 2200 students from 124 different countries have graduated from the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna’ (Diplomatische Akademie Wien 2017). The phenomenon is not restricted to rich developed states: many emerging powers do so, for reasons that will become clear. Chile, for example, has a one-third quota of places at *Andrés Bello*, the country’s national diplomatic academy, for foreign diplomats. It has hosted diplomats from as far afield as Egypt, Haiti, Latvia and Malaysia (Chile MFA *Andrés Bello* 2004). By the same token Brazil’s Diplomatic Academy, the *Instituto Rio Branco*, allocates a quota of its places to foreign diplomats.



In some cases, a separate diplomatic programme is customised for foreign diplomats. India's Foreign Service Institute runs an exclusive one month-long programme, the *Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats* which trains diplomats from 'friendly countries' (India MEA 2017). And Turkey's Diplomatic Academy has, since 1992, presented an annual *International Junior Diplomats Training Program*. As of August 2017, it had already hosted some 800 foreign diplomats. The website of the Academy notes that this international profile enhances 'the prestige and visibility of the Academy and Turkey'.

So why do states choose to allocate financial resources to the training of foreign diplomats, apart from boosting their own national prestige? Diplomacy has traditionally been such a high-political, national interest-sensitive domain that it would seem reckless to allow foreigners into the exclusive circles of diplomatic training. The reasons can be altruistic, interest-driven or a mixture of both.

A strong incentive for training of foreign diplomats is the joint agenda of a regional integration project. Regional communities aim at harmonisation of foreign policy so that the diplomatic efforts of member states are complementary rather than duplicative. This prevents 'beggar-thy-neighbour' policies and actions. An individual state's commitment to cooperative and integrative regional foreign policy, and the building of a distinct regional diplomatic culture, can be demonstrated by its training of the region's diplomats. This practice is widespread in Latin America, Europe and South Asia. It is especially required when diplomats from less developed states within a given regional organisation have to be brought on par with their colleagues from the more developed partners, as is done within the European Union. The more established diplomatic training institutes (such as Austria's *Diplomatische Akademie* and Clingendael Institute of the Netherlands) are subsidised by the European Parliament to provide training for diplomats from new or aspiring members of the Union.

Whatever the practical advantages or normative imperatives to training of foreign diplomats, the fact remains that it provides an excellent opportunity to influence the foreign policy community of another state. France is a master in this regard: when its prestigious *École nationale d'administration* (ENA) admits foreign diplomats, it does so in the knowledge that these individuals will be socialised into a French world view, woven into a network of contacts that will facilitate, on a long-term basis, the implementation of French foreign policy. This outcome is reinforced

by the requirement that foreign diplomats do internships at French embassies after the completion of their training; a practice that enhances their educational immersion in the French culture of diplomacy. The perception that France strategically indoctrinates elites (including diplomats) from the Francophonie is widely held. Mindful thereof, newly elected French President Emmanuel Macron during a November 2017 visit to West Africa emphasised that he ‘hailed from a generation that would not dictate to Africans what to do’ (Lefebvre 2017).

The many other states that now offer diplomatic training to foreign participants also do so as part of a calculated strategy: they impart selected information to a strategically important audience. Critics would therefore say that training offered to foreign diplomats amounts to a diplomatic ‘Trojan horse’: it grants the host state intellectual access to the individuals who will be instrumental in advising on and executing their own state’s foreign policy. As Philippino diplomat Marciano De Borja (1999: 40) recounts, the Philippine diplomats who were trained by the US State Department (and who were given mission apprenticeships in US embassies) immediately after their country’s independence in 1946 became known as the ‘State Department boys’.

In cases where states share an ideological or religious component in their foreign policy, joint diplomatic training is even more explicitly geared towards strengthening the ideational bond. This was very much the case during the Cold War, when ideological solidarity trumped the notion of a unified global diplomatic culture. The Soviet Union was a major provider of training, and diplomats from all over the East Bloc were regularly trained together in Moscow. A more enduring example is the training offered by Saudi Arabia to diplomats from other Gulf Cooperation Council, Arab and Islamic countries.

### 6.6 *Diplomatic Capacity Building as Development Aid*

An ostensibly altruistic reason for capacity building of other states’ foreign ministries is that it constitutes *development assistance*. Established as well as emerging powers are active in this regard. For poorly capacitated countries—in Africa that would be the majority of countries—foreign training opportunities could be the only, or most important, formal professional training that their diplomats will receive in the course of their careers. The same applies to institutional capacity building *in loco* for nascent diplomatic training centres. The Mozambican *Instituto Superior de*

*Relações Internacionais* (ISRI), for example, was established in 1986 but its lack of capacity prompted it, in 1997, to sign a three-year cooperation agreement with the Netherlands' Clingendael Institute. This allowed ISRI to obtain crucial training, research, conferencing and library support (Clingendael 1999).

The motivation for states' provision of diplomatic training as a form of development aid coincides with all the reasons that states train foreign diplomats, but the normative imperative looms large. Former colonial or occupying powers are certainly expected to build capacity in newly independent states. Countries such as France, Portugal, Spain and the UK have all assisted former colonies with diplomatic training, an endeavour facilitated by a common bureaucratic heritage and shared official language. For donor states in general, diplomatic training is a convenient vehicle for development assistance: its delivery is rather straightforward and easy to monitor. It is also relatively inexpensive for the donor state, which has the necessary resources (presenters, study material, etc.) readily available within its own foreign ministry.

Development assistance is, of course, notoriously politicised and it is no less so when diplomatic training is involved. Africa with its large cohort of UN member states (larger than any other region) is particularly attractive: a majority decision by the UN General Assembly is much more likely when the continent's support is ensured. During 2010, the Australian Government announced that African diplomatic training would be a focus area for official development aid, and committed funds to this effect under its *Australia-Africa Partnerships Facility*. A major incentive for the decision was that Australia sought election as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.<sup>15</sup> The strategy paid off, and Australia was awarded a seat for 2013/2014. When the two year stint was over, the country's government promptly called off the training that had been presented to African diplomats over the course of the previous four years.

Diplomatic training assistance can also be a manifestation of South-South cooperation. Various leader states in the Global South offer diplomatic training as assistance to fellow developing countries. Turkey's Diplomatic Academy, for example, prides itself on offering customised training for numerous countries, ranging from Afghanistan to Zambia, as part of bilateral diplomatic relations. Hosted training can be fully sponsored, as is offered by Pakistan and Turkey, or partially financed, as is done by China and Brazil. It can be part of a dedicated diplomatic training assistance programme, as offered by India and Malaysia. The latter

founded the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP) in 1980 as an explicit platform for South-South cooperation.

Apart from states, various philanthropic organisations, and regional and global intergovernmental organisations also disburse diplomatic training as development aid. The Commonwealth Secretariat, for instance, has since the 1960s been instrumental in the training of entry-level diplomats from member states. The state that received preferential assistance included micro-states such as Vanuatu, new states such as Namibia and states in democratic transition such as South Africa. An important advantage of IGOs is their resources: libraries, documentation facilities, electronic resources and Secretariat support assist with diplomatic capacity building of less developed members. At the UN, for instance, the permanent missions of small member states receive preferential technical support to ensure their full participation in the UN network (Kappeler 1998: 45).

## 7 CONCLUSION

The social fabric of diplomacy—the cohesion that exists within the institution of diplomacy, regardless of myriad influences on individual diplomats—can rightly be described as ‘diplomatic culture’. Like international society itself, it transcends the diversity and heterogeneity within the society of states. Diplomatic culture is driven by a pragmatic logic, but there are also ethical markers that are independent of the political cultures that diplomats represent.

The trend in contemporary social interaction is to be more flexible and informal, but in diplomacy the ‘form’ of doing things is as important as the substance on the agenda. The profession has cultivated its own rules of engagement, and codes of language. This ‘form’—diplomatic protocol—is adhered to universally because it offers a predictable and enabling environment for official interaction in a world with bewildering diversity.

Career diplomats share the quaint lifestyle that comes with ‘foreign service’, a professional nomadic existence with unique challenges. When they serve in the same capital, diplomats from vastly different political cultures identify with a distinct *community*—the diplomatic corps. The corps’ interests set its members apart not only from the host state, but also from their individual sending states. Indeed, diplomatic culture incorporates a rather complicated relationship between diplomats and their own foreign ministries. Diplomats can be perceived as fitting in

*too well* with the foreign environments where they are based, or fading into a generic cosmopolitan diplomatic culture. Their challenge is to represent, authentically, the people of their sending states.

As a profession diplomacy has shed some, but not all, of its exclusive image. Governments across the world continue to recruit from elite minorities, even if those minorities are only defined in educational terms. Targeted recruitment does not equate diplomatic culturalisation, however, and diplomats undergo lifelong learning ‘on the job’. In addition, most foreign ministries are ‘intensifying’ and ‘extensifying’ training for the profession, in recognition of the increasing—and increasingly complicated—roles that contemporary diplomats need to fulfil. This involves, *inter alia*, the formalisation of professional training—often delivered by prestigious diplomatic academies—and international benchmarking of training practices.

Foreign ministries (and private institutions that offer diplomatic training) also deal with a much larger, and more diverse, profile of trainees. It has become routine for other international relations practitioners from the same state bureaucracy to be included in diplomatic training. Even non-state actors—the de facto diplomats that have proliferated over the past century—are joining diplomatic training programmes, reflecting the polyilateral nature of many modern-day diplomatic ventures. A recent phenomenon is for states to offer training to *foreign* diplomats, a practice that seemingly undermines the sensitive, national interest-driven image of foreign ministries. There are practical and normative imperatives to do so, but it remains a tactical foreign policy move to shape the thinking of representatives of a separate sovereign entity. When the training is part of development assistance, there is an additional political layer to it. Diplomats from the recipient states are socialised into the diplomatic culture of international society, but they are also groomed in the political culture of the donor state.

It is important to keep in mind that diplomatic culture is not monolithic. Relativism is introduced by regional approaches, ideology, historical experiences *vis-à-vis* international society and many other factors. Like international society, the once homogenous diplomatic culture of a Eurocentric world has given way to more pluralism. The identities and interests of a much larger ‘rest’ of the world have brought new styles and techniques to diplomacy. Relativism in diplomatic culture has been particularly visible in attempts to level the playing field of the diplomatic arena. Diplomats need to understand these differences and how they

relate to ‘asymmetrical’ diplomatic behaviour. Being diplomats, they are expected to bridge differences in spite of—and sometimes because of—divergent approaches to the conduct of their trade.

History has shown that diplomacy always survives and continues. It is the only currency states can use to be part of international society, and engaging in its institutions invariably builds the supra-culture that *is* diplomatic culture. The very *raison d’être* of diplomacy infuses its culture: the imperative to network, communicate and bridge differences, and to do so on a continuous basis.

## NOTES

1. ‘Diplomatic culture’ should not be confused with the term ‘cultural diplomacy’. A state practises cultural diplomacy when it projects aspects of its own culture, or focuses on aspects of a foreign state’s culture, to strengthen bilateral relations. It is usually done as part of ‘people to people’ diplomacy, or public diplomacy.
2. I am not aware of the exact origin: it is used frequently in South Africa, but I have also seen it in speeches originating in Kenya and Nigeria.
3. As of April 2018, Pretoria hosted 133 embassies while Cairo had 139. By comparison at the same date, the following number of embassies was hosted by capitals of states with similar sized economies: Kuala Lumpur (102), Singapore (69), Copenhagen (74), Bogotá (56). Pretoria and Cairo’s diplomatic populations were also higher than many capitals of states with much larger economies; for example, Madrid (120), Riyadh (112), Canberra (106) and Seoul (110).
4. The ‘9/11’ attacks on New York and Washington were orchestrated by the terror group Al-Qaeda. It happened on 11 September 2001 (hence the name) and killed more than 3000 people.
5. Wiseman (2005) points out the irony of the USA having championed multilateralism in global diplomacy (dating back to the end of the First World War when US President Woodrow Wilson pioneered the establishment of the League of Nations) yet never seemed to have been comfortable with this method of diplomacy. As Bouchard and Peterson (2011: 4) put it ‘in practice, America “does not do” multilateralism’.
6. Arguably some self-proclaimed liberal democracies can also have ‘expansionist’ foreign policy. The US’ fervour for exporting democracy is experienced by many critics as ideological, in some cases aggressive, meddling in the affairs of non-Western states.
7. As of April 2018.
8. The Resolution is not binding, however, and several states (among them Nigeria, Senegal and Botswana) registered their dissent.

9. Differences in interpretation (or even recognition) of the various ‘generations’ of human rights are illustrative. In general, the developed, industrialised states tend to prioritise *first-generation* (political and civil) rights in their diplomatic interaction, while the less developed states emphasise *second-generation* (economic, social and cultural) rights. Groups that are the most marginalised emphasise their *third-generation* rights, which include so-called solidarity rights and the right to development.
10. ‘Diplomatic pathology’ is a term used by Portuguese Ambassador José Calvet De Magalhães in his 1988 book *The Pure Concept of Diplomacy*, to describe deviant forms of diplomacy.
11. Crawford (2010) notes that the British foreign office holds a ceremony ‘at the Main Staircase’ every year during November, to commemorate staff who had died in active service.
12. Sharp (2009: 22–23) expresses some sympathy with the plight of ‘revolutionary’ diplomats: he says that while conventional diplomats have to balance imperatives of *raison de système* with those of *raison d’état*, revolutionary diplomats have a greater challenge: they ‘have to maintain a balance between the requirements of their movements as actors in an international society, the requirements of those societies that make relations between their members possible, and a revolutionary *telos* committed to the destruction or transformation of both. It is a difficult juggling act, and it is also one they do not perform very well’.
13. Sofer (1988: 201) recounts the well-known vigour with which diplomats from the Soviet Union were trained, even in issues such as diplomatic etiquette, which they were known to be meticulous about.
14. Chancery is an alternative name for diplomatic offices—specifically the part of an embassy used for political (traditional diplomatic) work.
15. I know this from personal involvement in the project. The Australian government funded the programme, and it was implemented by means of joint ventures between Australian and African universities. The Australian academics who worked on the project were furious when funding for the programme was conveniently suspended during 2014, the final year of Australia’s Security Council stint. The African academics took it in their stride—we are used to the politics of development aid.

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## Conclusion

Diplomacy is not universally revered—there are many people who think of it as a waste of time and money—a naïve game of appeasement and charades. Some just do not trust *diplomats*, who can come across as liberal, pretentious elitists, self-imagined ‘citizens of the world’ rather than representatives of real people and real issues. Many others consider the state-centric nature of diplomacy’s bureaucracy and legal framework as outdated, even obsolete.

International society has its own cohort of sceptics. Critics take issue with the conceptual complacency implied by the term—concerned that it conjures up the idea of fixed rules and norms about how the world should behave. To some, it smacks of a Western-centric world order. The role of diplomacy within international society is also questioned, with opponents blaming it for the pursuit of narrow, selfish state interests. From this perspective, diplomacy is seen as worsening rather than solving the problems of humanity.

This might seem a gloomy end to a book on diplomacy and its place in international society, but for diplomatic studies and diplomatic practice alike, contestation comes with the territory. Criticism, even dismissal, of diplomacy and international society offers essential perspective on the troubled world in which diplomats operate. I want to respond summarively to the concerns of critics, by revisiting the main points covered by the book. In order to do so, I need to go back to the very *idea* of diplomacy, because it is a surprisingly slippery concept within literature on international relations. The term is much used, but seldom understood

or applied with analytical precision. It is even more rare for authors to venture consciously into the theorising of diplomacy.

As the second decade of the twenty-first century draws to an end, the geopolitical ‘landscape’ of diplomatic theory remains dominated by authors from the Global North. This is at least in part because the discipline of International Relations, since its inception a hundred years ago, was heavily dominated by US scholarship. The USA has historically been uncomfortable with diplomacy, and being the superpower of the world, its diplomatic narratives cannot avoid a subtext of unchallenged hard power. But I do not wish to paint it as the ogre in my diplomatic story; within international society, it is certainly not alone in its propensity for *sturm und drang*. As Thucydides warned us more than two thousand years ago, power and diplomacy tend to be wielded in inverse proportion. We see replications of the power-diplomacy nexus across the world: in regional microcosms where the more powerful states ‘call the shots’, within international organisations where institutional egalitarianism makes way for *realpolitik*; everywhere, dissimilar states interact.

More interesting for me is the deft navigation of the diplomatic arena by certain states, regardless of the hard power advantages they or their interlocutors might have. It is not a surprise that scholars who build diplomatic theory tend to come from states that prioritise diplomacy. These states, which many observers call ‘middle powers’, are known for taking initiative and leadership in diplomatic settings. They take ownership of international challenges and rally other states into joining inclusive, problem-solving networks. Since the end of the Cold War, their ranks have been swollen by peer states in the Global South, and scholarly contribution to diplomatic theory is (slowly but surely) following suit. I am from one such ‘Emerging Middle Power’, which probably accounts for my socialisation into the idea that diplomacy anchors international society.

My own theoretical approach to the study of diplomacy was explained within a conceptual framework, right at the outset. I encapsulated it with the following definition:

Diplomacy, a peaceful and continuous process of communication, involves international relations among states or other collectivities on the basis of intermediation, reciprocity and formal representation.

The definition sought to set diplomacy apart from foreign policy, a distinction that confounds many authors. Whereas diplomacy is as old

as humanity, foreign policy is per definition state-centric: it evolved in tandem with the concept of sovereign states. States have a range of options when they implement their policy towards the external environment, and diplomacy is one of them. It happens to be a universal option because it is available to all states, regardless of their relative foreign policy capabilities. Diplomacy further differs from foreign policy because the latter includes instruments like military force and espionage that are anathema to the essentially *reciprocal* nature of diplomacy. However, diplomacy can be present in conversations *about* those tools, or about any other aspect of foreign policy. Diplomacy is therefore the most versatile and ubiquitous of foreign policy instruments. Yet another difference is that diplomacy in practice exceeds the state-centrism of foreign policy. While it has been extensively integrated into the statecraft domain, and definitively into the domain of international law, diplomacy is practised in a de facto manner by the full spectrum of actors that manoeuvre within the global arena.

Over the past half-a-century, the quantum rise in actors and issues—the two main variables in the arena of global diplomacy—has made diplomacy a convoluted subject to study. I attempted to bring coherence to the endeavour by examining diplomacy within demarcated contexts: conceptual, historical, legal, bureaucratic and cultural. Each of these contexts highlighted that diplomacy is integral to international society for symbolic as well as practical reasons.

This has always been the case, and the evolutionary overview made that clear. From its genesis in Africa (the cradle of humankind) through Antiquity, Classical Antiquity, the Dark and Middle Ages and beyond, diplomacy has connected human polities and clarified their *modus vivendi*. Certain periods, and certain parts of the world, had a global, lasting impact on the practice of diplomacy. One such contribution started during the Modern Age, when the European Renaissance transformed the manner in which society—and the world—is organised.

It is now rather fashionable, especially among scholars from the Global South, to take issue with Eurocentrism in diplomatic practice and theory. Certainly, the traditional ‘old’ diplomacy has been much maligned since the start of the twentieth century. Its secretive, exclusive nature was held responsible for the European power rivalry that caused both World Wars. But there can be no doubt that we have all inherited the benefits of European systemisation of diplomacy. It was in Europe that resident embassies became institutionalised, where the notion of a diplomatic corps evolved and where a rudimentary



legal framework was developed to support the institution. As from the seventeenth century, the organisation of Europe into a state-centric system further consolidated the parameters of diplomatic practice. As foreign ministries emerged, they presided over dedicated bureaucracies that professionalised the practice of diplomacy, inter alia through training and regularising the conditions of service. What the Europeans provided was extensive institutional ‘architecture’ for diplomacy.

What they did *not* do was to enhance its normative credentials. It would take a war-punctuated transition to the tumultuous twentieth century to imbue diplomacy with overt normative goals. The ascendancy of the ‘New World’ and the leadership of the USA were crucial in this regard. In the aftermath of World War I, President Woodrow Wilson famously called for ‘open covenants of peace, openly derived at ...’. His appeal for more transparency and inclusivity in global diplomacy, ‘new diplomacy’ as it became known, would draw in stakeholders from states and regions that had hitherto been excluded from European power diplomacy. The dominant diplomatic mode of the twentieth century would become *multilateral* diplomacy, haltingly at first through the League of Nations and less ambivalently so after the Second World War, through the United Nations. International society would, for the first time ever, become a *universal* concept, embracing the idea that humanity’s problems could be addressed in forums of global governance. The United Nations was what the League had never been: universally endorsed, and sponsored by a powerful Security Council. It created the permanent hub of diplomacy that had been so elusive up to that point.

Despite its august inception, the organisation was encumbered almost immediately, and for many decades, by the Cold War. The war bifurcated international society along ideological lines, and diplomacy itself languished in the shadow of global ‘ideocracy’. To make matters worse, humanity had to contend, for the first time ever, with weapons so cataclysmic in their effect that world destruction was conceivable. Rather than witnessing all-out war among the great powers, the world grew accustomed to a barrage of delegated conflicts—proxy wars in regions where the superpowers did not have to internalise the trauma.

Germinating through all of these events in the twentieth century was a phenomenon that changed international society forever. It concerned the diplomatic awakening—and assumption of a separate diplomatic identity—of an entire new ‘world’. The ‘Developing World’ had previously been fragmented—its international identity inchoate or tied to that

of colonial masters. The twentieth century saw it crystallise into dozens of states, many of them sovereign for the first time. They shared then, as most of them still do, a developmental deficit. Their collective effort to challenge structural power united them as they sought to rectify, through the use of diplomacy, their own seemingly entrenched marginalisation within the global system.

Mainstream International Relations theory, and with that also mainstream diplomatic theory, has been largely ignorant about the ‘diplomacy of development’. This has excluded reflection on a host of issues that states in the Global North do not concern themselves with: external intervention in their domestic affairs, endemic intra-state conflict, challenges of state-building, cycles of underdevelopment and dependency and issues of identity. In practice, however, the Developing World has already left its footprint in the global diplomatic arena: in *form*, by insisting on multilateralism and using collective diplomatic techniques that resemble political advocacy; and in *substance*, by populating the global diplomatic agenda with historically neglected issues.

Participation in diplomacy has affirmed the symbolic presence of the Developing World in international society, and it is no coincidence that developing states have had a predilection for visible summitry. They are not the only states to have embraced the trend to showcase leaders at the apex of global diplomacy: summitry surged during the twentieth century, as executive-led diplomatic gatherings sought to engineer the fate of the world (or of regions, at least). It was facilitated by advances in communication and transport technology, necessitated by the high stakes of diplomatic decisions and fuelled by the desire of leaders to impress their democratising publics. Since the end of the Cold War, multilateral world summits have become so numerous as to be almost generic. They represent the pinnacle of *inclusive* diplomacy, if not always effective diplomacy.

The growth and diversification of international society during the twentieth century made it essential for universal consensus on diplomacy’s legal framework, which had remained largely uncoded through the ages. Until the nineteenth century, diplomatic law was based mainly on custom within a like-minded, European society of states. States and regions that had historically been excluded from that diplomatic club drove the momentum for diplomatic law to be codified comprehensively. The process benefited specifically from the legal ardour of (both South and North) American states. When the Vienna Conventions of 1961 and 1963 were adopted, it was a landmark achievement. The

treaties were ratified in the midst of the toxicity of the Cold War, thereby confirming consensus within international society on the essential nature of diplomacy.

The legal framework of diplomacy has remained uncontested since the 1960s, even in the face of increasing pluralism and systemic change in international relations. Like diplomacy itself, diplomatic law is both symbolic and functional: it signifies sovereign equality of states while at a practical level it ensures that the official representatives of states can execute their duties unhindered. Contravention of the law is rare, because the privileges and immunities of diplomats are tempered by legal obligations and representative honour. Observation of the law is furthermore guaranteed by the diplomatic principle of reciprocity. All states benefit equally and therefore treat representatives of other states the way they expect their own to be treated.

Just as diplomatic law is observed across the globe and domesticated by states in municipal law, the bureaucratic management of diplomats and diplomacy is reproduced worldwide. Foreign ministries, the custodians of state-centric diplomacy, tend to hold a special status among government ministries. They are often considered 'flagship' institutions because they project the prestige and status of their countries in world affairs.

The core function of foreign ministries is to protect states' interests in the international domain—an objective reminiscent of the state-centric *raison d'état* concept. The concept is understandably polemic: Who defines national interest, and is it indivisible? In the twenty-first century, a host of other actors are pursuing overlapping interests, so that the work and mandate of foreign ministries are rivalled at many different levels. From 'above', they are dictated to by political elites (who tend to pursue partisan agendas). Beyond the state, supranational authorities in regional integration schemes and institutions of global governance issue directives that foreign ministries have to heed, thereby 'stretching' the parameters of national interest. At the domestic level, subnational authorities, other government ministries and quasi-state entities have become directly involved in international relations. Their activities are dwarfed, in some cases, by those of non-state actors who use information and communications technology to circumvent state-centric barriers. This reality has seen a steady increase over the past few decades in 'catalytic diplomacy', as Brian Hocking has dubbed it. Whereas in the past ministries of foreign affairs (and their deployed diplomats) directed all their communication at

foreign governments, contemporary norms of transparency and accountability in governance demand that stakeholders in the widest context be engaged. It involves horizontal networking at the domestic and transnational levels, and it demands ‘public diplomacy’: proactive liaison with their own and other civil societies. This role is not just norm-driven: in general, governments find it increasingly difficult to implement policy without active public buy-in.

The many actors in foreign policy processes erode a monolithic approach to national interest and reveal the need for foreign ministries to play a managerial rather than (their original) gatekeeper role in states’ foreign relations. Worldwide, this realisation is prompting foreign ministries to reconceptualise their *modus operandi*.

As the ‘face’ of a country to the outside world, a given foreign ministry presides over a network of the state’s diplomatic missions. All states, even micro-states, maintain diplomatic missions in the external domain. The location, number and size of these offices are determined by the state’s balance of interests. Such priorities could be historical, economic, political, even ethnic and religious and are often led by security concerns.

The work done by diplomatic missions is summarised by Article 3 of the 1961 *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations*. Diplomats are deployed to represent their sending states; protect the latter’s interests; negotiate with host authorities; gather information and report on it; and generally, to promote friendly interstate relations. More than five decades after it was formulated, Article 3 remains valid because it encapsulates the basics of diplomatic practice. It also summarises the enduring need for resident embassies. Despite massive advances in communications and information technology, effective diplomacy still hinges on continuous, on the ground, face-to-face liaison by officials who understand the context and mandate of diplomatic representation.

It is by no means an easy profession, and the individuals who commit to it pay a price. The nomadic lifestyle—frequent postings to foreign missions, with occasional stints at head office—is hugely disruptive to diplomats and their families. Their professional imperative to adapt to any kind of host environment compels them to co-opt layers of identity, in addition to the identity of the (often complex) societies and regions they represent at an official level. In a host capital, they automatically become part of the diplomatic corps, which is the community made up of all the foreign diplomats based there. This sets diplomats apart not only from a receiving state, but also from their individual sending states.

Not fitting into a host state environment can leave a diplomat dreadfully lonely and less effective professionally. But adapting too well has problems of its own, if the diplomat is perceived to be sympathetic to the 'wrong' interests. And while some diplomats might be deemed too independent by their foreign ministries, those same diplomats might experience their head offices as out of touch with the on-the-ground realities of receiving states.

Ironically, the very characteristics that make diplomats good at what they do also make it difficult for foreign ministries to retain their services. Their adaptability, expertise at political analysis, ability to read verbal and non-verbal signals across cultural schisms, knowledge of official procedures and policy and (often) proficiency in multiple languages amount to a skills-set that is highly sought-after in international relations. The occasional 'loss' incurred by foreign ministries is however not a nett loss to international society. Career diplomats are trained and socialised to be nodal points that coordinate and facilitate multi-actor policy processes. They are 'professional generalists' (or 'specialist-generalists'), managers of the complex interests that converge within international society. When they leave the *de jure* profession, they carry these inclinations beyond the state-centric realm.

Individual agency is obviously crucial in diplomacy, even if—contrarily—diplomacy is about representation of a bigger political unit. This explains why personal profiling of diplomats permeates the historical literature on diplomacy and why diplomats were traditionally recruited from social groups close to the sovereign ruler. Worldwide emphasis on democratic participation has seen diplomacy shed some of its elitist images and the development of a more technocratic profile. The attendant global standardisation of diplomatic practice has made professional diplomatic training, rather than 'ready-made' recruitment, a global norm.

It has become a trend for the diplomatic academies of foreign ministries to take on a wider clientele of trainees: international relations practitioners from other domestic ministries and subnational administrations; even members of civil society. This is an indication that actors outside the formal domain of diplomacy wish to emulate its techniques and skills; from foreign ministries' perspective, the reality is that these 'other' actors are long-term partners in diplomatic processes. Interestingly, many states have begun to open up their national diplomatic training facilities to diplomats from other states. There is a tactical reason for doing so: the unique opportunity to mould the thinking of other states' diplomats.

When diplomats from recipient states are socialised into the political culture of the host foreign ministry, they are likely to end up ‘representing’ that alma mater, even if not intentionally so.

Unfortunately, with the exception of the more advanced members of the Global South, many developing states are at the receiving end of such diplomatic training ‘largesse’. The dearth of diplomatic training in ‘struggling’ foreign ministries, especially in Africa, is symptomatic of larger developmental deficits: they typically lack resources, infrastructure, institutional memory and financial means—in short, diplomatic *capacity*. The asymmetry in their diplomatic capacity is both a cause and a result of such states being marginalised in mainstream diplomatic narratives. The diplomacy of development is therefore, understandably, focused on levelling the playing field in global diplomacy. The style is abrasive and the message is transformational, rather than reformatational.

The heterogeneity of diplomatic practice has in turn given more nuance and texture to *diplomatic culture*. Diplomatic culture is the idea that diplomacy in practice cultivates a kind of supra-culture, a socio-professional layer that transcends the individual cultures, religion, ethnicity or political persuasion of individual diplomats. It bestows an identity closely linked with that of international society itself, and it provides collegial cohesion within the institution of diplomacy. It is thus the ‘social fabric’ of diplomacy. A peculiarity of diplomatic culture is that the ‘form’ of doing things is critically important. This is evident in the painstaking detail of guidelines for international interaction. In a world with so much variety, diplomatic protocol prevents misunderstandings. Much like diplomatic law, it offers functional egalitarianism and a predictable and enabling environment for official interaction. It also bestows on diplomacy an enduring ‘old-fashioned’ image. From personal dress codes to use of language and lifestyle, the tendency is to be elegant rather than fashionable—solemn rather than frivolous. Diplomats represent *states*, not trends, and states are conservative creatures.

This brings me to one of the criticisms mentioned at the start of the chapter—the debate about state-centrism in diplomacy. Nobody can dispute the importance of non-state actors in the global arena, but states are the only repositories of *sovereignty* under international law. They are the organising units of humanity, and they are accountable under international law. This is why diplomatic law applies only to official (de jure) diplomats, who represent the social contracts between the people and the governments of all the geopolitical units on earth. When international

agreements are negotiated, diplomats bring to the table the enforcement capacity and legal weight of their sending states. They do so independent of personal or partisan interests—a responsibility that cannot be outsourced on an ad hoc basis.

From a quantitative perspective, it is also too soon to renounce the Westphalian international template. In fact, the business of ‘being a state’ is booming. A hundred years ago, a mere 42 states founded the League of Nations. Its successor, the United Nations, had 51 founding members in 1945, but by 2013 its membership had reached 193. Several more ‘aspirant states’ are waiting in the wings. The 200-odd states of the world are all ‘doing’ diplomacy. Thus, over the past century, diplomacy has flourished: it has become more institutionalised, more bureaucratised, more legalised, more taught and more professionalised than ever before.

It should be rather obvious, by now, that I consider diplomacy to have a pragmatic logic that transcends any existential debate. I do not presume the same about international society. The idea is based on a broad and evolving consensus, rather than passive acceptance of imposed rules, norms and conventions. This does not lessen its importance. As human beings, we have a primordial instinct to create societies. At the international or global level, that same instinct manifests. Diplomacy is our means to do so, in practice and in theory.

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