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5 Diplomacy

Brian Hocking

Despite the fact that diplomacy is regarded as a key dimension of the processes through which world politics are conducted, it represents, as one observer has noted, a surprising lacuna in the study of International Relations (IR) (Reychler, 1979: 2). A variety of reasons can be advanced for this. Sharp has noted the disjuncture between the broad swathe of IR scholarship and the specialist literature on diplomacy (Sharp, 1999: 34), whilst Sofer, amongst others, has pointed to the inherent deficiencies of this literature whose 'conceptual wealth', is limited, divorced from political theory, and descriptive rather than analytical (Sofer, 1988: 196). Analysis of diplomacy in the European arena in its broader and narrower European Union (EU) definitions, reflects these tendencies. Indeed, the changing character of the general diplomatic milieu and the uncertainties that this has generated is reinforced by the EU's multilayered politico-diplomatic environment.

In reviewing these patterns of diplomatic complexity, their relationship to the more general post-Cold War diplomatic milieu and the implications for our understanding of the place of diplomacy in contemporary European foreign policy, the ensuing discussion rests on several assumptions. The first of these is a need to break out of the straitjacket represented by the linked discourses of 'decline' – the well-worn proposition that diplomacy is accompanying the state into oblivion – and 'newness' – the associated notion that what is significant in diplomatic process and practice is the replacement of the old with the new. A second, related, assumption is the need to interpret present trends in the broader context of the historical development of European diplomacy, recognising the consequences of the gradual separation of the foreign and domestic dimensions of public policy which occurred between the 17th and 19th centuries (Hamilton and Langhorne, 1995; Anderson, 1993).

The third assumption is that global, regional and domestic patterns of change, enhanced by the post-Cold War environment, are marked by a growing diplomatic 'ambiguity' clearly manifested in the EU. This can be seen in terms of the uncertainties surrounding a growing EU international capability, the possibility that the Commission delegations might evolve into a European foreign service, and the desire of national governments to retain control in core areas of international policy (Duke, 1997). Such a situation

reflects the broader ambiguities inherent in the EU itself. As Laffan et al. have suggested, this reflects its state of 'betweenness' and the 'process of becoming' leading to an end state which may bear little relation to traditional assumptions regarding forms of political order (Laffan et al., 2000: 189).

Precisely the same point can be made about diplomacy: an understanding of its historical development, combined with a relaxation of assumptions about its irrelevance and the dominance of 'new' over 'old' diplomacy, leads to the conclusion that the ideas of 'betweenness' and 'becoming' encapsulate the essence of what confronts us in the EU diplomatic environment. This echoes Der Derian's argument that the continual shaping and reshaping of diplomacy over time sits uncomfortably with the tendency to assume that it has attained its ultimate expression, 'that we have reached – or even that we are approaching – after a long odyssey the best, final form of diplomacy' (Der Derian, 1987: 3).

Against this background, this chapter identifies the ways in which broader global systemic change, interacting with societal forces, has impacted on the conduct of European diplomacy at both the national and EU levels. In doing so, it suggests that we need to reconceptualise diplomacy, particularly in fluid, emerging environments such as those represented by the EU. The identification of diplomacy as a means of securing the state from its international environment is being modified by diplomacy conceived of as a 'boundary-spanning' activity. Here, diplomats are operating not so much within the well-defined 'shell' of the state, but within shifting and reconstituting boundaries as state sovereignty is redefined in the face of globalising and regionalising pressures.

The 'What', 'How', 'Where' and 'Who' of Diplomacy

Underpinning the current debates on the nature, trials and tribulations of diplomacy are a set of interwoven questions which provide a loose framework for the exploration of the changing character of European diplomacy. I shall label these the 'what', 'how', 'where' and 'who' questions. The 'what' questions direct us, first, towards some familiar distinctions. Central to these is that between foreign policy and diplomacy – the former constituting the substance of an actor's international policy, the latter one of the instruments through which this can be effected. My reason for raising this rather obvious point is that diplomacy is often used as a synonym for foreign policy, not least in discussions regarding an emergent EU foreign policy. Thus Jørgensen's (1997) prescription for a research agenda on 'modern European diplomacy' is as much about the nature of foreign policy as it is about diplomacy defined in this more precise way. Similarly, Keukeleire's (2000) study of the EU as an emergent 'diplomatic actor' has as its central concern the ways in which the EU should be analysed as a 'foreign policy actor'. This is more than a semantic point, for it is one thing to argue, for example, that there is a developing EU foreign and security policy in terms of outputs and

quite another to posit that this is accompanied by a distinctive style and mode of delivery.

A second set of issues revolves around the essence of diplomacy both as an institution of the international system and as a mode of statecraft. Although it is quite common to regard diplomacy as a feature of the state system, it is equally true, as Cohen (1999) and others have demonstrated, that it has a far longer pedigree, evolving in terms of the methods utilised in different cultures. Sharp has argued that diplomacy should be seen as a resource that is not contingent on its identification with the state system, but as 'responses to a common problem of living separately and wanting to do so, while having to conduct relations with others' (1999: 51). Constantinou argues that this offers the best defence of diplomacy against the decline school: 'a better way of confronting those who herald the end of diplomacy in an era of multiple global actors, mass media and satellite communication is to outflank them theoretically, by suggesting that diplomacy may not simply consist of that interstate, intersovereign, and interambassadorial side that they see as an anachronism' (1996: xv).

This point has a clear resonance in the EU context where the Commission delegations are constrained, as Bruter notes, to adapt to the demands of a 'stateless' diplomacy (1999: 193), but it poses interesting questions as to the relevance of diplomacy to the EU in terms of its internal processes. Whereas their sheer density and boundary-transcending qualities suggest some form of 'post-diplomatic' order, at the same time negotiation, one of the key functions of diplomacy, is central to the way that the EU operates. Smith's image of the EU as a 'negotiated order' underscores the centrality of negotiation and, at the same time, its complex structures and processes (Smith, M., 1996).

Inseparably linked to these issues are questions regarding the 'how' of diplomacy – that is, the methods utilised in its conduct. One way of approaching this is to pursue the common distinction between bilateral and multilateral forms of diplomacy and to suggest that it is the latter, or variants thereof, which are characteristic of EU diplomacy. Thus, in his analysis of an emergent European diplomacy, Keukeleire takes as his comparator traditional state-based diplomacy, which he appears to equate with bilateral diplomacy. As I shall suggest below, not only is this a problematic definition in the sense that it hardly encapsulates the complexities of modern diplomacy, it also sets up assumptions regarding the continued significance of bilateralism in multilateral environments, including the EU. A related problem, of course, is the confusion of 'what' and 'how' questions and to assume that diplomatic processes (for example, bilateralism) are inseparably linked to specific institutional forms (for example, the maintenance of a network of bilateral embassies).

Associated with the what and how issues are the 'where' related questions. One of the key assumptions underpinning Nicolson's writings on diplomacy at a period of tremendous upheaval in Europe is that, there is a clear separation between the formulation of policy and its implementation – the latter being the function of diplomacy (Nicolson, 1939: 12). There is a

good case to be made that even in 19th and early 20th century Europe, this distinction was not sustained in practice – hence the continuing debate on the impact of the 19th century communications revolution on the relationship between foreign ministries and missions. But certainly, the growing linkage of policy arenas, as exemplified in the EU, and the multifaceted points of contact between member state governments, has changed hugely the ways in which negotiation is conducted. As in other policy environments, this poses important questions as to the management and sequencing of policy processes and where, precisely, diplomacy occurs. It is made far more complex, however, by the associated erosion of the distinction between foreign and domestic arenas – a familiar point which I do not propose to pursue here. Nevertheless, it is significant in the context of this discussion in as much as another cardinal principle of the 'traditional' diplomatic milieu is challenged; namely the separation of diplomacy and politics. As is often noted, especially by trade diplomats, as much time is spent nowadays in the 'two-level games' linking domestic and international diplomacy as in negotiating in international forums (Evans et al., 1993).

The final piece in the diplomatic jigsaw puzzle is represented by the 'who' questions and these follow logically from what has gone before. State-centred approaches take a very narrow view of this issue and argue, in essence, that diplomacy is conducted by diplomats and that the institutions of bilateral diplomacy are alive and well (Berridge, 1995: Ch. 2). This does not accord with reality or the tenor of the continuing reviews within national foreign services as to what they do and with whom they should engage in doing it. The diffusion that has occurred within an expanding foreign policy community is exemplified in the EU and it is a commonplace observation that 'traditional diplomats' – as distinct from officials from member state sectoral ministries – no longer comprise the greater element in the staffing of the Permanent Representations in Brussels. Beyond this development, however, there is an increasing recognition that the execution of international policy demands the construction of networks of interaction based on the exchange of resources which are no longer the sole preserve of government. To a considerable degree, this acknowledges the challenge presented to the conduct of diplomacy by the growth of civil society and its representatives, particularly non-government organisations (NGOs) (Cooper and Hocking, 2000).

The European Diplomatic Environment

Within the multilayered environment generated by interactions of institutions, member state governments, subnational interests and extra-European actors, we are presented with a number of lines of enquiry regarding the ways in which the general diplomatic puzzles identified above manifest themselves. One of these concerns the patterns of intra-EU negotiation which, as noted earlier, may be regarded as 'beyond' diplomacy with its state-oriented connotations. Thus, for example, Jørgensen (1997) cites one

observer's prediction that we are witnessing the end of 'traditional' European diplomacy as intra-European diplomacy is replaced by democracy. This is reinforced by the changing, if still significant, role *vis-à-vis* officials from sectoral ministries, played by national foreign ministries and their diplomatic networks within the EU arena (Hocking and Spence, 2002).

Closely related to this is the debate on the impact of EU membership on member state diplomacy. As Manners and Whitman put it, 'does this act as a constraint or opportunity in the pursuit of international goals?' (2000: 10). Not surprisingly, the conclusion is that this depends on context as determined by the issue and how responsibilities for it are distributed between the national and European levels, the character of the member state, and the extent to which the latter places an issue within what Manners and Whitman categorise as four 'rings of specialness' in terms of its international foreign policy interests (2000: 266–8). Having said that, the general burden of evidence is that the intersection of bilateral and multilateral arenas has transformed the patterns of diplomatic interaction between member states and between them and other international actors, both state and non-state (Soetendorp, 1999: 155; Hill and Wallace, 1996). Taking the instance of the UK, White notes the reconfiguration of British diplomacy as 'British representatives are locked into a complex, well-established, multilateral *and* multileveled process of foreign policy-making' (2001: 132). In terms of diplomatic capabilities, EU membership has added to what Ginsberg has termed the 'weight' and 'reach' of British diplomacy, providing a multilateral framework within which bilateral diplomacy could be anchored. That this might not be a cost-free exercise in terms of the diplomatic leverage over British external policy that such a strategy affords other EU states has also been noted. One of the key tests here for UK diplomatic strategy lies in the demands posed by balancing the demands of EU membership with the recalibration of the 'special relationship' at a moment of transition in American politics.

A further dimension of diplomatic adaptation concerns the impact of EU membership on the structure and operational forms of national diplomatic systems with the possibility that we are witnessing a convergence in diplomatic style and practice. This is noted in the working style of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) and the processes of diplomatic socialisation which have been identified as a key aspect of its operation (Blair, 2000). Apart from this, and the legacy of European Political Co-operation (EPC) noted earlier, there are other socialising forces at work amongst the EU member state diplomatic services reinforced by administrative working groups such as the CFSP Committee on Administrative Affairs (COADM) within Directorate General (DG) External Relations. Apart from the latter's focus on administrative issues relating to foreign services, it is also concerned with diplomatic training (Duke, 1997: 6).

This leads us into the area of a 'European' diplomacy viewed as the logical outcome of the evolution from EPC to the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Just as

this demands that we reconsider the fundamental characteristics of foreign policy and do not simply extrapolate from state-based definitions and criteria, so with diplomacy. Although we have a reasonable amount of evidence regarding the development of European diplomacy in the field, in the shape of the requirements under the Maastricht Treaty – and subsequent developments in the Amsterdam and Nice treaties – for co-operation and consultation between member state missions and in terms of the role of the delegations (Bruter, 1999), this is clearly concerned with diplomatic process rather than broader diplomatic 'style' issues and, often implicitly, rests on the assumption that a European foreign service would possess characteristics not dissimilar to those of national diplomatic systems. At the same time, those ambiguities apparent in the conduct of EU diplomacy noted earlier (including its 'stateless' dimension) are clearly visible in the tensions between, on one side, a growing diplomatic capability in the form of developments such as the High Representative created in the Amsterdam Treaty and a strengthened system of co-ordination in external affairs established at the Nice summit and, on the other, a continued adherence to intergovernmentalism in these sensitive policy areas.

Thus whilst the CFSP can be used as a tool of national foreign policy, at the same time the tools of CFSP are largely constituted from the diplomatic resources of the member states. As Keukeleire notes:

> While declarations of the Council or EU representatives may still be labelled the CFSP's 'own' instruments, most of the other instruments are put at the CFSP's disposal by member states, or are instigated by member states, in particular by the member state that plays a central operational role in CFSP diplomacy as (temporary) chair of the Council of Ministers. (2000: 10)

But he goes on to make a more telling point in the context of defining a European diplomacy. Not only is the image of CFSP often cast in terms of an ideal type of foreign policy, to focus on the second pillar may distort our overall perceptions of an emerging European diplomacy. Rather than solely CFSP-focused, an analysis of EU diplomacy should also embrace intra-EU diplomacy and what he terms EU 'structural' diplomacy. This transcends the different pillars and has as its core aim the development of structural change in those regions of the world with which the EU has differing forms of relationship. Amongst other things, this draws our attention to the fact that what might be regarded as innovative in EU diplomacy may lie outside CFSP and in, for example, the sphere of trade diplomacy with its complex patterns of public and private sector interactions. Focusing on the Commission delegations, Bruter suggests that the constraints and expectations which have developed around the delegations means that they 'have had to find some adaptive and original ways in which to formulate and carry out their activities' (1999: 193).

In relating broader dimensions of change in the structures and processes of diplomacy to the European arena, we are confronted by two interlinked

layers of complexity. On the one side is to be found the changing nature of diplomacy as it adapts to shifts in the configuration of both domestic and international environments. A key lesson here is that the idea of 'traditional' diplomacy – equated with state-based foreign policy – as a yardstick against which to measure some new mode of 'European' diplomacy, is problematic in as much as the 'traditional' is itself enmeshed in processes of profound change. The second layer of complexity lies in determining the character of what is 'European' in this context.

Patterns of Diplomatic Change

A dominant theme in diplomatic change which has considerable significance in the EU policy milieu is the compression of time and space. As Keohane and Nye have suggested, however, it is not so much the increase in 'message' velocity which marks out the present era, since the major quantitative leap in the speed of communications occurred in the 19th century (Keohane and Nye, 2000: 113–14). Rather it is 'institutional velocity', the intensity of interactions (what they refer to as the 'thickness' of globalism) and the responses of the actors to this that marks out the present era. The impact of this on the conduct of foreign policy has become a familiar theme. What Ammon has termed 'telediplomacy' is now seen as a key feature of the policy environment affecting the outcomes as well as process of foreign policy (Ammon, 1998; Tehranian, 1999). Consequently, the ability to respond speedily to the ever-quickening flow of events is deemed a key measure of actor capacity and this is reflected in the organisation and operation of diplomacy. Indeed, for Der Derian, speed has become a critical dimension of what he terms 'techno-diplomacy' wherein 'diplomacy becomes governed as much by the velocity of events as by the events themselves' (1987: 208).

Frequently related to the changing relationship between space and time, the concept of 'virtual diplomacy' has become a buzzword within diplomatic circles on a par with globalisation – and is used with commensurate imprecision. At its most general level, as defined by the US Institute of Peace's virtual diplomacy programme, it relates to the application of communications and information technologies (CIT) to diplomacy. More specifically, it has had two impacts on the organisation of diplomacy: first, to enable the rapid establishment of 'virtual embassies' – perhaps no more than a laptop, modem and satellite phone in a hotel room – as several countries did in the course of the Bosnian conflict (Smith, G., 1997: 156). Second, CIT has reconfigured the relationships between foreign ministries and overseas missions, giving the latter a more direct role in the formulation of policy (Eldon, 1994: 22).

In the EU context, this temporal-spatial dimension has been noted by Ekengren and Sundelius (2002) in their analysis of the response of the Swedish diplomatic system to EU membership. This, they suggest, has been marked by the diminution of control over the time-sequencing of the policy

processes at national level as these are set increasingly at the European level. They note that within CFSP procedures, the division of national diplomats into working groups means that they are operating on different timetables. As the sequencing of policy formulation and presentation is made more difficult by externally imposed timetables ('... the national present is, if not disappearing, seriously squeezed between narrow time slots of demands for quick action', Ekengren and Sundelius, 2002: 246), the capacity to anticipate outcomes assumes a key feature in both diplomatic process and structure.

At another level, enhanced economic interdependence has helped to redefine the very nature of what is 'inside' and 'outside' the state as the development of a global economy increasingly breaches the uncertain distinctions between domestic and foreign policy arenas. Thus the transformation of the trade agenda from border issues to matters of sensitive domestic political concern, often touching on subnational competencies, carries with it significant implications for the conduct of diplomacy. The growth of the regulatory state is accompanied by modes of regulatory diplomacy as represented in US–EU conflicts over hormone-treated beef and genetically modified foodstuffs (Vogel, 1997). Taken together with the emergence of a global agenda epitomised by issues such as climate change and AIDS, we have witnessed a marked growth in the technical qualities of much contemporary negotiation and an emphasis towards multilateral and mission-oriented diplomacy (Cooper and Hayes, 2000). However, rather than eroding the role of traditional bilateral diplomacy, this has promoted a meshing of bilateral negotiations with those conducted in a growing range of multilateral forums.

Despite the oft-heralded demise of bilateral diplomacy, it is notable that the role of bilateralism within the EU arena secures considerable support. Regelsberger argues that bilateral diplomacy, rather than being rendered redundant, is acquiring enhanced significance because increased majority voting requires governments to engage in coalition-building on issues of key importance to them. Consequently, in terms of diplomatic machinery, bilateral links between member states appear to be gaining in importance as influences over the decision-making processes in Brussels (Paschke, 2000).

Bilateralism as coalition building, however, has changed the role and functions of bilateral representation. Rather than gathering and transmitting large quantities of information which can now be acquired through other channels, the aim is to provide detailed analysis and interpretation of the position that member states are adopting on specific policy issues. Additionally, in the CFSP environment, the much more limited power of the EU in the second pillar means that 'bilateral diplomatic contacts remain essential for creating the required majorities or consensus, for formulating compromises within the Council, and for mapping and reconciling the member states' – sometimes contradictory – interests and sensitivities' (Keukeleire, 2000: 5).

A further point regarding bilateralism relates to the role of national missions in third countries and the requirements of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) for co-operation between these missions and Commission

Delegations. Observers – particularly those concerned with the smaller member states – tend to draw the conclusion that the CFSP has increased the significance of national representation as third states attach more importance to it as part of the EU 'whole'. Once again, the emphasis is not so much on information gathering as *sharing* information with other missions and Commission Delegations. But what is more significant here is not the relative importance of one or other of the two traditional modes of diplomacy, but the way in which they are being interwoven, producing a form of 'bi-multilateral' diplomacy, 'bilateral in its procedures but multilateral in its purposes' (Correia, 2002: 204).

The interpenetration of domestic and international policy arenas, well-developed in the EU, has had the effect of politicising the diplomatic environment. Nowadays, the process of ratifying agreements often involves a continuing dialogue with interested domestic constituencies alongside international negotiation (Evans et al., 1993). This has meant that the demands for co-ordination have expanded from the horizontal plane represented by intra-bureaucratic linkages to the vertical plane of intra-societal relations. Part of this process is reflected in a renewed concern with what has conventionally been regarded as public diplomacy. Engagement with both foreign and domestic publics has long been one sub-theme of the 'new' diplomacy debate, but has been given added significance by the need and ability to influence key policy constituencies through the exercise of 'soft' power reflecting changed policy agendas (Nye, 1990: 188; Leonard and Alakeson, 2000). One manifestation of this is the growing significance of image management in world politics as governments, business and NGOs seek to utilise it both as a power resource and a mode of managing the processes of regionalisation and globalisation (Hocking, 2000). Rather than a form of public diplomacy in which manipulation of foreign publics through the dissemination of what might be deemed as propaganda, what is now required – as a report on the reform of US diplomacy argues – is active engagement with both domestic and foreign publics and their representatives in civil society, based on transparency and information sharing (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1998: 94–8). In the European arena, the management of image can become a key preoccupation, as Berlin discovered in the context of claims made against German firms by Holocaust victims and their descendants.

Arguably, however, it is in the sphere of commercial diplomacy where the most significant changes are occurring. In the era of the 'competition state', patterns of diplomacy between firms and governments have developed and expanded, encapsulated in Strange's depiction of 'triangular diplomacy' (1992). Governments throughout (and outside) Europe are devoting more and more of their diminishing diplomatic resources to commercial work. Hence the FCO spends 27 per cent of its budget on this area, its largest single item of expenditure. Not only this, but the organisation of commercial diplomacy is under continuing review throughout member state capitals. In the UK instance, a significant development has been the centralisation in 1999 of all commercial promotion activities by creating a single authority,

British Trade International. As Lee has noted, this area is one that is largely ignored in discussions of the changing diplomatic arena, but the implications are significant, not only for national diplomatic systems, but in the EU context also for the evolution of forms of collective European representation (Lee, 2001; Walzenbach, 2001).

Much of the change occurring in the diplomatic environment has been related to adaptation in national bureaucratic structures. Overlaying these, however, is another transformative layer, relating to the implications of deterritorialisation and transnationalism for governmental actors – of obvious significance to Europe and the EU. Here, the focus has often been on the points of discontinuity between differing categories of actor, indicative of zero-sum arguments regarding their respective capacities. As Risse-Kappen and others have noted, the transnationalism literature has too often suggested that the significance of transnational relations lies in their separateness from intergovernmental patterns, with states seen primarily as targets of transnational actor activity as the latter undermine national sovereignty. Rather, what is interesting are the linkages between state- and society-oriented patterns in world politics, and how governmental/transnational coalitions are formed, penetrate one another and are managed (Risse-Kappen, 1995). Moreover, far from being eclipsed by the state, the latter's domestic structures become key explanatory factors in determining the nature of transnational actor behaviour and influence.

This symbiosis between state and non-state actors creates the background for the development of forms of 'catalytic' diplomacy (Hocking, 1999). This rests on the recognition of growing interdependencies between actors flowing from interlinked autonomy and resource dilemmas as they seek to maximise their freedom of action in the pursuit of policy goals whilst devising strategies to compensate for resource deficiencies. Consequently, bargaining relationships are created in which key resources – wealth, knowledge and legitimacy – are traded between actors possessing differing resource bases (Krasner, 1995; Reinecke, 1998). It differs from other designations such as 'track two' or 'unofficial' diplomacy in as much as these are usually employed to indicate supplementary negotiations primarily engaged in by governmental elites. Indeed, these may be associated with catalytic diplomacy but are qualitatively different both in terms of actors and objectives. The multilayered diplomatic processes characteristic of the EU provide an environment in which not only governmental actors operate, but also the representatives of business and civil society.

The implications of this for diplomacy lie outside the narrower confines suggested by some earlier, bureaucratic, phases of adaptation. That is not to say that these are irrelevant, for they have become a key theme in analyses of member state responses to Europeanisation, as reflected in the focus on co-ordination. If anything, the processes of bureaucratic diffusion and consolidation are likely to be enhanced by these developments. However, they are overlaid by a growing emphasis on establishing channels of communication with civil society organisations (CSOs), particularly NGOs. This is most

clearly developed in multilateral diplomatic environments (O'Brien et al., 2000). Increasingly, however, the development of NGO linkages has become a recurrent theme in all aspects of diplomacy. To take the UK as an example, the trend towards engaging both business and NGOs has gained momentum in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) under the Blair government. In late 1999, a staff member of Amnesty International was seconded as third secretary in the British embassy in Manila (Williamson, 2000). The development of an NGO secondee scheme, reflecting the Labour government's commitment to an 'ethical' foreign policy, complements a well-established system of secondments from business, underscoring the 'commercialisation' of diplomacy. In France, the Heisbourg Report, in criticising the inward-looking character of French diplomacy and its relative insulation from international influences, also pointed to the need to adjust to an international environment in which traditional diplomatic processes are modified by the emergence of informal networks in which non-state actors play a prominent role (Clarke, 2000).

Similarly, dialogues with civil society are becoming increasingly institutionalised within the EU diplomatic environment. This is well established in some areas, particularly development co-operation, where NGOs have been actively involved since the 1970s. More recently, the shaping of international trade policy, stimulated by the impact of the Seattle WTO summit, is now accompanied by a structured Trade–Civil Society Dialogue between the Commission and NGOs (Mackie, 2001).

Images of Diplomacy 'Gatekeeping' and 'Boundary-spanning'

Taken together, these developments indicate a need to re-evaluate traditional assumptions concerning the boundaries of diplomacy and, indeed, the role of diplomacy in mediating boundaries. A powerful image underpinning state-centred analyses of diplomatic processes is that of 'gatekeeping', which rests on a number of linked assumptions regarding the nature of foreign policy and those involved in it. The most fundamental of these is the assumed centrality of the territorial state and the primacy attached to the control of boundaries and the communication flows that cross them. Associated with this are the traditional claims made for the special qualities to be found in foreign policy, inscribed in its 'foreignness', reinforced by its equation with high policy and the pursuit of an identifiable national interest. At the practitioner level, the machinery of diplomacy seeks to establish control whilst recognising the need for co-ordination in the face of a much more diffuse international policy environment. These strategies are most likely to be rooted in the conceptualisation of co-ordination as a hierarchical, top-down process in which the foreign ministry, aided by the diplomatic network over which it presides, assumes the role of dominant central agency.

It is not simply that this image fails to accord with the essence of the developing EU polity, it has tenuous roots in the historical development of European (and non-European) diplomatic systems.

A contrasting image, and one more useful to the interpretation of the European diplomatic environment, is presented by that of 'boundary-spanning' whose essence resides in the changing character and significance of boundaries, both territorial and policy-related. Whereas much of the globalisation and regionalisation literature would accept the notion of boundary porosity, it would go on to suggest that this implies that boundaries have ceased to be significant. Scholte, for example, regards *transboundary* activity as the defining quality of globalisation (1997: 431). From another vantage point, however, border porosity, whilst implying significant change in policy processes, has rendered boundaries more significant. Thus Ansell and Weber (1999), in adopting an 'open systems' perspective on sovereignty derived from organisation theory, suggest that boundaries are fluid and contingent. Rather than viewing organisations as autonomous and strictly defined by their environments, 'they are simultaneously continuous with and demarcated from' these environments (1999: 77). Boundaries, rather than being fixed and permanent, reconstitute themselves in response to shifting patterns of interactions. Far from being irrelevant, therefore, they become sites of intense activity as they are enacted and re-enacted. In such an environment, actors capable of assuming the role of mediators or brokers assume a special significance: 'They aim at modulating, regulating, and sometimes controlling what kinds of resources, signals, information and ideas pass in and pass out of the semi permeable membranes that are the boundaries of the organization' (Ansell and Weber, 1999: 82). In so doing they operate both outside and within the organisation, assuming a diversity of forms in both the governmental and non-governmental arenas. Lobbyists, management consultants, think-tanks, epistemic communities – each may discharge such mediating functions.

This perspective provides an alternative – and, in many policy contexts, more relevant – set of criteria for understanding the role of diplomacy, particularly in complex and densely configured milieus such as the EU. The continuing need to reconstitute sovereignty, combined with a recognition of the advantages conferred by juxtaposing the qualities inherent in sovereignty-endowed and sovereign-free actors, places a premium on structures able to adapt to environments marked by high levels of uncertainty and ambiguity. As Henrikson argues, it is the very qualities implicit in what he terms the *associative* nature of diplomacy that enable it to perform valuable functions in world politics (Henrikson, 1997). This it can do by offering a channel between domestic and international environments in the processes of regime construction, enhancing the transparency of international institutions and, thereby, their legitimacy in the public eye, and assembling and co-ordinating a range of interests in combating global problems. Perhaps most significantly, in a world that is marked by significant levels of cultural conflict, diplomats, through their generic mediative skills, are well placed to 'weave'

understanding out of the conflicts over value and institutions that divide communities (Henrikson, 1997: 22–4).

Rosenau takes this theme further when suggesting that we are witnessing the emergence of a world constituted by intermingling 'spheres of authority' (SOAs) in which people may develop affiliations to a variety of entities alongside the state, none of which can lay claim to be the focus of ultimate loyalty: 'people will learn to balance diverse and even conflicting commitments in the absence of a terminal state' (Rosenau, 2000: 12–13). As they do so, Rosenau sees a crucial role for diplomats who, using their experience and skills, should be well placed to assist in the creation and legitimisation of new patterns of social contract between individuals and a plethora of SOAs.

Whereas the gatekeeper image rests on the assumption that its key objectives lie in controlling national boundaries and insulating the state from its environments, the boundary-spanner image defines this in terms of mediating within and across spaces created by points of interface between the state and those increasingly fluid environments. In other words, the logic of boundary control is replaced by a logic determined by an awareness of the limits of control combined with the needs of access to, and presence in, these environments. This, combined with enhanced permeability between domestic and international policy, strengthens the claims of other bureaucratic actors to a voice in international policy and weakens the identity of 'foreign' policy as a category in its own right endowed with distinct qualities which, in turn, demand the maintenance of special policy processes. Bureaucratic bargaining rather than the hierarchical model of co-ordination which, as suggested earlier, is no stranger to the management of the international environment, consequently becomes far more prominent. Co-ordination, as has been amply demonstrated in the case of the EU, becomes a matter of facilitating information flows and sharing 'lead' department status on international issues (Kassim et al., 2000). Equally, as EU-focused lobbying adopts multiple routes of influence, some within and others outside national channels, the co-ordination of national policy becomes at once more critical, yet more elusive (Van Schendelen, 1993: 277).

This is by no means intended to suggest that such a role is easily adopted. In terms of intra-EU diplomacy, part of the problem for member state diplomacy is adapting to a situation in which the demarcation lines between what is not yet a European 'domestic' policy but is neither 'foreign' policy, are increasingly blurred. Rather than a single layer of co-ordinating activity, the EU represents a clear example of the layered co-ordination model within which the foreign policy machinery assumes a role, but not the sole or even dominant role. Lead departments working closely with Commission directorates-general assume a major role here, identifying the implications of Commission policy initiatives for other departments, informing the foreign ministry, and consulting affected domestic interests and their opposite numbers in other member states. And, of course, 'domestic' ministries will establish their own European co-ordinating divisions concerned not with the detail of policy but with the co-ordination of the underlying principles

informing that policy. This produces a very decentralised pattern in which the processes of co-ordination become diffused throughout bureaucratic systems.

The overall picture that emerges is one of rapidly shifting boundaries between political arenas as political and bureaucratic actors respond to a more complex environment. 'Gatekeeping', or the attempt to maintain single channels of access between these arenas, is no longer a practicable objective. Rather, what national governments appear to wish to achieve is some measure of coherence in their national positions towards Brussels, and this has both an upward (EU) and – in the case of the decentralised states such as Belgium and Germany – a marked 'downward' dimension towards regional governments increasingly aware of the significance of the European level of policy-making for their own interests.

Diplomacy and Policy Networks

In the light of the trends discussed above, it is not surprising that network imagery has gradually come to be applied to selected areas of diplomacy and negotiation. In particular, the portrayal of EU diplomacy in network terms has become common, gaining expression in concepts such as multi-level governance which challenge intergovernmentalist explanations of EU policy processes. The literature on policy networks, particularly in the EU context, is replete with warnings as to the ambiguity and imprecision that surrounds the term (Jönsson et al., 1998; Pfetsch, 1998), and whether it represents a 'model' or a 'metaphor' (just two of the words which are commonly employed in network lexicology). Moreover, the literature is characterised by a growing typology of network structures such as 'advocacy coalitions' and 'discourse coalitions' as well as 'epistemic communities', a manifestation of the phenomenon more familiar to students of IR (*Public Adminstration*, 1998). But underpinning these various conceptions is the proposition that networks are indispensable in managing increasingly complex policy environments by the promotion of communication and trust. In this sense, a policy network can be defined as 'a set of relatively stable relationships which are of a non-hierarchical and interdependent nature linking a variety of actors, who share common interests with regard to a policy and who exchange resources to pursue these shared interests acknowledging that co-operation is the best way to achieve common goals' (Stone, 1997: 5).

This is the fundamental principle on which Reinecke's concept of global public policy networks rests (Reinecke, 1998, 2000). Starting from the premise that globalisation has highlighted the deficiencies of governments, both acting alone or in concert, in terms of their scope of activity, speed of response to global issues and range of contacts, he identifies the significance of the emergence of networks incorporating both public and private sector actors. It is not, he suggests, that multigovernmental institutions are irrelevant, but that the more diverse membership and non-hierarchical qualities of public policy networks promote collaboration and learning and speed up

the acquisition and processing of knowledge. Employing language that has a resonance in the EU context, 'vertical' subsidiarity, in which policy-making is delegated within public sector agencies, has to be supplemented by 'horizontal' subsidiarity through outsourcing to non-state actors. Underpinning the argument is the recognition of the value of division of labour between actors in specific policy settings and the advantages inherent in their respective qualities. If governments are not helpless pawns, neither are they dominant. NGOs, for their part, need openings to diplomatic networks, both bilateral and multilateral, if they are to maximise their influence over internationalised environments such as the EU. This creates a more subtle and nuanced pattern of relationships between state and non-state actors than the conflict stereotype which is frequently suggested. Esty and Geradin, in discussing the most effective form of regulatory system, argue that this is provided by what they term 'co-opetition' – a mix of co-operation and competition both within and across governments and between government and non-governmental actors (Esty and Geradin, 2000).

As Jönsson et al. note, in the EU networks are multidimensional phenomena and assume positions along a continuum of forms which can only be determined by empirical research (Jönsson et al., 1998: 326). Whilst it is beyond the scope of the present discussion to engage in the kind of analysis that would fulfil this requirement, we can identify some of the most obvious variations in the constitution of such networks. A major factor likely to be influential here is the broad character of the diplomatic site. In this context, Coleman and Perl provide a typology of four sites: intergovernmental, multilevel governance, private regimes and what they term 'loose couplings' (1999: 701–7). One of the differentiating features of these sites is the degree of governmental presence, from high in the case of intergovernmental sites to low in the case of private, self-regulatory regimes and loose couplings, where interactions between transnational and governmental actors will tend to be relatively sparse and unstructured. In the context of European and EU diplomacy, examples of each of these forms are clearly visible. As Keukeleire notes, a focus on the CFSP provides a much more traditional, intergovernmentalist diplomatic environment in which the range of actors is limited and in which foreign ministries play a significant role. This stands in contrast to his depiction of pillar-transcending 'structural' diplomacy as defined earlier in this chapter, which is 'centred around quite an extensive agenda of institutionalised dialogue between very diverse actors from the EU and the third states concerned' (Keukeleire, 2000: 25). The constituent networks on which this dimension of EU diplomacy rests embrace not only a proliferation of governmental actors but, as noted earlier, NGOs and other representatives of civil society.

The 'loose couplings' end of the Coleman and Perl network spectrum provides an increasingly rich yet, in traditional diplomatic imagery, unconventional field of activity which European diplomacy is exploring both within and outside the broader and narrower (EU) confines of Europeanness. Often, the form of network resembles that referred to as an 'issue network', based

more on a mutual interest in pooling knowledge and ideas rather than a highly developed sense of shared values. Moreover, each is characterised by a varying degree of 'co-opetition' between actors which confers on it significant elements of fragility and uncertainty. It is often noted that such networks, whilst they are differentiated from hierarchical structures in the sense that they are based on vertical organisational principles, are not hierarchy-free. Some actors are likely to be critical nodes in the network, or 'linking-pin organizations' as Jönsson et al. term them: 'Some actors are able to control communication channels between actors that are unable to communicate directly' (1998: 328).

Conclusion

Change is occurring within both diplomatic processes and the diplomatic systems which remain amongst their most significant agents. The long (and continuing) story of intra-bureaucratic adaptation – a dominant theme in the development of European integration – has been overlaid by the need to construct policy networks that transcend the state, reflecting the resource deficiencies experienced by both governmental and non-governmental actors. Within the EU, the resultant patterns of interaction are particularly complex, given its multilayered nature and the possibilities that these provide for member states to pursue their own diplomatic strategies within and alongside an emergent European diplomacy. In turn, this requires us to re-examine the stories that diplomats tell themselves about what they do and how they do it – in other words, the constitution of diplomacy and its practitioners.

The resultant, indeterminate picture is one of ambiguity and contradiction reflecting the uncertainties surrounding the analysis and practice of foreign policy and the interplay of differing dynamics. One conclusion would be to view the emergence of a pan-European diplomacy as the logical and final stage in the development of the European project, reflecting in part the reintegration of the domestic and the foreign whose separation provided the rationale for the development of European diplomacy in the post-Medieval world. Another is to view the development of a nascent EU diplomacy as the 'rescue' of national diplomatic systems (Allen, 1996). Yet another appears to lie in the tensions between these images as the drive towards the construction of a European diplomatic identity faces the growing 'commercialisation' of national diplomacy and the preoccupation with brand and image in the pursuit of enhanced market share in a competitive global economy.

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