

DISCUSSION PAPERS IN DIPLOMACY

The English School on Diplomacy

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ABSTRACT

Dominant schools of International Relations theorising such as neo-realism and neo-liberalism have bracketed the study of diplomacy in favour of abstract studies of the states system and the functioning of specific institutions such as the UN. Among the discipline's research programmes, the English School specifically lists diplomacy as one of five broad institutions which constitute its chosen subject matter. This Discussion Paper details the School's findings and concludes that interest in the subject appears to be declining. Two fairly recent studies by Der Derian and Reus-Smit, which are written at the margins of the school, seem to point the way forward by crossing key School insights and historical findings with more overriding general concerns in the social sciences. Diplomacy should be studied concretely, as a specific practice which is carried out by human beings acting inside a web of historically emergent norms and organisations. Inasmuch as these norms and organisations seem to be changing, so does diplomacy.

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THE ENGLISH SCHOOL ON DIPLOMACY

Iver B. Neumann

In the social science discipline of International Relations, the so-called English School, which is associated with the liberal international society approach, is one of only two fully fledged non-American research programmes. The School's beginnings can be traced to the milieux around C.A.W. Manning and Martin Wight at the London School of Economics and Herbert Butterfield at Cambridge University. Later strongholds included the Australian National University, Oxford University and Keele University. This Discussion Paper scrutinises what the English School has had to say about diplomacy. Part one introduces English School thought on diplomacy as it evolved through an original series of books. Part two looks at the work of later generations. Part three draws attention to the limits of the present English School conceptualisation by arguing that it is not sufficiently tied to an overall discussion of social change. The conclusion reached is that the English School has indeed made an impressive contribution, but one which we can only pursue by wedding it to more wide-reaching projects of social theory.

The Original Series

On the first pages of the first book to emanate from the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics, Martin Wight contrasts political theory with what he refers to as international theory. Whereas the former consists of a succession of 'classics from Bodin to Mill', there is no 'succession of first-rate books about the states-system and diplomacy' (Wight 1966a: 18). Wight's choice of title for the work – *Diplomatic investigations* – is, in this context, significant. As pointed out by Suganami (1983), inasmuch as 'politics' concerns the working of the *polis*, that is, the working of a social collective which strives to maintain its boundaries toward the outside, there can be no such thing as 'international politics'. As a response to this situation, Wight fastened on the concept of 'diplomats' as a more accurate and more technically correct way of referring to his preferred object of study than 'the international' of everyday speech. Everything which is not 'politics', then, is 'diplomats', but by the same token, everything which is not to do either with the internal life of the state and with the specific relations between states is ruled out as an object of study. By the same token, in his lecture course on the three traditions, Wight treats foreign policy, the balance of power and diplomacy alike under the

heading 'theory of diplomacy', giving as his explicit reason that diplomacy signifies 'all international intercourse, its purposes and objects, in time of peace' (1991: 137).

Famously, in the opening chapter of *Diplomatic Investigations*, Wight suggested that the study of diplomatics was a continuation of the 'speculation' (1966a: 18) by international lawyers on the workings of the states system, pointing out that when the first British chair of International Law was established at Oxford in 1859, it was as the Chichele Chair of International Law *and Diplomacy*. He went on to specify the extra-legal raw material for such speculation as consisting of the writings of the irenists, the Machiavellians, the parerga or asides of the political philosophers, and 'The speeches, despatches, memoirs and essays of statesmen and diplomats' (Wight 1966a: 20). Wight's (1966a: 22) complaint is that "Few political thinkers have made it their business to study the states-system, the diplomatic community *itself*".

Diplomacy is then central to Wight's conceptualisation of international relations. Crucially, however, Wight does not explicitly raise the question of method. For him, it is simply a given that the material to study is *texts*. It is the textual 'speculation' of the international lawyers which interests him, and he concludes that international theory must be the 'rumination about human destiny to which we give the unsatisfactory name of philosophy of history' (1966a: 33). From the point of view of social science, then, there must be an unacknowledged tension between Wight's stated overall aim of wanting to study 'the diplomatic community *itself*' and his preference for 'speculation' and 'rumination'. Wight extracts a living social reality – the diplomacy of the states system – from the overall field of the social. Methodologically, he reduces the ways of investigating this extract of the social to textually based approaches. This amounts to a double abstraction of diplomacy as a social practice.

Wight's second contribution to *Diplomatic Investigations*, on 'Western Values in International Relations', demonstrates that the tension between the textual and the practical is present in Wight's work in an implicit form. Wight states that 'there is no simple way of deducing Western values from Western practice. For example, the tradition of British diplomacy is by itself a weak authority for Western values' (1966b: 90). The expression 'pattern of ideas' is used interchangeably with 'values' (Wight 1966b: 90). What Wight maintains here, is that diplomacy must be something other and more than the pattern of ideas in relation to which it exists. The practice is more than the theory about that practice. But in that case, the study of that practice must, in order to capture more than a pattern of ideas about it, fasten on more than speculation and rumination *about* diplomacy. It must also include the study of diplomacy as what Wight himself refers to as a *practice*. There are, Wight points out, such things as 'requirements of social existence', 'the constant

experience of diplomatic life', and these things should be a crucial site of study (1966b: 116).

These programmatic statements notwithstanding, nowhere in *Diplomatic Investigations* is there any trace of an attempt to subject diplomacy to this kind of scrutiny. In *Diplomatic Investigations*, only one chapter, written by Wight's co-editor Herbert Butterfield, is devoted to diplomacy in its entirety. The focus of this chapter is the 'new diplomacy' championed by Woodrow Wilson and others after the First World War. This 'new diplomacy' emphasised parliamentary participation and transparent practices and broke with what Butterfield referred to as social 'laws':

We may wonder whether the proclamation of a 'new diplomacy' and 'simpler' types of policy in 1919 was not ... a facile attempt to pander to the self-esteem of the masses ... It might have been better, after 1919, therefore, not to humour the inexperienced democracies so much, but to press upon them the urgent need for education in the whole problem of international affairs ... it would have been better to take the line that here was the moment for asserting (and insisting upon) the continuity of history ... if there are rules of diplomacy and laws of foreign policy, these must be valid whether the business is conducted by men or women, whites or blacks, monarchies or democracies, cabinets or parliaments ... It may be true that some of the routines of diplomacy – some of the techniques and detailed practices – may depend on conditions (on the state of communications, for example, or the character of the *régimes* involved); but this can hardly be the case with rules of policy and the way in which consequences proceed out of causes in international relations ... If the principle of the balance of power was useful or valid in the eighteenth century, it was likely to be useful or valid in the twentieth century (Butterfield 1966b: 182-183).

Butterfield's other contribution to the volume bears the title 'The Balance of Power' and in it he discusses how humankind gained insight in this 'idea': 'the idea of the balance of power ... did not exist in the ancient world ... it was Guicciardini, who ultimately made the crucial advance and gave the first vivid picture of the balance of power ... The eighteenth century regarded it rather as a law which operates wherever there is an international order and a states-system, a law which operates if governments are alive to their long-term interests' (Butterfield 1966a: 133, 136, 147). To Butterfield, the growth of human insight into the workings of the balance of power is representative for diplomacies at large, for, as he states 'an international order is not a thing bestowed upon by nature, but is a matter of refined thought, careful contrivance and elaborate artifice' (Butterfield 1966a: 147).

Butterfield seems to make two central assertions about diplomacy. Firstly he believes that diplomacy should not be seen as an incorporated practice because this raises the problem of the social characteristics of its practitioners. Butterfield's diplomats are simply not (corpo)real. Secondly, to Butterfield, insights about the workings of society, at least in the realm of diplomatics, lie dormant in human history, waiting to be discovered. They can be lost but they are there, and it is the job of the practitioner to follow them and the scholar to study them. The problem with this approach is not whether or not there exists such a movement in human history but that this approach, like Wight's, blocks the study of diplomacy as a social phenomenon which is of interest in its own right, regardless of metahistorical speculation about evolutionary principles.

Butterfield's major legacy is his critique of ahistorical liberal or 'Whig' accounts of history as a movement of progress. This is a critique of writing a history of the present in terms of the future. But in his English School work, Butterfield is clearly guilty of another kind of ahistoricism, namely to write the history of the past in terms of the present. His colleague, Wight, delivers pathbreaking analyses of how diplomacy changes historically, but characterises diplomatics as the realm of 'recurrence of repetition'. But, as these analyses themselves demonstrate, the trait which most blatantly singles out diplomacy as a social practice characterised by 'recurrence and repetition', is that it has, at any one time over the last five hundred years, had bearers who have characterised it as such. Everything else is in flux. Yet the original series of books by the English School played a crucial role in maintaining social practices as they are by insisting on them not changing. One must ask how such an insistence on recurrence and repetition according to ahistorical social laws as that which one finds amongst the first generation of English School scholars is possible. The answer, as spelled out by their successors from Bull through Vincent to Dunne, is lodged in the metaphysical presuppositions which these scholars brought to their scholarly work. For Wight and Butterfield, diplomacy is not an incorporated practice because it is associated with something spiritual.

Where Butterfield is concerned, he carries his Christian belief on his scholarly sleeve, giving to his major work on diplomacy the title *Christianity, Diplomacy and War*. Wight, on the other hand, contents himself with insisting on the prolonged relevance of our present predicament. In his major work, the posthumously published edition of *Power Politics*, he repeats the credo of his philosophy of history that 'The notion that diplomacy can eradicate the causes of war was part of the great illusion after 1919. Diplomacy can do a little, perhaps, to mitigate the social conditions of war; it can circumvent the occasions of war; but the causes of war, like the need for diplomacy itself, will remain so long as a multiplicity of governments are not reduced to one government and international politics transformed into

domestic politics' (Wight 1979: 138). The book has a separate chapter on diplomacy, which opens by stating that 'Diplomacy is the system and the art of communication between powers. The diplomatic system is the master-institution of international relations' (Wight 1979: 113; compare 1977: 53). This analysis takes the form of general observations on how these patterns become more complicated, and performs a great service by tracing the emergence of patterns of interaction by excavating a series of facts and ordering them chronologically.¹

There are also interesting observations on resistance to diplomacy. In the chapter on revolution, giving the examples of the French directory, Soviet Russia and Wilson's new diplomacy, Wight stresses how 'Revolutionary politics tend to break down the important distinction between diplomacy and espionage', and also the distinction between diplomacy and propaganda: 'Diplomacy is the attempt to adjust conflicting interests by negotiation and compromise; propaganda is the attempt to sway the opinion that underlies and sustains the interests' (Wight 1979: 89). In the chapter on diplomacy, he specifies this further, stating that information, negotiation and communication are the three basic functions of diplomacy, that espionage, subversion and propaganda are their perverted forms in revolutionary diplomacy, and that 'An evolution of emphasis from the first to the third may be traced in the history of Soviet diplomacy' (Wight 1979: 115-117). Yet again, however, he does not proceed to substantiate this very promising hypothesis by undertaking a scrutiny of Soviet diplomatic practice. Neither does he spell out the feeling impressed on the reader that these characteristics of revolutionary diplomacy also to some extent seem to have spread to diplomacy at large, so that part of the achievement of 18th-19th centuries European diplomacy has been lost.

The major contribution of *Power Politics* was the conceptualisation of diplomacy as an institution of the same kind as war etc., but one which in key respects encompasses the others and so is in certain (unspecified) respects a 'master institution'. The major contribution of *Systems of States* (1977) was in the direction of what Wight refers to half jokingly as 'the sociology of states-systems' (Wight 1977: 33), namely to begin to substantiate the hypothesis that a diplomatic system is dependent on certain common institutions, which Wight refers to as 'a common culture'. He postulates that there have been three states systems, and begins to chart the common institutions of the Graeco-Roman one (language, the Olympic games,

¹ Firsts and lasts play crucial roles here. To give but one typical example, quoting Satow (1922, p. 52) he states how 'The last surrender of hostages to ensure the performance of an agreement other than a military convention was apparently at the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, when 'the King of England undertook to send to the King of France two persons of rank and consideration, to remain as hostages, until a certain and authentic account [sic] should be received of the restitution of

religious beliefs centred on amphyctionies such as the Delphic Oracle) as well as the modern European one (religion, transformed into what he calls values), but omits the Chinese Warring States (771 BC to 221 AD).² There is little sustained comparison, and no attempt is made to identify threshold values which characterise a states system as such.

In *Systems of States*, Wight also offers observations on diplomatic practices of what he calls secondary states systems, that is, systems where the acting entities are themselves suzerain and not sovereign systems. This is an interesting move inasmuch as it stands in contradistinction to the assertion made in *Diplomatic Investigations*, that diplomatics concerns relations between sovereign systems exclusively. For example, there is a concrete step away from this stance when he uses the concept of a 'diplomatic system' about pre-states system Europe. He writes that 'the real diplomatic system of the Middle Ages was the system of papal legates, who "carry out direct papal government through the length and breadth of the *societas*"' (Wight 1977: 28). Similarly, in his lectures, he used the phrase 'colonial diplomacy' as distinct from 'foreign affairs' about Chamberlain's relations with Krüger in 1896 (Wight 1991: 204). If negotiation and communication between entities other than sovereign states are open to scrutiny then there is no logical reason why such practices should not be made the object of inquiry inside what Wight calls primary states systems also. Wight opens the door to studying present-day diplomacy as something *more* than state-to-state relations, but seems to have no inclination to walk through that door.

To sum up, the great value of these assertions is that they place the conduct of diplomacy squarely at the centre of international relations, and that they give an account of how diplomacy has evolved historically. The original series of books by members of the English School has been, and should be, criticised for being statist and evolutionist. These are first and foremost criticisms of the kind of philosophy of history which is on offer in these texts. The major criticism offered here is of a different kind. It is that the philosophising of history is allowed to crowd out sustained scrutiny of the actual practices of diplomacy as they play themselves out

Cape Breton and of all the conquests made by his arms or subjects in the East and West Indies"' (Wight 1977, p. 31).

² Reus-Smit (1999, p. 44) argues that the Oracle at Delphi was less important for their advice than for 'the *amphictyony*. These cult-based religious leagues, sought to protect common religious sites, guarantee the water rights of their members, and manage intraleague conflicts. Toward these ends, league members were bound by oath, and amphyctionies were empowered to wage "sacred" war against delinquents.' In a too little known School book, Carsten Holbraad (1970) has detailed how 19th century European diplomats regularly invoked the amphictyony as a precursor of the Concert of Europe. These practices played an important role in legitimising contemporary diplomatic practices, and are interesting in their own right.

in the different time frames investigated by Wight, Butterfield and their collaborators.

The Next Generation

Hedley Bull, universally hailed as the major English School scholar of the second generation, fully acknowledged that the insights of the former generation of English School scholars belonged to the realm of speculation and rumination, writing for example in the introduction to his co-edited edition of Wight's *Power Politics* that 'It is not a work of history but of reflection about history' (Bull 1979: 10). He was also indirectly dismissive of their work on diplomacy when he praised peace researchers and non-School members Galtung and Ruge's article on diplomacy as 'the best thing written on this subject since Sir Harold Nicolson's *Diplomacy*, published in 1939' (Bull [1972] 2000: 264n5; ref. to Galtung & Ruge 1965). In light of this, it is appropriate that the works on the history of diplomacy in the last thirty years have *not* been written by members of the English School, but by scholars who do not refer to it or who have been openly critical of it (Anderson 1993, Berridge 1995, Hamilton & Langhorne 1995; the exception here is the lively discussion of revolutionary diplomacy in Armstrong 1993, esp. chapter 7).

There are two traits of Bull's own treatment of diplomacy, in *The Anarchical Society* and elsewhere, which deserve special mention. The first is his refinement of Wight's taxonomy. Wight had offered a number of different lists of constituent institutions of international relations. Bull concentrated on five – the balance of power, international law, diplomacy, war, and great power (concert). This list suggests that diplomacy has lost the standing of a 'master institution'. No arguments are given for this, and there is little by way of discussion of how the different institutions interact with one another. The book basically enumerates the functions each specific institution is supposed to serve, and leaves it at that. This, however, is done with an historical touch and an incisiveness that has still, as far as I am aware, to be bettered. To Wight's list of diplomacy's functions – information, negotiation and (gathering of) information – Bull (1977: 171-172) adds 'minimisation of the effects of friction' and 'symbolising the existence of the society of states'. This is significant because it constitutes a break with Butterfield's framing of diplomacy as not being an incorporated practice. Diplomacy's symbolic function is perhaps more visible than that of other institutions exactly because diplomats wander around in the host country and assert their *physical* presence there. This focus on diplomats as actual human beings allows Bull to make the other move which deserves special mention here, namely the idea of a diplomatic culture. Bull foreshadows the

introduction of this idea by a discussion of the kind of information that it is the diplomat's function to gather. To him, the diplomat (or 'diplomatist', as he has it) will easily lose out to the journalist on speed and to the scholar on depth, but he (or, one may add, she) is

uniquely skilled in gathering a particular kind of information that is essential to the conduct of international relations. This is information about the views and policies of a country's political leadership, now and in the near future. It is knowledge of personalities rather than of the forces and conditions which shape a country's policy over the long term. It is knowledge of the current situation and how it is likely to develop rather than of the pattern of past regularities. It derives from day-to-day personal dealings with the leading political *strata* in the country to which a diplomatist is accredited, sometimes to the detriment of his understanding of society at large in that country (Bull 1977: 181).

After two years in their midst, I think that Bull hits the nail on the head here. He points out that the diplomat's skill and trade is of a *practical* nature, tied to specific situations and contexts, not built to last but eminently useful here and now. There is a shift here away from speculation and rumination in the direction of the specific nitty-gritty of micro-power. The concept of a 'diplomatic culture' is a leap of faith built on empirical observations. Bull (1977: 316) defines it as 'the common stock of ideas and values possessed by the official representatives of states'. It is part of a wider international political culture which Bull, following Wight, sees as a necessary precondition for the emergence of what he calls an international society. These concepts could be developed further. Although Bull's major concern is with functions and institutions, he sees diplomatic culture in terms of a set of ideas only. Thus, the focus on practices which led him to introduce the concept in the first place is lost. This is a step back to Wight's approach, where ideas and practices lead separate existences, and the study of the latter is bracketed.

Bull's other major contribution, his co-edited *Expansion of International Society* (1984), does not contain any expansion of the concept of diplomatic culture, however. Overall, the scholarly attention paid to diplomacy in this book is a disappointment. Wight had insisted that diplomacy played a crucial role in diffusing the ideas and practices of the European system of states to new parts of the globe, and one could therefore reasonably have expected an introductory chapter on this. Instead, the institutions which are allotted separate introductory chapters are war and trade. There are some intriguing examples of the role of diplomacy scattered throughout the book, as when Hidemi Suganami (1984: 194) notes how admiral Perry used deliberate mistranslation of a key treaty to secure the United States

permanent representation in Japan. Suganami (1984: 193) insists that where Japan was concerned, 'Among these new methods, or institutions, introduced by the West, the most fundamental were the diplomatic/consular system and international law'. But Suganami's empirical findings seem to have been brushed aside by the editors. Chapters on these two institutions are included only at the very end. It does not help matters that the chapter on diplomacy is distinctly pedestrian, offering observations of the kind that 'The number of British missions abroad accredited to capitals has expanded to more than 150, though they include twenty-six capitals in which we [the 'we' under scrutiny is obviously the British] have no resident mission' (Palliser 1984: 381).

To sum up, Bull does not treat diplomacy and the other four institutions of international society as constitutive, but as reflective of it.³ To him, what constitutes order are the primary goals of states – security, the sanctity of agreements (*pacta sunt servanda*) and territorial property rights – and international society is simply the form a particular order happens to take. In this way, diplomacy and international society are framed simply as ideational and reflective of international order, and begin to take on an epiphenomenal hue. Wight's insight that diplomacy is a social practice is lost, and Bull's treatment of diplomacy emerges as being first and foremost taxonomical (compare Russell 2001). On that score, the rigour with which Bull treated the institutions of international society in *The Anarchical Society* has largely been lost in *The Expansion of International Society*. In terms of the study of diplomacy, it added little and muddled a lot.

Of the members of the original British Committee it was Adam Watson who gave most persistent thought to diplomacy as a social practice. In Watson's case, the tension between the weight of present philosophy of history and the itch of absent work on social practice which is so marked in the original series of books has been solved in a very promising way. Of Watson's two major works *The Evolution of International Society* (1992) and *Diplomacy: The Dialogue between States* ([1982] 1984) it is the latter which is of key interest.

In keeping with Wight's (and before that, Carr's) conceptualisation of international relations Watson sees diplomacy as dialogue. Also in keeping with general School thought, he underlines that this dialogue has a recorded history stretching back to the Tell-el-Amarna correspondence, that it is a necessary ingredient of a world of many sovereigns, and that the major point of studying it is 'to determine the functions' (Watson 1984: 212). He shies away from making sovereignty an explicit precondition for diplomacy, however, defining it rather as '*negotiation between political entities which acknowledge each other's independence*' (Watson 1984: 33). It is the institution of diplomacy as such which is

³ I thank Cornelia Navari for alerting me to this.

of principal interest, not its constitutive parts such as resident embassies, foreign ministries etc. The dialogue may turn on compatible demands, or on incompatible ones, in which case its function is 'either the search for a compromise, or else is designed to transcend the dispute and to bring in a new element that makes a wider agreement palatable to both sides' (Watson 1984: 69). The latter may also be settled by means other than diplomacy:

In a civilized community, which is not a mere tyranny, the power to judge and the power to enforce judgements must rest mainly on consent. This is true of a society of individual states, as it is of a society of individual men. In the days of the Vikings and other wild peoples, when the king was little more than the leader of a band of warriors and did not have the authority to dispense justice according to his judgement, two other ways of tackling the problem were evolved. The first was trial by combat, or by ordeal; and the second was the judgement of a man by his peers. Both are still highly relevant to an international society of independent states where by definition there is no overall authority (Watson 1984: 45).

Diplomacy is about what to do before one reaches the point where resort is made to these other mechanisms, about extending the period up to that point as far as possible and, once it is nonetheless reached, of maintaining contact with a view to restoring dialogue at the earliest opportunity. This involves persuasion, but this persuasion will necessarily be predicated on so many different matters that it is 'not an exact science; it remains a matter of human skills and judgements'. (Watson 1984: 53). It is, therefore something more than a cloak to cover a given balance of primarily military power (as Wight's Machiavellians would have it), or a 'deceitful activity' (as Wight's Kantians would have it) (Watson 1984: 55).⁴

To Watson, then, diplomacy is a practice which by preceding, succeeding and also accompanying war emerges as a constant institution of international society. War by contrast is tied to the exceptional circumstances: 'In general, where war is an instrument of political compulsion in the way suggested by Clausewitz, rather than a way of taking revenge or inflicting punishment, its own political purpose requires that those engaged in using force pay constant attention to relations with the enemy in order to test his willingness to negotiate' (Watson 1984: 67).

⁴ Whereas for the Grotian, 'the art of diplomacy is to conceal the victory', 'Diplomacy is for the Machiavellian the intelligent application of pressure or inducement in pursuit of one's own interests in such a way as to make the full exertion of one's power unnecessary', the victories of which are 'the changes forestalled, the crises foreseen and averted'. The Kantian 'does not believe in diplomacy, except under protest' (Wight 1991, pp. 187, 189, 190, 196).

Wight's historicisation of diplomacy opened up the possibility of treating it as an emergent practice. As a sometime serving diplomat, Watson embodies this practice, and this allows him to begin to sociologise what is much too often treated by International Relations scholars as a theoretical given. His treatment of the maintenance of the balance of power is a case in point, as is his discussion of the national interest. He begins from a general observation about consensus-formation over time, stating that 'Men who have known each other and who have read each other's letters and telegrams (for these are widely copied within a service) for many years, learn to allow for each other's biases and tendencies, as one allows for a friend's judgement of a book or a play. In this way a kind of consensus emerges about men and issues' (Watson 1984: 131). The outcome of these discussions, Watson maintains, is nothing less than the formulation of the national interest:

The ambassadors of George I and George II implemented and to some extent made foreign policy in the interests of the House of Hanover, rather than an abstract national interest, and none would have remained in office under a Jacobite restoration. But in the nineteenth century we begin to see statesmen like Talleyrand consciously serving what they conceived to be the long-term interests of the state. In Talleyrand's view, the welfare of France required the removal of his master Napoleon, and he remained in office to protect the same French interests after the Bourbon restoration. [...] The formulation of the national interest, and especially of the available ways to promote it, is made by diplomats who in the exercise of their profession are brought into continual contact with the similar purposes of other states, and study in great detail how they converge or conflict, and what inducements could bring about greater convergence. So the national interest emerges in practice from these diplomatic deliberations as a many-faceted affair, tempered by the art of the internationally possible, the art of the negotiable, rather than as simply the determined assertion of the national will (Watson 1984: 148).

This is a convincing argument. Watson advances our understanding of the oft-discussed shift away from the king's body to the nexus between state apparatus and the people whom it governs by spelling out how this shift involved new and specific acts by a specific class of actors, namely diplomats. Conversely, the role of diplomats in the general historical shift is highlighted. Watson does not, however, push on to ask whether we may be in the midst of a similar shift now. But that suggestion was made in another English School text, *Human Rights and International Relations* (1986, esp. 150-152) by John Vincent. He criticises Watson for treating the subject matter of diplomacy simply as being more sand for the machinery to grind. The implication is that, in the case of the subject matter of human rights, there is indeed a systems-transforming potential. Human rights belong

to the individual, not the state, but they are handled by states and so are a potentially disruptive subject of international relations. Whereas human rights are Vincent's primary concern, he also touches on the institution of diplomacy by insisting that diplomats find a way of dealing with this new subject matter, and by insisting that if they succeed, this international society will be strengthened. The argument, then, is that if diplomats can maintain national interests and the common interest of humankind in maintaining human rights, this communal achievement will strengthen the role of diplomats, and not weaken it. So, to Vincent, everyone would be a winner: international society would be strengthened by incorporating a new swathe of responsibilities, states would be strengthened by having more versatile diplomats, and diplomatic culture would be strengthened by having gained responsibility for a common subject matter. Here is a reading of a possible evolution of contemporary diplomatic practice which deserves more attention.

To my knowledge, Watson has never responded in writing to Vincent's critique. To him, the crucial work of diplomats remains the production of a consensus which goes by the name of the national interest. This process is necessarily similar to all diplomatic services. Where diplomacy's role in maintaining international society is concerned, however, Watson explicitly plays down the importance of maintenance work, and plays up the question of overall generalised standing. To Watson, the great powers are the great responsables. This picture emerges in a number of places, but perhaps most clearly in the way he plays down actual diplomatic performance relative to overall standing in the case of what happens when diplomatic relations are broken off. In chapter IX, he relates how

Nowadays, before a temporary closure comes into effect an embassy arranges to hand over the management of its interests to another embassy, with the approval of the host government. The embassy of the 'protecting power' opens a 'British (or Indonesian, or Ruritanian) Interest Section' in its embassy or in the embassy now nominally closed down, to transact the necessary diplomatic business. This may amount to more than the business it conducts on its own account. Often the host government will allow staff from the expelled embassy – other than the ambassador, whose person is symbolic – to man or partly man their interests section under the control of the protecting power. The staff who continue in this way may include senior political diplomats who continue a discreet dialogue with officials of the host government and report it through the protecting power to their ministry of foreign affairs. (Watson 1984: 129-130).

He emphasises the key role that Switzerland has played in this context and in chapter XII returns to the subject:

I have cited in Chapter IX some of the services rendered by Switzerland to the diplomatic dialogue. The contribution of the Netherlands to the development of international law is also impressive. Some states are more acceptable than others when it comes to making up a peacekeeping force ... the impact of a group or bloc of smaller states, such as OPEC, may be considerable. Even so, these variations are minor. It is the larger powers that determine the effectiveness of diplomacy. This mechanical fact goes far to explain why in many systems of states special responsibilities for the functioning of international relations, the management of order and the leadership of the diplomatic dialogue have been entrusted by a general consensus to great powers' (Watson 1984: 198).

This may or may not be so; most likely, the generalisation is valid. But the key interest of this quote is that, by treating this as a mechanical fact rather than as something to be made the object of sociological inquiry – Watson defines a limit to his approach. Rather than asking *how* great powers are actually able to achieve and maintain a position where they can lay down the order of conduct – that is, treating this aspect of diplomacy as an aspect of practice – Watson simply makes an assumption. Thus Watson's stress on the study of diplomacy as a social practice only happens within certain rather narrowly drawn limits. Judged as a work on social theory it is more a number of (often highly fruitful and stimulating) observations rather than a sustained effort to theorise diplomacy as an historically and socially occurring phenomenon.

To sum up, the next generation kept up the historical work and improved upon the taxonomical work that the first generation had initiated. Bull, Watson and Vincent postulated the existence of a diplomatic culture, by focussing on the actual practices which formed part of that culture, and by specifying how changes in the stuff of diplomacy make for changes in its historically emerging social practice as well.

The English School and Social Theory

Tim Dunne has noted that the third generation of the English School has so far stayed clear of diplomacy. There is a central exception to this observation to which I will return below. First, however, I want to use Dunne's framework in order to provide a critique of the work on diplomacy reviewed so far. Dunne (1998: 16) gives three principal criteria for delineating the School, namely that

theory-building must take place in a formal institutional setting, drawing from a shared body of knowledge and ideas; the invention of an interpretive

approach to the history of ideas about International Relations; and the recognition that the society of states embodies rules and norms which must be the subject of academic scrutiny and critical judgement.

Although there are problems with this formulation,⁵ Dunne is right in stressing that the invention of an interpretive approach to the history of ideas about International Relations is a constitutive as well as a crowning achievement of the school. However, when compared with other and parallel attempts to invent such approaches in the social sciences, I think that the School comes up somewhat short. Three such attempts, one from each of the three major centres of social research in the 20th century, stand out as particularly apposite for comparison. The first began to emerge concurrently with the first English School writings, in the early 1960s, when Reinhart Koselleck contacted some of his old professors with a plan for a broad work on what he baptised conceptual history. The first volume of *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* emerged in 1972; the seventh and final volume came twenty years later. Each volume contains 400 densely packed pages, dominated by footnotes.

Meanwhile, in France, Michel Foucault initiated a number of studies where the history of ideas is paired to social history in a different but comparable manner. The Foucauldian literature now runs to hundreds of volumes, including a number of studies of sovereignty, governmental techniques and other matters apposite to international relations. Finally, in the very same university where the British Committee met, at the same time, and out of the same broadly empirical Anglo-American tradition to which the English School itself belongs, there emerged an undertaking spearheaded by Cambridge Historians such as Quentin Skinner to write the history of the past in terms of the ideas which animated it. This undertaking has resulted in a number of meticulously researched monographs, as well as methodological essays.⁶

If one compares the results of these developments in social theory to the work done by the English School, they share a view that the study of ideas should be an access point to grasping a historically and socially evolving reality in its entirety.

⁵ That the emphasis on this equation is somewhat overdone may be seen, for example, from the fact that a number of the most important intellectual beginnings in social theory have *not* involved the kind of collective undertaking which makes up the first criterion. Nietzsche is an extreme example, but also where principal 20th century thinkers such as Weber and Foucault are concerned, the collective aspect of the undertaking was only a consequence of their work, not a precondition for it. Where the English School is concerned, as pointed out by Suganami (2000) and Knudsen (2000), the approach has the unfortunate effect of leaving out Manning's crucial contribution.

⁶ Andrew Hurrell has efficiently brought the work of the Cambridge Historians into his own. For an excellent introduction and comparison with *Begriffsgeschichte*, see Richter 1995.

However, whereas the conceptual historians, the Foucauldians and the Cambridge historians each in their different ways relate their chosen subject matter holistically to social developments at large, the English School has so far rested content with tracing the developments in the subject matter along its own trajectory only. As seen from Wight's foundational essay 'Why is there no International Theory?', this may be traced back to an explicit move, predicated on the hypothesis that the international realm is sufficiently cut off and insulated from other social spheres to call for special attention. When assessed from the other end of the tradition of scholarship that this essay helped to spawn, however, it seems clear that diplomacy, and the other institutions of international relations for that matter, are not special enough for this splendid scholarly isolation to be warranted.

Consequently, the English School has cut itself off from whole swathes of extant work. This is a problem inasmuch as the results of the valuable work which has actually been performed within the School does not reach the general community of scholars working on social theory. To quote a concrete example, nowhere does the English School scrutinise one of the institutions of international relations in the same way that, say, Schumpeter scrutinised war in his classic work on imperialism. In that work, he begins by seeing war as a social practice which must be studied in relation to other social practices. Noting that war was traditionally the prerogative of the nobility, that the nobility came under threat from the bourgeoisie during the 19th century, and that the beginning of bourgeois hegemony threatened to marginalise the importance of war, he hypothesises that imperialism can be read as the historical answer of the nobility to the bourgeoisie's threat of marginalisation. His work demonstrates how warfare can be better understood by being studied as a part of the social in its entirety. By comparison, Wight begins to make the same point by quoting John Bright's 1865 assertion that 'the foreign policy of this country for the last 170 years has been a system of gigantic out-door relief to the English aristocracy'. In the same breath, he notes that Richard Cobden, whom he calls 'the greatest of the English international idealists', observed that 'he felt the most sovereign contempt for aristocracy' (Wight 1979: 118). The comparison with how a social scientist like Schumpeter conducts his scholarly work points up the limits of Wight's approach. His stunning erudition enables him to pose problems and quote an incredible range of textual sources, but there is no will to knowledge beyond the textual bricolage and the bold assertion. Data is collected, problems are posed and assertions are made, but there is little engagement with social practices which could substantiate those assertions. I do not have in mind here any natural science-style testing procedure, but merely the kind of prolonged scrutiny which Schumpeter allots to imperial warfare.

It need not have been like this. Charles Manning gave vent to a similar sentiment when he criticised Wight for not emphasising his aim of establishing International Relations as a social science (see Dunne 1998: 52). Charles Jones (1998) has convincingly demonstrated Karl Mannheim's role as a central source of inspiration for another towering figure who was engaged in a similar pursuit slightly earlier, namely E. H. Carr. Carr lauded the progenitor of the sociology of knowledge for his interest in how political thinking is embedded in the wider social structure, and applied this central insight in his own work. I would argue that the scholars I have treated here consistently underestimate this insight. Tim Dunne (1998: 31) criticises the School for not taking power and power differentials as seriously as did Carr.⁷ The School did not follow Manning's and also Carr's aspiration to write works which were both studies of international relations *and* contributions which were explicitly dialogical in their relation to the literature on social phenomena. As I have tried to demonstrate above for the case of diplomacy, this is indeed the direction in which the School moved before its work on diplomacy was cut off. A new beginning is required.

I noted above that there is an exception to the observation that third generation English School scholars have not made diplomacy a key concern. The case in point is James Der Derian. I would argue that the most mature work on diplomacy to emerge out of the English School is James Der Derian's *On Diplomacy* (1987). There can be no doubt that this work emerged as part of the School's output. It builds on a doctoral thesis supervised by Bull and is dedicated to his memory, Vincent helped its publication, and its gestation involved contact with, among others Watson. In my view, the book is an example of the kind of work the School should aim to produce.

Der Derian (1987: 107) writes that his aim is to '...restore the neglected (some might say illegitimate) parentage of a diplomacy left as a foundling by historians at the doorstep of the diplomatic theorists, who only investigated when mature noises like [Hugo Grotius'] *De jure belli ac pacis* were to be heard'. The reason he gives for this emanates perhaps most clearly in his critique of Harold Nicolson's work, when he charges that

Nicolson almost axiomatically precludes the violent and uncertain periods in which early diplomacy is formed (and radically transformed), apparently in

⁷ Carr was sceptical to the idea of international society because of its power differentials, and particularly because the argument in favour of order was a conserving argument. Dunne lauds this stance. The critique is of course apposite. There is, however, no such thing as a society without power differentials, or an order which does not privilege a particular kind of agent. International society is and can be no different. It seems to me, therefore, that this particular criticism of the English School has a limited area of validity.

order to preserve the image of a seamless, upward development. An unfortunate consequence of this is that glib descriptive pronouncements not infrequently stand in for explanatory statements (Der Derian 1987: 81).

This is, of course, also an attack on much of the work reviewed above. It is the alternative view of history and the state's role in it on show here which makes for one of the two key senses in which the book is 'post-classical'. Der Derian's alternative to telling the history of the states system is to follow the growing tendency inside the School which has been charted above and look at diplomacy as a practice which emerges *across* both sovereign and suzerain systems: 'What gives definition to a diplomatic system, I have argued, is not the structure itself, but the conflicting relations which maintain, reproduce, and sometimes transform it' (Der Derian 1987: 106). To illustrate this point Der Derian takes up Wight's aside about diplomatic relations in the European Middle Ages. In the 8th and 9th centuries, the Holy Roman Empire had two kinds of legates, *missus regis* and *missus comitis*, who were literate and therefore usually monks, and who travelled in pairs. From Pepin II onwards, the *missi* were used for carrying information to and gathering information in the duchies. Under Charlemagne, this was institutionalised:

Missi were said to carry staffs; being short and often ornate, it can be surmised that these were intended for symbolic, rather than physical protection. The staffs were handed over to the *missi* at the court ceremony; it was often the practice to place the message inside it. Karl von Amira, the noted German medievalist, believes the staff and the protection granted to its carrier are related to the angelology inherited from Ambrose and Augustine. (Der Derian 1987: 74).

The second principal way in which Der Derian's work is 'post-classical' rather than classical lies in its use of the genealogical method, as distinct from the loose history of ideas-approach favoured by the School from Wight onwards. A genealogy is a history of the present told in terms of the past. He orders the narrative in terms of what he refers to as 'six interpenetrating paradigms to analyse the origins and transformations of diplomacy: mytho-diplomacy, proto-diplomacy, diplomacy, anti-diplomacy, neo-diplomacy, and techno-diplomacy' (Der Derian 1987: 5). The breaks between paradigms, then, are vague and non-final: 'Occasionally, after a great conquest or defeat – be it military, diplomatic, or even technological – the historical flux seems to crystallize, sometimes long enough for us warily to speak of a paradigm' (Der Derian 1987: 70). For example, the emergence of the *missi* are part of the change from mytho-diplomacy to proto-diplomacy, and the spread of resident embassies amongst Italian city-states and then northwards signifies the change from

proto-diplomacy to diplomacy. The diplomacy paradigm is a reification of the idea of *raison d'état*.

In Der Derian's reading, what characterises the very different paradigms subsumed under the heading of diplomacy, that is, what gives the phenomenon its coherence, is its function as a mediator of estrangement between human collectives. Thus, he studies diplomatic culture as 'the mediation of estrangement by symbolic power and social constraints' (Der Derian 1987: 42). In keeping with this, the focus is on specific practices, studied in their historicity. Whereas Watson has already undertaken work along these lines, as noted above that only happened within rather constrained limits. Der Derian is much more radical in this respect. As an example I quote his use of the diaries left by England's ambassador to the King of France 1685-1686 and to the Sublime Porte 1687-1691. The entry for 15 April 1689 consists of a long harangue about sleeplessness and stomach pains, and then, with no introduction, these sentences appear: In ye evening received from mr. Jacobs ye news of ye Prince & Princesse of *Orange* being proclaimed *King & Queen* of England etc. upon which mr. Haley the Chaplain alter'd his Prayers' (quoted in Der Derian 1987: 114). This is a graphic way of making the point that diplomacy, seen as a social practice, must be studied alongside other social practices of the everyday life of its bearers. It is embedded in the social at large, and so something is lost if it is abstracted from that placement. Der Derian (1987: 114) comments that 'it is as much the "petty" *rituals* and *ceremonies* of power as it is the "great" events of power politics or the famous developments of international law which define diplomacy'. (p. 114). Actually, Der Derian's more radical approach to diplomacy as a social practice leads him to a conclusion which is the exact opposite of Watson's where diplomatic innovation is concerned:

... it is not necessarily the preponderant accumulation of power – be it material or spiritual – which will determine diplomatic forms; rather, it is the circulation, exchange and exercise of *alienated* power which generates the rules of diplomacy which dominant power(s) might impose, especially if the military production of intended effects prove inappropriate or just impossible (Der Derian 1987: 86-87).

Whereas Der Derian follows Watson in interpreting diplomacy as an art which cannot either be detached from or subsumed by military prowess, he also insists that small powers may be as important in representing overall diplomatic practice as great powers. In hindsight, *On Diplomacy* comes across both as a summing up of English School work on diplomacy and, in its introduction of new methods and concepts, an attempt at renewal. The book has been recognised but not by the

English School. One possible reading of this is that Der Derian's attempt at renewal in the direction of general social theory was largely refused.

There exists a recent coda to the tale of *On Diplomacy*, namely the case of Christian Reus-Smit's *The Moral Purpose of the Modern State* (1999). Reus-Smit also crosses English School work and newer social theory. As was the case with Der Derian, the result of the mix is a fortifying one. Reus-Smit (1999: 5) is first and foremost interested in a why question – 'we presently lack a satisfactory explanation for why different societies of sovereign states create different fundamental institutions' – and to answer that, he investigates the constitutive principles of international society as they stood around the Second World War. That cut-off point seems to be informed by the basic thrust of the book, which is to demonstrate that John Ruggie's throwaway line that states historically seem to have undergone a whole series of systemic changes before landing on multilateralism as the *modus operandi* for an international society during the aftermath of the Second World War. *Contra* Der Derian, however, Reus-Smit's central subject matter is not diplomacy, and so a reading informed by that concern cannot do it full justice as a scholarly work.

The constitutive principle of systems of states as well as of international society is generally held to be sovereignty. Reus-Smit acknowledges the definitional character of sovereignty, but he highlights its intersubjective character. The fact that sovereignty is reciprocal, that it depends on being recognised by other sovereigns, means that they have to justify not only their existence, but also their action. This is crucial, for

when states are forced internationally to justify their actions, there comes a point when they must reach beyond mere assertions of sovereignty to more primary and substantive values that warrant their status as centralized, autonomous political organizations. This is a necessary feature of international communicative action, and historically it has entailed a common moral discourse that grounds sovereign rights in deeper values that define the social identity of a state: 'We are entitled to possess and exercise sovereign rights because we are ancient polises, Renaissance city-states, absolutist monarchies, or modern liberal polities' (Reus-Smit 1999: 30).

Inasmuch as saying that states must justify their actions seems to be a corollary of there existing a society and not merely a system of states, Reus-Smit seems to be playing well within the bounds of the School yard here. It follows from this that sovereignty is underpinned by what Reus-Smit calls constitutional structures which he defines as 'coherent ensembles of intersubjective beliefs, principles, and norms that perform two functions in ordering international societies: they define what

constitutes a legitimate actor, entitled to all the rights and privileges of statehood; and they define the basic parameters of rightful state action' (Reus-Smit 1999: 30). He then argues that these structures have three primary normative elements, the moral purpose of the state, the organising principle of sovereignty, and the norm of procedural justice. On empirical grounds, the first of these takes precedence, for 'Historically contingent beliefs about the moral purpose of the state have provided the justificatory foundations of sovereign rights, and as these beliefs have changed from one society of states to another, so too have meanings attached to sovereignty' (Reus-Smit 1999: 32). The upshot is that, whereas sovereignty is still definitional of international society, it is so only as a part of a single, coherent normative system where it takes second place to what actors think is the point of existence, the meaning of life etc. Furthermore, sovereignty is not what gives rise to international institutions. Rather, these emerge out of the entire normative system of which the principle of sovereignty is but one element. Reus-Smit has now set up the analysis in such a way that he can answer his question of why different international societies are historically constituted by different fundamental institutions, for the other stuff in the system is of course historically contingent.

Three of his findings concerning the various constellations of constitutive principles are of immediate relevance here. First, Wight and Bull's treatment of contemporary international society as one historical phenomenon is revised. Inasmuch as the international society of Renaissance Italy, Absolutist Europe (16th-18th centuries) and the Modern world (Versailles to the Cold War) are constituted according to different principles, they must be seen as three different phenomena. This increases the overall tally of sovereign historical diplomatic systems from three to five. Reus-Smit shares Der Derian's will to further periodisation, and, treading a different path, reaches similar results. Secondly, diplomacy may be amongst what Reus-Smit calls the fundamental institutions of an international society. Indeed, he holds what he terms 'Oratorical diplomacy' to have been the only fundamental institution of the international society of the Italian Renaissance, and 'old diplomacy' to have been one of the two constituting absolutist Europe (the other being natural international law). The importance of this is to salvage and specify diplomacy as a constitutive practice from Bull's attempt to reduce it to a reflective one. Thirdly and most importantly, Reus-Smit offers a reading of how diplomacy is embedded in social practice, for if diplomacy and international society flows from a general system of morals and justice, then it cannot be understood without reference to the social surroundings from which it grows and of which it is a part. Diplomacy emerges as a social practice amongst others.

Reus-Smit's historical readings of how Renaissance and Absolutist or 'old' diplomacy were embedded in the general life of those periods equates with Der

Derian in setting a new standard for what diplomatic studies should be supposed to accomplish, and must therefore be mentioned at least briefly. The moral purpose of the Italian city-states was the pursuit of *grandezza*, or civic glory. Its judicial principles were ritualistic, in the sense that social concord added to the glory of the city. Weeding out vice thus became a step towards larger *grandezza*. Political autonomy and actor capacity rested on a patronage system, where a knot of leading families held sway. Reus-Smit suggests that this normative system caused the rise of oratoric diplomacy:

Renaissance individuals responded to the anxieties and uncertainties generated by the erosion of guild-based corporate structures, and the retreat of papal and imperial sources of authority and identification, by embracing traditional patronage relations. In such relations, the operative norm of procedural justice entailed the ritual expression of honour and self-worth through ceremonial rhetoric and gesture. These practices established an individual's identity, legitimacy, and status as a social agent, and situated that individual within a framework of obligatory social relations. While the construction of relations between states that were as formally hierarchical and reliably binding as relations between individuals was impossible, political elites observed the same norm of procedural justice when seeking to establish the social identity, legitimacy, and status of their city-states within the international system, and when courting the cooperative relations with other states. In other words, the same mentalité that shaped how individuals responded to the anxieties of Renaissance social life also informed how princes and oligarchs reacted to the anxieties of 'anarchy', as they understood it (Reus-Smit 1999: 80).

Politically and diplomatically, agents were empowered not only by material factors, but also by honour, glory and virtue. Thus, it was no coincidence that Lorenzo's Florence, which was seen as being foremost in the arts and in learning, and which made a point of sending diplomats which also possessed these skills, was the major diplomatic arbiter of international society, despite its paucity of material resources. Reus-Smit underlines, however, that this situation rested on a specific social configuration, and that the specific characteristics of Renaissance diplomacy can therefore not be treated frictionlessly as a forerunner of modern diplomacy or an effect of Oriental influences, as is often suggested in the extant literature. To take but one obvious example, Renaissance diplomacy played itself out as ritual, which is to say that it was by definition public, while the diplomacy of the succeeding absolutist age was first and foremost private and secret. Renaissance Diplomacy, like other social practices, has to be understood on and in its own terms first, and only then, if at all, as a forerunner of the 'old' diplomacy of absolutist Europe.

Old diplomacy, in turn, rested on a moral purpose of heavenly salvation. Earthly powers were ordered in a hierarchy of descending closeness to God, with France on top, then other Christian rulers, then non-Christian rulers (and one may add people who were seen to be without rulers altogether). Having broken away from the overlordship of the church, these emerging states 'reimagined' the world: 'the moral purpose of the state was defined as the preservation of a divinely ordained, rigidly hierarchical social order. To fulfil this purpose, monarchs were endowed with supreme authority – their commands were law ... God's law and natural law were the ultimate arbiters of what constituted justice, and they received worldly expression in the commands of the dynastic monarchs.' (Reus-Smit 1999: 94). Law became a divinely sanctioned instrument rather than a frame for the circulation of power. These social conditions, Reus-Smit argues, were specific prerequisites for the emergence of 'old' diplomacy which had four characteristics. It was incidental, bilateral, secretive and hierarchical:

incidental [rather than contractually regular] in the sense that absolutist states were less concerned with the negotiation of generalized, reciprocally binding rules of international conduct than with the resolution of particular conflicts and crises. ... The incidental nature of old diplomacy privileged narrow, bilateral negotiations between conflicting parties over broader, multilateral negotiations ... Secrecy suited the age, an age when monarchs considered foreign policy their private domain and thought themselves accountable only to God ... The general assumption that sovereign states differed in status, and the preoccupation with pre-eminence and precedence this generated, gave old diplomacy a distinctly hierarchical character (Reus-Smit 1999: 107-109).

When placed next to the work of the School as reviewed above, these concrete readings of how diplomacy is reflective of its age suggest that Butterfield's hankering back to 18th century diplomacy as an ideal for post-war diplomacy was not only politically driven, but downright unhistorical, since the social prerequisites for such a development simply did not and do not exist. Not least because of such stark contrasts, English School scrutiny of Reus-Smit's work should be considered pressing. As was the case with Der Derian, however, the reception of Reus-Smit's work inside the English School has been rather limited. Still, before jumping to the conclusion that the School's interest in social theory remains as low as it was in the mid 1980s, when Der Derian's book was published, one must concede that two years may be too short a period to judge in these matters.

Conclusion

From the work reviewed here, what the English School seems to need at the present juncture is to build on its unique historical and taxonomic work. Having described and classified diplomacy in many of its varieties, we should now proceed to attempt fully-fledged theorisation. The one attempt which has been made in this direction, namely Der Derian's analysis of alienation and genealogy has led him away from the School. Characteristically, the major work inspired by it, Costas Constantinou's *On the Way to Diplomacy* (1996), has been written entirely outside the School. The School has failed to follow Manning's lead in the direction of rooting the inquiry into global affairs more firmly in social theory. Reus-Smit's work demonstrates one of many ways in which this may be done.

A number of projects offer themselves readily. For example, writing in the tradition from Marcel Mauss, Norbert Elias and Pierre Bourdieu, one could build on Bull's idea of a diplomatic culture and analyse to what extent there exists a certain diplomatic *habitus*, that is, a set of regular traits which dispose its bearers to act in a certain way. In this way, one may specify what a diplomatic culture actually entails, to what extent it is present in a similar degree in different foreign ministries, and to what extent it has spread beyond foreign ministries. *Habitus* is also a key factor in distinguishing the collective of diplomats from other human collectives, which means that we have here a way of specifying how far apart diplomats and (other) bureaucrats, politicians etc. are in different states and in different settings. This would be one way to specify what Bull refers to as the difference between diplomatic culture and international culture, as well as the difference between the diplomatic culture and the elite or mass culture of any one given state. To Bourdieu, specific actions entail the bringing together of the *habitus* of the different actors involved and a specific strategic field situation. This would be one way of approaching the study of what kind of difference the actualisation of a diplomatic culture makes for a particular process of international decision-making. Similarly, Elias's analyses of what he refers to as the civilization process and Bourdieu's analyses of taste as a key factor in constituting and maintaining the boundaries between groups could be used to theorise the historical emergence of a diplomatic culture as a process of adding ever new distinctions and refinements to the set of regular traits which dispose diplomats to act in a certain way.

To give another example, whereas in anthropology there is now a dominant so-called 'writing culture' school which builds on the work of Derrida and others in approaching the social through the textual, this work has, with the exception of

Constantinou's book not yet reached International Relations.⁸ In fact, diplomacy is an excellent example of a practice where the textual plays a key role. Etymologically, the very concept of diplomacy hails back to the Greek *diploun* – to double fold – and what was to be double-folded were the documents which were carried by heralds and negotiators, certifying and empowering them as what we would now refer to as diplomats. A similar practice may be observed in present-day diplomacy, where new ambassadors must show their credentials upon arrival in the host country. The constitution of diplomats, then, is a textual affair. Furthermore, Harold Nicolson and other writers on diplomacy underline how diplomacy is the art of negotiation through *written* documents. Again, the work done by the English School would be an excellent starting point from which to study how this distinctly textual character of the practise works to shape it in detail.

Let me end with a third example. Foucault notes that to Machiavelli, the objective of power is for the sovereign to hang on to his realm. The point is not first or foremost to defend a specific group of people or a specific territory, but to defend *possessions*. The anti-Machiavellian literature which emerged between the 16th century and the Napoleonic wars had as its main target the ensuing lack of foundations for an historical, organic or in any other sense 'real' tie between the sovereign and his realm. The development which made this an ever more pressing task was the emergence of a dense reality between the sovereign and the households which were part of his possessions. This reality was society. As a response to these developments, as a way of ordering power relations so that a tie was established and society governed by indirect means, Foucault sees a new form of power emerging. He uses the concept of governmentality for this indirect form of power, and separates it from other forms of older standing, namely sovereignty and domination. Now, if one brings this overall reading of social developments to the study of diplomacy, one notes at once that Watson's reading of how diplomats changed from seeing themselves as performing the will of the sovereign to acting in accordance with a *raison d'état* may be rephrased as a shift inside the power form of sovereignty – a consequence of sovereignty moving away from the king's body. This is hardly noteworthy. Perhaps more fruitfully, one may hypothesise that Vincent's reading of how diplomacy may at present undergo a change by beginning to make human rights part of its subject matter may be rephrased as a question of how diplomacy may begin to take on elements not only of the power form of sovereignty, but also of governmentality. If so, then one should expect the interface between foreign ministries and resident embassies to other social loci to rise, one should expect a blurring of agency in the sense that a number of quasi-diplomats should emerge, and

⁸ The locus classicus is Clifford & Marcus (1986); a stock-taking is James, Hockey & Dawson (1997).

one should expect there to emerge a number of new techniques whereby the traditional loci of diplomacy would try to orchestrate these developments by indirect means. Governmentality is, after all, a form of power where the point is to govern from afar.

A new enterprise must be launched in order to follow up on these and related issues of diplomacy. On the strength of the work reviewed above, I would argue that the work on diplomacy carried out by the English School remains the best dock from which to depart. The challenge for the School will be to maintain contact with these new enterprises and not let them slip out of its range of communication.

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