This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Leira, H. (2023). New Diplomacy. In The Encyclopedia of Diplomacy, G. Martel (Ed.), which has been published in final form at https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118885154.dipl0194. This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions. This article may not be enhanced, enriched or otherwise transformed into a derivative work, without express permission from Wiley or by statutory rights under applicable legislation. Copyright notices must not be

New Diplomacy

DIPL0194

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Word Count
3992

Abstract
New diplomacy is a term which has been used both politically and analytically, since the French revolution. It was introduced as a positive contrast to the old diplomacy of kings and intrigues, and as concerned primarily with trade. Such a liberal understanding has remained predominant – new diplomacy has typically been associated with democratic control over diplomacy, international organization and free trade, and with openness and honesty in diplomatic practice. An alternative radical interpretation, where new diplomacy implied the complete overthrow of the old, can trace its roots to the French revolution, and was expressed fully during the Russian revolution. Although new diplomacy has also been used as a term of abuse by those who prefer traditional forms of diplomacy, the term has primarily signified an ongoing or desired change in a positive direction. Currently, it is being used as a label for most of the non-state centric diplomacy.

Main Text
The notion of a "new" diplomacy is almost as old as the concept of diplomacy itself. Academics like to refer to diplomacy as a practice stretching back millennia in time, but the actual term "diplomacy" was only coined during the French revolution (Constantinou 1996, Leira 2016). From the start the concept was ambiguous, it carried negative connotations of aristocracy, duplicity, secrecy, privilege and a fixation on war and alliance, but could also be claimed as a fairly neutral signifier of general interaction between political entities. As a specification, soon after the concept itself had been introduced, the composite term "old diplomacy" (*vieille diplomatie* or *ancienne diplomatie*) was introduced, as a description of the earlier negative state of affairs. With increasing radicalization of the revolution and a gradual transformation of the diplomatic apparatus (Frey & Frey 1993, 2011), an alternative composite term with positive connotations was coined; "new diplomacy" (*noveau diplomatie*). Since, the discussion here is restricted to those two languages.

In the same way as "old diplomacy", "new diplomacy" has had political as well as scholarly application, and in particular in political form, the two have often operated as a conceptual pair. In such settings, "old diplomacy" has been seen as the source of many of the problems of an age and its immediate past, while "new diplomacy" has been hailed as the future solution. Amongst scholars, the terms have been used more as neutral descriptors; "old diplomacy" has typically

referred to the diplomacy of a bygone age (most often before 1789 or 1914), while "new diplomacy" has been used both in the analysis of historical programs of reform (Gilbert 1951) and in comments on current changes in diplomatic practice. If we approaching usage through Google Books Ngram Viewer, and analyze sources in French and English, since these have been the most important languages both of diplomacy and the analysis of diplomacy, three general trends of usage stand out. First, both of the terms have been *far* less used than the term "diplomacy" itself. Second, during the nineteenth century, both of the terms were more common in French usage than in English. Third, from their inception until 1940, with the exception of the first decade of the twentieth century, there was much more discussion about "old diplomacy" than about "new diplomacy". Since 1960, this relationship has been reversed. "Old diplomacy" has lost most of its political application, and has been partially supplanted by "traditional diplomacy" as a contrasting term in scholarly discussions. "New diplomacy" has on the other hand remained a relevant term, both in political and scholarly discussions.

New diplomacy and the French revolution

During the first phases of the French revolution, from the summer of 1789 to the spring of 1792, foreign affairs were in principle still a royal prerogative, if considerably circumscribed in practice from the summer of 1790 and in principle by the constitution of 1791 (Rothaus 1974, Howe 2008: 41-61). However, increasing distrust led to the establishment of a *comité diplomatique* of the French constitutional assembly in 1790 (Martin 2012b). The establishment of this committee brought together the practical question of checking the existing treaties of the old regime, and the desires for abandonment of the royal prerogative over external affairs, desires which had strong roots in enlightenment philosophy. In enlightenment philosophy, internal affairs were typically prioritized over external affairs, with the former seen as amenable to rational and scientific plans and the latter ideally just an extrapolation of this. The focus on internal affairs was not only rooted in ideas of state and society, but also a reflection of the secrecy surrounding foreign affairs, a secrecy which the revolutionaries wanted to be rid of. The diplomatic committee was established with the sole purpose of studying and evaluating treaties, but increasingly also dealt with the conduct of foreign affairs. In and around the committee, there was increased debate about what was had previously been known as "political communication", "negotiations" an so on, and which was starting to be known as "diplomacy", and reactions appeared against how it had been conducted in the past.

Soon, reactions against former practice led to the labelling "vieille diplomatie" and "ancienne diplomatie", understood as a practice steeped in intrigue, selfishness and privilege, and indelibly connected to the hated aristocracy. The first suggestions of a complete reorganization of diplomacy were made already in 1790, and a thorough plan for reorganization of both the ministry of foreign affairs and the diplomatic corps was presented by general Dumouriez in 1791. When he became minister of foreign affairs in 1792, the plan was put into action (Howe 2008: 48, 68-69). As the revolution became further radicalized, among other things by the Legislative Assembly removing the last royal prerogatives in foreign affairs in the spring of 1792, and accelerating in 1793-94, the changes were completed. Changes in the organization of foreign affairs and diplomacy were mirrored by changes in vocabulary. The very first call for a "Nouvelle diplomatie" was made in 1793, by 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. He argued that the new diplomacy should be concerned with

commercial matters and direct trade, and that politics should simply be the extension of commerce. 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 was opposed was not only the previous practice of French diplomats, but also the current practice of the enemy: in the hands of William Pitt the younger, the British Prime Minister, diplomacy was simply "la science des trahisons & de la guerre civile" (the science of betrayal and civil war) (Ducher 1794: 23). The broader argument here was that since Great Britain was unable to beat France militarily, it had to resort to the devious schemes of diplomacy. Ducher's arguments were rooted in the enlightenment critique of foreign affairs (Gilbert 1951), and echoed the general dissatisfaction with diplomacy. The logical next step for the most radical revolutionaries was simply to abolish the whole thing, as when Saint-André claimed that French diplomacy was simply "la vérité, la liberté" (the truth, liberty), and demanded the suppression of the diplomatic committee (quoted in Frey & Frey 1993: 716). Even "new diplomacy" would in this perspective be subordinated to the revolutionary war of liberation. After the Thermidorian reaction in 1794, there was an increased emphasis on trade and science within the framework of diplomatic interaction (Martin 2012a: 5-10), but the complete abandonment of diplomacy proved impossible for France at war.

Varieties of new diplomacy

With Napoleon's ascension to power, the terms "nouvelle diplomatie"/ "new diplomacy", at least among emigres and other enemies of the current regime, attained explicitly negative connotations. They could for instance signify the overthrow of the existing system and Napoleon's wish to be the arbiter of Europe (Une Année d'une Correspondance de Paris: 62), or more dramatically: "The new diplomacy, which substitutes violence for right, terror for humanity, and arrogant ferociousness for the dignified courage of our chivalrous institutions, is the work of the illustrious Napoleon" (Tinney 1809: 95). This usage did not gain much ground, but can perhaps help explain why for a long time there were few renewed calls for "new diplomacy".

Even though "vielle diplomatie"/"ancienne dipomatie" remained terms of abuse which would be used recurrently during the 19th century, references to "nouvelle diplomatie" were few and far between. The relationship with science, as expressed in the later phases of the revolution, was reiterated when Cuvier (1829: 7, the French original was from 1824) noted 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, resurfaced as a liberal critique from the middle of 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. But as with a number of other claims to newness, critics were sceptical, arguing for example that:

the new diplomacy seemed to be very like the new woman, unsavoury, unsatisfactory and unsafe. The new diplomacy was to tell the world that we were extending our Empire, that we were seeking new markets for our goods amongst the native races of Africa, and that wherever there was a bit of land to be grabbed England must be first in the process of grabbing other people's property (National Liberal Federation 1897: 67).

In a similar vein it was argued that "The old diplomacy was an elaborate, complicated and not always successful machine for the preservation of peace. The new diplomacy is a rough and ready method of provoking war" (Paul 1899: 260).

Even so, the prevalent usage of "new diplomacy" combined liberal critique, openness and expansion. This 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 Vol 26. Number 87, 26 December 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).

And from politics, the term found its way into academe. Paul Reinsch, one of the forerunners 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". This, he argued, was leading diplomacy to gradually lose its association with "shrewdness, scheming, and chicane", 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" (Reinsch 1909: 14).

New diplomacy, new diplomacies

The liberal ideas noted above were part of a long-standing liberal tradition of international thought. They fed into the intellectual debates about the Great War and led to the repeated

rejection of “old diplomacy” and hopes and promises of a new diplomacy in 1918-20. 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” on the other hand promised peace and co-operation. This “new diplomacy” came in two varieties. The first was the radical one advocated by Lenin and Trotsky, which to a large extent mirrored the Jacobin period of the French revolution; solidarity between peoples would make diplomacy redundant, what was needed was an international revolutionary war of liberation. The other variety was more traditionally rooted in mainstream liberal thought, and found its most famous expression in Wilson’s fourteen point plan. Key elements were abolishment of secret treaties, democratic control over foreign policy and the establishment of the League of Nations. As optimistically pronounced in December 1918: “The diplomacy of democracy seeks to level all barriers as between the peoples of the world and build a new diplomacy and a new programme that shall have world vision and the welfare of the world for its motto” (Wheeler 1918: 164).

While the record of “new diplomacy” as an entirely novel way of organizing international relations was famously unsuccessful, the term itself stuck. Critics were quick to point out the perceived naïveté of “new diplomacy” of the Wilsonian kind, and the dangers of the Soviet “new diplomacy”, but in general the term came to represent simply qualitative change. The continued use of “new diplomacy” not coincidentally corresponded to a reevaluation of diplomacy itself. Rather than a remnant of aristocracy, the corollary of war and the antithesis of democracy, diplomacy came to be seen as a way of managing international relations and the very opposite of war. “New diplomacy” as a label for contemporary developments thus became associated with gradual change rather than the complete transformation advocated during the French and Russian revolutions. What exactly “new diplomacy” signified varied, but its increased usage, particularly from around 1960 and onwards, seems to have been related to a number of more general processes of change in international relations. These include the growth in number of international organizations, decolonization, increased economic interdependence, technological changes in communications and weapons, ideological conflict and the codification of diplomatic practice in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961. To some, the multilateral setting of the UN signified a departure from prior practice (Thomson 1965), while others saw newness primarily in the rapid growth of diplomatic services, in numbers, tasks and functions (Bowles 1962), particularly the many functions related to intelligence, culture, education and propaganda/public diplomacy (Benton 1966). Yet others saw new diplomacy in the many international activities of governments which were taking place outside of the channels of traditional diplomacy (Donelan 1969). Thus “new diplomacy” was seen to necessitate refined training and planning, improved communications and stronger coordination (Bowles 1962, Rossow 1962, Howe 1968).

Unlike “old diplomacy”, which increasingly became an analytical term, applied to the past, “new diplomacy” continued to combine analytical and political dimensions. Arguments about “new diplomacy” were and have remained both descriptive and prescriptive, often combining a diagnosis of current change with hopes for future developments. The term has also been used in historical analysis, as a label for previous reform programs and for changes in states’ diplomatic stance.

New diplomacy in the new millennium

The increased interest in "new diplomacy" in the 1960s did not last. However, over the last decades, there has once again been an uptick in academic and policy-oriented thinking about "new diplomacy". To some extent, this has been a reflection of the further deepening of the trends which were discussed already in the 1960's, and overall, "new diplomacy" is often situated within a broader understanding of global governance. Two particular developmental trends have led to an uptick in references to "new diplomacy". First, the growth in what "diplomacy" is seen to cover has been significant, with new actors, arenas and institutions emerging, and some arguing even transforming diplomacy (Neumann & Leira 2013). Increases in multilateralism and summitry have been coupled with new kinds of treaties (such as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction and The Convention on Cluster Munitions) and institutions (such as the International Criminal Court). Non-state actors such as international organizations and non-governmental organizations have become more active and more important in diplomatic interaction, and the number of fields and actors which are considered "diplomatic" is steadily growing; what is described is a pluralization of diplomacy and a change from diplomacy understood as an institution to diplomacy understood as a practice. That is, rather than simply referring to a fixed set of embassies, ministries and regularized interaction; diplomacy is also seen as a particular mindset and approach, applicable across domains. Second, a particular driver for the increased interest in "new diplomacy" has been its association with "public diplomacy" and "soft power", to the extent that one Canadian ambassador noted how "the new diplomacy, as I call it, is, to a large extent, public diplomacy and requires different skills, techniques, and attitudes than those found in traditional diplomacy" (cited in Melissen 2005: 11). "New diplomacy" thus on the one hand is associated broadly with the expansion of what is considered "diplomacy" as such; on the other hand it refers more narrowly to a new way of conducting diplomacy, directed at populations rather than states. All told "new diplomacy" covers ever more conceptual ground, with the common denominator being a reduced state-centricity. And, it should be added, both analytically and in policy-terms, a recurring trend is reference to hybridity, how "old" and "new" forms of diplomacy co-exist and reinforce one another. "New diplomacy" emerged as a prescriptive concept opposed to stately privilege in foreign affairs, and although it is now primarily used descriptively and analytically, and seldom critically, it still retains its association with interactions where states are not the exclusive players.

SEE ALSO

DIPL0368
DIPL0333
DIPL0474
DIPL0331
DIPL0460
DIPL0361
DIPL0071
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DIPL0092
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Keywords:
1700-1799
1800-1899
1900-1999
Diplomacy and International Relations
French Revolution

First World War
Conceptual History
Public Diplomacy