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Burst Diplomacy
The Diplomacies of Foreign Policy: Actors and Methods

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Approaches to diplomacy tend to be restrictive because of an exclusively interstate insight. Indeed, historically, the state monopoly over diplomacy has always been challenged by private actors. Today, it is defied both from the inside because of growing public fragmentation (every ministry tends to lead its own foreign policy; subnational authorities develop their diplomatic relations) and from the outside (the business sector and civil society play a growing role on the international scene). This proliferation of actors has transformed diplomatic methods. Beyond the binary division between "old diplomacy" – bilateral, secret and resident – and "new diplomacy" – multilateral, public and itinerant – this article shows that diplomacy has to adapt to number and complexity. Therefore a more global conception need now be considered. Diplomacy today is a system of multiple actors using diverse methods in order to coordinate positions of common interest in a competitive and sometimes hostile environment.

Keywords: Diplomacy; Foreign policy; Subnational authorities; Business actors; Social movements.

Although diplomats seem quite interested in studies on diplomacy, the academic community tends, on the contrary, to disregard this area of studies in international relations. Perhaps the scarcity of reading material on the subject, or the need for field knowledge from diplomats themselves, or the proximity with foreign policy, account for the small amount of academic research on diplomacy.

An initial difficulty arises since the terms "diplomacy" and "foreign policy" are indistinctly used to designate the way actors – mainly states – act, react or interact on the

international scene, that is, in an environment other that the one in which they are supposed to exert their sovereign authority. Approaches to diplomacy tend to vary between a history of diplomacy – understood as an interstate history of international relations (Calvet de Magalhães 1988) – and an approach through techniques of interstate relations management (Nicolson 1988-1939; Bull 1977-1995) or the "art" of negotiation (Freeman 1997). These specific approaches seem all the more unsatisfactory since the definition of diplomacy is "monstrously imprecise" (Marshall 1997, 7).

It is most difficult to draw a line between an extensive conception, which assimilates diplomacy and foreign policy, and a restrictive conception, which sees diplomacy as a mere instrument of foreign policy. But approaches to diplomacy also tend to be restrictive because of an exclusively interstate insight – a debatable approach both because interstate relations do not necessarily go through official representatives and because states are not the only actors with the means to assert themselves *vis-à-vis* the outside and therefore lead a "foreign policy".

The position adopted here is to start with a few highlights on actors and methods which enable us to consider how at the same time they serve and mould the expression of a given foreign policy. We will point out the transformation of the bounds of so-called diplomatic activity, the broadening of its content and its possible evolutions. We will here call "foreign policy" that of states, which does not preclude further investigations on foreign policy diplomacies of non-state actors. Our implicit reference will be to Western states, which does not mean our reflections are uniform or may be generalized to all other states.

The Erosion of a Monopoly

It is only at the end of a long historical process that the formulation and leadership of foreign relations have been concentrated in the hands of the State and of a specialized administration. Until the end of the 18th century, many private actors – benefiting from a delegation of power or not – were still able to act as substitutes for the State and to compete with it. Religious actors, business companies and corsairs populated the international scene. Commercial and maritime law, for instance, were mostly drafted and shaped by private actors and private interests. All these private actors have progressively been submitted to greater and more powerful authorities. State monopoly imposed itself as in other fields (taxation, justice, policing) (Elias 1939-1975). Benefiting from this process of centralization to the benefit of the State, the administration of foreign relations became specialized and professionalized, thus reinforcing the role of a specific Department of State/Ministry (here called Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Retrospectively, the 19th and 20th centuries appear as the "Golden Age" for this ministry, which then exerted undivided authority on the definition of

public foreign guidelines and their implementation through a body of well controlled agents. But, this image of a gatekeeper of foreign relations is actually too simplistic. The control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) over foreign policy and diplomacy was never exclusive. The permanent characteristic is, rather, that of a conflict of rivalries between the MFA and other administrations also willing to assert their prerogatives in the foreign field: Treasury, Defence and Trade, among others (Hocking 1999a). At the 1919 Versailles Peace Conference, the MFA staff represented only a quarter of the French delegation (Anderson 1993, 134). A large proportion of international activities already eluded professional diplomats. However, this diffusion of diplomatic activity remained circumscribed within public authorities: neither subnational authorities nor private persons could participate on their own behalf. This principle of exclusion is officially based on a certain number of prohibition acts still effective today such as the 1799 Logan Act in the United States (sometimes reactivated in order to remind some American citizens that they cannot entertain direct relations with a foreign government without *prior* authorization from the US government, but based on which nobody was ever condemned) (Berman and Johnson 1977). But evolutions are actually far more meaningful. From the point of view of the history of diplomacy, it is quite striking to highlight that in parallel with the consolidation of a State monopoly over foreign relations – which is, itself, intrinsically competitive –, diplomatic activities have penetrated a growing number of departments and mobilized more and more actors. The internationalization of societies (Devin 2001) as well as the development of means of information and communication plays a major part in the process.

Public fragmentation

It is quite rare today for administrations not to deal with their own "international relations". Apart from the aforementioned ministries with which the MFA has long had to make do, the Home Secretary, the Ministries of Justice, Industry, Education, Culture or Environment currently conduct their diplomatic activity through multiple programmes and teams of "diplomats" with various *statuses*. In the field, many embassies have been transformed into cooperation and information agencies in which the Head of mission is only, at best, the coordinator. Already in 1997, 63% of the staff officially working under the authority of the United States or assimilated were not employed by the State Department (Talbott 1997). In practice, they reported – directly or indirectly – to other authorities of tutelage (Kennan 1997).

In parallel with this growing competition between ministries, the position of the MFA is twice eroded. It is first of all gnawed on from the top through summit diplomacy and direct exchanges between Heads of State and Government. This form of interstate relations

favours the concentration of the powers of negotiation and decision within restricted groups of advisers under the direct authority of the head of the Executive branch (Reynolds 2007). Professional diplomats are not systematically cast aside, but they are not necessarily associated with the highest level. In other words, the development of summit diplomacy cannot be explained only through "technical" reasons linked to means of transport or modern communication. Political decision-makers advocate this form of diplomacy both to get around what they perceive as bureaucratic burdens or resistance and to reassert their legitimacy and their power (Putnam and Baynes 1987; Dunn 1996). The collaboration of special emissaries, who "cross" professional diplomats with the help of "diplomatic cells" depending directly on the Head of State or Government, epitomizes this tendency towards the centralization of diplomatic activity in the hands of the Executive.

From the bottom, subnational authorities also tread on the usual territory of MFAs. The impact of the 1970s economic crisis and the public sector deficit which ensued triggered – with different shapes and under different conditions – a movement towards a sharing of responsibilities with the central State ("new federalism", autonomic devolution or decentralization). This movement, amplified through economic interdependence and regionalization, has strengthened the autonomy of infra-state authorities, stimulated their initiatives to attract foreign investments and, more generally, reinforced their interest in various modes of international cooperation. For instance, in 1997, the fifty federate states of the United States all had a commercial representation abroad; there were only four in 1970 (Mathews 1997). Though variable according to the capacities of the local authorities concerned (the situations of California and French Lozère differ greatly), this new situation has contributed, for the most endowed entities, to the development of "micro-diplomacies" (Rutan 1988) either through lobbying central authorities or through direct international action. These local interventions with an international scope tend to blur the borders between federal, national and sub-national interests, between domestic and foreign concerns, in fields as numerous as economics, education and further education, environment or development aid. They do not, however, necessarily submit themselves to the contents and procedures of central diplomacy. Sometimes by being complementary, sometimes by competing, they introduce another element of complexity in the very steering role which is officially that of MFAs (Hocking 1993).

MFAs seem better able to master action in the framework of associative diplomacy within a union of states. Coordination is then crucial and enables the "control tower" function, as France's former Minister of Foreign Affairs Hubert Védrine puts it, that some Foreign Secretaries would wish their administrations to endorse. The European Security and Defence Policy within the European Union so far remains an exclusive domain. As for inter-ministry coordination in the perspective of negotiations between the partners of the

Union, it strengthens the horizontal blind trust of MFAs or of the ministerial structures in charge of European affairs (with various modalities depending on the member states) (Lequesne 1993). However, in an advanced integration process such as that of the European Union, the position of MFAs, here again, undergoes strong competition: either through negotiations at the highest level which give the main impulses (the European Council of Heads of State and Government), or through the *quasi*-permanent negotiation of the Union Council in which technical ministries dominate.

The fragmentation of state diplomacy in developed countries has become large-scale and is hardly debatable. MFAs try to make do by claiming a central role of coordination for themselves between the different government structures (Langhorne and Wallace 1999). But, since they need to accommodate an always broader agenda and limited resources, the task remains necessarily approximate.

Business autonomy

While States multiply initiatives to sustain economic growth and employment, diplomats are also part of the mobilization, be it through supporting and accompanying domestic companies abroad or through the promotion of domestic advantages for potential foreign investors. Heads of State and Heads of diplomatic missions are equally expected to play the role of *commercial representatives* of domestic economic interests. This situation is not new, since the search for commercial opportunities has always been linked to diplomatic activity, increasingly so with the development of Western industrialization. Institutionalization in this field has also adopted forms which grew more precise at the end of the 19th century (Anderson 1993, 130-4; Taylor 1999 102-3).

The movement is still amplifying. On the one hand, companies have become more and more valued actors; their performances now weigh on indicators of "economics of well being" which tend to dominate electoral competitions in democratic regimes and are therefore carefully scrutinized. Diplomats, who traditionally did not like to "pass the plates" (Mowat 1935), have had to adapt. Diplomatic administrations have therefore opened themselves to various business advisers – outsiders to the diplomatic carrier – and sometimes reorganized themselves drastically (in Australia and Canada, a merger of the ministerial structures of International Trade and Foreign Affairs occurred; because of bureaucratic resistance, the merger was eventually cancelled but both structures remain associated within a common department called Foreign Affairs and International Trade in Canada, Foreign Affairs and Trade in Australia).

In parallel, companies have also been invited to associate themselves with demonstrations of state diplomacy (industrialists frequently accompany state delegations

abroad). This business oriented diplomatic mobilization is often called "economic diplomacy": administrations other than Foreign Affairs may seem more qualified to perform it.

On the other hand, companies have acquired greater capacities since they have been able to organize transnationally and to use the heterogeneity of states. The phenomenon of so-called multinational companies (which are in fact more transnational than multinational) conveys further complexity to state diplomacy. "Triangular diplomacy" (Stopford, Strange and Henley 1991) conceptualizes the interactive relations between the mother states of the companies, the state of destination and the companies themselves, and highlights the new autonomy which transnational companies have achieved in their relations with states. Games of influence – often facilitated by the fact that all the decision-makers belong to the elite of power – and various pressures must be taken into account in order to gain advantages or support an initiative. But the authority of these companies is not limited to that kind of bargain, all the more so as the latter lose their interest once the companies possess their own contacts and local offices in order to deal with the daily business. Diplomatic offices are no longer the indispensable relays. The influence of transnational companies on diplomatic work is therefore to be witnessed in the preparation of multilateral negotiations (such as those of the World Trade Organization) or specialized conferences (such as those of the World Health Organization) in order for state representatives to reflect the interests of the main industrial groups as faithfully as possible and to protect a legal environment as favourable as possible (Cutler, Haufler and Porter 1999). In negotiations related to the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) Agreement within the World Trade Organization (WTO) and health related issues regarding AIDS, particularly, Western pharmaceutical groups are eager to ensure their hold on Third World countries' markets, especially for fear that Third World pharmaceutical products may invade Western markets. State diplomats therefore find themselves between the rock and a hard place, trying to combine economic and industrial interests on the one hand and humanitarian concerns on the other hand (Dixneuf 2003; Ryan 1998).

When it comes to valorising companies or to making do with their demands, state diplomacy must thus face two constraints: economic imperatives which have become more sensitive politically speaking, and economic actors, which have become diplomatically more active. International organizations themselves come to establish informal partnerships with multinational companies. For instance, the Global Compact between the United Nations (UN) and firms derives from an initiative launched on 31st January 1999 by the UN Secretary General at the World Economic Forum. It is based on existing UN documents and on the interest of both categories of actors. Companies benefit from the regulation installed by the international institution in various fields (peace keeping, security, but also trade and telecommunications regulation etc, through its various organizations). The

UN on the other hand optimizes its chances of attaining its objectives through several types of arrangements: direct or indirect financial contribution from the partner-company (through the creation of an organization or a charity), joint technical assistance projects, participation of the firm in the promotion of UN goals and activities or associations within cooperation projects. Firms are submitted to ten ethical principles (protection of Human Rights, respect of labour norms, protection of the environment, fight against corruption etc) and a certain number of obligations concerning the right to use the UN label – which is an asset for the company. The legal range of these principles is quite limited – they are more guidelines than actual rules – and sanctions remain political. Nonetheless, it is a way to bridge a "moral gap" (Kapstein 2001) and also a tangible example of how multilateral diplomacy extends to non-governmental actors.

The intrusion of the social factor

State diplomacy is not adapting only to markets; it is also opening up to societies. Though more or less spontaneous depending on administrative traditions and civil society dynamism, the process is quite general.

The influence of the media on diplomatic orientations and practices, though difficult to measure, is not new. It has followed the development of information and communication media over the last two centuries and is expressed both "horizontally", by making public opinion out of various opinions, and "vertically", by assessing decision-making, among other factors (Cohen 1986; Cohen 1998). With the acceleration of data transfer, the development of worldwide communication networks and the broadening of audiences, diplomatic and representation activities need to adapt (Hamilton and Langhorne 1995; Kurbalija 1999). The speed of events, triggered in the second half of the 19th century by the railway and the telegraph, has become a major constraint for "techno-diplomacy" (Der Derian 1987). Having lost the monopoly over information, diplomats are summoned to react rapidly, through means other than denegation and under the close scrutiny of observers who hold as much if not more information than they do. These observers are not only journalists or a few authorized persons, but also – what is new – non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which have expertise capable of contradicting "diplomatic truths" (Aviel 1999). Indeed, NGOs lead fact-finding missions that in turn make "shaming campaigns" possible. But NGO expertise now goes beyond merely contradicting "diplomatic truths": NGOs have the legal expertise (lawyers and other professionals on their staff) to build legal arguments which are requested and used by state diplomacy itself (members of NGOs were part of a the state delegations of Canada and Australia, for instance, during the negotiations on the Rome Status of the International Criminal Court). In fact, in an international context of

great diversification and broadening of objects of negotiation, state diplomats must seek legal expertise beyond their own expert teams (Törnquist-Chesnier 2007).

The world of NGOs is no less heterogeneous than that of states. By nature and by the scope of their activities (cooperation, development, human rights, humanitarian emergencies, environment, protection of children etc), by their financial power and their representative character, NGOs from the North present us with the most diverse profiles. Of course, these assertions must be qualified and huge discrepancies in financial and human resources exist between most powerful British or American organizations and more modest French ones, for instance. While French NGOs such as International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) have one or two lawyers working for them, Amnesty International has a whole legal department in London. Their relations with public authorities and particularly with MFAs vary greatly, from competition to association, via cooperation on specific matters (Devin, 1999, for an illustration of the French case). However, on the whole, the benevolent organizations have a "paradiplomatic" activity – made of contacts, information, support – which is sometimes encouraged, sometimes refrained by states. Official diplomatic activities are therefore always observed, and supported or denounced when relevant. The fact that intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) acknowledge and value the work accomplished by NGOs increases the level of pressure. More generally, diplomats must learn to act with many actors, and specifically here with social movements (NGOs, political parties, trade unions, associations, foundations, social economy) both at the level of central administrations and at that of diplomatic offices and international organizations. If practice evolves more or less rapidly when having to face what is perceived by some as these new constraints, the general tendency is nevertheless towards accepting the opening to civil society.

Both state diplomats and intergovernmental organizations multiply more or less institutionalized partnerships with NGOs and other social actors. The International Labour Organization founded in 1919 at the Versailles Peace Conference after the First World War embodies the oldest example of non-governmental participation in the multilateral game. The newborn organization assembled three types of actors: state representatives, representatives of organizations of employers and representatives of workers. Article 71 of the UN Charter establishes a limited participation of a category of non-state actors – international and, after 1996, a certain number of national NGOs – in the multilateral functioning of the international organization (consultative *status* with the Economic and Social Council). Practice and pragmatism have further integrated NGOs into the functioning of the UN: the Assembly found at some point that associating with non-governmental actors was a way around the paralysis which affected the Security Council during the Cold War. It also derived from a wish to democratize the UN. The Security Council itself has developed its relations with NGOs ("Arria formula" which enables the Security Council to hear people

whose expertise is likely to shed light on situations on which it must rule (Malone 2004)). The World Bank entertains various forms of partnership with civil society organizations: dialogue facilitation, collaboration and direct cooperation (Mulot 2004). Since 1996, the Secretariat of the WTO has organized symposiums for NGOs and since 1998, information meetings have been convened on a regular basis (for instance in March 2007 on the Doha Round). *Amicus curiae* ("friends of the court") procedures enable non-governmental actors such as NGOs, which possess legal or field expertise, to file such a procedure, to take part in dispute settlements before the International Court of Justice or the WTO Dispute Settlement Body (Ascensio 2001; Shelton 1994). Regional organizations such as the European Union also consult and integrate various non-state actors: Eurogroups, European Round Table etc. These non-state actors in turn provide support to European construction (Balme, Chabanet and Wright 2002; Saurugger 2003).

Neither diplomatic contents nor diplomatic methods belong exclusively to professional diplomats any longer. This fact is quite unlikely to be reversed. Intra-governmental competition and the intervention of non-state actors force foreign policy administrations to permanently seek collaboration and adaptation as the multiple reforms to "modernize" MFAs since the 1970s show (Hocking 1999a). As state diplomacy is opening up and diversifying, the borders between public and private are blurred, domestic and international interests are intertwined and orientations and techniques confounded at the service of a "total diplomacy" (Plischke 1979; Hamilton and Langhorne, 1995).

The Diversification of Methods

Diplomacy is plural in its actors and diverse in its methods. This element is often underlined in the classic opposition between "old and new diplomacy". Very roughly, the former would be bilateral, secret and resident, whereas the latter would be multilateral, public and itinerant. Reality is of course all in nuances; it proceeds by accumulation rather than exclusion. Over time, diplomatic methods have not been opposed but rather added one to another, their novelty therefore being quite relative. Let us take multilateralism: alliances, leagues, coalitions or summit conferences have been around for a long time. Multilateral negotiations have increased because of the growth in the number of state actors and international organizations. If they are more visible than bilateral agreements, the latter nevertheless remain much more important in inter-state relations, quantitatively speaking: today, France is party to more than six thousand treaties, 80% of which are bilateral agreements (Conseil d'État 2000). So what diplomatic action offers is not so much to resort to this or that method, but rather the possibility to combine them in multiple ways.

Multiple, complementary factors

For most authors there is no opposition between the old and the new diplomacy, but only an evolution and an adaptation of diplomatic tools and style. Complementary elements dominate (Sofer 1988). The idea is commonly accepted as far as relations between multilateral and bilateral diplomacies are concerned: both techniques are perceived as reinforcing one another. Multilateral diplomacy, understood as the negotiations of positions between three actors or more, [1] benefits from bilateral contracts and, reciprocally, the solution of bilateral disputes is broadly eased thanks to prolonged or repeated presence in international *forums* (Calvet de Magalhães 1988, 74-6). Particularly, the participation in United Nations multilateral diplomacy, prepared by a series of bilateral consultations involving the most developed countries, may also be the occasion to establish or consolidate new contacts for the countries that possess limited bilateral representation (Hamilton and Langhorne 1995, 200; Watson 1982, 173), as preliminary consultations in preparation for G8 summits illustrate.

The opposition between secret diplomacy and public diplomacy is mostly considered no longer relevant. In an old but still often quoted book, Nicolson (1988-1939, 42) distinguished between the political orientation, which could be public, and the negotiations which had to remain secret. Less reluctant in relation to so-called "fantasies of opinion", or having no other choice than to make do with it in liberal democracies, authors put their case nowadays in relatively equivalent words. Neither secrecy nor publicity should be absolute. It is all a matter of proportion, of measure, of degree in order to reconcile the demand for transparency and the urge for efficiency (Sofer 1988, 203; Ikle 1964, 131-6). The same goes for this quite vague category of "non-official diplomacy", which designates an intervention as either completely private or unofficially supported by public authorities, and which is generally considered as a contribution to official diplomacy rather than as an alternative to it (Berman and Johnson 1977; Rouhana 1999). As for itinerant diplomacy illustrated by the shuttle diplomacy practiced by some diplomats or special emissaries in order to facilitate conflict resolution between parties that do not have any contact with one another, it sometimes circumvents the institution of resident diplomats but does not question the function of the institution.

The list of "complementary elements" is even longer: the personal diplomatic action of some representatives can be combined with the routine diplomatic negotiation of administrations; summit diplomacy does not prevent the development of a "parliamentary diplomacy" within international organizations; the diplomacy of or within the United Nations may also accompany an "associative diplomacy" between regional organizations etc.

The multiplication of diplomatic methods to meet and to negotiate need no longer

be established. But it would be rather more debatable to assert that all these methods are neutral. The theme of complementary factors is a way of suggesting the capacity of diplomacy to adapt. This demonstration is only achieved, however, at the price of a strictly functional reading of diplomatic operation.

The extension of political uses

As long as methods remained reduced to a few practices shared by a restricted club of dignitaries, diplomatic interventions offered only limited room for manoeuvre. The diversification of available techniques and the growing number of actors have broadened the opportunities to employ diplomatic tools. Because actors can play alternatively or in a competing way on various modes of action, they calculate costs and benefits, create a pool of resources out of this and politicize their uses. The choice between bilateralism and/or multilateralism is a political decision, as is the one between secret and/or public negotiations, or resorting to one form of diplomacy or another (resident, itinerant, summit, administrative etc). No diplomatic technique is neutral and their combination is even less so: they loosen up control over action and proportionally increase the weight of calculations in engagements. Far from an aseptic vision of a collection of complementary methods, diplomatic techniques here provide an arsenal of tactical means at the service of specific interests.

Multilateralism is thus a means among others, even if it cannot be defined as being merely that. Encouraged by the United States in 1945 to reconstruct the post-World War world, it also carries with it a liberal conception of international order, both open and collective, destined to facilitate free trade and political democracy. In practice, however, it was first mostly a "minilateral" cooperation of Western powers (the United States and their Atlantic partners) (Kahler 1993, 295-326). Later, when multilateralism had become "omnilateral" by including all the states of the international system or most of them, conflicts arose far more frequently in its functioning. Unilateral retreats or threats of retreat from the most powerful, the constitution of coalitions (Leigh-Phippard 1999, 94-111) and multiple bargains politicized its uses, diminished its efficiency and left states with great liberty to negotiate bilaterally at the same time. When Ruggie (1993, 12) asserts that multilateralism is a "constraining organizational form" implying among other elements that States ought to renounce temporary advantages as well as a narrow conception of domestic interests and the constitution of coalitions, he actually designates an ideal form of multilateralism and not its real way of functioning. The latter is far more laborious. If parties persist in associating with it, it is at the same time by interest (direct advantages or participants rallying to their cause), by fear of what the others could decide (better be in than out of the game) or by routine (the advantages of which are not to be neglected by the professionals involved) (Strange

1985). In other words, the multilateral framework must be somewhat useful to States if they are to make use of it (Roy, David and Racicot (1999), on the instrumentalization of international security institutions by the United States under Clinton's presidency) and be of some use to non-state actors if they are to perceive it and speak for it as being a factor of democratization in international relations (Smouts 1999). Resorting to multilateralism is therefore not just a question of the resources linked to this diplomatic technique, but a matter of its advantages compared to those of bilateralism. It is the choice between several methods that increases the share of calculations and politicization.

Comparable observations may be made when one combines secrecy and publicity in diplomatic action. Because of the increase in the number of participants in international negotiations, the extension of media coverage and the potential mobilization of organized sectors of civil society, some secret practices have become quite difficult to implement. Sooner or later what is concealed now risks being unveiled. It is therefore more than ever necessary to deal with communication in order to avoid being embarrassed by uncontrolled revelations or, on the other hand, to ensure "leaks" reveal what public diplomacy cannot do by its own official methods (Berding 1979). The scandal that came about in 2010 with Wikileaks illegally and massively publishing secret American diplomacy documents highlights how crucial information has become and how vulnerable state diplomacy is to intrusions from non-state actors.

As long as secrecy was the *quasi*-exclusive modality in diplomatic practice, *information* was mostly that gathered about partners-adversaries. An *information policy* has been added to this traditional information because diplomatic activities and especially negotiations have become public. This information policy is nothing but a calculated balancing between secrecy and publicity. Here again, the choice between several options increases the opportunity of "political coups".

According to Barston (1988-1997, 120; 252), the diversification of diplomatic methods would characterize a "transition period" during which the international community would seek to adapt to number and complexity. Diplomatic innovation is surely a matter of adapting to the quality and to the multiplication of actors, to the state of communication media and to the breadth of objects of negotiation. But one may also rightfully believe that the overlapping of methods and their sometimes complementary, sometimes competing use is actually a structural feature of "new diplomacy", yet another expression of "total diplomacy".

Diplomacy as a System

Because of the complex ensemble formed by a plurality of actors and diplomatic methods, diplomacy may no longer be defined as "leading relations between sovereign states

through the mediation of accredited representatives" (James 1980, 936). A more global conception need now be considered: a system of multiple actors using diverse methods in order to coordinate positions of common interest in a competitive and sometimes hostile environment.

The answers given to the ever recurring question about "diplomatic decline" greatly depend on the chosen point of view. Indeed, either the definition of diplomacy remains restrictive and one must inevitably point to evolutions which reduce the part of traditional state diplomacy, resident and bilateral diplomacy, or the approach is broader, in which case the new protagonists, their mobilization and their multilateral relations represent as many elements, which testify to the dynamism of diplomacy. In other words, the issue about the "decline of diplomacy" appears as a false debate: one ought to define diplomacy before trying to ascertain a potential decline. Clearly, if a form of diplomacy mainly oriented towards the recognition of the state system is undergoing a relative decline, it is because diplomacy has expanded into other fields and that from an exercise reserved to a few professionals, it has turned into a multi-track system of action. From one age to the next, diplomacy remains active, but it is not exactly the same.

The rise of multiple diplomacy

There are countless conceptualizations that attempt to capture the specificity of diplomacy today: new, modern, global, total, multi-level, multi-multilateral etc. Among the most recent ones, the notion of "catalytic diplomacy", proposed by Hocking (1999b), recapitulates a certain number of tendencies in research by highlighting "the growing symbiosis between the activities of State and non State representatives" through multiple interactions taking place between the actors concerned by the foreign action of State. This remark joins the one about the numerous "invasions" listed by Marshall (1997, 10-18) and which have transformed the diplomatic scene: from the "economic invasion" to the "social invasion" by way of the "invasion" of new actors, new fields of information and new media providing information and communication. The list may always be reviewed but adaptations impose themselves upon state diplomacy from everywhere. Even when some conjunctures of diplomatic crisis give back to the State its security functions and puts them on the frontline, and when diplomatic initiatives are refocused around specialized administrations, the latter must always deal with internal public opinion, NGOs in the field or potential economic interests not to be scared away. Generally, the threads of diplomatic action are growingly woven by multiple tracks. This *multi-track diplomacy*, identified especially in peacekeeping operations (Diamond and Mac Donald 1996), leads one to see diplomacy as a system, that is to say, as an ensemble of state and non-state actors in which the action of

each more or less depends on that of the others. As long as the process of administrative de-compartmentalization and growing autonomy of public actors – largely induced by the effects of internationalization (Devin 2001) – continues, this new diplomatic configuration may well last. It opens up new fields for research by questioning the intra-systemic relations of a "diplomatic community" which is no longer limited to the initiatives and the staff of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs or of their administrative equivalents: horizontal relations to grasp the degree of cooperation between all the actors involved and vertical relations to appreciate the degree of coherence of the whole.

Systemic unity in question

The State signs international treaties and agreements; it represents and engages the country at the bilateral and multilateral levels and in international organizations; it usually possesses the vastest and most diversified resources and capacities. The State, through some of its actors, therefore remains the centrepiece of the "diplomatic system". The executive branch, notably, and the specialized administrations are at the heart of the machinery: reactions and initiatives are to organize themselves around them. In the multi-track diplomacy system, the state holds the main "track" [2].

It is constrained by the effects of the system to which it belongs, but it remains the main reference of this system. It is the State that assumes the coordination and the monitoring in order for the system to keep, if not a unity of action, at least a certain number of complementary elements among its components by avoiding contradictions and channelling disputes.

As such, the State is a central and sought-after interlocutor. Contradictory demands converge towards it: some ask for "more State" in order to ensure the effectiveness of international engagements undertaken, while others, who sometimes come from the same non-governmental actors' camp, call for "less State" in order to take forward the idea of international justice to the detriment of inter-state political arrangements. State diplomacy does not escape these tensions. In the first case, it is perceived as a condition for the state society to reproduce itself and as a guarantee of stability thanks to commonly accepted functional rules. In the second case, it is considered a mechanism that perpetuates inequalities under the cover of formal rules and an instrument of state sovereignties that holds back the emergence of a "world society".

Neither of these conceptions is convincing for the mere reason that state diplomacy is no longer alone. One may certainly rejoice if the "multiple diplomacy" that now circumscribes it is a way of rendering more transparent the role of actors and the choice of methods that help make a state foreign policy. In this way, the transformations of diplomacy are not to be

understood as being technically neutral; they have a political effect that directly affects the definition and the orientations of foreign policy. But one may also worry about the risks of an excessive dispersion of "multiple diplomacy". Efficiency is also a condition for state authority. It is by no means certain that if it were erased, democracy and more solidarity would triumph in the international order. Here too, diplomacy is no second place object; to reflect upon its evolution is another way of thinking about the evolution of the State in international relations and that of international law. For international law the State remains the main actor on the international scene and therefore the only one accountable for its actions. The growing diplomatic or paradiplomatic activity of non-State actors and its impact on inter-state negotiations and decision-making at state level call into question the accountability of these new actors of diplomacy. Accountability is intertwined with credibility. Should the latter crack, non-state actors would lose their power on the international scene. The transformation of diplomatic practices deeply challenges our comprehension of interactions on the international scene.

Translated by Leandro Moura
Submitted in november 2010
Accepted in december 2010

Notes

1 According to Ruggie (1993, 14; emphasis added), "What distinguishes the multilateral form from others is that it coordinates behaviour among three or more states on the basis of generalized principles of conduct". This definition appears both too restrictive because states are not the only actors to "coordinate" their positions in a multilateral way, and too broad, since the definition of generalized principles of conduct is common to many bilateral or multilateral negotiations.

2 The idea of multi-tracks comes from the distinction between the official track of inter-governmental relations (Track I) and all the other informal and non-governmental diplomatic methods (Track II); see Montville (1991).

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