

21st Century Diplomacy: Globalized Diplomacy¹

Ambassador Kishan S Rana

The way countries deal with one another, on a one-to-one basis, or in small and large clusters, changes all the time. Thus bilateral, regional and multilateral diplomacy is constantly under evolution. But since the end of the Cold War, which coincided with accelerated globalization, this process has accelerated. Some feel we are in a time of paradigm change in the way international relations are conducted. We examine here the change elements, including both external and domestic factors, in what has become *globalized diplomacy*.

In the midst of a regional summit meeting, the head of government of a Southeast Asian state sends an SMS message to another leader in the same room. Obtaining his concurrence to a proposal that he has just thought up, he then sends two more SMSs to canvass support from other counterparts; before his own officials realize, a new initiative has been launched, with no official record of the exchanges, or how it came about. A number of major leaders are in frequent direct contact with one another via text messages, cutting through diplomatic formalities.²

On another continent, a Western envoy is frustrated with stonewalling by the local government, in his attempts to prevent local action that seems to hurt the interests of that country's minority indigenous population; even his own government seems reconciled – perhaps appreciating that this concerns another nation's domestic policy. Not satisfied, this envoy uses the internet to 'unofficially' alert several international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that work in that country; they in turn



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² One assumes that among these Western leaders, communication protocols ensure confidentiality. Does that apply to leaders in other regions that also use direct phone calls and text messages? We know that major intelligence systems devote sizable resources to intercepting such communications.

quietly warn their partner agencies in that country that they will hold back some aid projects; that does the trick, and the problem action is scrapped.

Elsewhere, a developing country industry association, supported by both governments, launches a series of bilateral country dialogue groups, where captains of industry, former officials, and public figures meet annually to discuss the full relationship, recommending actions to their governments. The motive: a realization that sound economic relations are intertwined with politics, security concerns and soft power; this industry body regards itself as a stakeholder in the nation's foreign policy.

The common thread in these incidents is that diplomacy now involves many different players; it works in ways that were not envisaged by the framers of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The modern foreign ministry has to accommodate itself to the changed circumstances, yet it remains answerable for failings; control over the diplomatic process has fragmented.

The Changes

One consequence of globalization: many people feel that their lives are shaped by external events that are outside their control. Crisis has many faces. Take the global recession of 2008 or the current crisis in the EU, producing economic insecurity, loss of jobs, decline in incomes, and a slowdown in production in many countries. Terrorism and migration are pervasive concerns, with roots in foreign lands. Climate change affects all of us, threatening the very existence of small low-lying island states. Others dangers are insidious, such as the influx of foreign cultural influence, viewed with alarm by those that struggle to conserve their own heritage. Each is a new kind of security threat, a consequence of interdependence among states and peoples.

Why globalized diplomacy? About two generations back, politics was in command and was the prime focus of foreign ministry work; the best diplomats specialized in this field. Then, commencing around the late 1960s, economic diplomacy began to emerge as a major component of external relations, in some ways over-shadowing political diplomacy; export promotion and foreign direct investment (FDI)³ mobilization became the priority activities of the diplomatic system. Overseas direct investment (ODI) is a new priority for developing countries that now have diversified economies. We see culture, media and communications, education, science & technology (S&T) and consular work as new priorities. Taken together, this third tranche is seen as a manifestation of 'public diplomacy', part of soft power. Paradoxically, after the end of the Cold War, political diplomacy has regained salience, becoming more open and complex. The techniques of relationship building and conflict resolution have also become more sophisticated, and require measured,

³ Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is investment by foreign enterprises in the production assets and the service industry in the receiving country; it is distinguished from portfolio investment which is foreign investment in the shares and bonds traded on the stock market. FDI is considered the best form of foreign investment because it creates physical assets and jobs in the receiving country, and is not nearly as volatile as other forms of investment, as it cannot be liquidated in a hurry. All countries, rich and poor, compete to attract FDI.

rapid responses. Overall, diplomacy has become multifaceted, pluri-directional, volatile and intensive.

Diplomacy has globalized in other ways. For one thing, with a breakdown in Cold War blocs, there exists no predetermined matrix of relationships. The West and NATO are now the dominant groups, but their former adversaries are also their networked partners, even while rivalries subsist. These are 'normal' situations of cooperation and contestation, driven by self-interest, as expressed through a search for resources and energy, and markets; ideology is no longer an issue. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) has been hollowed out, and remains as a loose coalition of have-not states; its ritualistic biennial summits persist, but NAM members are much more preoccupied with smaller, issue-based groupings. In essence, every country works with networks that stretch into far regions, in pursuit of shared objectives. Often, economics provides the driving force.

Regional diplomacy has taken a life of its own. Virtually every country is a member of multiple groupings, many of them geography driven, besides those pursuing other shared objectives, such as Francophonie, or G-20.

We should consider another change element. Some large and economically successful countries are seen as today's 'emerging powers', joining the high table of the world's major and near-major powers. One such small group is known by its acronym IBSA, i.e. India, Brazil and South Africa; none of these states is quite a major power, but they want to reach this rank. Or take BRIC, consisting of Brazil, Russia, India and China; two are permanent members of the UN Security Council. In 2011, it became BRICS, with the addition of South Africa. Egypt, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, and others that are also emerging powers. Each seeks through its external policy to reshape the international environment in consonance with its own interests. Since 2008, G-20, which began as a gathering of finance ministers, is now a major politico-economic forum.

The Foreign Ministry and its Context

Diplomacy is a system of the inter-state communication and issue resolution. As world affairs have evolved, diplomacy as the process of dialogue and accommodation among states, has adapted, responding to opportunities. The volatility of world affairs has accentuated change, to the point that some foreign ministries treat reform as a continual, incremental activity. Today's dominant framework conditions are:

- The MFA is no longer the monopolist of foreign affairs. The MFA has to partner all branches of government, since each has its external activities; the MFA has to reinvent itself as a 'coordinator' of all external policy, working closely with them.⁴ These agencies respect the MFA for the contribution it

⁴ See Brian Hocking, ed., *Foreign Ministries: Change & Adaptation* (Macmillan, London, 1999). This is a paradox because Article 31 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations stipulates the MFA as the principal channel for diplomatic communication; in practice however each ministry and department maintains its own network of bilateral ties with foreign partners, and multilateral contacts with international agencies and the like. The old 'gatekeeper' role is lost forever, even while some old-fashioned foreign ministries seem to hanker for it.

makes to their agenda, not for its notional primacy in foreign affairs. This is a hard lesson for many MFAs in their pursuit of coherence in external policy.

- Subject plurality compels the MFA to listen to outside expertise, while struggling to cultivate in-house knowledge. Professional diplomats need to be both generalists and experts in some specific fields; collectively, they are the MFA's pool of expertise. To put it another way, each diplomat needs deep skills in a few areas, plus wide-even-if-shallow lateral skills in other fields; they must work harmoniously with other experts, becoming proficient at networking.
- Many non-state actors are the MFA's permanent dialogue partners, and stakeholders – i.e. agencies active in the media, culture, academia, civil society, NGOs, S&T, business and others. Some harbor grievances over past neglect by the MFA.
- The working environment is polarized. At one end are: crisis, conflict prevention, movements of peoples and refugees, plus a range of hard and soft security issues. At the other end, traditional exchanges continue among privileged interlocutors, marked by elegant receptions and the trappings of old world diplomacy.
- The MFA professionals confront dangers of personal hazard, which makes their work that much harder. They also deal with increasing inter-cultural diversity and family pressures over constant dislocation and spouse employment. They need continuous training, plus high motivation.
- The focus of professional diplomats has partly shifted from high diplomacy, (involving issues of peace and security, or the negotiation of sweeping inter-state accords); some of these are handled directly by heads of government and national security advisers. The professional often works on low diplomacy: building networks aimed at specific areas, trade and other economic agreements, public diplomacy, image building, contacts with influential non-officials, education, S&T and the like. Consular protection and emergency actions have become important, owing to the impact of terrorism and natural disasters.⁵
- Diasporas are especially important as allies in advancing external relations. While in 1980 barely a dozen countries had a mechanism for diaspora diplomacy, by 2014 nearly 60% of UN members had a ministry, department or special agency for that work.⁶ Outreach to a diaspora progressively involves: *exploitation* (to draw in remittances and investments); *accommodation* (via special facilities such as visa exemptions, property rights, and dual citizenship), and *networking* (using the diaspora as a connector for better political relations).
- Information and communications technology (ICT) is vital in diplomacy; most countries are still experimenting, to exploit its full potential. The opportunity cost of neglecting technology is high.

The diplomatic network faces multiple demands at a time when resources and manpower in public service in most countries are being cut back; foreign ministries

⁵ A Western envoy told the author that rising public concern over consular services means that despite dwindling budgets, additional resources have to be ploughed into this sector, adding to the crunch in other areas (confidential discussion, May 2010).

⁶ *The Economist*, 27 June 2015.

are seldom treated as an exception.⁷ Some countries still believe that the ideas of performance measurement, accountability or value-for-money are not relevant; it may perhaps only be a matter of time before these become near-universal demands. This is one of the consequences of globalization.

Domestic Interface

In the past, external affairs drew limited attention from home publics, except during crisis; a national consensus generally supported the country's foreign policy. The diplomatic machine was insulated from political crosscurrents. It used to be said that politics ended at the country's borders. That has now changed radically.

Also altered is the old distinction between national policy, as determined by the political leaders, and its execution by an apolitical diplomatic system. The mutual roles are now more permeable, and the boundary is less clear-cut. Professional diplomats are no longer insulated from home politics.

Many countries retain the model of politically neutral civil services (e.g. in the UK and its former colonies), but this is under strain; at the top levels, officials have to be politically acceptable. In Germany, after World War II, civil servants were encouraged to hold their own political affiliation (they even serve in party secretariats on deputation). The French *Grandes Ecoles* graduates have long had a revolving door relationship, covering the civil services, politics and the corporate world. The US runs a highly politicized system of appointment to top administration jobs, including ambassadorships.⁸ In many developing countries politics now intrudes openly into the public services; in some Latin American and African countries the majority of envoys sent abroad are political appointees. One challenge: diplomacy is not yet recognized as a specialized profession.

The injection of new issues in the international arena (such as democracy, human rights, universal standards of governance, public accountability), leads to borderline situations where envoy activism in foreign countries can lead to political acclaim at home (for instance, when US and other Western envoys in Kenya pushed for the democratic process in the past 15 years), or political embarrassment (e.g. British Ambassador Craig Murray in Uzbekistan in October 2004, when his criticism of that government's rights record was initially supported from London, but his subsequent consorting with opposition groups led to his recall⁹). Secretary of State Condoleezza

⁷ Preliminary research suggests that unlike in developed countries, a fair number of developing countries still manage to obtain additional resources each year from the national exchequer, over their modest base figures; it is unlikely that additional funds will be available over the long or even medium term.

⁸ In the US, all appointments at the federal level at and above the rank of assistant secretary of state, and the appointment of envoys abroad, need congressional concurrence, which further brings politics into the high appointments.

⁹ Murray initially was applauded by the British FCO for his vigorous championship of the need to improve human rights in Uzbekistan, and cited in HR surveys. But when he questioned the wisdom of treating that government as an ally in the war against terrorism, and went public with his criticism of using information gathered from suspected terrorists by use of torture by the Uzbek government, he was recalled. Charges of personal misconduct were also leveled against him in a very public showdown, heavily reported in the British media. Developments in 2005 in Uzbekistan have borne out the truth of his warnings.

Rice put forward the interventionist notion of ‘transformational’ diplomacy in 2005, but the successor US administration of Barack Obama has retreated from the manipulation of foreign states implicit in that notion.

Foreign ministry professionals have to factor the domestic political impact into their actions; in the British Foreign Office, every proposal that goes to the minister must assess the likely public impact. Professionals find themselves mobilized in support of the political agendas at home. In Canada, Japan and the UK, envoys attending annual conferences are asked to speak to public audiences in different towns on the country’s foreign policy – we may call this public outreach, but it is also a form of political support for the government. Envoys have to consider reaching out to home political constituencies in building support for their work; in India, it is customary for envoys assigned to key foreign capitals to call on leaders of opposition parties, for two-way dialogue on their tasks.

The ICT Revolution

ICT has impacted strongly on diplomatic systems, bridging to *some* extent the distance syndrome that dominates diplomatic networks. One consequence: the relationship between the foreign ministry and the embassy abroad is much closer, and the bilateral embassy has gained in importance.

The internet provides innovative means for outreach to wide public streams, foreign and one’s own; ‘web 2.0’ is synonymous with the social media that are now a diplomacy tool. Foreign ministry and embassy websites are imperative for all countries. ‘Intranets’ (also called ‘virtual private networks’) permit confidential exchanges within the country’s diplomatic and public services. Blogs are used both for privileged communication and for open exchanges. Canada has been a leader in the application of net-based communications, for diplomatic training, export promotion and domestic public outreach, and others have followed.

Other related changes:

- The emergence of the ‘global information village’ has reduced reaction time. Official spokesmen of foreign ministries must react to events as they occur; embassies have to convey local reactions to issues, as they emerge. It has also increased the frequency and diversity of inter-state communication.
- Inside the MFA communication is flatter. ICT permits drafts and proposals to go directly from the desk-officers to the top echelons, with copies to the intermediate hierarchy. (In the British and German Foreign Offices, seniors generally do not change drafts from desk-officers, though they may give alternatives; embassy recommendations travel similarly to high levels in the MFA, without running the old gauntlet of modification by territorial desks.) This adds to responsibility for young officials, and for envoys abroad.
- In a few Western countries, the cipher telegram is threatened (US, UK; perhaps also in Germany or France); it is replaced by the confidential ‘intranet-based’ message sent to a single or limited cluster of recipients (unlike the cipher telegram, usually circulated in the government on a standard distribution template). The cipher telegram was a powerful instrument to keep

abreast with assessments from overseas missions. In several MFAs the classic dispatch has also withered away – losing that comprehensive analysis of a single, usually non-urgent, but important theme. Danger: it produces a fire-fighting mindset, perhaps too focused on current tasks. This devalues the reflective analysis of important issues.

- Some countries pursuing efficiency prioritize ruthlessly, concentrating on important bilateral tasks, plus major global and regional issues. This makes embassies more ‘bilateral’ in their activities, less attuned to sustained contact cultivation across a broad spectrum; it also reduces engagement with the diplomatic corps. Embassies that are stripped to the core in manpower sometimes lack reserve capacity for new tasks.

Developing and transition countries face hard choices in applying ICT. First there is the element of cost for hardware and software, and the need to replace systems, typically after three or four years.¹⁰ Security is often a concern, perhaps less so for small countries. The opportunity cost of not using modern communications is high, though often not taken into account.

¹⁰ In 2000 the British FCO spent £250 million on its intranet and confidential communication networks. By 2005 it was due to replace most of the systems at even higher cost.

Figure 1.1 A Matrix of Globalized Diplomacy

Issue	Classic diplomacy	Globalized diplomacy
The home partners	Major line ministries active in external issues, office of the head of government, parliament. Minimal contact with the media and business.	Virtually all the official agencies, plus non-state partners from business, the media, academia, think tanks, S&T, civil society, NGOs. Fairly open communication.
The external partners	The foreign ministry, the offices of the heads of government & state, the parliament, regional governments, the ministries of direct concern in dialogue – plus arms length contact with the media and business.	All the above, with a special focus on the non-state actors and the sub-state agencies like provincial governments, city & local administrations; plus ethnic diaspora communities, students and others from home based in the assignment country.
Subjects in international dialogue	Main focus on ‘high diplomacy’, i.e. issues of peace, security, cooperation.	Huge diversity; the MFA cannot master all dossiers, leaves technical subjects to functional ministries, attempting coordination role.
Style of external affairs governance	MFA-centric, limited role of other agencies.	Each agency has an external role; the MFA is the coordinator and networker; seeks ‘Whole government’ approach.
Role of Head of Government	Sporadic; infrequent summit meetings.	The MFA works very closely with the Head, and his Office; frequent bilateral, regional and global summits.
Typical diplomatic service	Highly professional, career stability, limited. interchange with other government branches; respected public image. High morale. Routine methods of HR management.	Blend of professional career track and lateral entry, frequent churning; increasing ‘in’ and ‘out’ placements; publics question its relevance. Morale level varies, depends partly on quality of HR management.
Role of embassies abroad	Give advice to home government, implement policy, promote relationships. Set pattern of embassy-MFA dialogue.	Blurring of roles between the MFA and embassy, embassy may act as co-manager of relationships. Continual dialogue with the MFA.

Human Rights and Global Objectives

In pursuit of global standards of democracy, human rights, good governance, a kind of universal charter of citizen rights is under evolution, led by Western countries (e.g. the concept of ‘responsibility to protect’ that was accepted by the UN General Assembly in 2005, as an inescapable obligation for all states towards their peoples, during conflict situations).¹¹ The sovereignty doctrine does not shield countries that blatantly transgress these norms. This is international law in the making – still amorphous, selective in application, and driven by a fickle cycle of world media attention. This theme is not currently pushed by Western countries.

Democracy is broadly acknowledged as a universal right, but its application in inter-state relations is conditioned by other over-riding bilateral and regional objectives driven by national interest, security or other compulsions; its proponents often end up supporting undemocratic regimes. After the experience of Iraq and Afghanistan, even democracy zealots now acknowledge that it cannot be exported, or imposed from outside. **Human rights** are closely monitored today, and enter the inter-state dialogue, but again, violations are treated with selectivity. At the UN, the abolition of the Human Rights Commission and its replacement by the Human Rights Council was expected to make the functioning of this body more objective, and while some improvement is evident, not all are satisfied with the result. **Good governance** is even harder to enforce, but gross abuse in some countries results in foreign aid cutoff and even sanctions; governance standards are now widely accepted.

President George W Bush made freedom around the world a major theme, but as before, calculations of self-interest, and indulgence for alliance partners, overrode declared principles. After January 2009 the Obama administration has put value promotion on the back burner. Nevertheless, value concepts have moved forward; developing countries are far more sensitive to these standards, compared with even a decade back, with their own civil society organizations leading demands for improvement. Media publicity, right to information initiatives and citizen actions, are visible in many countries. In Africa, a voluntary oversight mechanism, led by eminent experts, has gained traction in over a score of countries.¹²

- Western states produce global surveys, joining international NGOs, with their extensive annual reports on the application of these universal norms (e.g. Amnesty, Transparency International).¹³
- On the ground, pressure to improve human rights involves foreign governments in partnerships with these non-state actors; joint actions are often tacit.

¹¹ This was affirmed by the UN General Assembly in a historic resolution in 2005, marking further evolution in international law.

¹² The annual Mo Ibrahim Good Governance Award, instituted in 2005 by a private telecom entrepreneur of Sudanese origin, giving a hefty \$5 million to the recipient is a symbol of change. A number of African countries have also banded together in quiet mutual analysis, through a peer review mechanism.

¹³ One wishes developing countries produced their own surveys, which might add greater objectivity and balance, such as a listing of rich countries that lead in giving bribes and/or manipulating foreign states.

- In the affected countries, foreign states cannot really substitute for the actions that must come from domestic publics; external pressures have their limits (as seen in North Korea or Zimbabwe, but Myanmar is a different story).

The Arab Spring of early 2011 commenced with Tunisia, and then swept to Egypt, Libya, Syria and elsewhere, producing Western military intervention in Libya, sanctioned by the UN Security Council. Syria has shown that the intermingling of domestic upheaval and outside intervention can produce intense complications, with unimagined consequences, such as the current refugee exodus into Europe.

Multilateral Diplomacy

Has multilateral diplomacy overtaken bilateral diplomacy in importance? Such assertions are made from time to time, but this is a non-issue. Each plays its role, as processes through which countries pursue their objectives. Some issues are best handled in a multilateral forum. Simply put, bilateral and multilateral processes are the two legs of the international system. We should not leave out regional diplomacy, which is a special form of multilateralism.

Multilateralism has grown dramatically in the past three decades. The start of the annual UN General Assembly session, in the third week of September, has become a global forum that draws 80 or more heads of state and government, and scores of foreign ministers. Several thematic global summits meet each year. Regional summits have also multiplied, with the proliferation of new groups. MFAs deploy their best diplomats in multilateral diplomacy.

- When complex functional issues are debated, the line ministries take the lead; MFA diplomats play a support role. Over the years, these agencies have built considerable subject negotiation expertise.¹⁴
- Professional diplomats bring to the table wider relationship management expertise, including knowledge of interconnections between different issues that are in play with a partner country, allowing leverage and tradeoffs.
- Mastery of the conference technique is part of the professional's compendium of skills, honed through training and frequent exposure to bilateral, regional and multilateral negotiations.
- Most working diplomats blend bilateral and multilateral skills, each reinforcing the other; they rotate between bilateral and multilateral posts. The Chinese are among the few that treat multilateralism as a distinct expertise area for their personnel.
- A multilateral diplomat should ideally: speak two or more languages besides English; possess a sharp drafting ability; excel at people skills and inter-cultural communication.

The skills involved in multilateral work are:

1. Liaison, negotiation, representation, and conflict-resolution, involving the craft of communication, advocacy and persuasion.

¹⁴ In Brazil, the MFA was the indispensable leader in all foreign negotiations even some 20 years back, but now each ministry has the needed expertise.

2. The work is labor-intensive, with great effort in building personal ties, aimed at getting colleagues to tilt in one's favor, within their 'zone of discretion'.
3. The envoy often has latitude for local improvisation; good MFAs ensure that this is given to their representatives on the spot.
4. Committee or conference management is a special skill, aimed at getting into the 'inner group' that plays a key role at each.
5. Chairing a meeting needs sensitive judgment of the mood, a special 'listening' sense, and anticipation of problems before they emerge – of course, fairness, humor and a winning personality are taken for granted.
6. Knowledge of procedures and rules, which makes it possible to manipulate the conference to one's purpose, and block others from doing the same.¹⁵

Innovation

Innovation can cover *concepts* (e.g. how MFAs and embassies work together, or 'joint' embassies that represent two or more countries) or *process* (e.g. bilateral or regional 'eminent person groups' or use of 'challenge funds' to get embassies to compete with innovative ways for economic or public diplomacy projects); both are important. In business, *innovationis* distinct from *invention*; while the latter covers new ideas or concepts, innovation produces higher revenues and/or profits. In the public services, innovation stands for greater efficiency, or effectiveness; that also applies to diplomatic tasks. Canada lists innovation among its four mission objectives for Global Affairs Canada (i.e. the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, which for a while was also called 'Canada International'). The British FCO abolished its Policy Planning Department in 2002 and created a directorate for 'Strategy and Innovation'.

At the MFA, innovation includes:

- Networking with domestic ministerial and non-official partners, often in unconventional ways, e.g. harnessing NGO personnel, 'in' and 'out' personnel exchanges.
- Creating a learning organization, one that welcomes new ideas, involving 'Young Turks' into system issues, integrating them with the experienced.
- Flexible response, adaptable mindsets.
- Calibrated human resource policy, locating the best for the critical jobs.
- 'Zero base' budgeting, and shifting budget usage and aid disbursement to embassies.
- Using the internet as a vehicle for outreach, at headquarters and through the embassies, using new methods.

¹⁵ See Rana, *The 21st Century Ambassador*, pp. 109–11.

At the embassy it includes:

- Envoys geared to ‘public affairs entrepreneurship’, willing to undertake measured risk in pursuit of clear goals.
- Open styles, use of informal local networks and advisory groups.
- Using thematic, cross-functional teams, putting aside hierarchies.
- Inculcating breadth of subject awareness, plus ability to find cross-connections between issues.
- Working outside the circuit of privileged partners in the capital, extending activities to provincial administrations, regions and cities.
- Harnessing ethnic communities, returned students and other affinity clusters.

Innovation can be facilitated but not ordered. Systems that permit easy, flat internal communication, and seek out ideas from the shop floor are the winners.

Human Resources

The range of entrants into diplomatic services the world over is increasingly diverse in the subjects studied, regional and personal background, as well as age (intake age has risen in most countries). Yet, they are elites in talent quality, chosen as the best among a large number of applicants.¹⁶ Efficient management of this resource is the hallmark of the best services. This entails:

- Objective, transparent people management that carries conviction with the cadre; oversight of this process is usually a major responsibility for the MFA permanent head.
- Career management that tolerates individuality, and facilitates early selection of high-flyers.
- A calibrated promotion system, ideally a blend of in-depth tests, transparent selection, grooming the best for high office.
- ‘Bidding’ methods for assignments, via an open process.
- Inculcation of language, area and thematic expertise to match actual needs, as they evolve.
- Extensive ‘in’ and ‘out’ placement at all levels, breaking down network insularity, real and perceived, including assignments with non-state entities (business associations, think tanks).

The best services use elaborate methods for talent identification and selection for high value assignments.

Examples: The **British** FCO uses a ‘Job Evaluation Senior Posts’ system to assign numerical value to each of the posts which are up for bidding, with a single page application, to be considered by the ‘No. 1 Board’, final approval by the Foreign Secretary. **Singapore** uses an annual ‘Current Evaluated Potential’ (CEP) method (borrowed years back from Shell), which calculates the level which all officials with more than 5 years of service are expected to reach after about 20 to 25 years of service, and then guides the official’s career track accordingly. The score is not communicated to the official, but those estimated as the best are groomed for high

¹⁶ The ratio between applicants and those selected varies between 1 in 20, to 1 in 1000.

office. **Australia** demands that those aspiring to promotion must apply. The **US**, with a like method demands that applicants who fail to get promoted for six years must leave the service. **Mexico** requires promotion applicants to write out why they merit promotion; they write a written exam in several subjects; the board that interviews them includes a professor from a reputed university (the applicants pay their own travel costs). In 1995, **Nepal** opened up 10% of its posts to lateral entry by qualified specialists; contrary to initial doubt, this has worked well.

Concluding Propositions

Several key propositions should be kept in mind.

1. A need for mutual learning: At the EU the heads of the MFA administration meet periodically, to exchange ideas on management. In 2005, Canada and the UK launched a small closed Western group of heads of human resources that meets annually. No other regional group, including the advanced Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Caribbean Community (CARICOM), has a mechanism for such exchanges.¹⁷ Many MFA management ideas are transportable, adapted to circumstances; perhaps 80% or more of the practical innovations worked out at different places fall into this category.¹⁸
2. Stronger professionalism: Diplomacy emerged as a profession at the start of the 20th century, with a clear ethos and a code of conduct, partly enshrined in the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, though some working principles remain unwritten. But diplomacy is not widely accepted as a specialized area of knowledge and skill. In most countries working professionals face difficulty in getting home administration counterparts to accept this. Is there a way out?
3. Re-examining the patronage method for appointing envoys: In a number of countries, unfortunately most of them developing states, envoy appointments are acts of government patronage rewarding political warhorses put to pasture, or removing the awkward from the domestic scene. The US method has its rationale. Approximately 25% of its ambassadors that are appointed from outside the professional service fall into two broad categories: those that are genuine public figures, and a second motley group, composed of election campaign contributors, social climbers and ruling administration cronies. Another element is crucial – the Washington DC culture of the revolving door and job shuffle between congressional aides, think tank scholars, lawyers and lobbyists, and especially the politically appointed officials that run the administration at levels of assistant secretaries of state and above.
4. Open, inclusive and multi-owner diplomacy: This is a hard lesson for a profession, accustomed to privileged dealings with foreign elites, to find that many new home interlocutors are now to be accommodated. Dialogue with non-state actors can be strange and even disruptive. I recall my trepidation in

¹⁷ The author has discussed this informally, with a couple of leading ASEAN members and at the CARICOM secretariat; the idea is easy to implement.

¹⁸ A recent example: the British method of ‘challenge funds’ where embassies abroad compete for promotion funding (for trade, FDI, culture or public diplomacy activities) has been copied by a few countries, including Australia. In 2008, the Indian Commerce Ministry borrowed this idea to urge Indian embassies to do more by way of export promotion.

late 1992 when commencing dialogue with German NGO representatives on the Narmada project, then under consideration by the World Bank.¹⁹ In the event, the civil society representatives turned out to be eloquent, reasonable and more open to ideas than I had imagined. Other colleagues who have practiced such outreach speak of a like experience. Young diplomats, who do not carry the legacy baggage of their seniors, are more open to such contacts.

5. Training as central to the MFA's future: In some region, diplomatic academies hold annual consultations, but rather little organized mutual learning takes place.²⁰ The 'International Forum on Diplomatic Training' run by the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna and Georgetown University, of Washington DC, holds annual meetings on training related issues. The quality and depth of discussion at these events shows that foreign ministries treat training as more important than ever before. An increasing number of countries have established new training institutions of their own, or are intensifying training activities. Mid-career and senior level training is a growth area; many countries have introduced courses for ambassadors. All this is to the good.
6. Implementing simple human resource management improvements: A major challenge for the MFAs is to work out fair rotation in overseas postings, given that living conditions and the attractiveness of capitals varies so greatly. A simple device is classification of embassies abroad, in terms of the conditions in the country of assignment. An adjunct to this is to implement a 'bidding' system, where officials who are due to be posted abroad indicate their choices. It works surprisingly well, as preferences vary, dictated by a range of personal elements. Empirical evidence suggests that many MFAs hesitate needlessly to implement this.²¹
7. Intensifying the diplomatic process: All the change factors listed at the start of this chapter require that countries pursue diplomacy that is both extensive and intensive. They need to reach out to a wide catchment of states, and at the same time cultivate a larger number of partner countries than before. Geography is no longer a limiting determinant in the ways it used to be in the past. For instance, Brazil, Mexico and Turkey have greatly expanded their embassy networks to cover regions where they were absent in the past, especially Africa.

¹⁹ Rana, *Inside Diplomacy* (2002), p. 370–3.

²⁰ In Asia, the ten ASEAN countries, and China, Japan, and South Korea meet annually, under the umbrella of the 'ASEAN Plus Three' mechanism, but ASEAN has been unwilling to expand this to include other countries such as Australia and India. In Europe and Latin America such consultation works better.

²¹ The Indian Ministry of External Affairs put this into practice in the late 1990s, and has been gratified with the results; the method is standard practice in many Western MFAs.

DiploFoundation

Malta

DiploFoundation
Anutruf, Ground Floor, Hriereb Street
Msida, MSD 1675
Malta
Tel. +356 21 333 323
Fax +356 21 315 574

Geneva

DiploFoundation
7bis, Avenue de la Paix
CH-1202 Geneva
Switzerland
Tel. +41 22 907 36 30

Belgrade

DiploCentar
Branicevska 12a/12
11000 Belgrade
Serbia
Tel. +381 11 761 46 09
Fax +381 11 761 47 01

E-mail

diplo@diplomacy.edu

Website

www.diplomacy.edu