

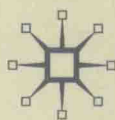
STUDIES IN DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

GENERAL EDITORS: Donna Lee and Paul Sharp

SUSTAINABLE DIPLOMACIES



Edited by
Costas M. Constantinou and
James Der Derian



Sustainable Diplomacies

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Studies in Diplomacy and International Relations

General Editors: **Donna Lee**, Senior Lecturer in International Organisations and International Political Economy, University of Birmingham, UK and **Paul Sharp**, Professor of Political Science and Director of the Alworth Institute for International Studies at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, USA

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*To Demetra, Daphne and Glafkos in Nicosia and
to Catherine, Marguerite and Walter in Northampton.*

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This book is the product of two meetings at which its contributors were asked to present papers and discuss the theme of sustainable diplomacy and global security. The first meeting took the form of a two-day conference held at Ledra Palace, UN Buffer Zone, Nicosia, in December 2007 and was hosted by the Cyprus Centre of the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO). The Nicosia conference was not just academic but meant to inform local stakeholders at a period of diplomatic stalemate; not, however, in the sense of telling them what diplomatic initiatives they needed to undertake in order to reignite the peace process, but rather in highlighting diverse practices of diplomacy and their application around the world, and from which they could draw their own lessons. Based on the positive reception in Nicosia and the high quality of the presentations, we decided to hold a second workshop at the Watson Institute of International Studies at Brown University in May 2008. At this event, and with a view to publication, discussants were also invited and papers revised as well as additional papers presented.

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Introduction

Sustaining Global Hope: Sovereignty, Power and the Transformation of Diplomacy

Costas M. Constantinou and James Der Derian

Can diplomacy be saved? Can diplomacy save us?

Take a singular event highlighting hope and the possibility of redemption like the awarding of the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize to US President Barack Obama. It does not constitute an epoch but it did signify a profound rupture from past practices. Lost in the controversy over the worthiness of the recipient and the debate about rewarding aspirations rather than actual accomplishments was the message itself: diplomacy would once again be in the service of peace and cooperation rather than of war and violence. Diplomacy was in the lede of the announcement:

The Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided that the Nobel Peace Prize for 2009 is to be awarded to President Barack Obama for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples.

It was in the body:

Multilateral diplomacy has regained a central position, with emphasis on the role that the United Nations and other international institutions can play.

And it was in the finale:

His diplomacy is founded in the concept that those who are to lead the world must do so on the basis of values and attitudes that are shared by the majority of the world's population.¹

Obama's concept of diplomacy is not a new one. Nor is the rehabilitation of diplomacy an exclusive effort of the current US administration.

Global publicity aside, it is doubtful that a single leader, well-intentioned or not, can consummate such a shift in the *Zeitgeist*. But after a decade of growing wary as well as weary of 'war on terror', unilateral foreign policies and preemptive exceptionalism (rendition, torture and global anomie), the diplomatic shift of the most powerful player in world politics can only be welcome. The question we wish to ask is how do we transform hope into action, opportunity into reality; how, in other words, to make the kind of diplomacy projected in the Nobel award sustainable?

We argue that diplomacy should not only be concerned with advocacy, policy implementation and public relations but also – and more crucially – with innovation and creativity, experimentation in finding ways and terms under which rival entities and ways of living can co-exist and flourish (including biodiversity and future generations). The major challenge with regard to diplomacy, and this book, is how to engender normative, yet pragmatic change, how to make possible a shift from practices concerned with preserving specific, and perhaps unsustainable, ways of living (such as preserving an ethnocentric or mono-cultural or consumerist or individualistic way of living) to practices that are more cosmopolitan and accommodating of alterity, practices that emphasize self-knowledge and are open to identity transformation.

Specifically, the diplomacy we outline entails at least two senses of sustainability, and the chapters that follow address one or both senses. The *first* sense concerns the 'durability' of diplomacy as opposed to the 'disposability' of diplomacy post- but also pre-9/11. Exhausting diplomatic options can be perceived as a delay in getting desired results and a form of appeasement to a party that displays unwillingness to accept another's specific demands and ultimatums. From this angle, using force may be viewed as a means of getting desired results more expediently, and that may sometimes be so, though at the cost of enhancing durable relationships with others. An anti-diplomatic tendency (Der Derian, 1992) can thus become dominant in the name of national and global security. By highlighting diplomatic sustainability we aim to support a diplomacy that is peace-preserving and peace-making though not necessarily pacifist (and of course we realize that the call to use force and its extent opens up wider debates about norms of legitimation that we cannot fully examine here but are examined elsewhere; e.g. Der Derian, 2009). To this end peace should be broadly conceived, not as the mere absence of war or violence but as a state of being that includes justice, security and solidarity.

Secondly, sustainability takes the viewpoint of the long-term reconciliation and/or coexistence of competing entities and ways of living. From this perspective diplomacy's role becomes that of a reflexive praxis. It includes

willingness to accommodate and learn from other ways of living but also to revise one's own way of living and doing things. The shift from national-interest diplomacy to regional- or global-interest diplomacy is substantial yet can also be rhetorical; thus the need to remain vigilant and critically reflexive about the discourse of sustainability, subalternity, humanitarianism, and other normatively loaded concepts. It certainly does not mean that the pursuit of a global interest is necessarily less violent than the pursuit of a national interest; but it does mean that the preservation of other ways of living is more likely to be acknowledged and supported within a more holistic, regional, or global-interest framework.

Perhaps the first step towards a sustainable diplomacy is to restore diplomacy as a virtue. If we are to follow Aristotelian terms (1934), to be a diplomat *ab initio* entails the notion of being a 'good diplomat' (the two are inseparable). The ethical imperative is not to take diplomats as they happen to be but as they ought to be if they are to realize their telos or functional excellence. The virtuous diplomat should not be an obedient servant but potentially a challenger and modifier of policies, including of the policy one is called to serve.

This is where Aristotelian virtue is complemented by Machiavellian virtuosity. Note Machiavelli's advice in his letter to Raffaello Girolami that in order to discharge his embassy to Spain *not just faithfully but adequately*, he needs to get to know not only the character of the sovereign to whom he is sent but also of the sovereign who sent him and skilfully adapt his practice in order to mediate between them (Machiavelli, 1522/2004, p. 41). The point is further exemplified in Bruno Latour's reflection on none other than the famous Talleyrand, specifically that the diplomat's role is that 'he imposes on the very ones who sent him [a] fundamental doubt about their own requirements' (Latour, 2004, p. 216). Diplomats may not always have the opportunity to do that; specific conditions of practising may not allow critique but only advocacy. Yet the point to make here is that besides implementing foreign policy objectives diplomats ought, on the basis of the diplomatic encounter, to raise questions and doubts, not only about the position of others, but about the position of their own government. In other words, the virtuous diplomat should be able to advise and experiment on what modifications are necessary to negotiate terms of amity, agreement or co-existence.

Diplomacy in the twenty-first century

At the onset of the twenty-first century the prestige and practice of diplomacy had sunken lower than probably any time in recent history,

and to that extent President Obama had an easy act to follow. In times of desperation – with or without glimpses of hope – temptation grows to compare the present condition to an imaginary past. High on the list of golden ages would be the so-called classical era of diplomacy when a corps of Great Ambassadors representing a condominium of Great Powers exercised Great Responsibility to bring a hundred years of peace; that is, of course, in certain territories of Europe and until the same corps also helped usher in the Great War. Closer scrutiny reveals more cracks in the mirror that we hold up to the present. ‘Civilizing processes’ cloaked hegemonic agendas and coercive treaty-making; universal reason, upon contact with alien beliefs, proved to be little more than a cultural norm of convenience framing negotiation; the lowest Machiavellian practices were justified in the name of the highest Kantian ends; and class conflict was displaced and magnified by imperialism into a global civil war, the consequences of which are still being felt in the international system. In the history of diplomacy there is as much if not more to disappoint as to celebrate.

Rather than gaze backward in fear or nostalgia, one can use historical insight to plot progress towards a new appreciation of diplomacy. Indeed, diplomacy needs and is bound to be re-appreciated in the post-Bush era. After a POTUS (President of the United States) who aspired to be LOTFW (Leader of the Free World) sent his highest diplomat, Secretary of State Colin Powell to obfuscate and misinform, if not lie to, the UN about WMD in Iraq, whose Ambassador to the UN, John Bolton, advocated the decapitation (‘take the top ten floors off’) of the UN Secretariat Building in New York, diplomacy can *only* improve. In sharp contrast, Presidential-candidate Obama repeatedly voiced his willingness to talk to world leaders declared *persona non grata* by his opponent; in his first week as President, Obama made a commitment for ‘engaged diplomacy’; and in the first six months of his office, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton travelled over 100,000 miles to 30 countries and held countless town hall meetings, to conduct ‘not just diplomacy between government officials [but] diplomacy between people’.² After eight years in which diplomacy was not just disengaged but disposable, as strange as it might sound, Obama appeared to offer a more realistic option. To follow on the main principles of one of the founding figures of classical realism, Hans Morgenthau (1985, pp. 584–6), diplomacy under Bush was infested with a crusading spirit that aimed at global salvation rather than the establishment or preservation of peace. What is more, and here we argue contra Morgenthau, it perpetuated the division of the world through the essentialist and simplistic categories of ‘us’ vs. ‘them’, an

increasingly uneasy and often senseless binary for dealing with complex global problems such as security, the environment and financial crises.

Let us leave partisan politics aside and intuitively consider the future of diplomacy. Is diplomacy still a viable institution? Can it still inspire hope to resolve major problems and enhance global peace, security and solidarity? Writing about these issues in North America, the negatives scream at us from the headlines: failure to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a war against terror that we are told one day can be won, the next that it cannot; between a war in Iraq that was declared over, yet grinds on; and, more generally, between the way things are and the way we would wish them to be. Yet, when considering these issues from our first vantage point in Cyprus – a nation with its own ‘protracted problem’ and the gravestone of many an aspiring diplomat – one cannot but recall the faultline of diplomacy’s modern origins. From the orientalized Byzantine practice that Harold Nicolson saw as responsible for transmitting the ‘defects of duplicity and suspicion’ (Nicolson, 1954, p. 27; cf. Constantinou, 2000) to fifteenth-century Italian diplomats instructed to take their cook with them (to avoid poisoning) but leave the wife behind (to avoid loose lips), we should not be too quick to ascribe immaculate origins and practices to the art of diplomacy. No immaculate origins means no perfect futures either.

A negative spirit seems to rule the world of diplomacy and muzzle hope – which is why Obama’s message appeared so appealing to both US voters and Nobel Peace Prize jurists. Worse, this negative spirit seems to accelerate as the news cycle shrinks, as classical diplomacy gives way to its public form. Inordinate means are too often and too quickly applied to ill-conceived ends; hegemonic agendas pass off as humanitarian practices in the global media; strategies of sovereign power cause or exacerbate problems, overrule and spin off their lack of resolution. Great moments of hope, like 11/9, when hammer blows to the Berlin Wall marked a symbolic end to a half-century of Cold War diplomacy, are too easily reversed by global events of terror, like 9/11, when kamikaze aircraft piloted by jihadists crashed into the Twin Towers.

Yet disappointment with diplomacy is not a new phenomenon. Those versed in the literature of diplomatic studies recall the classic debate between ‘old’ and ‘new’ diplomacy, a contest with moral undertones recurring at different stages in history, and referring to calls for diplomatic change as well as reactions to such change. To be sure, the terms *old* and *new* diplomacy have their analytical limits and are perhaps overused in the literature; but the compelling need to account for – if not to demand – changes in diplomatic conduct is quite revealing of how