1
The Study of Diplomacy

The lack of theoretical interest in diplomacy, alluded to in the Introduction, does not imply any dearth of literature on the subject. On the contrary, there is an abundance of narratives of various kinds dealing with diplomacy. Before setting out on our own theorizing effort, we therefore need to give a brief account of the existing literature and ask ourselves what can be learned from it. The second question we address in this chapter concerns the causes of the relative lack of theorizing of diplomacy and its marginalization in IR theory.

Extant studies

The bulk of the vast literature on diplomacy has been written either by practitioners or diplomatic historians. Neither category of authors has been particularly interested in theory-building. Practitioners have tended to be anecdotal rather than systematic, and diplomatic historians idiographic rather than nomothetic.[1] "The defining characteristic of historians may not be their dedication to the past in general, but their immersion in a *particular* past."[2] Similarly, practitioners have drawn on their own *particular* experiences. Neither practitioners nor diplomatic historians have been prone to regard different historical experiences and insights as comparable or detached from their "temporal moorings."[3]

Practitioners' insights

In works written by diplomats or scholars-cum-practitioners there is a clear *prescriptive* bent. What characterizes the good diplomat? How should diplomacy best be conducted? These are questions occupying authors from antiquity to today. The Ancient Indian treatise on statesmanship, *Arthasastra*, written by Kautilya in the fourth century BC, offers

detailed advice concerning the conduct of diplomacy.[4] In 1436 Bernard du Rosier, provost of Toulouse, wrote the first European textbook of diplomatic practice, entitled *Short Treatise About Ambassadors*.[5] The development of a diplomatic system based on resident ambassadors in Renaissance Italy saw the production of hundreds of similar works over the next few centuries. For instance, in 1620 the Spanish scholar, courtier and diplomat Don Juan Antonio De Vera published *El Embajador*. It was translated into French (where its title became *Le parfait ambassadeur*) and Italian, and was read thoroughly by most aspiring diplomats throughout the next century.[6] In *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions*, the Dutch diplomat and purveyor of political intelligence Abraham de Wicquefort criticized De Vera. First published in 1681, it was translated into English in 1716 as *The Embassador and His Functions*.[7] François de Callières published his *De la manière de négocier avec les souverains* in 1716. Along with Wicquefort's book, it became one of the standard references on diplomatic practice throughout the eighteenth century.[8] Callières' book was hailed as "a mine of political wisdom" in Ernest Satow's *A Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, which was first published in 1917 and has since appeared in several revised editions. Harold Nicolson's *Diplomacy* (1939) and *The Evolution of Diplomatic Method* (1954) join Satow's encyclopedic work as modern-day classics.[9]

In this long tradition of prescriptive tracts one can find similar but rather vacuous advice; "the striking thing is how little over the centuries the recommendations have changed."[10] Garrett Mattingly, writing in the 1950s, comments on the continuity from Bernard du Rosier to his own time:

> Translated from the clichés of the fifteenth century to those of the twentieth, what Rosier has to say might have been said by Andrew D. White, or Jules Jusserand or Harold Nicolson. Students in foreign service schools in Rome and Paris, London and Washington are reading in their textbooks much of the same generalities at this moment.[11]

In short, what these practitioners have written does not amount to anything we might label diplomatic theory, even if this is the term that is often used when referring to their works.[12] In addition to the prescriptive bent of this literature, modern-day ambassadorial memoirs tend to emphasize and exaggerate the profound changes that their authors claim to have experienced in their time of service, while overlooking elements of continuity. "The world perceived by a diplomat at the end of his career is bound to seem a very different place from that

which he knew, or thought he knew, when as an attaché or junior clerk he transcribed and translated the correspondence of his elders."[13]

In sum, diplomats have been prolific writers. Many have had scholarly ambitions and credentials. Diplomats have reflected on their own practice to an extent that few other professions can match. Much of this literature is in the form of memoirs. These, together with the succession of diplomatic manuals, while often prescriptive and value-laden, contain a wealth of useful information in need of systematization. To link this literature with IR theory is one of the tasks we undertake in this book.

Diplomatic history

Diplomatic history is an old subdiscipline. Having amassed a wealth of information about specific eras or incidents from antiquity onwards, diplomatic historians have failed to forge any strong links with IR theorists. Although diplomatic history and international relations have been characterized as "brothers under the skin,"[14] academic parochialism as well as stereotypical and caricatured readings of one another's subfield have hampered interdisciplinary cross-fertilization. Witness, for example, the lament of one diplomatic historian:

> Those with a strong theoretical bent consigned historians to the role of the hewers-of-wood and the drawers-of-water in their world of international relations theory. The historians were to toil in the archives, constructing detailed case studies on which social scientists were to raise grand explanatory structures that would account for enduring patterns in international relations and that would command the respect of policymakers.[15]

Whereas IR theorists have considered their historian colleagues atheoretical, diplomatic historians have accused IR theorists of being "illusionists rather than scientists because they rig the course before they roll the ball."[16] Obviously, both sides share the blame for the lack of cross-fertilization.

> Political scientists often accuse their historian colleagues of simply "scratching around" and lacking any rigorous methodology at all, failing to be concerned with contemporary problems, and being "mere chroniclers" of an "embalmed past." Historians, not to be outdone, frequently criticize the theorists for erecting artificial models *ex nihilo*, creating smoke screens of jargon, and becoming infatuated with computer paraphernalia instead of human beings. The conflicting

> opinions and rancor in this dispute only encourages scholars to emphasize their differences rather than their similarities and thus to go their separate ways in isolation.[17]

Yet the need for a cross-disciplinary dialogue is obvious. We agree with Jack Levy's conclusion that historians and political scientists need to learn from each other:

> The worst abuse of each discipline is to ignore the other. History is too important to leave to the historians, and theory is too important to leave to the theorists.[18]

Just as specialists on diplomacy do not figure centrally in IR, so traditional diplomatic historians are becoming marginalized within the history discipline: "the study of diplomatic history has been doubly marginalized in the discipline of history – first by the movement toward the study of different issues, especially issues involving the dispossessed rather than elites, and second by the epistemological shift that has made the careful amassing of documentary evidence, one of the hallmarks of diplomatic history, less and less consequential."[19]

Sharing both an interest in a common subject matter and the experience of marginalization, students of diplomacy, regardless of disciplinary background, ought to draw on each other's accomplishments. While avoiding stereotypical views of diplomatic historians as "hewers-of-wood and drawers-of-water," we will build on their work. As our story, unlike those of diplomatic historians, will not be told chronologically, we might at this juncture delineate the major epochs of diplomacy, chronicled by diplomatic historians, that will constitute our empirical foundation.

The first historical records of organized polities exchanging envoys date back to the third millennium BC, to the cuneiform civilizations of Mesopotamia. The excavated diplomatic archive of the king of Mari on the Euphrates contains letters from other rulers in the early second millennium BC,[20] and diplomatic records of the Egyptian and Hittite empires include correspondence and treaties among kings. The Amarna Letters, a remarkable cache of diplomatic documents found at Tell el-Amarna in Egypt in 1887, reveal intensive and sophisticated relations among the polities of the Ancient Near East in the fourteenth-century BC.[21] The Hittite treaties of the thirteenth-century BC constitute another valuable source.[22] The Ancient Near East, in short, is the earliest well-documented epoch of diplomacy.

During the first millennium BC, China, India and the Greek city-states developed complex patterns of communication and diplomatic practices. They all displayed a pattern of a number of roughly equal independent polities and a shared linguistic and cultural infrastructure.[23] In contrast to the Greek city-states, however, both the Indian and Chinese systems looked back to an idealized empire uniting all the fragmented territories.[24]

In view of its organization and longevity, the Roman Empire contributed surprisingly little to the development of diplomacy; "in seeking to impose their will, rather than to negotiate on a basis of reciprocity, the Romans did not develop a diplomatic method, valuable enough to figure among the many gifts that they bequeathed to posterity."[25] It is symptomatic that no major works on diplomatic method have survived from the Roman period, whereas there are many about military matters.[26] "Rome did not use diplomacy, as Byzantium was to do, as a means of maintaining its supremacy, but as a means of transacting often very humdrum business, and this may be why it was the methods of managing long-distance legal or commercial business principally within the Empire which were to constitute its more important legacy."[27]

Byzantine diplomacy had a more lasting impact. In its efforts to avoid war, Byzantium used a broad range of methods, including bribery, flattery, intelligence-gathering, misinformation and ceremonial manifestations of its superiority. By repeatedly saving the empire from invasion and by attracting many pagan peoples into the orbit of Graeco–Roman civilization and Christendom, Byzantine diplomacy was extremely successful. As a result of the close relationship between Byzantium and Venice, Byzantine diplomatic traditions were passed on to the West.[28]

Renaissance Italy is generally considered the birthplace of the modern system of diplomacy. The most important innovation was the introduction of permanent embassies and resident ambassadors. In the sixteenth century, the diplomatic techniques and ideas that emerged in northern Italy – with medieval as well as Byzantine origins – spread across the conflict-prone European continent, as sovereigns found the use of complex diplomacy essential to their statecraft.[29]

"Classic" diplomacy was advanced by the French in particular during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was characterized by elaborate ceremonial, secrecy and gradual professionalization. The concern about gathering and protecting information in combination with the established practice of conducting negotiations in secret tended to foster excessive secretiveness. In the wake of the First World War, the secretiveness of the "classic" or "old" diplomacy came under heavy criticism, and the

entire diplomatic system was held responsible for the failure to prevent the outbreak of war. Demands for a "new" diplomacy became widespread, as epitomized in US President Woodrow Wilson's call for "open covenants, openly arrived at." Since then the "newness" and possible "decline" of modern diplomacy have been prominent themes among observers.[30]

Building blocks

To these two categories of works on diplomacy – practitioners' insights and diplomatic history – may be added a third: anthropological and ethnological studies of diplomacy among less differentiated societies. Ragnar Numelin's inquiry into "the general human and social groundwork of diplomatic relations" is an ambitious early effort in this category by a diplomat-cum-scholar.[31] More recent works deal with such specific topics as diplomacy among American Indians[32] and in precolonial Africa.[33] Generally more descriptive than analytical or theoretical, contributions to this genre tend to be of only marginal value to our undertaking.

Of course, we also need to add the relatively few, yet quite valuable systematic studies of diplomacy that do exist within the field of international relations.[34] We will discuss some of them in Chapter 2, and draw on them throughout our undertaking.

In sum, there is a voluminous but treacherous literature on diplomacy. It is this goldmine or minefield – depending on which aspect you want to emphasize – we will enter in search of essential aspects of diplomacy. The work of practitioners is helpful in bringing "specific, firsthand experience to bear on what has been viewed as a remote, nebulous, hard-to-describe process."[35] We will also heed Smith Simpson's call for "politico-historical studies pointing out the similarities and differences between past and current diplomatic situations," which he sees as "one of the resources urgently needed for a realistic understanding of diplomacy."[36] Moreover, in our efforts to theorize an under-theorized field, we will draw on insights from other fields that we believe to be applicable to diplomacy. We will borrow ideas and concepts from the theoretical literature on representation, ritual, communication and, not least, institutions and institutionalization.

Why is diplomacy marginalized in international relations?

The relatively few specialized academic studies of diplomacy that exist have tended to be "marginal to and almost disconnected from" the rest

of IR scholarship.[37] The root of the marginalization of diplomacy in IR theory can be found in the *bottom-up conceptualization of political space*, in which anything "international" emanates from autonomous states. In the words of Janice Thomson

> international relations theory views global politics from the bottom up. That is, we begin with the story, as told by social contractarians, of how domestic "society" was created out of the state of nature, and then theorize about what happens when these separate, self-contained "societies" interact with each other.[38]

When these self-contained societies met, according to the IR canon, a process of selection for a particular type of political formation – the sovereign state – commenced, and political space became divided into two spheres: one hierarchical and one anarchical. Hierarchical political space is characterized by functional differentiation and specialization, and is populated by well-defined institutions and organizations, creating a substantial degree of order. Anarchical political space, by contrast, is characterized by struggle and the imperatives of self-help. In addressing these imperatives states have, fundamentally, two tools: warfare and diplomacy. It is important to note that warfare and diplomacy, in this account, are tools. They are not phenomena constitutive of the international system. Indeed, anarchical political space is void of any order, except certain mechanisms and "imperatives" emanating from the anarchical structure (balance of power, self-help). It is, in a sense, a between-space, utterly lacking autonomy from its constitutive units. This fundamental logic informs system-level theories as well, such as neorealism and world-system theory.

Moreover, most IR theories tend to be *substantialist* rather than *relationalist*. Relational thinking is not new – it can be traced back to Heraclitus – but it gained influence only with the rise of new approaches in the sciences, in particular Einstein's theory of relativity. While sociology exhibits a significant body of relational research,[39] the IR community has yet to draw on this tradition in earnest.[40] While IR scholars have been preoccupied with questions of "material versus ideal," "structure versus agency," "individual versus society," or other dualisms, the key question, according to Mustafa Emirbayer, is rather "the choice between substantialism and relationalism."[41]

Substantialism comes in two major versions: self-action theories and interaction theories.[42] They have in common the premise that it is substances, or things, that constitute the units of social inquiry. In the

self-action version – fundamental to liberal political theory and reflected, for instance, in methodological individualism – acting subjects, whose interests and/or identities are pre-given, generate their own actions in confrontation with an environment. What kind of logic or rationality they follow is a second-order issue; what matters is that they act autonomously. Reified entities, such as states, societies, classes, ethnicities and cultures, can be self-propelled agents as well in the substantialist tradition.

On the face of it, the interaction version of substantialism may resemble relationalism. Action takes place among entities, rather than being generated by them. Here, however, actors are "fixed entities with variable attributes" and look rather like "billiard balls."[43] Thus, it is the various attributes – variables – that do the acting. A change in a variable will lead to a different outcome, but the entity in possession of the variable will not have changed essentially. While the interaction version of substantialism creates an illusion of agency, "entities are reduced to locations in which or between which variables can interact."[44] With substantialism, then, the units in differentiated political space become things or substances. And since there is no substance between units, this theoretical political space cannot contain things, only mechanisms or, in positivism, nothing at all. Diplomacy, therefore, must be an attribute of states in this perspective.

Relationalism takes a radically different point of departure: "Relational subjects are not related to each other in the weak sense of being only empirically contiguous; they are ontologically related such that an identity can only be deciphered by virtue of its 'place' in relationship to other identities in its web."[45] This is the underlying premise of much recent work in historical sociology. Thus, Anthony Giddens argues that international relations "are not connections set up between pre-established states, which could maintain their sovereign power without them: they are the basis upon which the nation-state exists at all."[46] Similarly, according to Charles Tilly, "individuals, groups, and social systems are contingent, changing social products of interaction."[47] And Michael Mann regards societies as "constituted of multiple overlapping and intersecting sociospatial networks of power."[48]

Relationalism is compatible, and usually coupled, with processualism,[49] which views "relations between terms and units as pre-eminently dynamic in nature, as unfolding, ongoing processes rather than as static ties among inert substances."[50] Indeed, Norbert Elias, who is regarded as a pioneer in bringing relationalism and processualism into the social sciences, made every effort to avoid reification in his research. Thus, he

would speak of "rationalization," "modernization," "bureaucratization" and so on, rather than rationality, modernity and bureaucracy.[51]

A relational and processual approach reinforces the top-down view of political space as essentially one, rendering "modes of differentiation … the pivot in the epochal study of rule."[52] Diplomacy, in this perspective, is about processes and relationships that contribute to the differentiation of political space. As such, it seems in need of an active verb form along the same line as Elias's reformulations. Yet no such word as "diplomatize" exists in any lexicon.

With this distinction between substantialism and relationalism in mind, let us now turn to three theoretical traditions that are commonly singled out as the chief variants of mainstream IR – realism, liberalism and structuralism – and see to what extent, and how, they deal with diplomacy.

Realism and diplomacy

The fundamental tenet of classic realism is that international relations are a thing apart, differentiated from domestic politics by the absence of authority. International political processes can therefore be characterized as struggles with two available mechanisms: war and diplomacy. According to Hans Morgenthau, for instance,

> the conduct of a nation's foreign affairs by its diplomats is for national power in peace what military strategy and tactics by its military leaders are for national power in war. It is the art of bringing the different elements of national power to bear with maximum effect upon those points in the international situation which concern the national interest most directly.[53]

Morgenthau devoted two chapters and a crucial section of his *Politics Among Nations* to diplomacy. These constitute, in a sympathetic interpretation, a pre-theory of diplomacy. In this pre-theory diplomacy has four tasks: to define its goals with a view to the power available for the pursuit of these goals; to assess the goals and powers of other nations; to determine the level of compatibility of these different goals and pursue the goals with the appropriate means.[54] Diplomacy is the only defense against war – which is not seen as an anomaly – since to fail in any of these four tasks may mean to "jeopardize the success of foreign policy and with it the peace of the world."[55]

For Morgenthau, then, diplomacy is not constitutive of international relations. Its theoretical status is that of an asset – like a strong fleet or

nuclear capacity. It is something an actor possesses, as it were. The other side of this, of course, is that an actor must also be able to do without diplomacy. In this book we will argue against this view of diplomacy. As it is not seen as constitutive of international relations, diplomacy gets limited attention in Morgenthau's realism. Thus, it does not figure among his six principles of realism; it is merely a technique, alongside war, for dealing with the consequences of the second principle – that international politics is about "interest defined in terms of power."[56]

Nor do other realists elaborate diplomacy. Raymond Aron, for instance, claims:

> The commerce of nations is continuous; diplomacy and war are only complementary modalities, one or the other dominating in turn, without one ever entirely giving way to the other except in the extreme case either of absolute hostility, or of absolute friendship or total federation.[57]

He does not develop this point further. Aron might possibly be interpreted as suggesting that diplomacy and war are constitutive of international relations. In other words, while Morgenthau viewed war and diplomacy as alternative means in the struggle that is international relations, Aron seems to argue that this struggle takes two different expressions, neither excluding the other.

Robert Gilpin, in his *War and Change in World Politics*, states clearly his substantialist approach, as well as his view on diplomacy:

> the process of international political change is generally an evolutionary process in which continual adjustments are made to accommodate the shifting interests and power relations of groups and states. This gradual evolution of the international system is characterized by bargaining, coercive diplomacy, and warfare over specific and relatively narrowly defined interests.[58]

This argument, which may represent classical realism more generally, shows clearly why realism has not theorized diplomacy. Groups and states remain, but there may be changes in specific interests and power positions. Various tools are available in the pursuit or defense of these interests, and international change is a reflection of the deployment of these tools. What needs to be theorized is not the tools but those who are in possession of the tools – states (and indeed, realism has spent considerable energy on theorizing the state). If Gilpin does not provide

a foundation upon which to theorize diplomacy, a relationist rewriting of his quote might read something like this: "Processes of bargaining, diplomacy, and warfare resulted in the crystallization of relations into temporary polities formed around specific interests generated by these processes. The dynamism of the processes entailed shifting interests and power that, in turn, changed relations and their crystallizations."

Neorealism, with its fondness for systemic-level theorizing, might be expected to pay more attention to diplomacy. Yet, it has only marginalized diplomacy further. To an even greater extent than classic realism, neorealism emphasizes the duality of political space, the vacuous "between-space," and the invariable essence of the state. In many ways, neorealism is exemplary of the interactionist version of substantialism. Units are like billiard balls, but some attributes or variables (relative power) vary. These variations motivate and explain behavior (war, balancing and bandwagoning) as well as system-level outcomes (polarity). Although Kenneth Waltz, the father of neorealism, does acknowledge the power of socialization – which could be interpreted as a relationalist opening – he does not conceive of any socializing agents beyond the state. Socialization and competition, the two ways in which structures affect agents in neorealism, are seen to work through a demonstration effect.[59] In other words, units interpret the environment they find themselves in and choose appropriate behavior, or do not survive. The "socializer," then, is the unit itself and not a processual relation. Again, there is no need to theorize diplomacy.

Liberalism and diplomacy

In view of its emphasis on cooperation and peaceful relations, liberalism would seem likelier to have developed a theory of diplomacy. Instead, however, liberals tend to proceed from methodological individualism and conceptualize international relations as the sum total of state or actor behavior. State behavior, in turn, is seen to be shaped by state–society relations.[60] Hence, liberals have come to analyze international politics in terms of preferences of various groups, and the institutionalization of patterns of preferences. Diplomacy, therefore, "takes place within a context of international rules, institutions, and practices, which affect the incentives of the actors."[61] Again, diplomacy does not belong to the core matter of international relations, but is merely a tool for acting on incentives, and is therefore not a prioritized object of theoretical development.

The fact that liberalism is premised on a cobweb, rather than a billiard ball, metaphor of international relations, emphasizing the interdependence of states, does not alter its basic ontological and epistemological

assumptions, or its research focus. If anything, the cobweb model of international relations marginalizes diplomacy even further than variants of realisms by assuming a complex structure, involving a number of different units with particular and competing interests. The crucial focus for liberals, therefore, becomes the game surrounding these interests. Also as an empirical phenomenon, diplomacy is thus removed from the field of interest. For instance, Joseph Nye notes that one of the benefits of international regimes is that they "facilitate diplomacy by helping great powers keep multiple and varied interests from getting in each other's way."[62] Richard Rosecrance juxtaposes two types of international systems: the territorial system and the trading system. The two systems function according to different logics, but diplomacy is of interest in neither since both systems – as in all bottom-up theory – are determined by the character and interests of the constituent states.[63]

A good illustration of liberalism's relative lack of interest in diplomacy is the literature on democratic peace. While liberal explanations for democratic peace differ greatly among themselves, they all follow the same logic of regarding democracy as a state attribute explaining peace, either because of factors internal to each democratic state, or because of the way democracies relate to each other – in terms of trust, expectations, shared norms, economic interdependence and so on. Diplomacy, consequently, becomes a mere channel of communication, and the liberal research focus is directed at more crucial explanatory factors.

Structuralism and diplomacy

The third of the three traditionally dominant IR theories – structuralism or Marxism – is premised on relationalism to a greater extent. Political space is conceptualized as relations among centers of accumulation and production, and it is these relations that determine the characteristics and dynamics of the units. Three schools of thought figure prominently in structuralist or Marxist studies of international relations: World System Theory,[64] Gramscian IR[65] and New Marxism.[66] Not surprisingly, diplomacy is not even a significant modality in international relations as conceptualized by World System Theory or New Marxism, since politics cannot be anything but an epiphenomenon to relations of production[67] or accumulation.[68]

> Any theory of international relations therefore needs to begin by grasping the historical uniqueness of both sovereignty and anarchy as social forms arising out of the distinctive configuration of social relations which Marx called the capitalist mode of production and

> reproduction of social life. Only then will it be able to see its object for what it is: a set of social relations between people.[69]

While the major part of this argument is sympathetic to a theoretical development of diplomacy, the designation of the "capitalist mode of production and reproduction of social life" as the prime mover – indeed the only mover – forecloses the issue.

It is somewhat surprising that Gramscian IR has given diplomacy such short shrift. A crucial component in Gramscian IR theory is that hegemony is dependent on a certain degree of consensus, or consent, among non-hegemonic states.[70] However, it is not diplomacy that fosters this consent, but the commonality of interest within a transnational capitalist class. The sociological study of the machinations between and within classes is thus substituted for the political study of diplomacy among political formations.

In short, the problem with Marxism – as far as the theoretical development of diplomacy is concerned – is the lack of autonomous political space, either unitary or bifurcated. Space, instead, is economic or socioeconomic.

The turn to history and the return of diplomacy? The English school, constructivism and postmodernism

Many IR scholars, like other social scientists, have increasingly turned to history in order to generate new theory. Scholars who belong to theoretical traditions that take history seriously tend to problematize political space, employ relationalist and processualist perspectives explicitly or implicitly, and include diplomacy in their *theoretical* agendas. The dividing issue between the IR approaches discussed above and those included in this section is

> whether theory is to start from given states (as choice-making individuals) and see what systemic patterns and specific arrangements can be explained from features of their set-up and possibly internal characteristics, or to study how these units are produced by something that can variably be called practices, discourses, institutions or structuration.[71]

The English school (ES), constructivism and postmodernism can be seen as "conceptual jailbreaks"[72] from traditional IR: they avoid the

conceptual baggage of substantialism and, more or less successfully, proceed from relationalist and/or processualist premises.

There is today a revived interest in the English school (ES), and a number of monographs, anthologies and articles discuss its various aspects.[73] Several recent papers deal with diplomacy, as treated by individual ES scholars.[74] In his useful overview of ES studies of diplomacy, Iver Neumann argues that the first generation of ES scholars – Martin Wight and Herbert Butterfield, in particular – did place diplomacy at the center of international relations, producing taxonomic and historical studies of diplomacy. These studies, however, did not focus on diplomacy as a practice or diplomacy as an integrated part of social life, but aimed at formulating a philosophy of history.[75]

The second generation of ES scholars, represented by Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, by and large disregarded Wight's and Butterfield's writings on diplomacy. Bull[76] listed diplomacy as one of five central institutions of international relations – no longer the "master-institution," as in Wight's formulation – and introduced notions of a diplomatic culture and diplomacy symbolizing the existence of an international society. However, Bull never fully developed the idea of a diplomatic culture, and, by conceiving of diplomacy as symbolic, made it reflective of, and epiphenomenal to, international order rather than constitutive of international society.[77]

Adam Watson focused much more on diplomacy as a practice. Proceeding from the premises that diplomacy is communication, that sovereignty is not a precondition for diplomacy, and that it is the institution of diplomacy that is interesting rather than its different manifestations, Watson began to "sociologise what is much too often treated by International Relation scholars as a theoretical given."[78] Curiously enough, Watson wrote one book each on diplomacy and international society without any sustained overlap or cross-fertilization.[79] Yet, it is obvious that diplomacy plays a crucial but not fully articulated part in his sociology of international society.

Adam Watson characterized world history as a pendulum movement between absolute empire and absolute independence, with mixed forms of international systems lying in between. Watson claimed that the two extremes are historically rare or nonexistent, but that there is a continuous propensity for each. International society is characterized as a "set of rules and institutions," a "superstructure, consciously put in place to modify the mechanical workings of the system."[80] Arguably, Watson here posits diplomacy as, at least, co-constitutive of international society. While still proceeding from a bottom-up approach, he opens up for

constitutive effects of rules and institutions, insofar as they are the premise upon which states or other political units exist with some permanence. Unobstructed, the mechanical pressures would result in constant flux, in Watson's formulation. This is an important argument, to which we will return at several points in this book.

The third generation of ES scholars is represented by James Der Derian and Christian Reus-Smit in Neumann's review. Curiously, both these scholars have found it necessary to depart from their ES roots and instead work within a post-structuralist or constructivist frame, respectively.

Der Derian proffers, at least, three crucial arguments. First, in line with Watson, he proposes that diplomacy functions as the mediation between estranged peoples. Peoples, or polities, become estranged, when a particular system is transformed and new social formations arise. Der Derian gives two examples: "when the *mutual* estrangement *of* states *from* Western Christendom gives rise to an international diplomatic system; and when the Third World's revolt against Western 'Lordship' precipitates the transformation of diplomacy into a truly global system"[81] (italics in original).

Diplomacy mediates the conflict that arises when hitherto integrated peoples find themselves removed from one another and from that which previously integrated them, be it Christianity, humanity, or empire/imperialism:

> Like the bridges of medieval cities, the diplomatic culture begins as a neutral link between alien quarters, but with the disintegration and diffusion of a common Latin power, it becomes a cluttered yet protected enclave, a discursive space where representatives of sovereign states can avoid the national tolls of the embryonic international society while attempting to mediate its systemic alienation.[82]

Der Derian's second argument – in which Watson's influence is again detectable – is that it is not the concrete structure of the diplomatic system that defines it, but rather "the conflicting relations which maintain, reproduce, and sometime transform it."[83] Thus, it is not resident ambassadors, conferences or other concrete manifestations that are of primary importance, but relations among polities. Der Derian's first two arguments combined suggest a top-down view of international relations, in which any given international system is (co)constituted by a diplomacy that both distinguishes between polities and binds them together in the process of mediating their relation of estrangement. Here, the need for a verb form of the noun "diplomacy" becomes obvious.

Missing from Der Derian's study is an explicit discussion of the implications of this view for the conceptualization of political space. However, his third argument gives a clue: diplomacy is "embedded in the social at large, and so something is lost if it is abstracted from that placement."[84] In other words, the practice of diplomacy is integrated with other social practices and takes place in the same political or sociopolitical space. By implication, diplomacy is defined not only by great events and great men but also, and perhaps more, by the " 'petty' *rituals* and *ceremonies* of power"[85] (italics in original). Our endeavor derives considerable inspiration from Der Derian's arguments, as we will explicate in the following chapter.

Christian Reus-Smit, the other representative of the third generation of ES scholars in Neumann's overview, sets out to explain why different international societies adopt different fundamental institutions. Fundamental institutions he defines as "elementary rules of practice that states formulate to solve the coordination and collaboration problems associated with existence under anarchy."[86] Although his focus is not diplomacy *per se*, Reus-Smit largely identifies fundamental institutions with forms of diplomacy. In his four cases these are interstate arbitration in Ancient Greece, oratorical diplomacy in Renaissance Italy, natural international law and "old diplomacy" in absolutist Europe and contractual international law and multilateralism in the modern society of states.[87] Reus-Smit's chief contribution is to offer a "reading of how diplomacy is embedded in social practice, for if diplomacy and international society flows from a general system or morals and justice, then it cannot be understood without reference to the social surroundings from which it grows and of which it is a part."[88]

All in all, we concur with Neumann's assessment that the studies by Der Derian and Reus-Smit are "setting a new standard for what diplomatic studies should be supposed to accomplish."[89] In his own writings on diplomacy, Neumann insists that diplomacy is a social practice that cannot be abstracted from the social world. Like all social practices, diplomacy is a nested phenomenon and must be studied as such.[90]

Concluding remarks

In this chapter we have seen that the abundance and variety of literature on diplomacy does not preclude a dearth of theorizing. Neither practitioners nor diplomatic historians have put a premium on theory, while major IR theorists have tended to neglect diplomacy or see it as a

secondary phenomenon. The English school constitutes a significant exception and provides a point of departure for our endeavor.

We share the ES view of diplomacy as an international institution, as we will amplify in Chapter 2. The link between diplomacy and international society is another ES notion we will develop further. From later, postmodern representatives we learn that diplomacy is integrated with, and embedded in, other social practices. Moreover, we have concluded from our overview of the major IR traditions that we need to move away from substantialist toward relational and processual perspectives. With these lessons in mind, we will outline our own theoretical building blocks in Chapter 2.