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# A Conceptual History of Diplomacy

Halvard Leira

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Scholars of diplomacy have identified diplomatic practices across the human experience, spanning the globe and going back before recorded history. Even so, the actual term ‘diplomacy’ did not enter into usage until the last decade of the 18th century.<sup>2</sup> Does this discrepancy matter, and if so, what can it tell us? These are the underlying questions of this chapter. The position taken here is that the emergence of the specific concept is crucial to our understanding of ‘diplomacy’. Transhistorical reference to ‘diplomatic’ practice obscures the very distinct historical specificity of what we today refer to as ‘diplomacy’. The advent of the concept marked not only the drawing together of a number of what had been perceived as ‘political’ activities of princes and their representatives and named them collectively as the business of interaction between polities, it also happened as the culmination of a long process of critique against the very same practices. Furthermore,

the emergence of ‘diplomacy’ was part of a much larger shift in political languages, replacing the understandings of absolutism with the new understandings of the enlightenment. What we today refer to as ‘diplomacy’ was, according to this understanding, born out of (Western) revolution and enlightenment. Drawing on a relatively modest secondary literature, as well as a number of primary sources, I will thus emphasise the relative modernity of the concept of ‘diplomacy’, and how it emerged very rapidly as part of a much wider transformation of political vocabularies around 1800. Furthermore, I will stress, how it emerged as a contested concept (almost a term of abuse), and how it has repeatedly been contested over the last two centuries. Where ‘diplomacy’ was for a long time viewed with strong suspicion, and even for its multiplicity of meanings, predominantly associated with the state, over recent decades more positive connotations have been associated with the concept, and it has been stretched to cover ever more phenomena.

I make my argument in four steps. First I present the usefulness of conceptual history, and the notion of conceptual change, which underlies this chapter. Then follows a longer discussion about the emergence of diplomacy, subdivided into sections dealing with conceptual change in related concepts, the etymology of diplomacy and how diplomacy emerged as the negatively loaded term set to cover all that which radicals towards the end of the 18th century disliked about the executive prerogative over external affairs. The ensuing section covers the repeated challenges from 'new' diplomacy, and how diplomacy has become a more positively loaded term in recent decades. A brief conclusion wraps up the chapter.

## CONCEPTUAL HISTORY AND CONCEPTUAL CHANGE

When writing a regular history of diplomacy (like Black 2010), discussing the diplomacy of some historical epoch or polity, or presenting definitions or even the 'essence of diplomacy' (Jönsson and Hall 2005), writers work with some more or less abstracted or ideal-typical notion of diplomatic practices and/or diplomatic institutions, and explore these in their given context. Focus is on the signified, on the perceived content of diplomacy, and although long periods of time might be covered, the underlying theme is one of stability – diplomacy is recognisable across time and space. In contrast, a conceptual history of diplomacy asks when and for what purpose the concept 'diplomacy' emerged, and what it has implied across time. Focus is on the signifier, on the meaning of the term 'diplomacy', and the underlying theme is one of change – 'diplomacy' is expected to change across time and space. The reasons for a conceptual focus are many. At a basic level, one seeks to avoid explicit anachronistic usage; the reading of the past in terms of the present. More importantly one desires not to add

conceptual baggage to times when it is not warranted, insisting that concepts attain meaning from their usage in specific historical contexts; thus one must study not only the meaning of concepts, but also how they are put to work. Conceptual histories start from a conviction that concepts are not simply tags for fixed phenomena, but in and of themselves tools or weapons in political struggle.

In the discipline of International Relations, conceptual history under that name has been largely associated with the works of Quentin Skinner and the Cambridge School, while studies inspired by Michel Foucault have touched some of the same ground. For the purpose of this chapter, some basic insights from the German school of conceptual history, associated in particular with Reinhart Koselleck (1985, 1988), will be utilised; namely the notion of concepts as inherently ambiguous, and the overarching claim that the period from 1750 to 1850 witnessed a radical transformation of political language during the transition from the early modern time to modernity. Let us briefly discuss them in reverse order.

First, the notion of a transformation of political language, of conceptual change, is tied to the enlightenment and the age of revolutions, with emphasis on changes in established concepts as well as the emergence of completely new concepts. Key to Koselleck is how this period witnessed what we can call the historicising of history; for the first time history was conceptualised not as a field of recurrence, but as inherently open-ended. What had come before needed not determine what was to come. This was a radical departure, enabling many of the other conceptual innovations of the period simply by breaking the bonds of recurrence. For our purpose, with 'diplomacy' emerging around 1790, this conceptualisation of general conceptual change seems pertinent. 'Diplomacy' emerged mainly as a negative description by non-diplomats, and almost from the outset, the evils of 'old diplomacy' were contrasted with the 'new diplomacy', ideally without

diplomats. Second, the difference between words and concepts, according to Koselleck, lies in the surplus-meaning of concepts. Following from Nietzsche, he argues that concepts can never be fully pinned down, that there is always some ambiguity involved. This fits the current usage of ‘diplomacy’ which can refer to the practice of diplomats, in particular negotiations, but also to skill in the conduct of international relations. It is also used as a synonym for foreign policy writ large, and as shorthand for both tact and finesse and a life of champagne, canapés and receptions (Berridge and James 2001). The multiplicity of meaning is evident also in the etymological development of ‘diplomacy’, and in the history of related concepts. (see also chapter 1 in this Handbook)

- A conceptual history of diplomacy treats diplomacy as a contingent phenomenon.
- Understanding ‘diplomacy’ as a concept implies acceptance of ambiguity and a surplus of meaning.

## ‘DIPLOMACY’ AND RELATED TERMS

General, as well as etymological, dictionaries pin the emergence of ‘diplomacy’ to the last quarter of the 18th century, with ‘diplomatic’, albeit largely with connotations which differ from the ones of the 21st century, emerging some decades before. Constantinou (1996: 78) argues that during the medieval period,

there was no single term that conveyed the themes of diplomacy in terms of statecraft, deputation, negotiation, foreign policy, tact, and so on, nor was there a word that could be simply used as a substitute for the term diplomacy without any supplementary political associations and meaning.

Although words with *diploma* as the root started being used in the late medieval age, Constantinou’s assessment could easily be stretched well into the 18th century. Moreover, there never emerged any concept as a

‘forerunner’ of diplomacy. When diplomacy entered the political vocabulary, it built on existing terms and practices, but it gave a new name to something which had not been collectively named until then. Terms such as ‘negotiations’ (a staple of the widely read texts of e.g. Wicquefort and Callières) and politics (as when the first school for future ministers in France, established in 1712, was called *L’Académie Politique*) cover some of the same ground, and a number of specialised titles (such as ambassador, minister, envoy etc.) existed for the practitioners, but the totality of practice had not before been named. Even so, some attention must be paid to politics and foreign policy, as the domain of the unnamed group of princely representatives.

## ‘Politics’ and ‘foreign policy’

In the 17th and early 18th century, ambassadors and envoys were clearly seen as engaged in ‘politics’. Koselleck (1988) suggests that absolutism rested on a conceptual dichotomy where the state monopolised ‘politics’, leaving ‘morality’ to the subjects. Viroli (1992) and Palonen (2006) provide more detailed readings of the conceptual history of ‘politics’ and related concepts, suggesting that with the coming of *reason of state*, politics was ‘no longer the most powerful means of fighting oppression and corruption but the art of perpetuating them’ (Viroli 1992: 477). Politics was also considered a whole, covering all forms of governance, from the household to relations between princes. Thus, the first sentence of the entry for ‘politique’ in the great encyclopaedia of Diderot and D’Alembert, published in 1765, reads: ‘La philosophie *politique* est celle qui enseigne aux hommes à se conduire avec prudence, soit à la tête d’un état, soit à la tête d’une famille’ (Diderot and d’Alembert 2013).<sup>3</sup> Around the middle of the 18th century, a beginning differentiation can nevertheless be discerned in English usage, as when Dr Johnson (1768) defined ‘policy’ as: ‘1. The art of government, chiefly with respect

to foreign powers. 2. Art; prudence; management of affairs; stratagem'. The association of politics and policy with matters relating to other powers was nevertheless not complete; it would be more precise to argue that politics was in the process of being reconstituted as a sphere, a move which allowed for a specialised (and in principle spatialised) term like 'foreign policy' to emerge, which it did for the first time around 1730 in England, and some decades later in France (Leira 2011). Thus, when the radical enlightenment thinkers opposed the politics of the absolutist states, they could direct their fire both against politics in the wider sense and against 'foreign policy' more specifically (Gilbert 1951). But while ambassadors were attacked as practitioners of politics, they were not yet named as a wider collective.

### ***The etymology of 'diplomacy'***

The etymology of diplomacy is well known and referenced in etymological dictionaries, the OED and in a little more elaborated form in Satow (1922: 2–3). A much richer, scholarly account is provided by Constantinou (1996: 76–89). Very briefly, the term comes from ancient Greek, where it was used as a verb (*diploō*) to designate double folding (*diploin*), and as a noun (*diploma*) to denote official documents which were folded, and which gave the bearer a specific set of rights. Originally, *diplomas* functioned as something resembling modern passports, but gradually, through the medieval era, the term was used about any sort of document granting privileges. By the renaissance, *diploma* was used as the term for papal letters of appointment, with the associated term *diplomatarius* used to designate the clerk writing these *diploma* (Constantinou 1996: 78). Towards the end of the 17th century, and particularly in the beginning of the 18th century, yet another usage emerged. Older letters of privilege (*diploma*) were being scrutinised for authenticity, and collected and commented

upon under the collective term *diplomatica* (such as in Mabillon's *De Re Diplomatica* from 1681), which was also used as a term for the science of establishing the legitimacy of such documents.<sup>4</sup> Since diplomas were regularly dealing with privileges relating to other polities, it was but a small step to consider collections of treaties between princes in the same way, and in 1693 Leibniz published *Codex Juris Gentium Diplomaticus* and in 1726 Dumont *Corps Universel Diplomatique du Droit de Gens*. These were collections both of treaties and other official documents, but around this time *corps diplomatique* seems to have signified the corpus of texts defining international law in practice (*corps du droit des gens*).

How the concept expanded to cover not only the total body of treaties, but also the total body of those engaged in negotiating such treaties, is unclear. What is clear is that, from around the middle of the 18th century, *corps diplomatique* was also used to cover the totality of ministers accredited to one specific court. Pecquet (1737: 134) presents an understanding of the phenomenon, but without naming it, referring to it as 'Le Corps des Ministres dans un Païs'. Ranke (1833–36: 724, note 1) dates the term to Vienna in the mid-1750s, but without anything but anecdotal evidence, and again referring to the notion of a community, rather than the actual concept. A decade later, 'corps diplomatique' was repeatedly used in Chevalier d'Éon's (1764) published letters, in the sense of the collective of ministers. The concept was also reiterated in original and translated form (as 'the diplomatic body') in English commentaries (and commentaries on commentaries) the same year (Smollett 1764: 177).

Even so, usage was not consistent, and the reference to documents more common than the reference to practitioners. In French dictionaries, 'diplomatique' can first be found in the fourth edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (1762), but here only in the sense of the art of recognizing true from false diplomas. This was also the case

in the great encyclopaedia, where the article on ‘diplome & diplomatique’ (from 1754), deals solely with official documents and the art and science of knowing true documents from false and interpreting their content (Diderot and d’Alembert 2013). In the fifth edition of the *Dictionnaire*, from 1798, there has been added a second meaning, where ‘le corps diplomatique’ is defined as a collective term for the foreign ministers residing in any one power. Turning to the 30-volume *Dictionnaire universel des sciences morale, économique, politique et diplomatique; ou Bibliothèque de l’homme-d’état et du citoyen*, published from 1776 and onwards, where diplomatic science is promised in the very title, the results are similar.<sup>5</sup> ‘Corps diplomatique’ was used intermittently, in the sense of a collection of treaties and reports, and the science of diplomacy is related to the knowledge of such treaties. None of ‘diplomate’, ‘diplomatie’ nor ‘diplomatique’ were index words.

### **The emergence of ‘diplomacy’**

Etymological dictionaries provide a little more insight, suggesting that ‘diplomate’ and ‘diplomatie’ were derived from ‘diplomatique’, on the pattern of ‘aristocratie – aristocrate – aristocratie’ (v. Wartburg 1934: 83).<sup>6</sup> From at least the 1770s, *diplomatie* was used to describe the practice of envoys, as when Linguet (1777: 383) discussed ‘intrigues diplomatiques’. The associated words ‘diplomate’ and ‘diplomatie’, dealing with interstate practice rather than documents, have their origin in the revolutionary period (Imbs 1979).

In the 1780s, ‘diplomatie’/‘diplomatic’ was thus in a process of gradual change, but still with multiple layers of meaning. As Constantinou (1996: 83–88) argues, the connection with written diplomas suggest a connection between a form of specialised handicraft and statecraft, and the roots in the accrediting authority of diplomas and their

(in)authenticity suggest a capacity for duplicity, a capacity which was underscored in an early usage of the term by Burke (1796: 121, note), who, in one of the first usages of the concept in English, praised Louis XVI for doing what he could ‘to destroy the double diplomacy of France’, that is, referring to the parallel accreditations to the same ruler, with opposing instructions, and their duplicitous practices thereon.

To this we should add the following: being derived from the study of treaties, ‘diplomatic’ was strongly connected to issues of alliance, war and peace (as these were the issues typically covered by treaties), and to the secrecy with which these treaties were most often associated. Furthermore, by its connection with diploma, the term also had a strong affinity with privilege. This affinity was made even stronger by the usage of ‘diplomatic corps’ to designate the collective of ministers, a collective which was increasingly claiming (and being accorded) a number of privileges (Anderson 1993: 54), and which was largely constituted by the nobility, the foremost carriers of privilege. In sum, the term conveyed specialisation, duplicity, secrecy, privilege and a fixation on war and alliance (see also Gilbert 1951, Frey and Frey 1993). From the perspective of a broader conceptual history, it covered a number of the terms on the wrong side of the dualistic enlightenment scorecard (Koselleck 1988), terms associated with politics rather than morals. (see also chapter 10 in this Handbook).

The association with the ways of the past was underscored in what would prove to be a decisive conceptual break, the establishment of the *comité diplomatique* of the French constitutional assembly in 1790 (on this, see Martin 2012a). Tellingly, the first suggestion of such a committee mentioned ‘un comité politique’, a committee dedicated to what we discussed above as the external component of ‘politics’, and not diplomacy. However, naming was soon to change. There are a few examples of ‘diplomatie’ having been used to



designate something other than documentary study before that date, but the establishment of this committee brought together the practical question of checking the existing treaties of the old regime, and the ongoing desires for abandonment of the royal prerogative over external affairs. The committee was established with the sole purpose of studying and evaluating treaties, but increasingly also dealt with the conduct of foreign affairs. In what seems to have been a fairly rapid conceptual development, 'diplomatie' came to cover not only the inspection of documents, but all activities falling within the purview of the *comité diplomatique*. Although the committee never had executive powers, as argued in the literature, it spawned debate about diplomacy in both the national assembly and the press, thus rapidly popularising the concept.

English usage seems to have been largely derivative of French usage. Thomas Paine (1792: 42), writing *Rights of Man* as a reply to Burke's early criticism of the French revolution, referred to Benjamin Franklin's work as minister to France arguing that it was of 'the diplomatic character', which 'forbids intercourse by a reciprocity of suspicion; and a diplomatic is a sort of unconnected atom, continually repelling and repelled'. The genius of Franklin lay in his transcendence of this role, 'He was not the diplomatic of a court, but of MAN'. Burke's later use of 'diplomacy' and related terms, as referenced above, was likewise in texts dealing directly with the situation in France. In the diary of Gouverneur Morris (1888: 299), who was at the time representing the US in France, the term likewise appears in 1797.

Considering its newness, it should come as no surprise that the concept had yet to attain a precise meaning. In Mason's (1801) supplement to Dr Johnson's dictionary, 'diplomatic' is, for example, defined as 'Privileged', based on a traditional (if probably unintended) reading of Burke. As the previous discussion of etymology has demonstrated, the connection was not far-fetched, and in 1805 another dictionary based on Dr Johnson defined

'diplomatic' as 'relating to diploma'; which is again defined as 'a letter or writing conferring some privilege' (Perry 1805). A decade later, changes in usage had worked their way into dictionaries, with Webster (1817) defining 'diplomacy' as 'the customs or rules of public ministers, forms of negotiation; body of ambassadors or envoys'. Even so, 'diplomatic' still had the double meaning 'pertaining to diplomas, relating to public ministers'.

In French, 'diplomatie' can be found for the first time in the fifth edition of the *Dictionnaire* from 1798, where it is defined as 'Science des rapports, des intérêts de Puissance à Puissance'.<sup>7</sup> Only in the sixth edition from 1835 are the actual people who made the treaties and wrote the reports covered by the term and, by this stage, 'diplomatie' was also considered as ordinarily concerning matters related to diplomacy.

Even though some conceptual uncertainty remained, the spread and uptake of the concept was rapid across enlightened Europe. In German, it can be found at least as early as 1795, again in relation to France, when an article in *Europäische Annalen* discussed 'Frankreichs diplomatie oder geschichte der öffentlichen Meinung in Frankreich' (Posselt 1795).<sup>8</sup> The scepticism towards the concept and its association with absolutism and aristocracy seems to have been a common feature as well; at the Norwegian constitutional assembly of 1814, representatives spoke with scorn and admitted lack of knowledge about 'the dimly-lit corridors of diplomacy' and 'the cold and slippery ice of diplomacy and politics' (Leira 2011: 174, 177; see also chapters 3 and 11 in this Handbook).

- Before the 18th century there was no collective term for the activities of ambassadors and envoys.
- Until the 18th century, relations between princes were seen as 'political'; 'foreign policy' was not established as a separate sphere before mid-century.
- 'Diplomacy' grew out of an etymological background of treaties, duplicity, secrecy, and privilege.

- 'Diplomacy' first emerged during the French revolution, largely as a term of abuse, and spread rapidly across Europe.

### NEW DIPLOMACY, NEWER DIPLOMACY, NEWEST DIPLOMACY

Considering how the revolutionaries treated 'diplomacy' as emblematic of most which had been wrong in the past, it should come as no surprise that an alternative was soon formulated, indeed with Koselleck it could be argued that contestation over the content of a new concept should be expected. Gaspard Joseph Amand Ducher, (1793: 75) who had worked as an *ancien régime* consul in the USA, and was writing about external affairs for the revolutionary government, in 1793 called for a 'Nouvelle diplomatie' basically concerned with commercial matters and desires for direct trade. He argued that French foreign affairs should solely deal with external trade, and that politics should simply be the extension of commerce. Thus there would be no need for the former secrecy or noble privileges, the new ministers of France were to be 'ni marquis, ni intrigans',<sup>9</sup> and where the treaties of old diplomacy had simply been giving titles to the royal family, the French family (i.e. the French nation) would guarantee itself (Ducher 1793: 74). The 'new diplomacy' would be simpler, fairer and cheaper than the old one, where the diplomats had been like priests; with their doctrines relating to the true relations of the peoples in the same way as theology related to morals (Ducher 1794: 23). What this opposed was not only the previous practice of French diplomats, but also the current practice of the enemy: in the hands of Pitt, diplomacy had become 'la science des trahisons & de la guerre civile' (Ducher 1794: 23).<sup>10</sup>

Ducher's call for a new diplomacy echoed the general dissatisfaction with diplomacy, and for many the solution was simply to abolish the whole thing, as when Saint-André

claimed that French diplomacy was simply 'la vérité, la liberté',<sup>11</sup> and demanded the suppression of the diplomatic committee (quoted in Frey and Frey 1993: 716). From 1794, there was an increased emphasis on trade and science (Martin 2012b: 5–10), but the complete abandonment of diplomacy proved impossible for France at war. In the USA, however, more could be done. Upon taking office, Thomas Jefferson abandoned half of the US missions, and would have wanted to cut the rest as well, claiming in 1804 that:

I have ever considered diplomacy as the pest of the world, as the workshop in which nearly all the wars of Europe are manufactured. [...] as we wish not to mix in the politics of Europe, but in her commerce only, Consuls would do all the business we ought to have there quite as well as ministers. (quoted in Gilbert 1951: 31, note 92)

Calls for a 'new diplomacy' would persist, but a departure from the past need not be associated with trade; it was also noted some decades later (Cuvier 1829: 7) how France had 'sent out her scientific ambassadors to all quarters, and war itself has not interrupted this new diplomacy'. The association between regular diplomacy and war nevertheless persisted, and the distinction between an old, political diplomacy and a new diplomacy, focused on trade, was maintained as a liberal critique throughout the 19th century, as when Thorold Rogers argued (1866: 496) that:

The ancient habits and instincts of political diplomacy are silently or noisily wearing out or passing away, and a new diplomacy of commerce, assuming for a time the guise of formal treaties, is occupying no small part of the ground once assigned to labours which were called into activity by distrust, and effected their purpose by intrigue.

The newness of 'new diplomacy' was, however, not restricted to trade and science; it was also used by liberal promoters of imperialist ventures. Towards the end of the century, this combination took another form, when Joseph Chamberlain argued for a 'new diplomacy', characterised by openness



towards the public, in dealings with the Boers.

The combination of liberal critique, openness and expansion was evident in American debate at the same time as well, as when an unnamed American diplomat addressed the public and noted that the new diplomacy:

is as old as the United States [...] A European diplomat works by intrigue and dissimulation [...] The American diplomacy has always been the reverse of this. We ask for what we want, and insist upon it. [...] The 'new diplomacy', in the popular meaning of the word, is not diplomacy at all. It is simply knowing what we want, fearlessly saying it and insisting upon it with a disregard for consequences. (*Los Angeles Herald*, 1898)

Again, the rejection of what had previously been known as diplomacy, and which relied on intrigue and dissimulation is obvious. The feeling that there was something inherently American was echoed by government officials as well: 'The discovery of America opened up a new world; the independence of the United States a new diplomacy' (Scott 1909: 3). Secretary of State Elihu Root (Root 1907: 113) stressed the historical development more than the uniqueness of America:

There was a time when the official intercourse between nations which we call diplomacy consisted chiefly of bargaining and largely of cheating in the bargain. Diplomacy now consists chiefly in making national conduct conform, or appear to conform, to the rules which codify, embody and apply certain moral standards evolved and accepted in the slow development of civilization.

And from politics, the term found its way into academe. Paul Reinsch, one of the fore-runners of what would become the discipline of International Relations, writing in 1909 contrasted the old kinds of treaties, with the purpose being 'conciliation and compromise of conflicting interests', in essence exercises in balancing and marginal gains, with the new economic treaties seeking to find 'a basis for cooperation, an essential equality of interests between all the nations upon which permanent international arrangements may

be founded' (Reinsch 1909: 14). This, he argued, was leading diplomacy to gradually lose its association with 'shrewdness, scheming, and chicanery', and to the rise of a:

new diplomacy [which] makes its main purpose the establishment of a basis for frank cooperation among the nations in order that, through common action, advantages may be obtained which no isolated state could command if relying merely on its own resources.

All of the above ideas fed into the intellectual debates about the Great War, leading to the repeated rejection of the 'old diplomacy' and the hopes and promises of a new diplomacy in 1918–20. The extent to which this was achieved need not concern us here, the central point being that once again an international practice celebrated by its opposition to the diplomacy of old was being put forward – 'diplomacy' was in essence defined by its flaws and failures, by its secrecy and its failure to avoid war. The new diplomacy, however, promised peace and co-operation.

The failure of the League of Nations and the Second World War was to change the valuation of diplomacy, over time completely transforming the conceptual grid around it. Where diplomacy had for 150 years been seen as related to war and as the opposite of true co-operation, it gradually became defined as the opposite of war, and as the prime mechanism of co-operation. While there have been repeated discussions of 'new diplomacy' in the decades following the war (e.g. Géraud 1945, Butterfield 1966, Sofer 1988, Riordan 2003), the newness has been associated with *evolution* rather than *revolution*; with gradual changes in the means, methods and content of diplomacy, rather than the wholesale rejection of traditional practice.

The revaluation of diplomacy has not only implied that the calls for its abandonment have disappeared. On the contrary, defined as the opposite of hostile conflict and as associated with expert skill in negotiation and the mediation of difference, diplomacy has become not only a growth-business, but

also a growth-concept. More and more practises are latching on to diplomacy as something which to emulate, and in effect we are seeing the emergence of ‘composite diplomacy’ (or perhaps ‘hyphen-diplomacy’), where new actors, arenas, topics and forms of interaction are claiming ‘diplomacy’ for themselves or being claimed by ‘diplomacy’. Diplomacy is now associated with units above, below and parallel to the state; with supra-national organisations, regions and cities, multi-national corporations and rebel groups, to name but a few. Likewise, diplomacy is described as taking place not only in the traditional arenas of state-to-state interaction, but in individual lives, families, public spheres and business, again to name a few. The list of topics connected with diplomacy is limited primarily by the imagination, but special attention has been paid to sports and health. As for modalities, an emphasis on citizens hails back to earlier hopes for a new diplomacy, and this can also be said for the emphasis on new media and public diplomacy witnessed over the last decade. (see further chapters 35, 36, 39, 41, 42, 43 and 44 in this Handbook).

- Calls for a ‘new diplomacy’, centred on trade, instead of the ‘old diplomacy’ of intrigue and politics, arose almost as soon as the concept had been coined.
- More radical critics have wanted to abolish diplomacy all together.
- Around 1900, ‘new diplomacy’ became more associated with openness and co-operation.
- After the world wars, diplomacy was largely re-evaluated as a vehicle for peace and co-operation, with calls for ‘new diplomacy’ now focusing on evolution and reform, rather than revolution and abandonment.

## CONCLUSION

Although the etymological root and many of the associated practices are old, the concept of diplomacy is relatively modern. Considering

how ‘diplomacy’ is currently regularly defined through a set of practices (e.g. communication, representation, negotiation), it is noteworthy how the actual concept has its roots not in practice as such, but in the material results of practice; in privilege rather than in parity.

Situated in a conceptual web undergoing rapid development in the decades around 1800, the newness of ‘diplomacy’ illustrates well how the very conceptualisation of relations between political entities was changing, and how this new naming was part and parcel of the domestic struggles over political power. Never before named as a collective practice with specific content, ‘diplomacy’ became one of the key pejorative terms associated with the *ancien régime*, defined by its opponents and by virtue of all that had been wrong with how external affairs were handled. It clearly matters that there was no established term for diplomacy until it arose as a derogatory label. Whereas the earlier titles in use (like ambassador or envoy) were descriptive terms, the concept of diplomacy was evaluative, and strongly negative, leading to the almost immediate call for something else to supersede it, namely ‘new diplomacy’.

The negative associations of ‘diplomacy’ would persist for a century and a half, only abating with its gradual disassociation from war and coupling with co-operation. In current parlance, ‘diplomacy’ is no longer to be exchanged for a ‘new diplomacy’, rather the old version is to be upgraded to ‘diplomacy 2.0’.

## NOTES

- 1 Thanks for comments to an earlier draft are due to the editors, Benjamin de Carvalho, Iver B. Neumann, Ole Jacob Sending, Minda Holm, Morten Skumsrud Andersen, Mateja Peter, Kari Osland, Cedric de Coning, Bjørnar Sverdrup-Thygeson and Pernille Rieker. The usual disclaimer applies.
- 2 For etymological reasons, the discussion below deals not only with ‘diplomacy’, but also, when

appropriate, with 'diplomatic'. The discussion is also limited to English and French language, a limitation which is justified both by the centrality of France, Britain and the US to political and conceptual innovation in the 18th and 19th centuries and by the importance of these countries to the admittedly Eurocentric theory and practice of diplomacy (Neumann 2012).

- 3 'Political philosophy is one that teaches men how to behave with prudence, either at the head of a state or at the head of a family.'
- 4 The term *diplomats*, referring to the study of documents, retains this meaning.
- 5 All volumes can be searched on <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>
- 6 Considering how 'aristocracy' was itself changing from a neutral descriptor to a derogatory political term over the second half of the 18th century, it was hardly coincidental that the terms related to 'diplomacy' followed this particular pattern.
- 7 'The science of reports on the interests between powers'.
- 8 'French diplomacy, or the history of public opinion in France'
- 9 'Neither marquis [that is noble] nor making intrigues'.
- 10 'The science of betrayal and war'.
- 11 'The truth, liberty'.

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