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Diplomacy: Theory and Practice

Contents

- Metaverse Diplomacy
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Metaverse Diplomacy

What is the Metaverse?

Marc Zuckerberg's announcement about Facebook's transition to Meta brought the concept of metaverse back in the spotlight. Yet, did you know that Diplo has extensive experience in Metaverse Diplomacy since 2007? On this topic page, you can discover what Diplo has done so far on Metaverse Diplomacy and follow what we will be up to next.

Watch the recording of the events:

Traversing the Metaverse: A Caribbean Perspective, with the participation of Diplo's Vladimir Radunović (Director, Cybersecurity and E-diplomacy) The Metaverse and International Relations, with the participation of Diplo's Katharina Höne (Director of Research) See also: Pokemon and Diplomacy in Augmented Reality

Diplomacy Island in Virtual Reality

In 2007, Diplo created a Diplomatic Island on metaverse platform Second Life where the Maldives had become the very first country to open a virtual embassy followed by Malta and the Philippines.

This section presents Diplo's experiments on Metaverse conducted in 2007. You can find further down excerpts from the original website of the 2007 experiment with metaverse diplomacy.

About Diplomacy Island in Second Life

Diplomacy Island is the next step in over a decade of research and development in the field of explore new possibilities for diplomatic representation and interaction. Diplomacy Island will also be another channel for Diplo's main mission of assisting small and developing countries in participating meaningfully in international relations. At the Island, Diplo will also promote development issues among Second Life citizens.

What is Second Life?

Second Life (SL) is an Internet-based virtual world with more than five million users worldwide have registered to become part of this virtual world developed by Linden Lab.

The users, or residents, interact with each other through mobile avatars, providing an advanced level of social network services. They can explore, meet other residents, socialise, participate in educational and social activities both individually and in groups, and create and trade virtual property and services with one another.

More than 60 universities have established campuses in Second Life, alongside many companies and media houses. Some of these are Aarhus Business College of Denmark, Harvard University, Leeds Metropolitan University, New York University, Newcastle University, Sheffield Hallam University, Stanford University, the University of Edinburgh and Virginia Tech.

Virtual Embassies at the Diplomatic Island

First Virtual Embassy ever: Embassy of the Maldives

On May 22, 2007, **the Republic of Maldives opened the world's first Virtual Embassy in Second Life**. The inauguration of this embassy took place in both the virtual and real world. In Geneva, in front of 200 guests, **Mr. Abdulla Shahid**, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Maldives emphasized how information technology and particularly the internet can be harnessed by small countries to help them participate meaningfully in international relations.

The Maldives Virtual Embassy is located on Diplomacy Island in Second Life. It was constructed on the basis of typical Maldivian architecture.

Virtual Diplomatic Library

Diplomacy Island hosts Diplo's Virtual Library.

Museum of Diplomacy

The Virtual Museum of Diplomacy is more than a typical museum. Its main function is to highlight the relevance of diplomacy to modern society, as opposed to the use of force. The Museum will present historical examples of the success of diplomacy.

Diplomatic Academy

The virtual Diplomatic Academy hosts sessions and panels related to modern diplomacy and themes such as environmental diplomacy, energy diplomacy and cyber diplomacy.

Internet Governance Village

The Internet Governance Village, a place dedicated to Internet Governance hosts panels, round tables and conferences on Internet Governance issues. Visitors have the chance to consult various books, articles and other materials on Internet Governance.

Science diplomacy

Science diplomacy has the potential to help us address some of the most pressing challenges of our time such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. In both cases science diplomacy has already illustrated its potential. Yet, we are still very far from achieving our global goals.

2022 is an important year to further shape the practice of science diplomacy and bring clarity to confusion.

Science diplomacy has become somewhat of a buzzword and is used in many different ways by different actors. So in the following, let us unpack the concept of science diplomacy and highlight some of its practices.

What is science diplomacy?

There are three types of science diplomacy (AAAS and Royal Society, 2010):

- **Science in diplomacy** is about the use of scientific advice for foreign policy decision-making. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) of the United Nations is an important example. Established in 1988, the IPCC brings together the latest scientific advice on climate change.
- **Diplomacy for science** often include large-scale research facilities, which given their cost and resource intensity can only be built through collaboration among a number of countries. The most example of diplomacy for science is the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), which was established in 1954 after negotiations between 12 founding member states.
- **Science for diplomacy** is the promotion of a more peaceful world through scientific cooperation. CERN is also an example of science for diplomacy. A commonly cited recent example of science for diplomacy is the Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East (SESAME), a research facility based in Jordan. It's members are Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Pakistan, Palestine, and Turkey. This is very notable as the diplomatic relationships between some of the members are very strained. Iran54 and Israel, for example, have not had direct diplomatic relationships since 1979.

How is science diplomacy conducted?

- Development and management of international cooperation
- Negotiations
- Diplomatic reporting

A good example of the practice of science diplomacy is CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research CERN. Its founding reveals two different aspects of practising science diplomacy. Have a sneak peak into our science diplomacy online course and learn more about CERN's origin story.

Why does science diplomacy matter?

Science diplomacy mirrors the importance of science for modern society from the fight against pandemics to nuclear non-proliferation and the fight against climate change. Science for diplomacy can also contribute towards more international cooperation and, ultimately, more peaceful international relations.

Who are science diplomats?

States and their representatives

The main actors are states. According to Flink and Schreiterer (2010) they are motivated to participate in science diplomacy by the following main goals:

- **Access:** Ensure access to 'researchers, research findings and research facilities natural resources and capital' (Flink and Schreiterer, 2010, p. 669)
- **Promotion:** Promote the country's research and development achievements
- **Influence:** Impact public opinions abroad and the opinion of foreign decisionmakers
- **Research cooperation:** Support participation in large-scale research efforts that would otherwise not be realistic or possible
- **Addressing global challenges:** Work towards addressing global challenges such as climate change

When it comes to putting these goals into practice, diplomats and official representatives are called upon.

Scientists serving as science attachés

Some of the first science attachés were scientists who were sent abroad to represent their country. We already mentioned the zoologist Charles Wardell Stiles, the US science attaché in the 19th century. The USA maintained one of the biggest networks of science attachés, including 24 attachés at the height of the science attachés programme in 1987 (Linkov et al., 2014).

The appointment of science attachés often follows broader strategic interests.77 In 2009, former US president Obama appointed three science attachés to Muslim-majority countries following his outreach efforts to the Muslim world (El-Baz, 2010).

Many examples of science attachés come from the Global North.78 However, looking more closely, we can identify cases of scientists acting as state representatives from the Global South. The term 'science attaché' is often not used in these cases, and does not strictly apply, but parts of the practice of these individuals do fit within a broader understanding of the work of science attachés. Hornsby and Parshotam (2018) looked at the participation of states from sub-Saharan Africa in international food standard-setting. They found that some 'scientists act as state representatives, advancing an interest-based position in negotiations around scientifically based international standards'.

Scientists who serve in this role need to have a good understanding of diplomacy and international relations. More often than not, their science communication skills are called upon. They also need to navigate a fine line between their role as scientists and their role as envoys. Science advisors working with foreign ministries have a global network called the Foreign Ministries S&T Advice Network (FMSTAN).

Officials from other ministries and national institutions

If we look at current case studies, we see that some science attachés are seconded from other ministries, national scientific institutions, and other relevant domestic stakeholders. Looking at the case of France, for example, Flink and Schreiterer (2010) found that science attachés 'are seconded from different institutional stakeholders according to their individual agenda with respect to the region' that they are sent to.

It is also worth noting that in some cases, other ministries, such as the ministry for the economy or science and innovation, take the lead on science diplomacy efforts. For example, South Africa created the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, which became the Department of Science and Technology in 2002, and was later renamed the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI). It aims to pursue a 'concerted science diplomacy strategy' (Pandor, 2012). Different institutional cultures and perspectives on the main goals of science diplomacy can, in these cases, complicate finding a coherent and sustained approach.

Diplomats with a portfolio that includes science and technology

Diplomats who serve as official representatives of their countries also practice science diplomacy. Some simply touch upon science diplomacy practices as part of their work. For example, trade negotiators might need to liaise and collaborate with scientists back home on specialised questions. Diplomats based in Geneva might find themself in meetings at CERN regarding their countries' membership.

In addition, career diplomats are also appointed to specific roles that give their practice a clear focus on science diplomacy. These include: special ambassadors or envoys for science diplomacy, scientific counsellors, and tech ambassadors.

Networks abroad

There are also outreach posts of states or groups of states for diplomatic and scientific interactions. They engage in science diplomacy, but do not have the status of an embassy. Sometimes they have the status of a consulate85, but only perform consular work in major emergency situations. Examples include:

- Switzerland's Swissnex network
- The Ibero-American Programme for Science, Technology and Development (CYTED) (Gual Soler, 2014)
- The UK Science and Innovation Network (SIN)
- Open Austria in Silicon Valley

Where is science diplomacy performed?

International organisations (IOs) are the main multilateral venue for science diplomacy. Examples of IO activities are:

- The UNESCO Science Report (every five years)
- The World Science Forum (every two years)

- A number of international science programmes
- The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS), which focuses on advancing science and scientists in developing countries

Future of meetings

In December 2019, Zoom reported 10 million daily users. Three months later, the number of Zoom's daily participants jumped to more than 300 million.
The COVID-19 outbreak has dramatically altered our daily routines, shifting our day-to-day activities from offline to online. Online lectures, meetings, and conferences skyrocketed following the pandemic. New conferencing platforms emerged while existing ones gained in popularity.

Expressions such as the **'future of meetings'**, the 'future of work', and the 'future of learning' have been used extensively, each referring to a specific field of our daily activities which have been impacted by COVID-19.

New challenges began emerging the moment we shifted to meeting online. Some of the setbacks are related to the existing **digital divide** between regions/countries that have the necessary access and capabilities to use information and communications technologies (ICTs) and the internet, and those that do not. Other challenges have arisen with the increased popularity and use of online platforms.

Tackling the challenges

Following the pandemic outbreak, Diplo launched its **ConfTech project** to assess the challenges and opportunities of the shift to online work and learning. Since then, ConfTech has been publishing **guidelines** on the use of various online platforms, and providing **advice to event organisers and moderators**, as well as **tips and tricks** for organising successful and effective online events. All of these resources are available below.

In May 2020, Diplo addressed the shift towards online meetings in its landmark **Future of Meetings online conference** which included almost 600 participants. The event explored the five main aspects of the future of meetings: technology, security, moderation, behaviour, and diplomacy. A summary of the discussions can be found in the report available here. The main aspects of the future of meetings will be tackled in the following sections.

Technology and security of online platforms

One of the recurring questions when organising online events is **how to choose the right videoconferencing platform**. The influx of conferencing platforms, each claiming to offer easy videoconferencing, leaves many meeting organisers puzzled. For this reason, Diplo has conducted a comprehensive and **comparative survey of online meeting platforms** and outlined the basic features of each one to help users select the right option.

It is also worth noting that a number of regions still face obstacles in regard to **internet infrastructure development** which, to a large extent, impact one's participation in online meetings. This is why an increasing number of platforms enable low bandwidth utilisation, by, for instance, adjusting resource usage depending on network conditions.

Online meetings are also prone to numerous **security and privacy challenges**. The sharp rise in videoconferencing increased the possibility of security breaches of all kinds due to security limitations of platforms. They can occur through participants' computers, via their internet connections and online meeting platforms, such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Webex.

'Zoom bombing' reports have been in the headlines ever since the pandemic broke out. Uninvited participants have been **hijacking meetings, classes, and conferences,** and using obscene language and visuals. On the other hand, manyfold leakages of **meeting recordings, transcripts, and participants' data** have come to public attention and led platform companies to tighten their security and privacy settings.

There are a number of ways users can secure their online events. For example, meeting hosts can require a password for meeting attendees, set up waiting rooms, lock meetings, keep their software up-to-date, and encrypt meeting resources, to name but a few.

Moving beyond technology: The importance of social interaction

While technology is key to online meetings, it is not the sole enabler of successful and efficient videoconferencing. **Efficient moderation of online events**, for instance, has become even more important for effective online meetings since participants are only a click away from finding something more interesting on the internet. Therefore, **moderators need to appropriately engage with the audience** by adapting content to online settings, avoiding long statements, interacting with participants through icebreakers such as **polls and surveys**, brainstorming and other collaborative activities, and be ready to improvise on the spot.

Good **planning and preparation**, such as preparing a scenario ahead of time, are key to conducting a successful online meeting. Time management is no less important. Below are some of the most important tips regarding **time management** during an online meeting.

ConfTech has also tackled the issue of good moderation and has published its *Do's and Don'ts for Online Hosts and Moderators*.

Emotions and social contexts are equally important. Often, it is hard to remain focused on the meeting, and being physically present does not imply cognitive presence. It has become even harder to resist distractions in the online environment where the abundance of interesting content is just a click away. Given that our **attention is limited**, keeping pace with an evergrowing number of video conferences will require making meetings brief and focused, and increasing the use of **interactive and engaging tools and approaches** as mentioned above.

Social interaction is indispensable to meetings. **Eye contact and body language** are an essential part of every meeting. However, many have addressed the challenge of reproducing this kind of

social interaction in the online environment. That said, one can still apply various aspects of body language to video conferencing by having a video on during the meeting, making eye contact by looking directly at the camera, paying attention to the posture, or replicating gestures used during the onsite meetings (e.g. hand gestures).

Another important aspect that appears in discussions about online meetings is the issue of 'conference extras', i.e. activities that are essential to onsite conferences that cannot be easily replicated online, such as **corridor discussions, coffee breaks, and networking events**. However, there is a growing number of online platforms that simulate networking events by offering online spaces where attendees can virtually move, reach out to other participants, and start **one-on-one and small group conversations**. One such platform is Wonder about which you can read more on our page 'How to use Wonder for hosting an event'.

The future of meetings: What to expect?

So, what will the future meetings look like? Certainly, online meetings and **hybrid (blended) meetings** are here to stay. Some of the reasons include the ease of attending a meeting from anywhere in the world, lower costs, and environmental benefits. This is why adequate digital skills, effective moderation, and understanding technology, security-related risks, and social contexts will remain the key aspects of meetings and conferences.

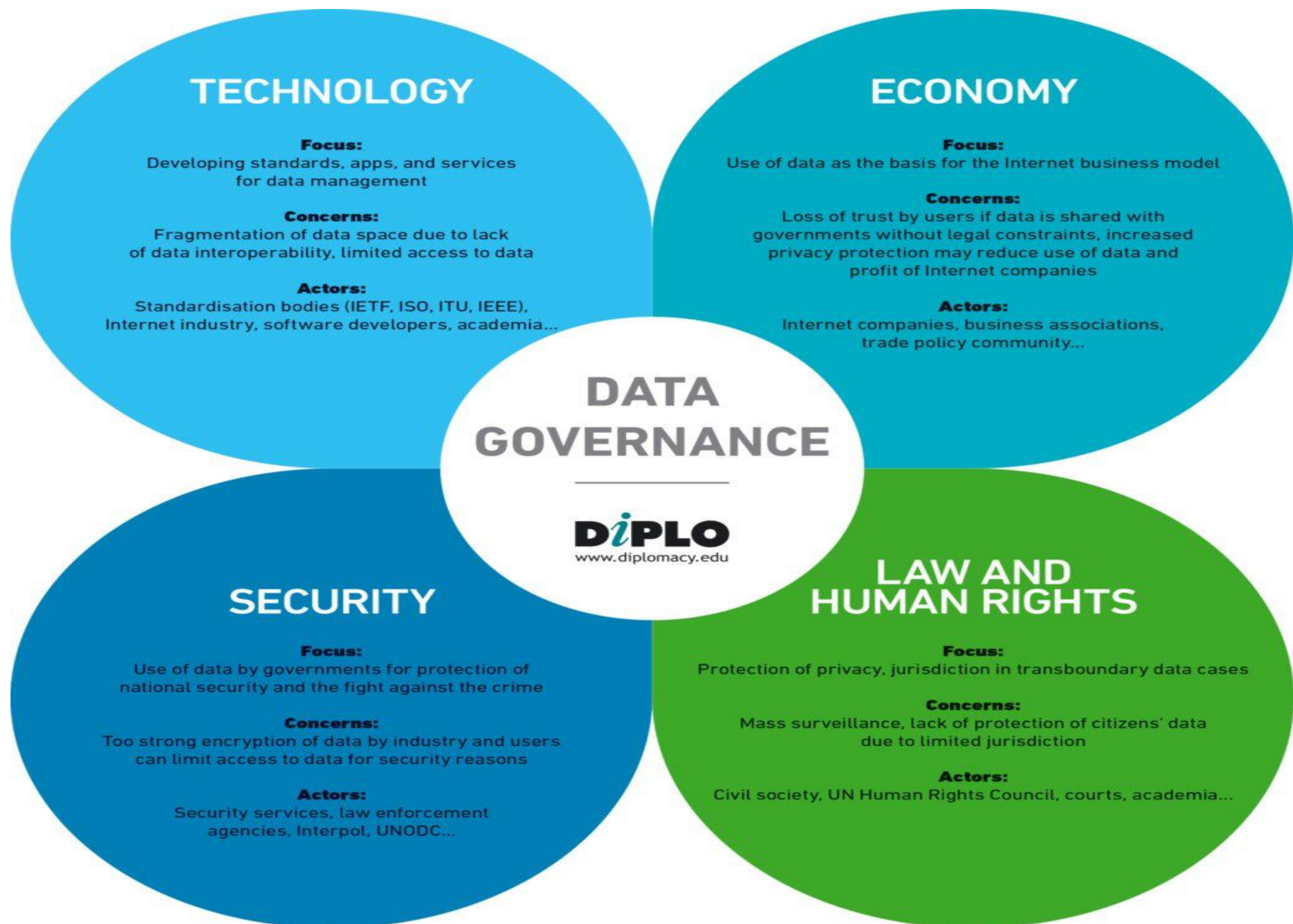
Data and diplomacy

In Focus: Reporting from eCommerce week on Data and Development

Described as the 'oil' of the 21st century, the potential of data to achieve breakthroughs in various industries and fields is significant. Diplomacy is no exception.

Data and diplomacy have three major interplays: data shapes digital geopolitics; data governance is a topic on the diplomatic agenda and data is a tool in diplomacy.

These interplays can be explored by grasping the cross-cutting nature of data governance, as shown in the image below.



At the **technical level**, data needs standards in order to be interoperable. Here, the work of standardisation and technical bodies comes into play.

At the **security level**, data is subject to many breaches. In the last few years, millions of email accounts, credit card information, social security numbers, and other personal data, were stolen. Data security is at the centre of activities of the tech industry and governments worldwide.

At the **economic level**, the Internet business model is based on data. The role of tech companies which handle and process users' data, and the role of authorities to ensure users and their data are protected, come into play.

At the **legal and human rights level**, the main issue pertains to the protection of users' rights, including the right to privacy and data protection as well as protection from mass surveillance. Since rules are anchored in geographical spaces, jurisdiction is often the main issue that arises in disputes. Courts are increasingly becoming de facto rule-makers. Civil society plays an important role in advocating for users' rights.

What is the difference between data, information, and knowledge?

Here are the details about the pyramide's three levels:

Data: Facts and figures which relay something specific, but which are not organized in any way and which provide no further information regarding patterns, context, etc. I will use the definition for data presented by Thierauf (1999): "unstructured facts and figures that have the least impact on the typical manager."

Information: For data to become information, it must be contextualized, categorized, calculated and condensed (Davenport & Prusak 2000). Information thus paints a bigger picture; it is data with relevance and purpose (Bali et al 2009). It may convey a trend in the environment, or perhaps indicate a pattern of sales for a given period of time. Essentially information is found "in answers to questions that begin with such words as who, what, where, when, and how many" (Ackoff 1999).

IT is usually invaluable in the capacity of turning data into information, particularly in larger firms that generate large amounts of data across multiple departments and functions. The human brain is mainly needed to assist in contextualization.

Knowledge: Knowledge is closely linked to doing and implies know-how and understanding. The knowledge possessed by each individual is a product of his experience, and encompasses the norms by which he evaluates new inputs from his surroundings (Davenport & Prusak 2000). I will use the definition presented by Gamble and Blackwell (2001), based closely on a previous definition by Davenport & Prusak:

"Knowledge is a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, expert insight, and grounded intuition that provides an environment and framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. It originates and is applied in the mind of the knowers. In organizations it often becomes embedded not only in documents or repositories, but also in organizational routines, practices and norms."

Making use of data abundance

In order to make use of abundance, the first question one should ask is what is the potential of data in diplomatic practice.

Data could be used to better inform foreign policy, measure foreign and domestic sentiments, or to monitor quickly-unfolding emergency situations. In addition to serving as a tool, data arises as a topic on the diplomatic agenda, from data-sharing between countries and the protection of personal data across borders, to the regulation of e-commerce data flows and international standards related to data. Finally, referring back to the oil metaphor, i.e. data becoming increasingly valuable, it can be regarded as a factor in geopolitical power dynamics, placing significant leverage on those countries and actors that collect, store, and control data and its infrastructure.

Diplo’s work on data and diplomacy

DiploFoundation has published a number of papers, policy briefs and blog posts (see below) on the topic of data diplomacy:

- Data diplomacy: Updating diplomacy to the big data era (February 2018)
- Data and international organisations: Navigating cross-sectoral data challenges (February 2018)
- Data diplomacy: Big data for foreign policy (October 2017)
- Leaving no one behind in the data revolution (August 2017)
- Data diplomacy: Mapping the field (April 2017)

Past discussions

- Data diplomacy and knowledge management – key skills for the next generation of diplomats (December 2016)
- Evidence and measurement in Internet governance (November 2014)
- Big data and cyberdiplomats: Big opportunities or big problems? (October 2013)
- E-participation webinar: Open data (May 2013)

Where is data governance addresses?

In the diplomatic context, data and related topics are addressed in international forums, but also at regional and bilateral levels. To illustrate, questions pertaining to data sharing have been addressed at the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) since its outset.

Regional bodies, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Council of Europe (CoE), and the Organization of American States (OAS), have tackled the protection of personal data, while the USA and the UK have, for instance, bilaterally negotiated the issue of data access by which British legal authorities can access data from American communications providers without review by US authorities, and vice versa.

Space diplomacy

The United Arab Emirates has launched the first-ever Arab interplanetary mission to Mars. Luxembourg has its own space programme. A few hundreds satellites, owned by the private company SpaceX, are in Earth orbit providing the internet in a few dozen countries around the world. More than ten space tourists have been to space transported by the private company Virgin Galactic. The only thing you need is to apply for it on their website.

As of today, more than 70 countries in the world have some kind of space programme, and a dozen companies are having or planning to have some kind of ‘business’ in space. The value of the space industry is estimated at 350 billion dollars.

The question is, are we in a new race in space in which companies are also participating, or even winning? Are there any rules and laws? Who monitors the enforcement of these rules?

Are we historically in the phase of conquering orbit and nearby celestial bodies as the New World and the Wild West used to be? What about the governance of orbit and space.

Stakeholders and actors

There are four categories of actors in the field of space technology and research: governments, (inter)national space agencies, private companies, international organisations.

World governments are stakeholders even if they are not involved in any space programme. The global impact of future space research and exploration will be great. In a positive way, this process will improve global knowledge and value, and in a negative way, it could ruin the local environment of different celestial bodies, increase space debris in orbit, or even start a war.

Governments that have their own space programmes or are part of some of them will have the opportunity to run the development of space exploration and to improve their own knowledge and technologies.

(Inter)national space agencies are motivated to be faster in their own battle for space discoveries and to gain as much new funding as possible for their projects. Space run is a matter of prestige, but much more a matter of new opportunities, new territories outside the Earth, new materials and minerals to be found, as well as knowledge.

The private sector in space activities

The number of private companies in the field of space technology is estimated at around tens of thousands. Some of them are engaged in satellite launch or manufacturing, some in propulsion and engine technologies, and some in future space services.

Today, after almost 15 years since the launch of the first private-owned rocket, we have companies capable of launching into orbit and bringing back reusable spaceships, or sending commercial ships with passengers to space … Some of them make launchers, small and nanosatellites. The number of private satellites in lower orbit is a few hundred, and they are visible even in the sky every night.

What could be future space projects?

The most common commercial use of space technologies will be tourism programmes, which will lead to the development of better and more economical spacecrafts. The biggest challenge is better autonomy of space crafts and automotive mechanical processes (they may be run by AI).

These space projects will go in two directions – research and colonisation. The Moon, Mars, asteroids, giant planets will be the missions of these space programmes. Some new space telescopes, such as the James Webb Space Telescope, will explore deep space or our galaxy. The technology of transforming ice or some minerals from the Moon or Mars will be used to produce rocket fuel or to create earth-like conditions for human crews in potential base camps.

International outer space law

In 2022, we celebrate 55 years of the first international law on space – the Outer Space Treaty. However, only 111 countries have signed this document by which humanity has decided that the celestial bodies must be used only in the common interest and for peaceful reasons. However, there are no rules for using the rest of space (between celestial bodies).

The treaty specifically prohibits the deployment of weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons anywhere in space. What about conventional weapons or some new hi-tech weapons?

Four other treaties have been adopted to reinforce the framework set by the Outer Space Treaty: the Rescue Agreement of 1968 (requiring states to assist astronauts in emergencies), the Liability Convention of 1972 (liability for damage caused by space objects), the Registration Convention of 1975 (all objects launched into outer space must be registered with the United Nations), and the Moon Treaty of 1979.

Five sets of principles have been established to support international law in this field: the Declaration of Legal Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space (1963), the Principles Relating to International Direct Television Broadcasting (1982), the Principles Relating to Remote Sensing of the Earth (1986), the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space (1992), and the Declaration on International Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space (1996).

The only international organisation dealing with space is the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA). It was initially formed as a small expert unit within the United Nations Secretariat to service the Ad Hoc Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, established by the General Assembly in its resolution 1348 (XIII) of 13 December 1958. Today it works to help all countries, especially developing countries, access and leverage the benefits of space to accelerate sustainable development. We work toward this goal through a variety of activities that cover all aspects related to space, from space law to space applications.

The end of 2021 brought some new international activities in the field of space regulations. The UN General Assembly First Committee (Disarmament and International Security) decided to start working on preventing an arms race in outer space, in November 2021. An open-ended working group was established to assess threats to space operations, determine irresponsible behaviours, 'make recommendations on possible norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours', and 'contribute to the negotiation of legally binding instruments' – including a treaty to prevent 'an arms race in space'.

COVID-19 and Diplomacy

COVID-19 has brought the world to its knees. With almost every country and territory reporting cases of the coronavirus, the world is having to adapt to a new kind of normal.
Online meetings have long been seen as a poor substitute for face-to-face ones. With the COVID-19 pandemic and the responses from governments around the world, this view has

changed. Online meetings are now a necessity for many organisations. The question is no longer 'should we use online meetings despite their drawbacks?' but rather 'how can we use online meetings effectively?' and 'how do we blend online with face-to-face meetings?' Our course on the Future of Meetings for Global Governance has just started. Interested in our next intake? Subscribe for updates.
Read also: DiploFoundation's online conference The Future of Meetings held on Tuesday, 12th May 2020, tackled the most pressing questions and issues on transitioning from offline to online, and how to resolve them. Read the Future of Meetings report

Addressing COVID-19 challenges

COVID-19, the infectious disease associated with a new strain of coronavirus, is claiming lives and bringing countries to a halt. The world is realising it needs to adapt fast to new ways of living, and new ways of work.

In this space, we share advice on how to organise online meetings, how to transition to an online work environment, how to make the best of online learning, and which tools to use for various needs. We provide our best resources on COVID-19's impact on diplomacy and global governance, and on technology's response to the global pandemic.

Plus, we invite you to join us for live discussions on various topics, from practical tools and methods to help you adapt quickly, to deeper conversations on the challenges the world is facing.

How is COVID-19 shaping diplomacy?

The spread of the new coronavirus is testing our globalised world. The world of diplomacy is particularly affected by these developments, as meetings, conferences, and other major events are cancelled.

During times of crisis, international cooperation is more than essential. Driven by necessity, diplomacy is adapting. For the first time, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will hosted their Spring Meetings online. The UN, EU and other organisations have moved from conference rooms to online spaces, triggering a profound change in the way diplomacy is conducted.

The accelerated transition towards online meetings and diplomacy requires three major changes:

1. Online platforms need to be improved to offer the stability and security required in diplomacy;
2. The social face-to-face dynamics need to be adapted to new online dynamics;
3. Many of the centuries-old rules of protocol need to be revisited.

A new 'hybrid diplomacy' which fuses traditional face-to-face meetings with organised online participation, and ad-hoc online meetings, is emerging quickly.

Find out more…

- **Diplomacy goes virtual as the coronavirus goes viral**
- **Online course on Online Meetings for Diplomacy and Global Governance**

Are artificial intelligence and data coming to the rescue?

In the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, digital epidemiology is emerging fast. We are witnessing the involvement of major tech actors who are exploring and exploiting the potential of artificial intelligence (AI), big data, and other emerging technologies in predicting, monitoring, and preventing the adverse effects of the crisis.

The use of AI is varied. Researchers are using AI to detect existing drugs that can halt the spread of the virus. AI is being deployed in the form of tiny robots serving food and providing medical help to quarantined people, or as chatbots that screen individuals and tell them whether they should be evaluated in case of possible infection.

The use of data enabled the prediction and identification of the pandemic. Data collected by BlueDot helped provide an early warning about the virus. Similarly, data collected by medical centres on patients' geographic location and infection situation, used as part of a database known as the National Infectious Disease Monitoring Information System Database, helped Chinese authorities identify the outbreak of the coronavirus.

Online data platforms are being used to track the spread of the pandemic worldwide. One such tool has been developed by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University, which gathers data from the World Health Organization (WHO), Centers for Disease Control, and the National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China.

Coronavirus COVID-19 Global Cases by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University (JHU)

The tool serves to combat what the *Washington Post* called a pandemic of misinformation about coronavirus. Attempts to regulate virus-related digital content and halt such an 'infodemic' have been initiated by both the WHO and major tech companies such as Facebook and Google.

The WHO, for instance, addresses popular myths related to the spread of the disease in its dedicated page on 'myth busters'. Google's efforts to address fake news include the activation of an 'SOS alert', while Facebook is removing false assertions and virus-related conspiracy theories posted on its social media platforms.

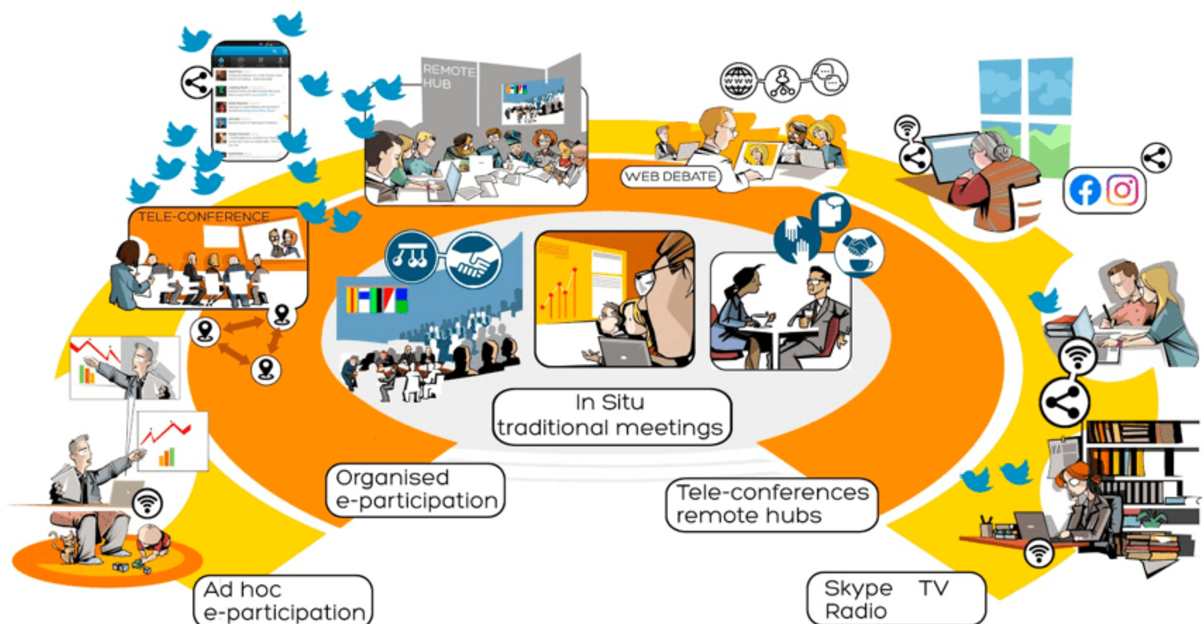
Find out more…

- **Coronavirus crisis: A digital policy overview, *Digital Watch* observatory**
- **The latest digital policy updates on COVID-19**

How do we go from onsite to online?

Online meetings, conferences, and other events have become more relevant as COVID-19 spreads (and spreads again), obliging people to observe social distancing rules. Hundreds of events have made the shift from onsite to online for the first time.

With over 15 years of practical experience in e-participation, the team behind Diplo's Conference Tech Lab suggest a two-step approach. First, one should decide on the type of event to be organised; second, one should choose a platform that fits the specific needs. Additionally, moderation – which depends on a smart blend of old and new skills – should be regarded as the tipping point that creates a unique online experience.



The need to transition from onsite to online goes beyond conferences. Millions of workers have turned to working online, increasing the time spent online, and blurring the line between work and family life. Knowing how to work effectively online can make this transition smoother.

Online learning is also receiving renewed focus, as schools, colleges, and universities are forced to shut their doors. Students and lecturers are turning to interactive platforms and innovative tools to enhance their online learning experience.

Is COVID-19 changing our approach to 'online'? Definitely. The reduction of carbon footprint and pollution levels, less time spent commuting, and lower travel costs are strong incentives to retaining this new-found kind of (online) normal.

Language and diplomacy

It has often been said that language is not only an instrument of communication, but the very essence of diplomacy. Diplomats engage in **negotiations, persuasion, presentation, and communication**, all of which necessitate language skills for the effective conduct of diplomatic work.

Both the written and the spoken language require the mastering of concepts and skills, and need to consider message and context. Language can also serve as a form of action: when we warn, threaten, promise, suggest, agree, advise or otherwise, we are *doing* something, and not merely *saying* something. The role of **the unsaid** in communication (the meaningful silence) is equally crucial.

Language is as much important today as it was to the first envoys and negotiators. Today, **technology** is continuously shaping certain aspects of language and diplomacy, with the introduction of **new tools** for communication and interpretation, novel ways of capturing and preserving diplomatic documents, and methods that facilitate online negotiations. Despite the changes, core issues remain fundamental to the practice of diplomacy.

Language and Diplomacy online course

What makes one set of words more convincing than another, and how can language best be put to work in the service of diplomacy and international relations?

The course promotes language awareness as a means of improving the skills of opinion shapers. Close attention is paid to case studies of treaties, presidential speeches, public announcements, government advertising and media materials in order to link theoretical discussion to practical examples. Since effective communication has much to do with reading intentions and contexts correctly, insights are provided into relevant cultural, social and psychological variables.

Read more and apply here.

Why is language important to diplomacy?

Language is one of our most basic instincts. From birth humans communicate, at first in order to survive – to ensure that needs are met. But at an amazing rate communication becomes refined into language, one of the defining characteristics of human beings.

In *The Language Instinct* Stephen Pinker writes:

In any natural history of the human species, language would stand out as the pre-eminent trait […] A common language connects the members of a community into an information-sharing network with formidable collective powers. Anyone can benefit from the strokes of genius, lucky accidents, and trial-and-error wisdom accumulated by everyone else, present or past. And people can work in teams, their efforts coordinated by negotiated agreements. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1994, 16)

As Pinker points out, language is what allows us to build on the work of others, benefiting from their knowledge and collaborating to achieve more than one person can alone. The processes of diplomacy – communicating, negotiating, reaching and formulating agreements, collecting, creating, transmitting and recording knowledge – all depend on language.

Studies of diplomacy usually concentrate on the message rather than the means. However, examination of language use in diplomacy can lead to a better understanding of the way diplomacy functions and why some diplomatic processes are more successful than others. Through careful and critical attention to various aspects of diplomatic language we can improve our understanding of both the explicit and implicit messages world leaders and other political figures send out, and improve our own ability to communicate in the most effective and appropriate ways.

Speech act theory

Popular dichotomy views words as distinct from actions. Yet, language can also serve as a form of action. The Speech Act theory shows that not only do words have the power to give rise to actions, but many utterances are a form of action in themselves.

This approach to language as action is significant for diplomacy, since it confirms that diplomatic interventions and communications are not just a means to an end, but may be ends in themselves: diplomats act on the world through language. It is therefore important to understand what exactly they are doing by means of the language they use.

The Speech Act theory invites us to distinguish between an act *of* saying something, what one does *in* saying it, and what one achieves *by* saying it. It also distinguishes between direct and indirect speech acts. Direct speech acts are either flagged by set phrases such as '*hereby*', or by explicit mention, as in '*I promise, I warn you*' etc. In the case of indirect speech acts, the intention of the speaker has to be inferred from context.

Persuasion and rhetoric

The aim of persuasion is to change the attitudes and associated behaviour of another party in line with one's own beliefs or purpose. Rhetoric, the art of persuasion, is the practice and study of the linguistic resources which help speakers to achieve their objectives.

The study of rhetoric has traditionally been understood under three headings: (1) *pathos* (Greek 'emotion'), generally referred to as an 'appeal to emotions,'and which includes the ability to engage the sympathy and imagination of one's audience; (2) '*logos*' (Gk. 'word'), namely the appeal to reasoned argument, which involves the felicitous choice of words, the use of logical thinking and sound argumentation; and (3) '*ethos*', which is an appeal to the good character of the speaker: their credibility, experience, knowledge and authority; the genuineness of their stated interests and objectives and the nature of their evidence. If we were to recast the traditional terms of rhetoric into the jargon of today, we might say that *pathos* translates as 'soft persuasion', *logos* as 'hard persuasion', and the judicial combination of the two, combined with *ethos*, as 'smart persuasion'.

Overlaps are inevitable between appeals to argument and to emotion since rhetoric involves drawing on all the resources of language in order to persuade one's audience, and these resources do not come neatly pre-packaged. The traditional headings indicate general dynamics, not discrete categories. Thus logical fallacies, for instance, are usually thought of as a form of faulty logic, but they constitute the staple of propaganda due to their rousing emotional content. Similarly, the choice of the 'right word' may be thought of as a rational exercise – certainly Classical rhetoric assigned it to '*logos*' and the appeal to reason – yet the 'stories in a capsule' contained in connotations and metaphors also centrally belong to the study of emotional appeal, or *pathos*.

Classical rhetoric is defined as the art of speaking or writing effectively: as (a) the study of principles and rules of composition formulated by critics of ancient times, and (b) the study of writing or speaking as a means of communication or persuasion. However, people often think of 'empty words, meaningless speech: *The prime minister's speech was pure political rhetoric.*' (The Newbury House Online Dictionary) These definitions seem at odds with each other: effective and persuasive speech compared to empty, meaningless speech. But whether one considers rhetoric in a positive or negative way, the common factor is that it is speech aiming to persuade.

Diplomats can benefit from studying both the positive and negative aspects of rhetoric. World events are triggered by the words and actions of national leaders and politicians. Diplomats need to pay careful attention to political speech in order to gain clues about the concerns, intentions, and agendas of national leaders and political figures. At the same time, the work of diplomats is based largely on their ability to use language well – to convince and persuade. Diplomats need to be aware and in control of the power and effect of their words. As Drazen Pehar, researcher on language and diplomacy, writes: *'...when it comes to the use of language and its many styles, diplomats must bear in mind that they have a choice*. They may choose one or more among many styles of language. This freedom of choice of an instrument of expression is particularly important because plurality of such instruments makes diplomats aware of their own *responsibility* in verbally expressing their attitudes towards international developments.' (Historical Rhetoric and Diplomacy, *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

On a comical note, visit An English primer (a glossary translating political rhetoric into plain English), created by Thomas Sowell. The glossary offers definitions such as:

Demonstration: A riot by people you agree with.
Mob violence: A riot by people you disagree with.

While the intent is comic, the glossary makes the point that most of us believe politicians to be hiding behind their rhetoric as a way to avoid direct communication. And most of us have accepted this practice as simply the way politicians work.

Analysing rhetorics

Diplomats seeking to analyse political rhetoric can benefit from knowledge of the terms and techniques of classical rhetoric as well as techniques frequently used in modern political speech. Silva Rhetoricae: The Forest of Rhetoric provided by Dr Gideon Burton of Brigham Young University, is a guide to the terms of classical and renaissance rhetoric: definitions and examples of Greek and Latin terms, discussion of general rhetorical strategies and examples of different types of rhetorical analysis.

While the site focuses on classical rhetoric, many points are equally relevant now. Rhetorical analysis does not involve simply identifying and labeling linguistic features, but an examination of the entire context of the communication: 'Speech or writing never occurs in a vacuum, but in some historical, cultural, temporal setting that is intimately tied up with how one frames discourse. In one sense, the 'rhetorical situation' refers to what prods or inspires communication: a pressing need, a conventional ceremony, a specific intention.'

An important part of context is **audience**: 'Rhetoric is never about discourse in the abstract; it is always concerned with directing one's words with specific intentions towards specific audiences…All rhetorically oriented discourse is composed in light of those who will hear or read that discourse.' As an example of rhetorical analysis focusing on context, Burton writes about Hitler's rhetoric:

Germany of post-World War I was demoralized and disorganized. Adolph Hitler's rhetoric was successful not only because of his personal charisma and his mastery of delivery, but because he spoke at the right time: the German people wanted a way out of its economic morass and its cultural shame, and Hitler provided them both with his strong, nationalistic oratory. Had Germany been doing better economically, Hitler's words would have bounced harmlessly off the air.

Professor Hugh Rank of Governors State University proposes an **'intensification/downplay**' schema to analyse methods of political communication and persuasion in How to Analyse Political Rhetoric. Intensifying involves the techniques of repetition, association and composition, while downplay involves omission, diversion and confusion.

Repetition: Repetition is effective because people feel comfortable with what they are familiar with, and repetition creates familiarity. Most people have favourite songs, television programs, etc., that they listen to or watch repeatedly. Chants, prayers, rituals, and dances are all based on repeated patterns; we learn them and remember them through repetition. Politicians often repeat key words or themes throughout a speech, and also use internal repetition techniques such as rhyme, alliteration and anaphora (repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginning of successive clauses or sentences). Slogans are another repetition device used by politicians in the hopes that, like in advertising, audiences hearing a message many times will become saturated and remember the message without conscious effort.

Association: Association is the process of linking an idea or product with other ideas, events or products which the audience either likes and respects, or hates and fears, depending on the aim of the association. Politicians may use association by directly asserting, for example, their connection with certain groups and communities with which the audience identifies or respects. They may also use indirect language to establish associations, for example, metaphors or allusions. Association may be established with images, music, colours, flags, choice of location and timing for a speech, etc., as well as words. Association may take the form of literary, historical or religious references or allusions.

Composition: The way a presentation is composed can be used as a technique of intensifying. The type of language used (negative or positive, active or passive constructions, simple or abstract, etc.), the level of detail, the use of absolutes (all, always, never, etc.) and qualifiers (perhaps, some, a number of, maybe, etc.), metaphors, rhetorical questions, exaggerations, the order of presentation and the overall organisation of a speech can all be used to emphasise certain ideas or themes. Non-verbal elements can also contribute to composition: facial expression, gestures, tone of voice, etc. also play a role.

Omission: All communication involves decisions about what information to include and what to omit and therefore is limited, slanted or biased in one way or another. However, politicians often choose to deliberately omit information about disadvantages, hazards or side-effects of their proposals. What US politician, proposing military action in another country has reminded the US population that his proposed action is likely to result in the deaths of a certain number of soldiers not through enemy attacks, but from 'friendly fire'? Politicians can also be expected to omit information about any criminal or scandalous activities of their own or their associates in the

past, as well as information about their own mistakes or failures. Conflicts of interest may be covered-up and information about the source of controversial information may be omitted also. Finally, information about the opposition's good points is likely to be omitted. Subtle forms of omission include quotes taken out of context and half-truths, and can be hard to detect.

Diversion: Diversion techniques distract focus or divert attention away from key issues, usually by intensifying unrelated issues, or trivial factors. Diversion techniques include attacks on the personality and past of opposition figures rather than their relevant policies, appealing to the emotions – fears, hopes, desires – of the public rather than their reason, directing attention to the short-comings of the opposition rather than to one's own weaknesses, evasion of difficult topics, emphasis on superficialities or details rather than substance, and finally, jokes or other entertainment to distract attention.

Confusion: Politicians sometimes make their presentations so complex and chaotic that those listening get tired or overloaded, and give up on trying to follow. Confusion, whether caused by accidental error or deliberate deception, can hide or obscure important issues. Politicians may seek to confuse their audience by using unfamiliar or ambiguous words, technical jargon, euphemisms, round-about or rambling sentence construction, inappropriate or unclear analogies, non-logical sequences of thought or linking of ideas, manipulation of statistics, over complexity, information overload, etc. After introducing confusion, the politician is in the position to offer an easy answer, a simple solution to complex problems, telling the audience: 'trust me'.

Henry Jankiewicz suggests some additional tools for analysis of rhetoric on his page The Concepts of Rhetoric. He brings up the topic of **intertextuality**: using references to link contexts or topics, with the following example: 'President George Bush tried to arouse negative sentiment against the Soviet Union by referring to it as the Evil Empire, associating it with the nemesis in George Lucas's Star Wars trilogy. This resonated with the fact that the government's plans for a cumbersome satellite anti-missile defense system were popularly referred to as Star Wars.' In a written text, traditionally footnotes are used to create intertextuality – a footnote establishes credibility by making a link to the texts written by experts. The most intertextual form of communication that exists today is the World Wide Web, which consists of a huge number of documents linked to other documents through hypertext.

War propaganda

Hugh Rank offers a set of guidelines for analysing war propaganda, another genre of political rhetoric. He writes: 'Words are weapons in warfare. Words affect how people think about themselves and about others. War is probably the time of the greatest language manipulation, when people are most likely to deceive others, least able to negotiate, and are under the most intense emotional stress — of fear and anger — with the greatest dangers of loss, death, and destruction.'

Rank points out that some types of war propaganda target the domestic audience, with the aims of uniting the country, building morale, silencing opposition, inciting action, and channelling energy. Other types of war propaganda are aimed at the enemy, with the intention to terrorise or demoralise. With modern means of mass communication, messages can be ensured to reach a

huge audience, worldwide. War propaganda has the risk of getting out of control, and inciting more hatred than originally intended. The basic techniques used for war propaganda are to intensify your own good points and downplay the enemy's good points, and to downplay your own weaknesses while intensifying those of the enemy. As we have seen repeatedly in the last century, the enemy is demonised, while the 'good guys' are portrayed as the protectors of the free world.

To learn more about techniques of war propaganda, visit Hugh Rank's page War Propaganda.

Humour

Professor Peter Serracino Inglott, former rector at the University of Malta and lecturer in philosophy, suggests that humour may be a useful rhetorical technique for diplomats. He proposes that a new type of joke, which he refers to as the 'serious joke', may aid the diplomatic practice of the 21st century, inspiring creative approaches to problem solving through new perspectives and shifting frames of reference.

Inglott writes: 'jokes are the paradigmatic example of language. […] the most singular aspect of language – namely its creativity – is most manifest in wit and humour – in jokes.' A joke is a powerful tool because it shows things in a new perspective, it shifts frames of reference and places things in a new gestalt. As Edward de Bono puts it, it causes perceptions and conceptions which were set up in one pattern to be reconfigured into another different pattern. That is its inbuilt goal…It takes you to an apparently unreasonable point from which the main road along which you have been travelling does not appear to be the only one. A joke is the best device to get you on the side track from where you can see that there are other ways of getting about than just the contraries forward or backward, or right and left. Joking involves glimpsing the improbable and using upside down logic.

Inglott compares jokes to arguments, pointing out that joking may be a more productive technique in diplomacy:

The structure of an argument is the confrontation of contraries aimed at making a choice between opposite ways. A serious joke, on the other hand, is a provocation to both parties displaying the possibility of adapting an as yet unexplored angle of approach. It aims not at the victory or defeat of either side, not a compromise, which means some sacrifice by both sides, not consensus, which is only agreement at the low level of the highest common ground, but at a situation where something is gained by both sides. Serious joking is the prime tool of the mediator who does not conceive of his role as neutral or passive, but as a promoter of win-win conclusions. ('To Joke or Not to Joke: A Diplomatic Dilemma in the Age of Internet', *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

Historical analogies

Historical analogies are a rhetorical device frequently used by politicians and diplomats to strengthen their arguments or to persuade the public of their views. Drazen Pehar explains why this type of rhetoric can be so effective:

First, historical analogising is an essential part of national narrative and national identity. Nations tend to group around their most central and deeply rooted memories. Over time many of those memories acquire the status of lasting symbols that nations use to describe their contemporary concerns or fears as well…they help people symbolically transcend the limitations of time and space…

The second function, which is directly linked to the aforementioned one, is the function of identity maintenance. Historical rhetoric not only provides nations with the sense of worldly immortality; a surrogate of religion, but also with an answer to the question 'Who are we?' Historical rhetoric explains the lasting origins of a nation…When a president says that the nation must look to its past for a vision and inspiration to guide its present choice, he actually says that if applied to the present, models from the past will help the nation maintain its spirit and sense of specific identity…

A third function of historical analogy is simply to provide a sense of cognitive orientation in international affairs. The future is always open and undetermined, and the number of international actors and the complexity of their relations are too high to give a straight clue about future developments… [Historical analogies] indicate a direction for actions in this world, which would otherwise remain too complex to allow for an intellectual grasp. Historical analogy simply projects an image of past developments into the future and thus makes the future cognitively manageable…

Finally, historical analogies could be used as a kind of anti-depressant; a colourful imagery which neutralises a boring and non-dramatic kind of political reality. Historical analogies make international relations intriguing, interesting, worth watching and participating in, which without such a drama-producing imagery would not be the case. (Historical Rhetoric and Diplomacy, *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

Positiveness rhetorics

Dr Francisco Gomes de Matos of Federal University of Pernambuco, Recife, Brazil, examines diplomatic communication and proposes applying his 'pedagogy of positiveness' as a means to improve diplomatic communication. He provides a checklist of suggestions for the pedagogy of positiveness, which includes pointers such as:

- Emphasise 'what to say' constructively. Avoid 'what not to say'.
- Communicate national and international values constructively.
- Learn to identify and to avoid potentially aggressive, insensitive, offensive, destructive uses of languages. Do your best to offset dehumanising ways of communication, often the outcome of human communicative fallibility.
- Think of the language you use as a peace-building, peace-making, peace-promoting force.
- Handle differences of opinion in a constructive way. Remember that 'negative talk' tends to predominate or often dominate in face-to-face diplomatic interactions.
- Try to see and describe both sides of an issue. Challenge yourself to make balanced (rather than biased) statements. Don't be a polemicist.
- Conflict can be managed to some extent, and so can language use, especially if you adopt a constructive perspective, for expressing your attitudes, beliefs, and emotions…Educate yourself

in identifying 'positivisers' in spoken and written texts in your field and challenge yourself to make increasing use of such constructive, human-dignifying adjectives, verbs, and nouns.

Matos believes that 'communicating well diplomatically means communicating for the well being of diplomatic interlocutors and, more broadly, for the well-being of humankind'. For more on his pedagogy of positiveness read 'Applying the Pedagogy of Positiveness to Diplomatic Communication' (*Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001).

Language and power

Effective rhetoric is about the **right words, at the right time and in the right place**. As we saw earlier with Burton's example about Hitler, the right words at the right time can shape world events.

Language is a powerful tool; it can be used as a means of controlling or shaping the thoughts of others. Tongtao Zheng of the University of Tasmania writes: 'Language is a weapon and a powerful tool in winning public support, especially during the current information revolution period…it is also a powerful weapon in the struggle of community against community, worldview against worldview.' ('Characteristics of Australian Political Language Rhetoric,' *Intercultural Communication*, Issue 4, November 2000)

New terminology

Dr Andrew Cline writes: 'The power to define, and make it stick, is arguably the premier political power. To control the definitions of terms is to control the debate by bracketing how the audience may think about an issue. To create new terms is to create new realities.' He demonstrates the power of creating new terminology with an example from April 12, 2002, when White House press secretary Ari Fleischer introduced the term 'homicide bombers' for the Palestinian men and women blowing themselves up in public places. He points out that this change in terms is not politically innocent: any terms created or redefined by a political administration have political importance:

In this case, the new term helps further delegitimize the bombers. What's wrong with that? Perhaps nothing, except that the term may also further delegitimize the larger cause of the Palestinian people, which is the establishment of an independent state. In other words, this new term might further aggravate the idea of guilt by proximity, as if all Palestinians think and act alike in regard to the violence.

Suicide bombers might be fighting for legitimate political ends (establishment of a state) by decidedly illegitimate means (the murder of civilians or non-combatants). A 'homicide bomber' is simply a criminal who wishes to kill outside of political goals. While it is possible under some circumstances to condone the violence of a 'freedom fighter', this new term adds further distance between any legitimate concept or action and the actions of the homicide bombers. The new term helps the Bush administration put further pressure on the Palestinian authorities to do more than simply denounce violence; it puts pressure on them to actively stop the lawless action of criminals who have no legitimate political claims. ('Homicide Bombers' Further Delegitimizes Violence', Rhetorica Network, April 14, 2002)

Peter Beinart writes:

The extraordinary thing about American foreign policy since September 11 is the extent to which it has been shaped by language. In the terrible days after the World Trade Center fell, the Bush administration grasped for words that would capture America's resolve. And it came up with 'war on terrorism'. […] 'Terrorism' meant violence by individuals or groups (but not governments) against civilians, no matter what the cause. 'War' didn't connote a merely military effort, but it suggested a broad struggle with the urgency, and Manichaean clarity, of a battlefield campaign.

The phrase soon caught on overseas, and other governments began to use it in order to invest their own conflicts with the same moral authority. Russian called its struggle in Chechnya a 'war on terrorism', as did India with Kashmir, Israel with Palestine, and many others. Beinart points out that partly due to their use of this phrase, US policy swung towards support of the government forces: Russian, India and Israel. However, there are significant differences between the conflicts in these countries and the US fight against Al-Queda. He explains:

The critical difference is that the wars in Kashmir, Palestine, and Chechnya are wars of national liberation. The terrorists seek to end a foreign occupation and create an independent state on a defined piece of land. That doesn't make their demands legitimate: Yasir Arafat's definition of a Palestinian state is clearly grandiose and dangerous (especially given that Israel is so small–and therefore particularly imperiled by such fantasies); Kashmir and Chechnya probably shouldn't be independent states at all. And it doesn't make their methods legitimate either: There's no excuse for deliberately targeting civilians. But as a practical matter, wars of national liberation are easier (though certainly not easy) to resolve politically and much harder to resolve militarily than the kind we're fighting against Al Qaeda. ('Word Play', *The New Republic*, April 12, 2002)

In a February 24, 2002 article in the New York Times, Mark Lilla, professor of social thought at the University of Chicago, describes the negative European reaction to Bush's phrase 'axis of evil' to describe adversary states. He compares Bush's rhetorical style to that of Ronald Reagan during the cold war era. But while Reagan's style may have been appropriate at the time, the current situation is quite different:

When Ronald Reagan addressed the Soviet leadership, he was dealing with functionaries of a highly routinized, if sclerotic, empire, a state where the passions of religion and nationalism played almost no role. The American rivalry with the Soviet Union was likened to a chess game where each party understood the moves and feints of the other. Today, however, the United States is facing adversaries that are wholly unlike our cold war rivals. They are not part of an empire or even an axis; they are regimes as different from each other as we are from them, and there is no shared understanding of the rules of the game.

Some are driven by a messianic ideology to seek not temporary advantage or influence, but an impossible transformation of worldly existence. Others are classic tyrannies run by ruthless figures whose moves are wholly unpredictable. And there are states where no one seems in control.

Lilla points out that choosing the right rhetorical style can affect the course of events, suggesting as an example, that Bush's 'masterly way of reaching out to Muslims at home and abroad has

displayed before the world our principles of tolerance'. (New Rules of Political Rhetoric, *New York Times*, February 24, 2002)

Euphemisms

In 1946, in his essay 'Politics and the English Language', George Orwell criticised current use of the English language, particularly in politics. He pointed out the general emptiness of political rhetoric and discussed the increasing use of **euphemisms** to avoid admissions of possibly controversial actions:

In our time it is broadly true that political writing is bad writing… Orthodoxy, of whatever color, seems to demand a lifeless, imitative style. The political dialects to be found in pamphlets, leading articles, manifestoes, White papers and the speeches of undersecretaries do, of course, vary from party to party, but they are all alike in that one almost never finds in them a fresh, vivid, homemade turn of speech. When one watches some tired hack on the platform mechanically repeating the familiar phrases — *bestial, atrocities, iron heel, bloodstained tyranny, free peoples of the world, stand shoulder to shoulder* — one often has a curious feeling that one is not watching a live human being but some kind of dummy…

In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible. Things like the continuance of British rule in India, the Russian purges and deportations, the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan, can indeed be defended, but only by arguments which are too brutal for most people to face, and which do not square with the professed aims of the political parties. Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness. Defenseless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called *pacification*. Millions of peasants are robbed of their farms and sent trudging along the roads with no more than they can carry: this is called *transfer of population or rectification of frontiers*. People are imprisoned for years without trial, or shot in the back of the neck or sent to die of scurvy in Arctic lumber camps: this is called *elimination of unreliable elements*. Such phraseology is needed if one wants to name things without calling up mental pictures of them.

Ambiguity in diplomacy

A word, phrase, or sentence is ambiguous if it has **more than one meaning**. (Kent Bach, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on Ambiguity)

…any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for **alternative reactions to the same piece of language**. (William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity, London: Hogarth Press, 1927, quoted by Norman Scott, Ambiguity versus Precision: The Changing Role of Terminology in Conference Diplomacy, *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

…ambiguities are pieces of language that 1. can be interpreted as meaning A, 2. can be interpreted as meaning B, and 3. cannot be interpreted as A and B simultaneously, but, eventually, as a neutral (re)source, from which, under specific focuses of vision/interpretation, both A and B might at separate times spring… In order to qualify as an ambiguity an expression must generate not only 'at least two different meanings', but also **two incompatible and**

unrelated meanings. It is only then that an expression is truly ambiguous (Drazen Pehar, Use of Ambiguities in Peace Agreements, *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

…ambiguity is a one-many relation between syntax and sense. (Geoffrey Leech, *Semantics*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987, quoted by Pehar).

A good visual model of ambiguity is the well-known 'duck-rabbit' picture, a drawing which can be seen as either a duck or a rabbit, but not both at the same time. This picture thus includes two separate and incompatible possibilities.

Types of ambiguity

Most sources differentiate between two types of ambiguity:

1. **lexical** (referential)
2. **syntactic** (structural)

A third type of ambiguity, **textual ambiguity**, is also of relevance in diplomacy.

1. Lexical ambiguity (also known as referential)

The comedian Dick Gregory tells of walking up to a lunch counter in Mississippi during the days of racial segregation. The waitress said to him, 'We don't serve colored people.' 'That's fine', he replied, 'I don't eat colored people. I'd like a piece of chicken.' (Quoted by Stephen Pinker, The Language Instinct, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1994)

Lexical ambiguity is ambiguity based on a single word. In many cases, a single word in a language corresponds to more than one thought, for example, the adjective *light* (not dark vs. not heavy); the noun *bank* (financial institution vs. the edge of a river); and the verb *run* (to move fast vs. to direct or manage). Words may also have more than one meaning through their unrelated use in more than one category of speech, for example, *can* (a container of food – noun vs. to be able to – verb).

Inattentive use of ambiguous words can lead to humorous, or even awkward situations, as shown by these newspaper headlines collected by Stephen Pinker.

- Iraqi Head Seeks Arms
- Child's Stool Great for Use in Garden
- Stud Tires Out
- Stiff Opposition Expected to Casketless Funeral Plan
- Drunk Gets Nine Months in Violin Case

2. Syntactic ambiguity (also known as structural or sentence)

In the movie Animal Crackers Groucho Marx says 'I once shot an elephant in my pyjamas. How he got into my pyjamas I'll never know.'(Quoted by Stephen Pinker)

Sometimes an entire sentence has more than one different and incompatible interpretations, even if none of the words are ambiguous. This happens when one part of the sentence may grammatical specify in more than one direction.

Drazen Pehar provides the following example: *I am prepared to give the sum of one million dollars to you and your husband.* This can be understood as *I am prepared to give the sum of (1 million $) (to you) and (your husband)* – making a total of two million dollars; or as *I am prepared to give the sum of (1 million $) to (you and your husband)* – making a total of only one million dollars.

Lexical ambiguity can also lead to humorous sentences, for example, the following collected from newspapers by Stephen Pinker.

- Yoko Ono will talk about her husband John Lennon who was killed in an interview with Barbara Walters.
- Two cars were reported stolen by the Groveton police yesterday.
- The judge sentenced the killer to die in the electric chair for the second time.
- The summary of information contains totals of the number of students broken down by sex, marital status and age.
- No one was injured in the blast, which was attributed to a buildup of gas by one town official.
- One witness told the commissioners that she had seen sexual intercourse taking place between two parked cars in front of her house.

3. Cross-textual ambiguity

Drazen Pehar describes a third type of ambiguity which is based on incompatibilities between different parts of a text, or specifications in multiple directions, across a text. Pehar writes: 'This kind of ambiguity is best exemplified with so-called 'open-ended sentences' which can be found in legal texts. For example, a chapter in a peace treaty may begin with a precise enumeration of the powers that one entity, for example, a central federal authority, may exercise. But at the end of the chapter an open-ended provision is inserted, which may, for instance, state that 'the central federal authority may exercise some other duties as well'. (Use of Ambiguities in Peace Agreements, *Language and Diplomacy,* Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

Ambiguity in diplomacy

We often hear the phrase 'diplomatic ambiguity' used to describe a special type of language used by diplomats. Professor Norman Scott, director of Diplomatic Training Programmes at the Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, wrote: 'In common parlance the skill of finding formulations which avoid giving offence and are at the same time acceptable to all sides is treated with justifiable respect and often referred to as a 'diplomatic' form of expression. This usage probably reflects an accurate perception of language and diplomacy down the years.' (Ambiguity versus Precision: The Changing Role of Terminology in Conference Diplomacy, *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploFoundation, 2001)

Why is ambiguity used in diplomacy?

Ambiguous formulations are used in diplomacy to allow for a degree of consensus when parties to a negotiation cannot come to an agreement. Drazen Pehar explains:

If two parties have strong and contradictory interests, and if it seems that neither side is ready to concede a part of its maximum demand, and/or if the negotiations are running short of time and the parties can not discuss such concessions in more detail, then the issue of conflicting interests can be resolved by, so to speak, simulating a compromise in a very rudimentary form. The mediators may come up with a formula which is open to at least two different interpretations; which can carry at least two meanings, A and B, one to gratify the interests of party A and another to gratify the interests of party B… ambiguities make sure that, on the one hand, the parties retain their own individual perceptions as to 'how things should proceed' and that, on the other, one common language is adopted, which both parties may later equally use. (Use of Ambiguities in Peace Agreements, Language and Diplomacy, Malta: DiploFoundation, 2001)

Norman Scott, in his paper on ambiguity in conference diplomacy, points out that while a party may push for precise language to 'serve the purposes of his own side in stipulating claims or limits to commitments' it may seek ambiguity 'to allay anxieties on either side or to secure a margin for subsequent interpretation'.

Is ambiguity an effective diplomatic tool?

Arguments can be found both against and for the use of ambiguity in diplomacy. Opponents point out that an ambiguous formulation in a treaty or agreement does not actually resolve a problem but simply puts it off until a later time, or allows the parties to the agreement a means of avoiding their obligations. Proponents respond that in a conflict, any tactic that brings an end to actually physical violence is useful and valuable.

Scott reminds us that in conference diplomacy ambiguity is usually used by parties seeking to avoid obligations, and that 'in the drafting of legal documents such as contracts strenuous efforts are usually made to eschew ambiguity because their survival in the document improves the chances of one or other of the parties raising a successful challenge in court and thereby escaping fulfilment of ambiguous provisions […] it is easier to hold a party to an agreement to a specific commitment than to a vague or ambiguous one'.

According to Pehar, opponents of the use of ambiguities in peace agreements consider ambiguities a deceptive device which brings only temporary satisfaction. 'Such satisfaction is deceptive because both parties have the right to interpret ambiguities in their own irreconcilable ways and that is a right they will certainly, sooner or later, start exploiting. That is also why ambiguous agreements may quickly lead to arguments, and turn into disagreements, as, precisely due to ambiguities, conflicts in interpretation will necessarily break out […] For that reason implementation of an ambiguous agreement is very likely to fail.' Furthermore, 'Just as, prior to an outbreak of war, the crucial terms of political vocabulary become ambiguous and generate misunderstandings and disagreements that then lead to war, an ambiguous peace agreement will itself generate new misunderstandings and add more heat to the parties' already hostile feelings.'

However, Pehar draws our attention to several factors in favour of the use of ambiguities, despite the fact that ambiguous agreements do pose a risk. First, 'if an ambiguity makes it easier for negotiating parties to accept an agreement and therewith put a close to a war, or to a situation of

increased friction or hostility, this should be taken as an argument supporting the use of ambiguities. Even if an ambiguous provision may later generate a conflict in opinion, the fact that the relationship of physical hostility gave way to the relationship of merely verbal conflict must be taken as a sign of progress.

Second, ambiguity offers great potential for cooperative conflict resolution. It generates further conflict only when 'parties insist on their own, unilateral interpretation of an ambiguous provision and do not recognise ambiguity qua ambiguity. If they recognise an ambiguous provision for what it actually is, a sentence or a text open to several incompatible interpretations, the argument over interpretations would in all likelihood give way to the relationship of a joint cooperative effort in the search for a third impartial reading of the provision.'

Third, 'they make the conflict of interpretation predictable. In other words, start from the premise that the parties to an agreement will continue fighting politically even after they sign a treaty. However, this process of political fight will be more channelled, more orderly and predictable if one knows in advance which provisions of the jointly adopted text will give rise to a conflict in opinion or interpretation.'

Pehar concludes that ambiguous peace agreements should be 'tolerated in an ambiguous fashion, used as a last resort and employed to the best of their capacity, with all the caution they deserve.' Finally, Pehar points out, as a final point in favour of the use of ambiguities in peace agreements, that '…societies whose members display an ability to tolerate an ambiguous state of affairs fare both economically and psychologically much better than societies whose members are lacking in such ability. Individuals tolerating ambiguity also tend to tolerate risks, to cope more easily with emotional or intellectual friction and conflict, and to refrain from jumping to premature conclusions when evidence is inconclusive…Those tolerant of ambiguity do not believe in a black and white image of human affairs, but find shades of grey more attractive and enjoyable. That is why one will hardly ever find them caught in the dangerous logic of zero-sum games. If tolerance of ambiguity represents a value worth striving for, then why would one oppose the use of ambiguous wording in peace agreements?'

Analogies: effects and functions

An analogy is a systematic comparison between structures that uses properties of and relations between objects of a source structure to infer properties of and relations between objects of a target structure. (Dictionary of the Philosophy of Mind)

1. Inference that if two or more things agree with one another in some respects they will prob. agree in others
2. Resemblance in some particulars between things otherwise unlike: similarity **b:** comparison based on such resemblance
3. Correspondence between the members of pairs or sets of linguistic forms that serves as a basis for the creation of another form
4. Correspondence in function between anatomical parts of different structure and origin (Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online)

Analogy is a basic human reasoning process used in science, literature, art, education, and politics. Analogy can be used to make predictions, provide explanations, and restructure our knowledge. Analogy is also used to influence public opinion, fight battles, win wars, start and finish relationships, and advertise laundry detergent. (Kevin Dunbar)

Dr Kevin Dunbar, professor of psychology and cognitive science at Dartmouth college, provides the following information on terminology for analogies:

Different researchers on analogy use different terminologies, however most researchers distinguish between two main components of an analogy — the ***Source*** and the ***Target***. The Source is the piece of knowledge that one is familiar with. The Target is usually the less familiar piece of knowledge. When one makes an analogy, one *Maps* features of the Source onto the Target. In the case of the Earth-Mars analogy, the Source is the Earth and the Target is Mars. By Mapping features known about the earth onto mars it is possible to make predictions about the types of features that will be found on Mars, such as water and life. Thus, analogy is a very powerful mental tool to discover new things. As well as distinguishing between the Source and the Target researchers in analogical reasoning often distinguish between *Superficial* and *Structural* feature. Superficial features are things such as Mars being round or having a red hue. Thus, making an analogy between Mars and a red Stop sign would be an analogy based upon the feature red, which is a superficial attribute. Structural (or *Relational features*) refer to the underlying sets of relations between features (first order relations), or relations among relations (second and third order relations). In the case of Mars, structural relations might be the Seasonal movement of dark streaks across the surface of the planet and the presence of dust devils. Noting these attributes and relations led to the hypothesis that these are the same as dust devils on earth and that the same mechanisms that produce dust devil trails on earth are what is happening on Mars (As you can see analogy can be complicated). The major virtue of analogy is that it allows a person to go beyond the superficial. (Kevin Dunbar)

For a history of the use of term analogy by logicians and theologicians, consult the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

Effects of analogies

The Arab philosopher Ibn Khaldoun points out the risk of analogies:

Analogical reasoning and comparison are well known to human nature. They are not safe from error. Together with forgetfulness and negligence, they sway man from his purpose and divert him from his goal. Often, someone who has learned a good deal of past history remains* unaware of the changes that conditions have undergone. Without a moment's hesitation, he applies his knowledge (of the present) to historical information, and measures such information by the things he has observed with his own eye, although the difference between the two is great. Consequently, he falls into an abyss of error. (Quoted by Abba Eban, *Diplomacy for the Next Century*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998)

The use of historical rhetoric may lead to false conclusions about the likely outcome of current or future events, and in some cases this may lead to unnecessary conflict. Drazen Pehar discusses several ways in which historical rhetoric generates conflict: 'historical analogising sometimes leads to an overly offensive, self-confident posture. It sometimes leads to a significant lowering

of the threshold of tolerance as it negatively affects self-image, i.e. sense of honour. And last but not least it sometimes plays the role of a deterrent to deterrence and makes leaders too restrained, too cautious in acting, which then gives an opportunity to belligerent leaders of this world to pursue their own policies. For instance, French leaders were reluctant to make an offensive move against Hitler because a) their image of World War I implied that offensive equals disaster; and b) because they did nothing to question the applicability of that source-analogue to the future developments they expected in their relations with Hitler.'

While these dangers suggest that historical rhetoric should not be used by politicians and diplomats, Pehar suggests that it would be difficult to eliminate it from political rhetoric: 'the human mind has a biological inclination to reason inductively; that is, to reason about future happenings through the prism of past experiences. We reason via analogies. By instinct we set expectations on the basis of our past experience and nothing may be changed with that.' Furthermore, 'the world community is divided into nations with each nation measuring the time of its existence along the historical line of its evolution. And each nation considers its historical traumas and recoveries especially important; something like milestones on the path leading from its past to its present. Nations thus treat their particular histories as stores of their collective memory, which serve both the purpose of maintaining their particular identities and the purpose of providing answers to challenges of the present time. Diplomats are still their nations' humble servants and therefore cannot avoid using historical analogies in presenting their nation's views or interests."'

As a solution Pehar proposes the 'ambiguation' of analogies:

Diplomats should choose a 'golden mean', and try to balance and combine certain aspects of both historical rhetoric and ambiguous language in order to satisfy their instincts but also to make this satisfaction less dangerous, less capable of generating first mental and then armed conflict. In other words, *diplomats may continue using historical analogies but they should be made more ambiguous and less suggestive*.

The idea is very simple. *All we have to do is to loosen the link between a source of historical metaphor and its target*. In that way a diplomat could still retain a historic image, an idea of historic precedents, using language which would also retain the flavour of national identity or national narrative. By using *ambiguated* historical analogies, though, diplomats could, with the same stroke, raise their awareness of the fact that the final decision is theirs to make, as the 'loose' historical analogising would leave enough elbow room for them to act as individual and adaptable thinkers or decision-makers. Namely, ambiguated historical analogies do not deduce from the past a straightforward or rigid image of the future.

For more on Pehar's suggestions for a 'diplomatic' style of historical analogy read Historical Rhetoric and Diplomacy: An Uneasy Cohabitation (*Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001).

Historical analogies and their functions

Historical analogies are a variety of analogy often used by politicians and diplomats to explain or make a prediction about a current or future event based on events in the past. The past event is used as a source, while the present or future situation is the target of the analogy.

Drazen Pehar, researcher on language and diplomacy, suggests several reasons that historical analogies are used by politicians and have such a strong effect on public opinion: 'historical analogising is an essential part of national narrative and national identity. Nations tend to group around their most central and deeply rooted memories. Over time many of those memories acquire the status of lasting symbols that nations use to describe their contemporary concerns or fears as well. [Analogies] […] help people symbolically transcend the limitations of time and space. […] the need for spiritual transcendence is one of the main sources of motivation for the use of historical analogies in dealing with international affairs'.

A second function is 'identity maintenance. Historical rhetoric not only provides nations with the sense of worldly immortality; a surrogate of religion, but also with an answer to the question "Who are we?" Historical rhetoric explains the lasting origins of a nation. Typically, when a crisis occurs in the life of nation, responses to it are couched in a language of past models, of past dealings with a crisis similar in shape if not in essence. When a president says that the nation must look to its past for a vision and inspiration to guide its present choice, he actually says that if applied to the present, models from the past will help the nation maintain its spirit and sense of specific identity.'

A third function 'is simply to provide a sense of cognitive orientation in international affairs. The future is always open and undetermined, and the number of international actors and the complexity of their relations are too high to give a straight clue about future developments'. Historical analogies 'indicate a direction for actions in this world, which would otherwise remain too complex to allow for an intellectual grasp. Historical analogy simply projects an image of past developments into the future and thus makes the future cognitively manageable.'

A fourth function of historical analogies is as an 'anti-depressant; a colourful imagery which neutralises a boring and non-dramatic kind of political reality. Historical analogies make international relations intriguing, interesting, worth watching and participating in, which without such a drama-producing imagery would not be case. They put things and relations, as it is said, into perspective and make them tastier, less boring and more purposeful. Historical rhetoric sets a scenery or stage linking the past with the present and the future into the chapters of single drama to offset the bad feeling that nothing important or big is happening. (Historical Rhetoric and Diplomacy: An Uneasy Cohabitation, *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

Diplomatic signalling

Our day-to-day verbal communication includes a sub-text of signals: some verbal and others non-verbal, some deliberate and others unintended, some subtle and others obvious.

Methods of signalling range from physical gestures and facial expressions to choices such the order in which topics in a conversation are raised, what other people are present to overhear a conversation, and the tone or volume of voice used when talking about a certain topic.

Signalling may be used to reinforce a message or to contradict it. For example, compare an invitation to dinner mentioned at the beginning of a conversation with a smile and a welcoming tone of voice with an invitation mentioned at the end of a conversation as an afterthought, in a hesitant tone. In the first case the signals reinforce the message, in the second, the listener may feel that her presence is not really desired.

Raymond Cohen writes ‘States have become adept at extra-linguistic forms of communication […] [these] do not replace language, rather they complement, illuminate and supplement it.’ (*Theatre of Power: The Art of Diplomatic Signalling*, London and New York: 1987) In diplomatic communication, as in communication between individuals, signals are frequently used to transmit messages. Actors of diplomacy often choose to use signals rather than direct communication for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it is inappropriate for one actor to make too direct a suggestion or demand of another, or to transmit a message in person. A message passed through signals rather than directly also saves face for the receiving party, which can comply without seeming weak or refuse to comply without creating confrontation by simply ignoring the signals.

According to Christer Johnsson and Karin Aggestam, ‘the classic diplomatic dialogue can be seen as a system of signals, based on a code shared by the members of the profession’. They point out that diplomatic signalling is characterised by ‘constructive ambiguity’ for the following reasons:

First, it may be a deliberate means to retain flexibility and make signals disclaimable. Ambiguous signals allow the sender to argue ‘I never said that’, ‘that is not what I meant’ and the like, if the situation calls for it.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, ambiguity is often promoted by the need to take multiple audiences into account. ….In diplomatic signalling the potential audiences may be both international and domestic.

A third factor contributing to the ambiguity of diplomatic signals is the prevalence of non-verbal messages and ‘body language’ in communication between states. Diplomatic ‘body language’ has come to encompass everything from personal gestures to the manipulation of military forces. (‘Trends in Diplomatic Signalling’, *Innovation in Diplomatic Practice* (ed. Jan Melissen), London: Macmillan Press, 1999, 151)

Types of diplomatic signalling

Diplomatic signalling is carried out through a wide variety of methods and means. A few commonly used methods are described here.

Media

One of the most widely used methods of conveying signals is the media—newspapers, television or radio news, and now, increasingly, the Internet—as an intermediary. Christian Kaschuba of the University of Washington writes that ‘the media are frequently used to send messages to other governments. This allows for an informal exchange of information between leaders, indicating for example a willingness to talk or a pending military action against the other country. These messages are generally (and primarily) not intended for the general public in

either country.' He provides as an example the following newspaper headline: 'Iraq Issues Threat to Hit Turkish Base Used by U.S.' (NYT 2/16/99: A4)

The article reports that Iraqi Vice President Taha Yasin Ramadan is threatening to hit a Turkish military base used by the US. While Iraq has not communicated this threat directly to the US government, a diplomatic message has been sent to the US with the assistance of the media. (Communications in International Relations course materials, Spring 2000)

Drazen Pehar, researcher on language and diplomacy, provides the following scenario of signalling through the media in the Balkans: Imagine that the prime minister of Serbia, Zoran Djindjic, speaks to his Macedonian counterpart, and in the course of the conversation he says: 'We have had too many divisions in the Balkans. We would regret it if Macedonia was divided into Macedonian and Albanian territories.' While this comment was directed by Djindjic to his Macedonian counterpart, Djindjic knows that the conversation will be televised or published in full in a newspaper that the prime minister of Montenegro, Djukanovic, usually reads. Then Djindjic's message to the Macedonian prime minister has meaning for Djukanovic and the government of Montenegro as well: approximately, that 'Serbia and Montenegro should remain together. We would regret it if Montenegro was to declare independence and secede from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.' In other words, Djindjic sent a message carrying a diplomatic signal to Djukanovic.

Another example is provided by David Wigston in a study of international radio news coverage of South Africa elections in 1987, 1989 and 1994. Wigston writes:

A Comparative Analysis of South African Election Coverage by International News Radio,' *Communicatio: South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research,* Vol. 21 (2), 1995)

Intermediary

A third person, or intermediary, may be used for diplomatic signalling, with or without her knowledge. The sender of the message tells something to the intermediary assuming that the intermediary will pass on the information to the desired recipient of the message. The content of the message may have one meaning which the intermediary understands, and another which is comprehensible to the intended recipient. The intermediary may not even know that she is being used as a messenger.

Drazen Pehar and Dietrich Kappeler, former director of the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, point out an example of signalling through intermediaries in Abba Eban's book *Diplomacy for the Next Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998, 4-7). Eban recalls that when in September 1950 he presented his credentials as Israeli Ambassador to the United States, US President Truman mentioned to him twice that 'the decision to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima had caused him no anguish or discomfort.' Eban spoke to the next ambassador to present his credentials, Hermann Van Roijen of the Netherlands, and found that President Truman had also told him 'that he had never lost any sleep over the decision to drop atomic bombs on Japan.' Eban interpreted Truman's preoccupation as a sign of his actual anguish and discomfort with his actions.

Kappeler provides another interpretation for Truman's statements that he felt no remorse over using the atomic bomb. The ambassadors were presenting their credentials in late 1950, at the peak of the Korean War. Kappeler believe that Truman was probably sending a diplomatic signal via the newly appointed ambassadors to the leaders of North Korea, the People's Republic of China, or perhaps even the Soviet Union, that he would not hesitate to drop an atomic bomb again. Truman probably hoped that by mentioning his lack of remorse to enough people the message would eventually be transmitted to the intended recipient.

Diplomatic relations

Signalling can take the form of the cutting or establishing of diplomatic ties between countries. For example, an article by Jawed Naqvi describes how on November 21, 2001, India sent a diplomatic mission to reopen its embassy in Kabul which had been closed since the Taliban takeover, in September 1996. The author writes: 'By re-establishing diplomatic ties with Kabul, India is signalling its commitment to political and economic reconstruction of Afghanistan.' ('Indian Diplomats Arrive in Kabul,' *Dawn* (Pakistani English language newspaper), November 22, 2001)

Kishan Rana, former Indian ambassador to Germany, discusses one of the classical signals of diplomacy:

Language, Signaling and Diplomacy,' *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

Diplomatic visits

An article on the Center for Defense Organisation's website examines the use of diplomatic visits for signalling. Senior Analyst Nicholas Berry writes that diplomatic visits are commonly recognised as symbols of the closeness of relations between two countries, but less recognised 'is the signaling function of visits. Signals focus on future behavior.'

Using the example of the visit in September, 2000, of Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to US President Clinton, and Clinton's earlier visit to India, Berry writes that:

Clinton's exchange of visits with India signaled to New Delhi that its nuclear weapon program and failure to sign both the Non-Proliferation and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaties will not impede closer ties. These subjects were mostly unmentioned during Vajpayee's Washington visit. The U.S.-Indian visits also signaled to China that any aggressiveness, such as toward Taiwan, in the South China Sea, or over the disputed border with India, would drive the United States and India into a closer security relationship.

President Clinton, after departing from New Delhi, made a notably brief stop in Pakistan to talk to Pakistani leader Pervez Musharraf, signalling to Islamabad that its continued support of Kashmiri guerrillas in their incursions into Indian-controlled Kashmir and its support of the Taliban in Afghanistan who harbor the international terrorist Osama bin Laden will continue to erode U.S. relations. It also signaled to Islamabad, by including the stopover at the last minute, that relations could improve with its return to democracy and its resumption of dialogue with India.

At the same time the White House announced that the President would visit Vietnam in November after attending the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Brunei, 'signalling to China once again that upsetting the status quo in East Asia would recruit willing partners for U.S. efforts to check such behavior.'

Berry elaborates that the political efficacy of signaling via visits is that nothing has to be explicitly stated, thereby avoiding bruising nationalistic feelings and eliciting hostile responses. The subtlety of this mode of signaling has been valued historically, especially through multilateral summitry. One is reminded of the Congress of Vienna after the Napoleonic wars that signaled that radical political change in Europe would not be tolerated. The Roosevelt-Churchill-Stalin wartime summits signaled to Hitler that the Allied coalition could not be broken. The various Camp David summits to broker Middle East peace sent signals that U.S. interest in Middle East oil is a high priority. The just-concluded Millennium Summit at the UN, where 154 government leaders gathered, signaled that globalization has virtually unanimous acceptance (if not enjoying unanimous enthusiasm).

In addition, the volume of foreign visits – Clinton has traveled abroad more than any other president – signals to the world that America has many international commitments and worldwide interests, and so American world power is here to stay. ('Diplomatic Visits: Signaling As Well As Symbolism,' Center for Defense Organisation Website, September 20, 2000)

Attire

Even the attire chosen for a particular event or visit can project signals. Kishan Rana writes that 'The wearing of a particular kind of attire at an event of significance, when images are captured and broadcast around the world, may signify a hidden intent, for positive projection or for negative reasons. When national leaders visit their troops in the field, like President Bush in Kosovo in July 2001, they don ordinary combat outerwear, to underscore identification with the ordinary soldier.' (Diplomatic Signalling)

Economic sanctions

In a 1989 article in *Policy Analysis* Joseph G. Gavin re-examines the common perception of economic sanctions. He concludes that 'the chief purpose of foreign policy sanctions is to send signals and not, as is commonly perceived, to exert economic leverage.' He writes that the 'questions and arguments about sanctions that consume the most time and energy usually center on whether they work. The answer is a matter of judgment, which depends critically on how one defines their purpose.' If the purpose of sanctions is understood to be signalling, then 'sanctions can be said to work merely by application unless the signal is garbled.'

As an example, Gavin suggests that economic sanctions against South Africa have value if their purpose is seen as sending a message to non-white South Africans living under apartheid, and he reminds us that in fact, 'clarifying U.S. policy on apartheid is a declared purpose of the legislation implementing the sanctions. In general, economic sanctions can send signals to any or all of three receivers: the target country, allies, and domestic audiences. ('Economic Sanctions: Foreign Policy Levers or Signals,' *Policy Analysis* No. 124, November 7, 1989)

Departures from protocol

A signal can be conveyed by a departure from diplomatic protocol, in a positive or negative way. Kishan Rana suggests that actions such as the 'level at which a foreign dignitary is met at the airport, or who receives the foreign visitor for a meeting […] a social gesture honoring the visitor, like a lunch, or some other function […] especially when it is not mandatory under local custom' can all be used to convey positive or negative signals. He provides the example of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who was a master of the 'symbolic gesture; there was a clear but subtle distinction between the foreign visitors she received at the office table and those who were offered the sofa seat!' Rana provides a further example with the issue of punctuality: 'Some years back, during a state visit to Morocco, the late King Hassan kept Queen Elizabeth waiting for some ten minutes, surely not by accident, but to assert a notion of 'royal prerogative' of his ancient monarchy, and indirectly assert equality with a major power.' Rana also discusses the 'inconvenience display' as a powerful form of signal, 'when a host goes out of his way to do something for the visitor at the cost of personal inconvenience, like coming to the front entrance steps to receive him […]' (Diplomatic Signalling)

Signalling and intercultural issues

While diplomatic messages transmitted through signals offer some advantages to both sender and receiver, as nothing need be explicitly stated, they also present some risks. Foremost is the risk that a message might not be received, or more seriously, that it might be misinterpreted. Kishan Rana provides the following example:

At the May Day parade at Tienanmen Square in 1970, Chairman Mao conveyed a conciliatory signal to the Indian Charge d'Affaires, shaking hands with him and remarking that the two countries should not go on quarrelling. It was the first personal bilateral gesture from Mao in over a decade. Barely days later, while the move was under evaluation, someone in Delhi, perhaps with pro-Soviet tendencies, leaked the news to the media where it was trivialised in headlines as a 'Mao smile', and the value of the signal was lost. It took some years of quiet effort by both sides to move even to the first step to normalisation, through the return of ambassadors in the two capitals in 1976. (Language, Signaling and Diplomacy, *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

As this example shows, misinterpretation of signals often happens when a signal is interpreted differently in a different cultural setting. As Rana points out, the same signal may carry different meanings in different cultures. This problem is becoming more and more prevalent due to a change in the nature of the setting in which foreign policy and diplomacy operate.

The setting in which foreign policy and diplomacy operate in countries has changed drastically, first, through the entry of multiple state entities into the diplomatic process in each country, overcoming the former exclusive role of the foreign ministry, and second, by the entry of non-state actors into the external relationships of each country […] This means that there are many new players, who do not know the old syntax or style, using less subtlety and more direct language than before.

Unlike the classic age of diplomacy, the period up to and immediately after World War II, when the number of nation states was barely one fourth of today, and most of the players had similar upbringing and mindsets, there is infinitely greater diversity now. Even while a single vehicular language dominates as the medium of discourse, the levels of language competence, both in the

spoken word and comprehension, vary greatly. There is no certitude that direct communication will always be understood as intended, much less a subtle signal. This demands greater care over how one uses language, and greater sensitivity on how one is perceived by the other side. (Language, Signaling and Diplomacy, *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

Rana suggests with today's diversity of cultures, diplomatic practitioners need to be more direct and resort to the use of signals less.

Because signalling is an integral part of communication of all kinds it seems unlikely that its use can or should be avoided in diplomacy. However, as diplomatic communication deals at times with matters of high importance and the outcomes of diplomatic decisions effect vast numbers of people, misinterpretation of signals can have serious consequences. Awareness of cultural differences and conscious and considered use of signals is necessary now more than ever.

Intercultural communication

An Internet search on the topic of intercultural communication or cross-cultural communication yields over three million results. In recent years practitioners in a wide variety of fields — scientific cooperation, academic research, business, management, education, health, culture, politics, diplomacy, development, and others — have realised just how important intercultural communication is for their everyday work.

Fast travel, international media, and the Internet have made it easy for us to communicate with people all over the world. The process of economic globalisation means that we cannot function in isolation but must interact with the rest of the world for survival. The global nature of many widely diverse modern problems and issues such as the environment, governance of the Internet, poverty and international terrorism call for cooperation between nations. Intercultural communication is no longer an option, but a necessity.
At the same time, lack of knowledge of another culture can lead, at the best, to embarrassing or amusing mistakes in communication. At the worst, such mistakes may confuse or even offend the people we wish to communicate with, making the conclusion of business deals or international agreements difficult or impossible. Donnell King of the Pellissippi State Technical Community College provides examples: A General Motors auto ad with 'Body by Fisher' became 'Corpse by Fisher' in Flemish. Pepsi Cola's 1960s 'Come Alive With Pepsi' campaign, when it was translated for the Taiwanese market, conveyed the unsettling news that 'Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the grave'.

Because important decisions in business, politics, education, health, and culture effect citizens of more than one nation, the question of whether communication between people of different nations is effective and whether all parties emerge with the same understanding is of crucial importance. Individuals who deal with people from other cultures want to learn how to improve their performance through improving their communication skills. Numerous resources are now available. We invite you to explore our portals, and to get in touch with feedback.
Related pages: *Language and Diplomacy*

Categorising cultures

Just what are the differences between cultures? Is it useful to look for patterns or categories to make it easier for us to understand these differences?

Kishan Rana, former Indian ambassador to Germany, points out that categorising cultures offers both advantages and disadvantages. Looking for categories is a useful tool for analysis and the training of diplomats, and can be used as initial device in preparing for cross cultural encounters. However, we should beware of creating and reinforcing stereotypes. Creating categories ignores fact that within any cultural are sub-groups which may have different traits, and also that individuals within a culture may not follow the norm. Rigid adherence to categories may lead to false assumptions.

Lewis categorisation

Richard D. Lewis, author of *When Cultures Collide: Managing Successfully Across Cultures* (London: Nicholas Brealey, 1993), divides cultural characteristics into three groups: "linear active", "multiactive" and "reactive". He argues that people of different nations exhibit characteristics from each of these groups to different degrees. For example, some linear active traits are: introvert, plans ahead methodically, works fixed hours, follows procedure, limited body language; some multiactive traits are: extrovert, plans grand design but impatient with detail; works any hours, does several things at once, interrupts frequently, interweaves personal and professional; and some reactive traits are: introvert, sees whole picture, plans slowly, subtle body language.

Lewis categorises nations by determining which of the groups their characteristics tend to fall within. The nations with the most linear active traits are the Germans and the Swiss. Typical examples of multiactive nations are Latin Americans, Arabs, Africans, Indians and Pakistanis. Nations showing reactive traits are the Japanese, and to a lesser degree the Chinese.

High context and low context

Raymond Cohen of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (*Negotiating Across Cultures: International Communication in an Interdependent World*, revised ed., Washington DC: USIP Press, 1997) offers a system for analysing national negotiating styles in terms of the importance which negotiators attach to the broad cultural context in which they operate. Cultures fall into various places on a continuum from high to low context. Arab culture, for example, is high context as Arab negotiators attach great importance to context, for example history, and make a sharp distinction between the way matters of state should be conducted and matters of commerce. The first is the realm of principle and morals, and the second, the realm of haggling. Arab negotiators attach high importance to creating bonds of friendship and trust between negotiators, and respect for the honour and dignity of negotiating partners. Less developed, traditional societies tend to give rise to a high context approach.

American society is typical of the low context approach of more developed countries. These cultures view negotiation as an exercise in collective problem solving: knowledge and expertise are applied to find mutually acceptable solutions to problems, and partners expect to adopt a give-and-take approach. Low context cultures subordinate history, personal honour and personal relationships for the purpose of agreement. These cultural differences can lead to serious

misunderstandings not only about the topic of negotiations, but about what it actually means to negotiate.

Professor Paul Sharp, head of political science at the University of Minnesota, points out that although Cohen's approach is useful as a point of departure, it has some weaknesses:

> …[the categorisation] misses the extent to which there exist variations within cultures which are themselves brought forth by different contexts…there are times and circumstances in which US negotiations are very high context, even on the proverbial second hand car lot. In Minnesota alone books have been written (and, more importantly, money has been made) providing outsiders with the context they need to make sense of what is, or may be, being communicated in the sparse conversations and non-verbal exchanges which participants in the culture instantly recognise.

In everyday life at least, Americans sometimes negotiate in a low context manner and sometimes they do not. The question to be asked is what kind of contexts give rise to which kinds of approaches to negotiating, and I have already suggested that an analysis of the balance of resources between those involved might be a starting point for an answer to this question. Syrians in their dealings with Americans and Israelis may take a high context approach, but Syrians in their dealings with the Lebanese or the Kurds, one suspects, may take a low context approach.

The second problem with the high context-low context approach resides in its characterisation of what is meant by low context. While Cohen and others are at pains to suggest that the low-context, American approach involves only one way of looking at the world which is not necessarily superior to others, they do tend to accept it on its own terms, namely that it is sparse or thin not only in its presentation but also in fact. By so doing, an opportunity is missed to put the use of language by Americans under the microscope. A closer examination reveals, of course, an implied universe of assumptions about what is important, how the world works, and America's proper place within it, not to mention the place of others. (Talking to Americans: Problems of Language and Diplomacy, *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

Ambiguity

Are there cultural differences in the use of ambiguity? Drazen Pehar, researcher on language and diplomacy, offers these reflections:

> Measured by the use of ambiguities in peace agreements, there is no significant difference between so-called "low-context" and "high-context" cultures. Both low- and high-context cultures use ambiguous language to bridge the gap between negotiating parties. We have Wilson's 14 Points side by side with the Oslo Accords; Chinese cross-textual ambiguities in the Shanghai Communiqué together with American referential ambiguities in the very same document. We have both the Dayton Accords and the Rambouillet draft agreement drafted by American negotiators. We have the Yalta Declaration drafted jointly by representatives of high- and low-context cultures… In other words, there is no direct and positive correlation between the use of ambiguous provisions, on the one hand, and types, or kinds of culture, on the other. For me, this is

> good news for diplomacy. Negotiators from different cultures rely on similar means to arrive at the text of an agreement. This means that, at least when it comes to the use of ambiguities, there may be a common diplomatic culture, a common culture of drafting an agreement. In other words, there is no pre-determined cultural barrier to hugely affect one's attitude towards an ambiguous proposal. ("Use of Ambiguities in Peace Agreements," *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

However, Norman Scott, director of diplomatic training programs at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva suggests:

> It is possible (even probable) that different languages, emerging from and reflecting distinct cultures, offer varying scope for ambiguity, intended or unintended. Some maintain, for example, that the Chinese are predisposed to underspecification and ambiguity as a culture-conditioned stance in interpersonal communications; while the opposite holds true of United States citizens…

If this is true, differences in the grasp of the language used in negotiations could conceivably confer a distinct advantage on diplomats seeking to introduce ambiguities in negotiated texts in order to serve their own purposes. (Ambiguity Versus Precision: The Changing Role of Terminology in Conference Diplomacy, *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

Read more: Ambiguity in Diplomacy

Other categorisations

Steven A. Beebe, Susan J. Beebe, and Mark V. Redmond (*Interpersonal Communication: Relating to Others*, Needham Heights, Mass.: Allyn & Bacon, 1996) propose several other categories of differences between cultures:

- Masculine versus feminine approaches to interaction: masculine cultures value achievement, assertiveness, heroism, and material wealth. Feminine cultures value relationships, caring for the less fortunate, and overall quality of life.
- Tolerance of uncertainty versus avoidance of uncertainty: cultures in which people need certainty to feel secure are more likely to have and enforce rigid rules for behavior and develop more elaborate codes of conduct, either formal or informal.
- Concentrated versus decentralized power: some cultures value equality and distribution of power more. Others expect a hierarchy and that some people will have more power than others.
- Individual versus group achievement: Some cultures put more emphasis on individualism; some place most emphasis on the good of the group.

Improving intercultural communication

How can diplomats improve their intercultural communication? Amb. Kishan Rana believes that the key lies in formal training for diplomats in cross cultural communication.

'Cross-cultural skills cannot be taken for granted, as qualities that diplomats master intuitively.' He writes that in the past the dominance of Western diplomacy and the fairly homogenous nature

of the discourse of diplomacy made such training largely unnecessary. But the reality today is different: 'Today, the addition of many layers of diversity demands explicit training in this area, but as before, the practitioner must integrate theory with practical needs, and adapt his learning on the basis of experience.' However, Rana makes the important point that "to be adept at cultural understanding is not to adopt the cultural style of others, or abandon one's own cultural characteristics. The aim is to reduce the distance from the "other", and to gain insight.'

Rana further suggests that more directness in communication on the part of diplomats may reduce the incidence of misunderstanding between cultures: 'diversity of cultures and languages suggests for diplomacy practitioners more directness and less resort to indirect signaling in dealing with non-homogenous interlocutors.' (Cross-Cultural Sensitivity and Language, Signaling and Diplomacy, *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

Raymond Cohen's efforts to improve communication between negotiators from different cultures included the development of a lexicon of negotiating terminology in Middle Eastern languages and English as a guide for conducting or following negotiations in these languages. He writes: "Behind the preparation of the lexicon lay the conviction that differences between languages matter deeply. Living and working in two languages, English and Hebrew, I was struck by how each language seemed to manifest a different outlook on the world. Things that could be said easily and elegantly in one tongue lent themselves to laborious expression in the other. Where one called for understatement, the other required hyperbole. Ostensibly slight nuances of tone and nice distinctions evoked quite far-reaching differences of association and meaning." The lexicon takes a variety of words and concepts related to negotiation, examining them for differences in distinctions drawn, historical associations, contrasting values and differences in emphasis. For more information about Cohen's lexicon of Middle Eastern negotiation, read his paper Language and Negotiation, a Middle East Lexicon (*Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001).

Paul Sharp provides advice for negotiators in dealing with American mediators. He notes that most literature on negotiation is written to advise Americans and other Westerners about negotiating with foreigners. However, 'for the diplomatic profession…how to talk to Americans is a much larger shared problem than how the Americans talk to everybody else.' Sharp points out that many of the problems other nations encounter when dealing with Americans are not cultural at all, but common problems any nation faces when dealing with a richer and more powerful nation. As advice, he suggests the same rules that are given to American diplomats for dealing with others: show respect for other cultures and make necessary adjustments to avoid offence:

> On the big question of the relationship between language and the 'out there'…I would suggest showing respect for American claims to a privileged access. Respect here can mean several things. As a Briton who has lived in the US for fifteen years and before that was congenitally disposed against even visiting the place, let alone living there, I am happy to concede that, as civilizational models go, they, the Americans, have got a lot of things right and, more importantly, they have got a lot of things right in the judgment of many less privileged than ourselves around the world. …Taking Americans seriously, however, can also mean simply acknowledging their power and wealth. (Talking to

Americans: Problems of Language and Diplomacy, *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

Finally, Donnell King suggests some general guidelines for bridging the gap between different cultures:

- *Seek information about the culture.* Knowledge is power. Prejudice stems from ignorance…do your homework, don't make assumptions.
- *Be other-oriented.* As Dorothy said in the Wizard of Oz, we're not in Kansas anymore. You can no longer rely on the assumptions of your own cultural heritage. This is not to tear down the value of your own culture; it is to make you aware of the richness that is available to you in other viewpoints. This also does not mean to try to be something you are not. It does mean allowing the other to be whomever s/he is rather than who you think that person should be.
- *Ask questions.* Be prepared to share information about yourself, and be sensitive in the way you ask (you don't want to be perceived as prying). But open communication helps in reducing the uncertainty that is present in any relationship.
- *Develop mindfulness.* This is another way of saying "be aware." Acknowledge that there is a connection between thoughts and deeds, and become aware of your own thinking and assumptions. Be conscious. Be active, not reactive. Be aware of your own self-talk.
- *Develop flexibility.*
- *Tolerate ambiguity.* Communicating with someone from another culture produces uncertainty, which can be uncomfortable. Learn to tolerate the discomfort until you come out on the other side.
- *Avoid negative judgments.* Resist thinking that your culture has all the answers. It has its strengths; so do other cultures.

Cultural diplomacy

Diplomacy has always involved communication with other nations. However, as Dr Kamel Abu Jaber, president of the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy and former Jordanian Minister of Foreign Affairs points, out, 'the idea of a language of diplomacy…is that it should not be culture-bound but an attempt at transcending such boundaries to create a quasi neutral vehicle of exchange.' (Language and Diplomacy, *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

So why has intercultural communication become such an important issue in diplomacy in recent years? Kishan Rana points out that for several reasons, differences between nations are now more significant than in the past:

> First, the breadth of diversities is far greater than what confronted the earlier generations of professionals, in a global community of some 189 UN member-states. Second, we live in an age when diversity is celebrated, and burnished with pride more than ever earlier. Third, within countries, there are sub-state diversities that have gained new impetus around the world, and this adds to the cultural management challenge. We see this in differences, between regions, communities and religious and ethnic groups. For instance, the same Europe that is witness to the world's most intensive political unification process via the EU, now enjoys greater diversity at subsidiary levels. Fourth, the professional diplomat is less homogenous in background and training, and his/her values are no

> longer cast in the same template as could be assumed even a few decades in the past. Further, this diplomat has dealings with a far wider range of government officials and those outside the government, especially the civil society representatives, academia, and other constituencies, at home and aboard.

Paul Sharp agrees that cultural differences are increasingly significant for diplomacy due to globalisation, but expresses some doubt that that they did not play a role in diplomacy in the past:

> …the separateness of cultures has been historically presented as a *raison d'être* for diplomacy as a cosmopolitan caste of privileged professionals. They served their Princes and Peace, not only by pursuing interests, but also by keeping affairs of state properly insulated from passions, morals, and cultural peculiarities of those whom they were increasingly forced to represent, the peoples of their respective countries. A shared diplomatic culture distinguished by a common language and acquired by similar patterns of socialisation, it was argued by writers on diplomacy from de Callières and de Wiquefort to Satow and Nicolson, was the key to preserving this insulation.

However, the historical record of classical diplomacy provides grounds for treating these writers' confidence in this regard with scepticism. Either the diplomats of 1914 did not share a common understanding of what was happening, or they were unable to get their respective leaders to accept that understanding. Clearly, the professionals were not as good at finessing the culture problem as their defenders thought they were simply because they could not. As libraries of philological, philosophical, and sociological inquiry in the twentieth century made clear, a direct correspondence between language and the material reality it purported to describe could not be taken for granted. The *lingua franca* of the day, be it Latin, French or English, was steeped in its own peculiarities of understanding and ways of seeing the world, and even professionals who acquired fluency in it did so with their habits of thought and understanding firmly structured by their own cultures mediated by their own languages.

If one adds to this the great irony of globalisation as far as diplomacy is concerned, namely that it is bringing together more and more people steeped in their own cultures and languages (politicians, business people, advocates and lobbyists for public transnational causes, and individuals), one begins to sense the scale of the contemporary problems posed to diplomacy by questions of language and culture.

…Nevertheless, faith (or so it must seem at times) leads them to believe that some shared understanding is, in principle, always attainable for if it were not, there would be no point in having diplomats trying to find what it was. (Talking to Americans: Problems of Language and Diplomacy, *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

Raymond Cohen discusses the effect of cultural differences on the language of negotiation, particularly in a Middle Eastern context:

> By definition, negotiation is an exercise in language and communication, an attempt to create shared understanding where previously there have been contested understandings. When negotiation takes place across languages and cultures the scope for

> misunderstanding increases. So much of negotiation involves arguments about words and concepts that it cannot be assumed that language is secondary and all that 'really' counts is the 'objective' issues at stake. Can one ever speak of purely objective issues? When those issues include emotive, intangible concepts such as 'honor', 'standing', 'national identity', 'security', and 'justice' can we really take it for granted that the parties understand each other perfectly? And if not, what can be done to overcome language barriers?

The case for the importance of language and culture rests on the view that semantic distinctions reflect different interpretations of reality and normative modes of behavior. Words and their translations are not just interchangeable labels denoting some given, immutable feature of the world but keys opening the door onto different configurations of the world. A stone is an object that speakers of all languages can recognize and respond to at a non-linguistic level. They can kick it, throw it in a pond, or use it to crack a nut. The moment language is used and the object is named, culture enters the picture. As opposed to the thing itself, the word 'stone' or its equivalents is a cultural notion. As such it is steeped in the culturally-grounded meanings of the given language community in the light of its history, religion, customs, and environment.

The word is therefore a shorthand symbol capable of evoking a unique range of specialized references, uses, and associations. Words are *polysemic*, that is, they have multiple clusters of meaning and usage. Across languages these spreads of meaning occupy different *semantic fields*, though they may well coincide and overlap in certain places. Speakers of Hebrew and English may talk of 'peace', using the word in appropriate contexts, and referring to the same legal precedents. But what they mean by peace are subtly different phenomena. 'Peace' refers in English to a relationship established by treaty between states concluding war, an ideal prophetic vision of harmony, and tranquility. *Shalom* shares in the Biblical vision of universal accord but lacks the legal features that 'peace' acquired in the European state system from centuries of diplomatic practice. Moreover, deriving from an ancient Semitic root referring to wholeness or completeness, *shalom* importantly connotes 'health, welfare, greetings, and safety'. Hence the common Israeli army bulletin broadcast after a military operation: 'All our planes returned *b'shalom* to base.' Here *b'shalom* means 'safe and sound', not 'in peace'. (Language and Negotiation: A Middle East Lexicon, *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

Translation and interpretation

Over the last century various ethnic groups have become more aware of their identity and rights. In some countries ethnic minority groups have demanded the right to education, media and other services in their own languages, at times leading to armed conflict with the majority groups in their countries.

In the last few decades contact between nations has increased, as more and more countries take an active — and interactive — role in international affairs. Both of these processes have led to an awareness of linguistic rights as human rights. At the same time as English has gained currency as an international language and as the most commonly used diplomatic language, international organisations are recognising the various languages of member states as official or working languages for their proceedings, both oral and written. In diplomacy, now more than ever before, interpreters and translators are of vital importance.

The 1996 Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights is one of the results of increased awareness of linguistic rights.

Professor Dietrich Kappeler, former director of the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, describes the history of language use in diplomacy:

> Documents exchanged between countries in the past were written in the single vehicular language then in use in Europe: Latin. In the 18th century French had become the generally accepted diplomatic language, so much so that even diplomatic notes addressed to the British Foreign Office by the Legation of the USA were written in that language. The 20th century saw a gradual emergence of English as a second and later even dominant diplomatic language. At the same time, a growing number of countries insisted on the use of their own language in diplomatic correspondence and joint diplomatic documents. As a result the United Nations admitted to five languages at its inception (Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish), to which Arabic has later been added by informal agreement. In the European Union, all twelve languages of the members are currently in use and their number is bound to grow as new members will be admitted. Translation and interpretation have therefore become a major element in present-day diplomatic life. (Texts in Diplomacy, *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

Dr Stanko Nick, Croatian Ambassador to Hungary, makes the point that although it has frequently been argued that one language or another is more suitable for diplomacy as it is clearer, more flexible, more expressive, or more eloquent, the "mere fact that historically such a role has been taken in turns by so many languages (Acadian, literary Chinese, Greek "koin`e", mediaeval Greek, Latin, Arabic, Turkish, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Italian, Dutch, German, French, and English) proves that linguistic or semantic reasons are not decisive. On the contrary, it can be said that the dominant role of one language or another in diplomacy has resulted from the political, strategic, economic, cultural or other domination of one power or another in international relations." (Use of Language in Diplomacy, *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

Translation

Roger Chriss, a professional translator, describes the role of the translator:

> Translators are language professionals. They are applied linguists, competent writers, diplomats, and educated amateurs. Like linguists, translators have to be capable of discerning subtleties and nuances in their languages, researching terminology and colloquialisms, and handling new developments in their languages. Like writers, translators have to be accustomed to working long hours alone on a subject which interests few people and with a language that few people around them know. Like diplomats, translators have to be sensitive to the cultural and social differences which exist in their languages and be capable of addressing these issues when translating. And like educated amateurs, translators have to know the basics and some of the details about the subjects they deal with. ("Translation as a Profession," on Roger Chriss's website *The Language Realm – a Website about Translation and Language*)

In diplomacy one of the main drawbacks of the growing need for translation is cost. Nick points out that although most organisations and conferences try to limit the number of languages used by selecting several official or working languages, the cost of interpretation and translation is astronomical. “Several years ago it was calculated that the translation of one single page to all official languages of the UN amounted to the value necessary to cover the cost of living for one person in India for a whole year! When one takes into account the number of international organisations, and the thousands of pages translated almost daily it is easy to subscribe to the proposal of introducing Esperanto as the language for international communication.” (“Use of Language in Diplomacy,” *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

Another drawback to the use of translation in multilateral diplomacy is the complexity of the task of producing equivalent documents in different languages. Kappeler writes:

> Versions in working languages are based on the records of simultaneous interpretation. Versions in other languages have to be prepared separately. All have to go before the drafting committee which therefore needs at least one member for each language. Preferably however members of a drafting committee should master two or more of the languages used so as to ensure proper concordance of texts. The drafts submitted to the committee are prepared by the secretariat of the negotiating body, which must check recordings of simultaneous interpretation and produce versions in languages which were not used as working languages. The complexity of the task of a drafting committee explains why, in some cases, it will re-convene after the treaty has already been authenticated, with the express competence of making linguistic adjustments between the various versions. (“Texts in Diplomacy,” *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

Interpretation

Vicky Cremona and Helena Mallia, professional conference interpreters, explain the difference between the work of a translator and that of an interpreter:

> Translators work alone, facing a white sheet of paper and a text. They recreate the text by becoming its second author, understanding and recreating the author’s writing skills… The interpreter’s work is not a solitary one. The interpreter works directly with an orator, who possibly elaborates his text as the topic unfolds, expressing his thoughts directly without any time for re-elaboration or rewording. The interpreter also works directly with a public, the floor, who is listening simultaneously to him and to the orator. (“Interpretation and Diplomacy,” *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

Types of interpretation

There are two main types of interpretation: consecutive and simultaneous.

In consecutive interpretation, the interpreter listens to the speaker and takes notes, and when the speaker chooses (at intervals of anything from a few minutes to half an hour), renders the speech into the target language.

In simultaneous translation, the interpreter sits in a booth and listens to the speaker through headphones, then instantly renders the speech into the target language, a few seconds to a minute behind the speaker. Although quality and accuracy are not as high as in consecutive interpretation, speed and intensity are higher.

Cremona and Mallia describe some of the techniques they use as conference interpreters, which center on identifying key words for the conference topic before the conference and listening carefully for those words during the speeches:

> Interpreters are chameleons, they have to lend themselves to the topic under discussion, and blend themselves with the general decor… Certain interpreters choose to specialise in particular areas, in order to be able to handle the language peculiarities of a particular field.

…an interpreter must seek other sources of information beforehand. It is important for an interpreter working in the diplomatic field to follow closely world political, social and cultural events. Sources for these may include local and foreign newspapers, journals dealing with current affairs, news broadcasts, as well as a very good knowledge of history and geography.

Interpreting for diplomatic conferences takes some particular skills, according to Cremona and Mallia:

> In diplomatic conferences, confidence in the interpreters is essential. The underlying tensions which may arise between delegates or country representatives can worsen if the interpreters are not trusted. In fact, in certain cases of great tension, delegates prefer to speak in or translate into a language they do not really master rather than passing through an interpreter. This is why it is important to ensure that the interpreters chosen are of the calibre and have experience in dealing with situations where tact and savior-faire are an asset. ("Interpretation and Diplomacy," *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

Interpretation — and translation — pose some difficulties in diplomacy, for example, cost, lack of accuracy, and the difficulty of translating exactly the same concepts to a different language. However, so far, interpretation is the best option we have. Stanko Nick examines the various ways diplomats speaking different languages can communicate with each other, and the drawbacks of each method:

One solution, obviously, is that one of the interlocutors speaks the language of the other. Problems may arise: the knowledge of the language may not be adequate, one side is making a concession and the other has an immediate and significant advantage, there are possible political implications, it may be difficult to apply in multilateral diplomacy, etc. A second possibility is that both sides use a third, neutral, language. A potential problem may be that neither side possesses full linguistic knowledge and control, leading to possible bad misunderstandings. Nevertheless, this method is frequently applied in international practice because of its political advantages. A third formula, using interpreters, is also very widely used, particularly in multilateral diplomacy or for negotiations at a very high political level — not only for reasons of equity, but because politicians and statesmen often do not speak foreign languages. This method

also has disadvantages: it is time consuming, costly, and sometimes inadequate or straightforwardly incorrect (even if the translator has a good knowledge of both languages, he/she may not be familiar with the particular subject which can be extremely specific — from the protection of the ozone layer to the homologisation of sports records; it was not without reason that the slogan traduttore-traditore, translator = traitor, could be found in mediaeval Italy). Finally, there is the possibility of using one international synthetic, artificial language, such as Esperanto; this solution would have many advantages, but unfortunately is not likely to be implemented soon, mostly because of the opposition of factors that dominate in the international political — and therefore also cultural and linguistic — scene. (Use of Language in Diplomacy, *Language and Diplomacy*, Malta: DiploProjects, 2001)

Database on International Communication

The following are excerpts from Diplo's Database on Intercultural Communication.

Diplomats and Intercultural Communication

A core part of a diplomat's work is easing communication among different national and professional cultures. For example, a diplomat must, on the one hand, understand local culture and cultural patterns in the country of assignment, in order to comprehend and influence local developments. On the other hand, the diplomat has to 'translate' local cultural developments and present them in a lanuguage clear to decision-makers back at home. Another cultural transition managed by the diplomat is between professional cultures. For example, with negotiations on the environment, the diplomat must translate the language and logic of the environmentalists into language understable to politicians, and vice versa. This task is sometimes more difficult than communication between different nations.
Contribution by: Jovan Kurbalija

Shift from Euro-Centric to Global Diplomacy

'Classical diplomacy consisted only of interactants who belonged to the same JudeoChristian family of cultures. But as the European-centered structure of Classical Diplomacy weakened after WWI, cultural anthropological perspectives began to be accorded serious consideration in diplomatic policymaking.'

Source: Getinet Belay, '7 Ethics in International Interaction: Perspectives on Diplomacy and Negotiation,' *Communication and International and Intercultural Ethics,* ed. Fred L. Casmir (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997) 241.
Contribution by: Jovan Kurbalija

Function of Language

'In the straightforward style of American culture, language has primarily the instrumental function of transmitting information. For the members of the face-salient societies, however, it performs the important role of social lubricant, easing and harmonizing personal relations.' Raymond Cohen (1997). *Negotiating Across Cultures.* Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 112-113.
Contribution by: Jovan Kurbalija

Intercultural Misunderstanding (USA-Japan)

'On Prime Minister Sato's 1969 trip to Washington, President Nixon insisted that Japan exercise export restrain. Mr Sato's classic reply, delivered with a heavenward glance, was, "Zensho shimasu". Literally translated as, "I will do my best", the expression really means, "No way". Nixon naturally understood it to mean that he had his guest's agreement. When there was no practical follow-up he denounced Sato as a liar. But unlike Americans, who expect yes or no answers, Japanese are quite happy with the gray areas. "They hate no, and they hate "yes".'
Raymond Cohen (1997). *Negotiating Across Cultures.* Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 113.
Contribution by: Jovan Kurbalija

Vocabulary of Negotiations

Raymond Cohen identifies a difference between high and low context cultures in the vocabulary of negotiating: 'In the Anglo-Saxon tradition great stress is laid on creating the conditions for an equitable contest. A whole vocabulary, redolent with approvals, exists to describe this state of affairs: fair play, level playing field, rules of the game, due process, and so on. Face salient cultures in contrast, are less enthusiastic about competition, with its potential for affront and painful confrotation, than about ensuring a result that will protect their cherished dignity.'
Raymond Cohen (1997). *Negotiating Across Cultures.* Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 62.
Contribution by: Jovan Kurbalija

'I' and 'we' in Thai language

'In Siam there are eight different ways of saying "I" and "we", depending on whether the master speaks to the servant or the servant to the master… Each one of these synonimies is linked to the custom, character, and origin of the people…'
Anna Wierzbicka, *Understanding Cultures Through Their Key Words,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, 10.
Contribution by: Jovan Kurbalija

Be careful with literal translations!

You should be cautious interpreting signs, instructions, and conversational idioms literally, as the following humorously suggests: In a Bucharest hotel lobby: The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time we regret that you will be unbearable… and more at this address.
Contribution by: Jovan Kurbalija

Language Networks on the Internet

This article by Clay Shirky looks at new geographic networks being created over the Internet by langauge proximity. He writes 'the internet is creating an American version of the British Empire, with the English language playing the role of the Royal Navy… in an information economy the vital protocol is language, written and spoken language… two countries border one another if and only if they have a language they can use in common.' The implications reach into economics: 'the degree to which a country can plug into a "language network", especially the English network, will have much to do with its place in the 21st century economy… And as we

would expect of networks with different standards, gateways will arise; places where multi-lingual populations will smooth the transition between language networks.' Shirky makes the interesting point that 19th century imperialism, and the accompanying export of languages, will reshape the map of the 21st century.

Promoting Multilingualism on the Internet

In this paper, presented at the Second International Congress on Ethical, Legal and Societal Challenges of Cyberspace, 1-3 October 1998, Taik-Sup Auh of Korea University makes the claim that 'Multilingualism on the Internet is a necessary, if not the sufficient, condition for transforming an ephemeral cybersociety into a robust one.' The terms are defined by Jim Falk: 'Relationships within an ephemeral community, whether emotional or intellectual, are likely to be partial, satisfying only one or a few of the members' needs.' In contrast, a robust community is one in which 'the members have not only a sense of interrelatedness and shared experience, but also share common ideals and believe that through by virtue of belonging to their community they can make great progress towards achieving their objectives than through belonging to other communities. Members will invest personal resources, energy and commitment into it because they consider it stable, growing, supportive and effective.'
Contribution by: Jovan Kurbalija

Liberty vs. Tyranny

Bernard Lewis (*What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 54) on 18th and 19th century Ottoman political thought: 'Westerners have become accustomed to think of good and bad government in terms of tyranny versus liberty. In Middle-Eastern usage, liberty or freedom was a legal not a political term. It meant one who was not a slave, and unlike the West, Muslims did not use slavery and freedom as political metaphors. For traditional Muslims, the converse of tyranny was not liberty by justice. Justice in this context meant essentially two things, that the ruler was there by right and not by usurpation, and that he governed according to God's law, or at least according to recognizable moral and legal principles.'
Contribution by: Hannah Slavik

'Young' Ottomans and Turks

In the mid-1860s a new movement was launched — the Young Ottomans. Even the use of the word 'Young' is interesting. We have now become accustomed in the Western world to using 'young' as a positive political term. In the Middle East in the nineteenth century this was new and strange. The connotation of "young" was inexperienced and immature, and no group would have thought of putting themselves forward for any kind of office on the basis of being young. On the contrary, all the terms of respect mean old, senior. The primary meaning of the Arabic *shaykh* and of the Persian *pir* is "old." Both carry a connotation of political or religious authority. The Turkish *aga* has the primary meaning of "elder brother." In some Turkic languages it means "father," "uncle," and even "elder sister." In Ottoman usage it connoted command or authority, military or other. The Aga of the Janissaries commanded that corps; the Aga of the Girls (*Kizlar agasi*), the chief black eunuch of the imperial harem, maintained order in that institution. A similar respect for age — for seniority — appears in Western languages, in the common use of

such words as “elder” and “alderman,” “Senate,” “Senator,” and “senior.” In is interesting that both the Young Ottomans and their later successors, the Young Turks, avoided using the normal Turkish word for “young” in their nomenclature. The Young Ottomans called themselves *Yeni*, which literally means “new.” The Young Turks called themselves *Jöntürk*, simply transliterating their French designation.” (Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 58).
Contribution by: Hannah Slavik

Problems in the Study of Intercultural Communication

‘Suggesting that intercultural communication is above and beyond all else a matter of colliding cultures, of culture clashes and culture gaps, of uncertainty, stress and loss of confidence, often contributes to the construction of problems. It often generates stress, anxiety and so on, by presenting it as something strange, weird, unusual, in short by abnormalizing it. The abnormalization of intercultural communication is based on a gross hypostasis of ‘culture’ as the all-eclipsing contextual factor, and a massive overestimation of the degree and the nature of differences in speech styles.’ This paper by Prof. Dr. Jan Blommaert analyses problems with the study of intercultural communication and proposed a better analytical methodology.
Contribution by: Hannah Slavik

Meaning of the word ‘sustainable’

‘… the word “sustainable” as used in the Brundtland Reports refers nowadays to radically different approaches to development, which result in diametrically opposed economic practices. Increasingly, the word is used by North Americans to mean that development is sustainable for as long as there is a steady supply of resoruces to sustain it (which implies that resources may be destroyed if deposits of unexploited resources are identified). According to the European approach, on the other hand, development is sustainable only if the known enviornmental capital is preserved intact.’ (Louise Lassonde, *Coping with Population Challenges*, London: Earthscan Publications Limited, 1996, 9.)
Contribution by: Jovan Kurbalija

The Concept of Linguistic Imperialism

Language constitutes one building block of a nation’s cultural identity. In interactions with other nations, each nation should acknowledge respect for each others’ languages. Only then, intercultural communication turns into a dialogue between equals regardless of the nation’s size and power. However, the proponents of linguistic dominance claim that every language has its period of longevity (emergence, development, maturity, decay). Some languages which are culturally potent have a chance for sustained life. Others recede into oblivion through assimilation or/and integration into the dominant linguistic environment which overtakes them. In a *Mail and Guardian* article on 22 Novmeber, 2002, John Crace writes: ‘There are about 6 000 languages in the world, yet 95% of the population speaks just 15 of them. Economic imperialism has gone hand-in-glove with linguistic imperialism, as people abandon their mother tongues in favour of the globally dominant English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese and Russian. As a result hundreds of languages have disappeared in the past 50 years, and experts predict there will be fewer than 3 000 languages left by the turn of the next century.’ This is a dangerous tread that needs to be reversed if we do not wish to have a whole set of langauges —

and perhaps the cultures that accompany them — completely obliterated.
Contribution by: Valentin Katrandzhiev

Cultural Barriers in US-Iraq Relations

This article pubished by the Diversity Training University International in their weekly newsletter of 25 September, 2002, identifies and discusses the Top Ten Cultural Barriers in US-Iraq Relations: Ethnocentrism, Symbol Systems, Formulation of the Problem, Differences in a Sense of Fairness, Sense of History, Dehumanization, Morality, Avoiding Identification of Cultural Barriers, Unwillingness to Deal with Obvious Cultural Barriers, and Power.
Contribution by: Hannah Slavik

Language or Culture? – German and English

In this *International Herald Tribune* article of January 8, 2003, Emma Burrows points out that some words, for example "understatement," do not exist in German for the simple reason that the concept does not exist. Germans tend to express themselves directly, which can be seen as rude by Americans, while Americans tend to use more polite formulations which may be considered false by Germans.
Contribution by: Jovan Kurbalija

Book: Intercultural Communication and Diplomacy

Intercultural Communication and Diplomacy is a collection of papers presented at two conferences: the 2003 Conference on Intercultural Communication and Diplomacy, and the 2004 Conference on Organisational and Professional Cultures and Diplomacy.

Topics covered include basic theory, intercultural communication in practice in diplomacy, negotiation and conflict resolution, professional and organisational cultures, and training for diplomats. The papers in this volume approach the topic of intercultural communication and diplomacy from a wide range of cultural perspectives, as the authors originate from 17 different countries and a variety of professional sectors, including foreign services, universities, businesses, and non-governmental organisations.

Diplomacy of small states

The diplomacy of small states is a subset of diplomacy. It is sufficiently identifiable to warrant an examination on its own. At the same time, it also helps to provide an insight into the broader themes, objectives, and methods of diplomacy in general.

Small states form an integral part of the international order. About two-thirds of United Nations members fall into this category. They operate in the same broad political and economic environment as all other states. In their foreign policy, they pursue the same objectives of security, prosperity, and wellbeing of their citizens. They also conduct their diplomacy using the same diplomatic toolbox as larger states.

While all states share in the full definition of sovereignty and autonomy, certain characteristics influence how small states operate in the international system. They have a limited set of human and material resources to devote to the tasks of diplomacy. The range of issues they face is more limited. Yet, they are no less urgent or intense than that of larger states. The effects of their actions on the international order also tend to be more focused.

Small states recognise the valuable role that multilateral diplomacy plays in enhancing their engagement and amplifying their voices, thus levelling the playing field. Nevertheless, the many complex structures and processes of multilateral diplomacy strain their resources. For instance, the resources required for gathering support for their positions may be in short supply.
Despite the limited resources, this initial disadvantage can often by be circumvented, reduced, and turned into a strategic advantage. This requires a reliance on collective solidarity and the rule of law, a strict focus on limited objectives, and the adoption of creative solutions.

What is a small state?

According to the World Bank, 50 countries are listed as small states: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belize, Bhutan, Botswana, Brunei, Cape Verde, Comoros, Cyprus, Djibouti, Dominica, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Iceland, Jamaica, Kiribati, Lesotho, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Micronesia, Montenegro, Namibia, Nauru, Palau, Qatar, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, Suriname, Swaziland, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

With no single definition of a small state, what criteria should we use to decide the smallness of a state? Territorial size? Economic power or potential? Security postures or military strength? Interaction with other states? Relative power indices?

There are two main approaches: quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative definitions start with the criterion of absolute size – based on demographic, geographical, or economic factors – singly or in different combinations. **Qualitative** definitions start with relationships and with the assumption that the majority of relationships are among unequals. These approaches provide separate, but complementary, perspectives on the conduct of small state diplomacy.

Quantitative definition

Size is an important factor affecting how states deal with constraints on, and threats to, their sovereignty. Quantitative definitions look at absolute size in terms of demographic, geophysical, or economic conditions. As an example, the Commonwealth definition focuses on demographic size: *Small states are sovereign countries with a population of 1.5 million people or fewer*.

Using this definition, there are just over 30 small states in the Commonwealth. Yet within the Commonwealth, this list includes larger member countries such as Botswana, Jamaica, Lesotho, Namibia, and Papua New Guinea, as they share many of the same characteristics of small states (Commonwealth website). With limited resources, these states face unique development

challenges, including limited economic diversification, remoteness, and isolation with accompanying high transportation costs, limited human and institutional capacity, susceptibility to natural disasters and environmental change, openness, and income volatility.

Categorisation based on quantitative definitions is often used in the context of development cooperation. It focuses the diplomatic exercise on the identification of the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of small states and on those measures and programmes that can help them cushion or avoid them. This approach is useful in directing attention to very small and vulnerable states. It can also highlight the concerns of small states with serious exposure to the effects of natural disasters (e.g. climate change in the case of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) group).

Qualitative definition

The qualitative approach concentrates on the perceptions that result from unequal relationships. It considers a much larger number of states as small, states whose sense of smallness is essentially circumstantial and subjective. It conceptualises the whole community of states ranging from the extremely small and weak (microstate) to the massive and most powerful (superpower).

Approached within this framework, the study of the diplomacy of small states includes a broader variety of foreign policy options and diplomatic methods, for example how small states deal with development and security, and how they seek to overcome their initial handicaps in specific circumstances. This approach allows a wider appreciation of the value and uses of the multilateral processes in small state diplomacy, beyond the value and use of these processes in development cooperation.

Characteristics of small states

In its small states overview, the World Bank notes: 'To meet small states' unique constraints, international development institutions need to develop innovative solutions tailored to address their interrelated development and financing issues. (World Bank)

Openness, insularity, resilience, weakness, and dependence are important factors influencing small state engagement in the international system, according to the Commonwealth Advisory Group report, *A future for small states: overcoming vulnerability*.

Small states are exposed to a high degree of economic openness often with a dependence on strategic imports (particularly food, energy, and industrial supplies); a dependence on a narrow range of exports or services; and susceptibility to external economic shocks. Consequently, vulnerability is often seen to be a key element in defining them.

A class-constructed definition (DiploFoundation small states course, 2010) encapsulates the ideas of qualitative and quantitative elements, characteristics, and the issue of vulnerability: *A small state is one whose geographical, economic, or demographic conditions contribute to a perceived weakness and vulnerability in the international setting. A small state may be robust internally but is vulnerable externally.*

These characteristics and vulnerabilities are often reflected in how small states conduct their diplomacy.

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Diplomacy of small states

Cohesion often accompanies smallness. This assists in creating common purpose and consistency in the foreign policy and diplomacy of small states. It can reduce complications in governance arising from the competing or conflicting interests and perspectives of a complex and diverse society. Yet resource constraints mean that small states often have fewer resources necessary for effective interaction with other states. Resources required for gathering and analysing relevant information, for elaborating and projecting positions and points of view, and for marshalling and deploying alignments and circumstances in support of their positions may be in short supply.

Although their limited resources can put smaller states in a weaker bargaining position in their interactions with larger states, this initial disadvantage can be reduced. This may require a reliance on collective solidarity and the rule of law, a strict focus on limited objectives, and the adoption of creative solutions. The role of small states in various multilateral negotiations confirms that small and cohesive groups can have an important effect. For example, the Neutral and Non-Aligned (N+N) countries in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) process, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in climate negotiations, and the Small and Vulnerable Economies (SVEs) group in the World Trade Organization DOHA round.

Although the many complex structures and processes of multilateral diplomacy can strain the resources of small states, they see the value of the multilateral approach in levelling the playing field. Small states can also exploit how their positions at the multilateral level can feed into bilateral relations.

Key issues for small states

However we define them, small states are represented on either side of the divide that exists in the international system between developed and developing countries. The binding elements arising from the constraints of smallness are a relevant factor in several important aspects, most notably those related to the environment, to trade and investment, and to security for small states in general.

Read more in the following sections on small states and the specific issues of economic development, security, and environment and climate change.

Issues: Economic development

In determining a small state's economic vulnerabilities, key elements include economic openness and the link between smallness and remoteness, and connections between smallness and low levels of development. In economic diplomacy, the resilience that small states have to economic

vulnerability and the way these vulnerabilities affect their bilateral and multilateral economic diplomacy is important to consider.

Resilience may be inherent or nurtured. **Inherent resilience** arises from positive factors of geography or resources over which a state has no direct control. For example, the natural resource base of Bahrain or Trinidad and Tobago and the advantageous location of Luxembourg are natural factors of resilience that offset the disadvantages of smallness. **Nurtured resilience** is developed and managed through some deliberate policy. One example is the development of information technology in Estonia in various economic sectors in the domestic and foreign market.

Briguglio, in the paper *Economic Vulnerability, and Resilience: Concepts and Measurements*, identifies four variables on an index of nurtured resiliency: good governance, macroeconomic stability, market reform, and social development.

Regional arrangements provide small states with the opportunity to insert their economies into larger economic frameworks. Regional economic integration provides a common platform through which members can better promote their collective interests with the rest of the international community and in multilateral arrangements, often advocating for a recognition of their specific challenges.

An important dilemma for many small states is how best to maintain a distinction between their demands for a preservation of preferences, based on the argument of special vulnerability, and the demands of other developing countries for retention of these preferences as an indispensable development tool. This is discussed further in the Commonwealth Secretariat/World Bank Joint Task Force on Small States Report: *Small States: Meeting Challenges in the Global Economy.*

Issues: Security

Small states have a more limited range of human and material resources to devote to security. They often lack the option of using force, either as a defensive or as a pre-emptive measure. Therefore, the diplomatic process becomes a more vital aspect of their approach to security than it may be for larger states. In common with all other states, the small state also has an interest in broad aspects of international peace, security, cooperation, prosperity building, and the protection of human rights.

An international system based on respect for, and compliance with, the rule of law is a fundamental security safeguard for all states, but especially smaller and weaker ones. In today's international environment, the processes of regional security and cooperation are the most visible and immediate expression of preventative diplomacy. Small states have a strong record of active and enthusiastic promotion and support of these processes.

This is reflected in the following statement in 2016 on the ongoing South China Sea dispute by Singapore Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan. *Singapore is not a claimant state in the South China Sea. We take no position on the merits of the specific territorial claims. But as a small state, we do have a vital interest in and we have to strongly support the maintenance of a rules-based international order and to support the peaceful resolution of*

disputes, with full respect for legal and diplomatic processes. This is of vital importance for us that the integrity of international law and international agreements, such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea or UNCLOS for short, we must make sure that these agreements, these arrangements are not in any way undermined. As a small state, Singapore cannot accept that might is right.

Issues: Environment and Climate change

In environmental concerns, size is a major element of vulnerability. Environmental risks and natural disasters affect large and small states indiscriminately, and their effects on specific locations are the same, irrespective of location in a large or a small state. Yet the capacity of a state to cope with the effects of environmental risks and natural disasters is highly related to size.

The necessity of mitigation and adaptation for small states is summarised in the following statement in 2011 by the St Lucia Minister for Sustainable Development.

The adaptation needs of our islands are many and they certainly transcend water and coastal zone issues as climate change will affect other critical sectors and systems such as food production, human settlements, critical infrastructure, financial services, human health, and terrestrial bio-diversity. Our islands may appear to be a fragile emerald necklace laid against the foil of the Azure Caribbean Sea but for us, they are everything and possess the assets that exist nowhere else in the world'.

In 2017, the vulnerability of small states to external shocks was brought sharply into focus during the hurricane season in the Western Hemisphere and the devastating impact wrought on Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Puerto Rico, and the Florida Keys, among others.

Diplomatic reporting

Information is the lifeblood of the diplomatic services with diplomats, like veins and arteries, reporting from their posts back to their home countries. These diplomatic reports, or cables, as they are more commonly known, keep information flowing; they help co-ordinate activities and prepare the groundwork for decisions.
While reporting remains an intellectual activity requiring good judgment, good cognitive skills, and a good writing style, it, too, has been affected by the Internet. What should be reported? How should diplomats integrate into their cables what has already been published by journalists, bloggers, and other providers of information? What value do diplomatic reports add to the already available information and analysis provided by Wikipedia and blogs, among others? What is the usability of the new generation of artificial intelligence tools for summarising texts? This portal explores the function of diplomatic reporting and the impact of technology on this important function.

What is diplomatic reporting?

Thousands of reports are written every day: they record meetings, analyse situations, and suggest actions. Since the ancient Egyptian Tal-Amarna diplomacy right up until the present day,

diplomatic reports have been at the heart of diplomacy. They very often determine the internal chemistry of diplomatic services. Diplomats try to establish their positions and gain peer-recognition through the quality of their reports.

One way to look at diplomatic reporting is to consider it as one facet of a broader and more general phenomenon – the flow of information. Transmission of information is a basic human activity that in one form or another takes place all the time and under multiple circumstances. It is a product of instinct combined with need. Like any other method of information flow diplomatic reporting needs to have its own recognisable structure. It has to emerge from a clearly defined context. It needs direction and purpose. It should avail itself of whatever means of communication are currently available.

Two contrasting aspects characterise the flow of information in whatever form it is conducted. On the one hand once information exists there is both the need as well as the natural tendency for it to flow outwards. One may put this in another way. Information cannot exist in isolation. There is the need for a human recipient, as much as a human conveyor, for facts and events to become information. The underlying thrust is therefore towards all type of reporting, including diplomatic reporting, to become open and unrestrained.

The question is the extent to which there are limits to this openness, and furthermore who decides on these limits. This leads to another, and contradictory, aspect of the issue of information flow. Information is a form of power. Withholding information is a means for one individual or a group of individuals to exercise control over others.

On the whole, technology has been on the side of the moves towards freer flow of information, though it has occasionally also been used for the opposite purposes. The major breakthrough came with the invention of printing. One could go back even further, to the invention of writing. The latest breakthrough is represented by the internet. It is useful to put the Internet phenomenon in this historical context. In the way it is evolving, Internet forms part of the age-long contest pointing towards a freer and more open flow of information.

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