DISCUSSION PAPERS IN DIPLOMACY

Bilateral Diplomacy in the European Union: Towards 'post-modern' patterns?

Jozef Bátora and Brian Hocking

ABSTRACT

Just as the European Union (EU) poses questions regarding the nature of political organisation 'beyond the state' similarly it raises issues as to the changing character of diplomacy where this is determined by developments at several interrelated levels, from the global to the subnational. This paper explores one aspect of this issue by examining the role of a traditional mode of diplomacy, namely bilateralism, as expressed in the continued presence of bilateral missions in EU member state capitals. The aim is not to provide a detailed empirical survey of the activities of these missions but, rather, to set out a framework within which such an investigation might be conducted. Against this background, we welcome comments and suggestions. Having briefly considered where bilateralism fits into the complex EU milieu, its changing character is analysed within two contrasting orders – that of a 'modern' and 'post-modern' diplomatic order. This is done in terms of the juxtaposition of three variables: function, access and presence. The article then addresses the role of bilateralism in the EU, proposing three possible developmental patterns. It is suggested that intra-EU bilateral diplomacy is characterised by a dialogue between a form of 'ceremonial modernity' and 'practiced post-modernity.'

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BILATERAL DIPLOMACY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: TOWARDS 'POST-MODERN' PATTERNS?

Jozef Bátora and Brian Hocking

Introduction

The key proposition of this article is that the European Union (EU) as a transformational polity, in the sense that it poses questions about the appropriate mechanisms for political organisation beyond the state, also raises questions concerning the appropriate mechanisms for organising diplomacy beyond the state. This relates to a variety of levels and arenas, reflecting the complexity of the EU as an international actor. Consequently, debates about the character of diplomacy within the EU arena embraces various forms - from intra-EU diplomacy to that linking the EU to other regional arenas and to the global arena (Keukeleire 2000, Hocking and Spence 2005, Bátora 2005). Whilst much of this discussion is cast in terms of the nature of the EU as an arena for multilateral diplomacy, it is clear that this involves complex patterns of communication one element of which is the continuing presence of bilateral missions maintained between member state governments. But the status and role of such posts is unclear. On the one hand, some evidence suggests that, over time, their size has actually increased (Bratberg 2007); on the other, foreign ministries – such as the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) – are seeking to rationalise their EU networks against a background of resource constraints.[1] How should we explain the continuation of what might be regarded as a manifestation of a diplomatic structure whose rationale is grounded in a set of structures ill-attuned to the demands of contemporary global needs and to the logic of developing regional integration? There are at least two dimensions to this question. The first recognises that EU member states (together with national governments around the world) are involved in an institutional search for appropriate models for organising external affairs in a situation where organisational models (traditionally centred on the foreign ministry) are experiencing significant processes of adaptation as they respond to international, regional and domestic pressures. The second dimension relates these developments to debates concerning the

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1) This is noted, for example, in the references to the 'Europe Zero Based Review' in the FCO Board minutes, 18 May 2007. See at http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/ BOARD %20MIN%20MAY%2007.pdf.

way in which the EU should develop its own diplomatic machinery and the appropriateness of the models on which this might be based.

We suggest that in this context, the EU represents an evolving diplomatic milieu in which the practice of diplomacy is responding to pressures from these two linked levels of interest and activity. One of its characteristics is the coexistence of overlapping rationales for diplomatic representation which seek to accommodate the tension between diplomatic modernity drawing upon institutionalized 'Westphalian' models for organising state-to-state relations (including MFAs, embassies and other agencies of the 'national diplomatic system')[2] and diplomatic post-modernity of emerging diplomatic processes and structures beyond the state. One facet of this tension, we suggest, is represented by the continued presence of intra-EU bilateral representation. Structures and processes of bilateral diplomatic representation co-evolved with the modern state order and studying their change and stability may serve as an analytical lens for studying change and stability of the modern state order in the EU. This field of research is currently under-specified and apart from policy-oriented analyses such as those of Paschke (2000, 2003), we lack comprehensive studies of the change dynamics of bilateral diplomacy inside the EU.[3] Our purpose here is to provide a conceptual framework for further empirical research based on an examination of selected member state missions within the EU arena.

The article proceeds in the following steps. Having considered the changing environment of contemporary diplomacy, we briefly consider current debates within national diplomatic services regarding the modalities of diplomatic representation. These focus on the development of the structures of diplomacy in their bureaucratic and political settings, but also on the definition and execution of diplomatic representation. The article then addresses the practice of intra-EU diplomacy and, specifically, the role of bilateralism. Whilst recognizing that this term denotes a set of processes – conventionally contrasted to multilateralism – through which policy objectives

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2) The term `national diplomatic system' is employed here to denote the machinery through which national governments conduct their international policy. As such, it suggests that this machinery is not necessarily synonymous with the ministry of foreign affairs but increasingly includes a range of bureaucratic actors, both in sectoral ministries and in central agencies. Moreover, it recognizes that the MFA and its diplomatic network exist in an increasingly complex relationship in terms of the functions each performs in the overall processes of managing and implementing international policy.

3) Some foreign ministries have over the years produced discussion papers focusing on this topic such as the FCO 1991 report 'The Role of Bilateral Embassies in the European Community'. These, however, are mostly outside the public domain.

are pursued and which are rooted in differing negotiating logics and dynamics from the latter, our specific focus is on the machinery through which bilateral relations are conducted. This, of course, has come to be associated with the resident mission. In considering the continued presence within the EU diplomatic milieu of member state bilateral missions, we suggest that rather than a distinct mode of diplomacy rooted in the past, bilateralism may be changing its forms and objectives in line with the changing character of the EU as a polity, the objectives of contemporary diplomacy and the broader patterns of world politics. It will be argued that this issue highlights a key dimension of diplomatic practice, namely the juxtaposition of the goal of access to key loci of decision-making activity with the requirement of presence in those key arenas. In turn, these are linked to the functions that diplomacy performs in specific contexts. Whereas the EU marks a shift in the relationship between these dimensions of diplomatic practice and structure, nevertheless bilateralism remains a key, yet changing, feature of what might be viewed as a 'post-modern' (or perhaps 'post-Westphalian') foreign policy environment.

Modernity and post- modernity in diplomacy

Before pursuing the theme of change and diplomacy and the possibility that we are witnessing the emergence of some form of post-modern variant both in the context of the EU and in the broader, global, arena, it is helpful to recall how diplomacy has evolved and how it has been constructed in different time periods. There is a strong tendency to associate it with the modern state and the development of the Westphalian order. Such an assumption and linkage has conditioned much contemporary discussion of the role and significance of the structures and processes that we have come to associate with diplomacy – with a strong emphasis on the lack of 'fit' between them and the demands posed by the agendas of contemporary world politics.

However, understanding the current place of diplomacy in its varying forms requires us to recognise that diplomacy has a long history and one that predates the 'modern' state-focused international system. Indeed, diplomacy as a set of practices, rules and procedures enabling regularized interaction and mediation between human collectivities has existed since the early days of humankind. At the most fundamental level, diplomacy has always concerned processes of mediation between 'us' and 'the other' (Numelin 1950, Neumann 2002), and the reconciliation of the impulses for separateness and community in international affairs (Sharp 1999). Such concepts have varied depending on the specific historical context. As a number of scholarly works have shown diplomacy was conducted in various ways in the ancient Middle East (Cohen and Westbrook 2000), ancient China, ancient Greece, the Roman Empire and Byzantium (Hamilton and Langhorne 1995) and, indeed, in medieval Europe (Queller 1967, Anderson 1993) and renaissance Italy (Mattingly 1955).

It was only with the gradual structuration of the modern ('Westphalian') state order that diplomacy became associated with the prerogative of the sovereign and was deemed to be an exclusive preserve of the state (Bátora 2005, 2006). In other words, the rise of modern diplomacy shadowed the processes through which different types of boundary (political, market, cultural, welfare) coincided within a single territory (Bartolini 2005, 2006, see also Rokkan 1975, Tilly 1975). A key element of this process was the gradual separation of domestic and foreign policy as reflected in the emergence of a distinct machinery (the foreign ministry) in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries where previously the boundaries of the foreign and the domestic had been far less clearly drawn (Anderson 1993). Whilst there were variations in the nature of the diplomatic machinery developed by specific states, one of its key operating principles was to act as 'gatekeeper', mediating

the overlaying boundaries that came to characterise the modern state (Hocking 1999).

Of course, this process has never been as clearly defined as proponents of the diplomatic monopoly of national governments have often claimed and the patterns of 'modern' diplomacy have been far more complex both in terms of participation and process. Nevertheless, it is the case that modernity in diplomacy can be related to the confluence of boundaries of the territorially organized state and thereby the function of 'guarding' the points of intersection between the foreign and domestic environments. As we discuss below, one of the underlying features of European integration is that it challenges the coincidence of various types of boundaries in member states of the Union (Bartolini 2005). Given an increasing fluidity of boundaries and radically increased possibilities of exit, there is a process of territorial de-differentiation within the EU (ibid.).[4] This poses the question as to whether we can now identify a mode of post-modern diplomacy and, if so, what its characteristics might be?

One response to this question might be that it is ill-conceived, even irrelevant. As noted earlier, for many observers, diplomacy is by definition an institution of a state-based order and as such, its norms, operational principles and processes are unsuited to the demands of an era which requires new principles rooted in the demands and of global governance. However, such a conclusion is questionable at two levels. First, it fails to assign sufficient importance to the continuing role of the state and its agencies as a critical component in a polycentric world order marked by a growing diffusion of regulatory authority. Second, it ignores the fact that in response to change in both the international and domestic policy environments, developments are occurring within national diplomatic systems which reflect significant change in terms of the processes of modern diplomacy. These are determined by changes in the character and functions of the state itself denoted by Lind as the transition from the 'integral' to the 'catalytic' state which increasingly engages with and draws upon the resources of a range of non-state actors (Lind 1992) and is paralleled by a form of 'catalytic' diplomacy in which coalitions of state and non-state actors, often assembled by professional diplomats, seek to manage policy issues (Hocking 1999).

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4) For a discussion of this concept see Hirschman, A.O. (1978): 'Exit, Voice and the State.' *World Politics*, 31: 90-107. Bartolini (2006:11) discusses also the possibility of 'partial exits', which allow actors to stay in their country physically, but achieve exit by accessing various kinds of external resources.

Consequently, a post-modern diplomacy involves increasingly complex patterns of interaction between the state and a shifting range of other actors in both public and private arenas. Whilst this might be portrayed – as several observers have done – in terms of a shift from hierarchical and state-centred diplomatic processes to networks of action, it retains a key role for diplomats but not in traditional formulations of gatekeepers, but as coordinators of state-based action and facilitators in the construction and operation of multi-actor policy coalitions (Krasner 1995; Reinicke 1998). One way of portraying this is in terms of 'boundary spanning' activity in which the value-added role of professional diplomats resides in their capacity to operate in the spaces created by fluid boundaries rather than the 'hard' borderlands of modern diplomacy separating states as policy spaces and the domestic and international policy agendas (Hocking 2002, 2004).

The resultant image of a post-modern diplomatic order resonates with the character of the EU as a foreign policy arena. This is frequently depicted in terms of a complex set of layers in which international activity at national and EU (and, in some contexts, sub national) levels intermingle in multilevel networks (Krahmann 2003). Thus Michael Smith (2003) in distinguishing between modern and post-modern foreign policy environments (the latter relaxing preoccupations with territoriality and central control) portrays an arena in which differing levels of foreign policy activity coexist alongside each other. Rather than a zero-sum relationship, member states and the EU as a collective foreign policy actor may operate alongside, across and in tandem with one another (Manners and Whitman 2000; Hill and Wallace 1996). The associated patterns of diplomacy reflect this complexity as patterns of communication within and outside the EU shadow the multifaceted relationships which international policy embraces. And, consequently, patterns of diplomatic representation are likely to become more dense and fragmented. Before considering how these are adapting to the demands of the European arena, we consider the implications of diplomatic change for the character of representation in more general terms.

Changing diplomatic orders and the concept of representation

The concept of representation is central to the analysis and practice of diplomacy. But as with diplomacy more generally, analysis tends to be fragmentary and, often, lacks substance (Jönsson and Hall 2005). This, as is not infrequently noted, relates to the dominant discourse of diplomatic studies, rooted in realist and neo-realist perspectives. With its emphasis on the

significance of international structures, not only has this discouraged an appreciation of the role of agency in world politics – clearly critical to an appreciation of the activities of diplomatic agents – it has also established a set of boundaries determining the way in which we view diplomacy as an activity. (Lee and Hudson 2004).

This is of particular relevance to the ongoing discussion about the role of diplomatic networks and, in particular the place of the bilateral mission within them. There is a danger here in assuming that the continued existence of the structures of bilateralism proves that they are of importance and that their functions remain unchanged. Consequently, much discussion ignores, is unaware of, or fails to connect with what is happening in the 'real world' of diplomacy where the issues of external challenge and internal adaptation underpin the proliferation of papers and reports produced by foreign ministries. Against this background, few students of international relations have sought – as has Rana – to map the nature of bilateralism and the changing the role of the ambassador in diplomatic networks (Rana 2002; 2004). Moreover, it is rare to find work such as Wolfe's which, having decided that diplomatic networks are worth looking at, then seeks to explain why resident missions still exist (Wolfe 1998).

The answer to this, Wolfe suggests, lies in the role of multiple acts of diplomatic recognition. One such act is the representation of states in the diplomatic system. Another is the reproduction of the state by ambassadors, missions, and consulates. This dual act of recognition is constitutive of an international system which is the intersubjective creation of states. In this context, therefore, ambassadors 'are central to the social reproduction of the society of states' (Wolfe 1998). In terms of the growth of diplomatic representation, Wolfe sees this as linked to familiar debates about globalization and the collapse of time and space. Drawing on the analogy with decisions made by firms regarding international investment, he suggests that foreign ministries reach not dissimilar conclusions as to the benefits of an international presence. Additionally, the growing density of international relationships reinforces the need to know what other actors are doing and their perceptions of their environments. This questions the familiar observation – or assumption – that globalization weakens the rationale for the structures and processes of diplomacy rather than, as Cohen has suggested, enhances the need for them (Cohen 1999).

A related issue, namely the reasons determining choice in the pattern of overseas representation from a 'sending' state, has not received much systematic attention. A rare attempt to adopt a 'scientific' approach to the matter is provided by Webster who examines the factors underpinning the decisions of five Commonwealth member states in allocating scarce resources

to diplomatic representation. His conclusion is that geopolitical considerations are of significantly greater importance than any sense of common ties with fellow member states of the Commonwealth (Webster 2001). This poses additional questions regarding the logic of representation in specific organisational settings which is of obvious relevance to the EU arena.

Against this background, it is unsurprising that there is a lack of empirical evidence concerning the adaptation of the structures of diplomacy to the changing environments in which they are required to function. To be sure, foreign ministries are engaged in almost continuous processes of evaluation and re-evaluation of their overseas networks and the processes through which these are tasked to achieve policy objectives. However, this rarely manifests itself in reflective discussions on the precise objectives of representation and how these relate to possible structures. Thus even where the patterns and conduct of bilateral representation are subjected to the enquiring lens of government auditors, the assumption is made that the continuing significance of states and, therefore of interstate relations, explains and justifies the structures of bilateralism.[5] Additionally, most academic analysis focuses on bilateralism as a negotiating process rather than the structures through which it occurs.

In this sense, bilateralism refers to a much broader set of interactions than those conducted through bilateral missions and ones that may be routed through a variety of channels including quite diffuse transgovernmental linkages outside the traditional routines of professional diplomacy. As such, bilateralism can be integrated into the complex patterns of world politics and the range of multilateral forums through which it is conducted. Thus rather than standing apart from multilateralism, bilateralism can be viewed as part of the fabric from which it is constructed, posing questions as to how the two coexist (Smith 2005: 168). The EU provides an intriguing laboratory in which this issue can be explored. As Keukeleire notes, the EU both embraces bilateralism as part of its densely-textured pattern of multilateral interactions whilst at the same time providing both a new context for and alternatives to traditional bilateral diplomacy (Keukeleire 2000). Looked at from the perspective of the integration process, bilateralism can be viewed not as an obstacle or an assertion of intergovernmentalist models, but as an instrument of enhanced integration reflecting the role of coalition building in the evolving

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5) Such reports are relatively rare but an exception is the 2004 report from the Australian National Audit Office on the management of Australia's bilateral relations. However, whilst critically evaluating the way in which bilateral posts are managed, there is little attempt to question the logic of the structure.

dynamics of EU decision-making processes (Bulmer and Wessels 1987; Smith, J & Tsatsas 2002). Alternatively, bilateralism is also seen as one of the fundaments of Europe's 'accumulated executive order', where it coexists alongside layers of a multilateral order and a supranational administrative order (Curtin and Egeberg 2008). But whilst it is agreed that the structures through which the national objectives of EU member states are pursued are changing, we appear to have relatively little data on the how the traditional diplomatic machinery as represented in the bilateral missions is adapting to these new demands. We return to these points later in the discussion.

Developing a framework: function, access and presence and the processes of their re-ordering

As noted at the beginning of this paper, we are concerned with an apparent paradox: in a multilateral environment such as the EU, why do intra-EU bilateral missions not only exist but in some cases appear to have grown in terms of the personnel attached to them (Bratberg 2007)? We address possible answers to this question in the next section. But before doing so, we explore some fundamental dimensions of change in the character of diplomatic representation which may help us to understand patterns of change within and outside the EU policy space and provide a context for the evaluation of bilateralism.

First, the changing modalities of diplomatic networks have to be seen in the context of the evolution of patterns of interaction between national diplomatic systems and the regional and global diplomatic networks of which they are a constituent element. Structures and processes of diplomatic representation operate at the boundaries of these systems and are reflective of changes in each environment. Analysing the way in which diplomatic representation is adapting to a transformational world order of which the EU is a significant part can be approached through the lenses of three basic dimensions of diplomatic representation: function, access and presence (see table 1). We shall suggest that important changes are occurring in terms of each of these which help us to understand the character of the EU diplomatic milieu. The first of these, function, poses the question 'what is diplomatic representation for?' In part this is determined by the interaction of symbolic representation which simultaneously asserts the identity and location of a state within the international order with the functional processes of information gathering and transmission. In this sense, the structures of diplomacy constitute a cybernetic system through which messages are

transmitted, at the most elementary level between principal and agent (Jönsson and Hall 2005).

Diplomatic environment	Function *Objectives of representation*	Access *Targets of representation*	Presence *Modes of representation*
'Modern' diplomatic environment	Symbolic: constitutive of the international system Foreign policy focus Consular role Commercial diplomacy Information gathering and transmission	Limited focus and scope Relatively simply-structured networks and nodes of influence. Dynamics focus on principal-agent relationships Strong emphasis on inter-governmental linkages	Physical presence: the act of `representing' the state's existence as international actor Mix of mission and residential presence with growing emphasis on the latter Distinction between bilateral and multilateral presence
'Post-modern' diplomatic environment (EU)	Symbolic: constitutive of the EU as an inter-state union Governance focus; knowledge brokerage From information gathering to information analysis Multiple `customer base': governments; civil society; business and public (enhanced consular role) Coalition-building and management Enhanced commercial role Public diplomacy	Expanded, multilayered foci of access: • Global (extra EU bilateral) • Regional (EU) • Intra EU bilateral Need to access complex nodes and networks determined by multiple agendas and composed of state and non-state actors	Erosion of link between access and presence Re-valuation of foci for presence (multilateral and bilateral) Innovative modes of maintaining presence (eg `virtual' presence) Redefining composition of missions (sectoral departmental presence) Redefining linkage between missions and MFA and policy process

Table 1 Changing diplomatic environments: function, access and presence

A significant dimension of change which is clearly reflected in the EU arena is the growth of inter-societal linkages and the desire of governments to trade knowledge and policies in a range of areas. One implication of this for diplomats is that they become instruments of social learning or 'knowledge brokers' in a wide range of areas from health and education reform to the management of terrorist threats. In so doing, their home 'client' departments lie outside the MFA as do their interlocutors in the receiving state. Further significant functional adaptation reflects a reordering of priorities in the light of changing demands from the international and domestic policy arenas. A clear manifestation of this has been the growing emphasis over several decades on commercial diplomacy in the form of trade promotion and investment attraction. But more recently, this has been overlaid by the emphasis placed on the consular function. Whilst this embraces the more traditional functions relating to visa and passport issues, it is now assuming a far more prominent place as MFAs and their networks are expected to play prominent roles in crisis situations resulting from natural catastrophes and terrorist incidents. Judgements as to the worth and effectiveness of diplomatic networks are, consequently, subject to enhanced pressures from public expectations as reflected in the media.

Access relates to the direction of representation, namely access to key nodes of decision making power and networks of influence whilst presence refers to the modalities and operation of representation. Patterns of diplomatic representation reflect a dialogue between these two concerns. Traditionally, access has been linked to presence in the modern diplomatic order in the sense that the two were regarded as coterminous. In other words, access demanded presence in a physical sense. A more complex set of relationships between the national diplomatic systems and regional and global diplomatic networks means that this link, whilst by no means broken, is being continually re-evaluated. Thus in such densely configured policy milieus as the EU, the linkage is tested by the complexity of the diplomatic environment and a growing diffusion of networks of interaction and nodes of influence within the policy arena. In part, this reflects an ongoing debate with its roots in the impact of changing communications technology in the nineteenth century (Nickles 2003) which focuses on the degree of autonomy which diplomats possess in discharging their functions (Davis Cross 2007). But the argument that the diminution of distance has demoted the significance of resident missions is countered by the enhanced complexity of information flows, the closer texture of political arenas and the engagement of a growing diversity of actors (both governmental and non-governmental) in diplomatic processes. Nevertheless, the presumption that access demands presence in a physical sense is one that is being reviewed in the broader context of

diplomacy as well as in the transformational policy environment of the EU. A concern with resources underscores such concerns as national governments seek to reconcile the changing shape of nodes and networks within the international system with demands that presence be maintained in the most economical fashion.

One can see how these concerns come together in a variety of initiatives aimed at relating the changing functions of diplomacy to the imperatives of access and presence. At the global level, Secretary Rice's formulation of 'Transformational Diplomacy' seeks to redefine the character of representation in the light of changed priorities for US foreign policy alongside the changing structures of world politics. At the regional level, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has restructured its diplomatic presence in the US, recognizing the significance of economic and demographic developments in what is its most important bilateral relationship (Hocking and Lee 2006).

Summarising these points, the definition and practice of diplomacy reflects, not surprisingly, broader patterns of change in the international system. The key elements that can be regarded as distinguishing the modern from a putative post-modern scenario lies in shifting perceptions of what is being represented and to whom, and how the business of representation can best be adjusted to significant changes at national, regional and global levels. Contemporary diplomacy, therefore, is not marked by clear breaks with its role in its modern phase but by a re-ordering of functions and additions to them reflecting the contemporary context of world politics. This relates to a general observation by organisation theorists such as Meyer and Rowan (1977), who point out that formal organisational structures are often established and maintained in a 'ceremonial' manner irrespective of their actual efficacy given their role as legitimacy-generating devices in highly institutionalized environments. Change of institutionalized organisations then does not have the form of perfect adaptation of structures to organisational environments, but rather that of a gradual 'inefficient' process in which adaptation of practices and informal routines may be paralleled by resilience of formal structures (March 1981, March and Olsen 1984, 1989, Olsen 2008). As March (1981:565) argues,

> [a]n organisation uses rules, problem solving, learning, conflict, contagion, and regeneration to cope with its environment, actively adapt to it, avoid it, seek to understand, change, and contain it. The processes are conservative. That is, they tend to maintain stable relations, sustain existing rules, and reduce differences among existing organisations. The fundamental logic, however, is not one of stability in behavior; it is one

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> of responsiveness. The processes are stable; the resulting actions are not.

This dynamic of what may be termed responsive stability may be at the core of a key puzzle for students of organisations studying the process of European integration, summarized in Olsen's observation (2003:524) that although formal organisational structures (or 'façades') in member states' public administrations often remain unchanged, new practices and routines have been introduced within the existing structures. The next section addresses the change dynamics in bilateral diplomacy in the EU and develops hypotheses as to the possible change patterns in the emerging intra-EU diplomatic environment.

The changing environment of bilateral diplomacy in the EU

As noted earlier, policy making processes in the EU evolve in a complex system of multilevel governance in which national democratic systems interact with each other and with EU institutions in multiple forums and in multiple ways (Olsen 1996, 2007, Kohler Koch 1999, 2003, Egeberg 1999, 2006, Nugent 2003, Trondal and Veggeland 2003, Hix 2005). Simplifying somewhat, it is no longer obvious what in the relations between the member states constitutes 'high politics' traditionally managed by diplomats following the specific rules and norms of diplomacy and what, on the other hand, represents the more mundane kinds of 'domestic' political processes subject to the procedures and rules of democracy in the respective member states. The effects of this blurring are reinforced by the decreasing ability of member states' governments to work according to specific national timetables, which as Ekengren (2002) reports in his seminal analysis, are increasingly supplanted by a multitude of policy-specific EU-wide timetables and deadlines connecting civil servants throughout the EU in administrative networks hammering out policies. Intensification of horizontal policy coordination across executive branches of member states' governments is paralleled by a decreasing ability of national parliamentary assemblies to exercise effective control of these processes (Pollak and Slominski 2003).

These developments generate an emergent intra-EU order, in which the two traditionally disjointed institutional spheres of state – domestic politics and diplomacy – increasingly overlap leading to what Duchêne (1973) referred to as the domestication of relations between member states. In the view of Ruggie (1993:172), the EU is hence a 'multiperspectival polity' in which it is 'increasingly difficult to visualize the conduct of international

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politics among community members, and to a considerable measure even domestic politics, as though it took place from a starting point of twelve separate, single, fixed viewpoints.' The challenge faced by analysts, as Claes' (2003) study of the impacts of the European Economic Area agreement on Norway had shown, is that the legal framework of the EU and the institutionalized political processes associated with it structure politics in ways which cannot be satisfactorily explained either from an intra-state perspective focusing on democratic processes or from a purely inter-state perspective placing a premium on diplomatic processes. EU governance can be conceptualized as 'political organisation in the field of tension between democracy and diplomacy' (ibid., p. 277, authors' translation). Consequently, the EU constitutes an emerging diplomatic order in which multilateralism and bilateralism are intertwined and bilateralism, whilst constituting a significant component of this multilateral order, is at the same time being re-situated within it and policy areas re-located from predominantly bilateral to the multilateral framework or a mixed 'bi-multilateral' set of processes (Keukeleire 2000:4-5). These change dynamics can be recorded at two interconnected levels – in the Council/COREPER context and in the context of member states' embassies inside the EU.

The Council as a an institutionalized forum for intra-EU bilateralism

One of the key specifics of the EU diplomatic milieu is the Council and more specifically the COREPER providing an additional layer and/or a 'super-framework' for bilateral diplomacy among member states. Firstly, this specificity has to do with the kind of actors present in the member states' permanent representations to the European Communities in Brussels. In addition to foreign ministry personnel, each of these includes 'domestic' actors such as staff from domestic line ministries, representatives of regions and counties, national banks etc. (Westlake and Galloway 2004:205). Additionally, sub-state actors, such as the German Länder, maintain their own representative offices in Brussels. Secondly, in addition to the presence of a plethora of 'domestic' actors, the Council-based framework for bilateral diplomacy is also characterised by first-hand information exchange regarding the respective national positions on particular policy issues, which challenges the role of embassies in member state capitals as key information providers. As the permanent representative of one of the smaller member states pointed

out in a recent conversation with one of the authors[6], he rarely reads reports from his country's embassies in member state national capitals as these mostly contain information on the country's policy positions, i.e. information he already possesses. He suggested it would be of much more value, if national embassies provided analytical input as to the broader domestic context behind particular positions, so that he could know how best to develop strategies for possible influence and persuasion in COREPER. This is in line with arguments made by a diplomat from another smaller member state stationed in one of the Central European capitals[7], who complained that his reports are no longer of value to his home foreign ministry, because 'they know the position of this government a week earlier from our permanent representative in Brussels.' As will be discussed in the next section, these developments have recently prompted some member states to re-order the function their embassies inside the EU with the aim of aligning their political work with the negotiation processes in COREPER.

Moreover, as the above mentioned permanent representative also pointed out, due to the commonly enacted role as 'lawmakers', the permanent representatives in COREPER share a common culture that goes beyond the traditional sense of professional diplomatic community built around accommodating the tension between promotion of national interests and doing so through the commonly agreed diplomatic procedures and norms.[8] The common enterprise of law-making in COREPER introduces a new logic of appropriateness into intra-EU bilateral diplomacy. The challenge here is that this context exposes diplomats to a different set of expectations related to political accountability and transparency than in the case of traditional multilateral diplomatic negotiations[9]. It is in particular in COREPER and in the Council more generally that the transposition of rules of appropriateness

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6) Discussion, August 26, 2007.
7) Discussion, May 10, 2007.
8) Permanent Representatives of member states to the EU is usually a senior diplomat, who bears the title 'Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary', which traditionally indicates that such representatives can be empowered by their Head of State to enter into international obligations on behalf of their country. Permanent representatives usually exercise their function for five to seven years and sometimes even longer, which is in general not in line with the custom of regular rotation in three to four years practiced in most foreign ministries. The explanation of the length of service of permanent representatives is usually related to the need to ensure continuity, experience and expertise in the representation of interests in the COREPER (De Zwaan 1995:15-17). Such long tenures, of course, also foster socialization among the permanent representatives.
9) For an insider view on various aspects of the lack of political accountability in modern diplomacy see Ross (2007).

between the domestic political spheres governed by democracy and the far less orderly international sphere governed by diplomacy, becomes visible. Hence, the COREPER setting arguably brings about change in intra-EU diplomacy not only due to the effects of socialization of permanent representatives into new behavioral patterns and working procedures, as suggested by de Zwaan (1995) and Lewis (2005), but also due to the institutionally structured intermingling of logics of appropriateness from the domestic and the international spheres. While the result may be 'domestication' or democratization of diplomacy, the effects may just as well be the reverse, namely, as Anderson (2007) argues, that traditional diplomatic norms including an excessive focus on secrecy and lack of political accountability come to dominate law-making processes in the Council. A study exploring the role of the Council (and the COREPER) as an institution bringing about such an intermingling of traditionally separated internal and external institutional logics of the modern state is still to be written.

The role of member states' embassies in the EU

While the Council framework is a significant factor influencing the daily work of member states' bilateral embassies in the EU, there are issues and policies not covered by the EC framework, and here bilateral embassies act as an important interlocutor for domestic line ministries seeking input and information from counterparts in other member state governments. Moreover, as Paschke (2000, 2003) argues in his report on German bilateral representation in the EU, the increasingly dense pattern of relations amongst EU member states has not reduced the need for bilateral representation: 'proximity has not produced intimacy' in intra-EU relations and the belief that it has is characterised as the 'illusion of familiarity' (Paschke 2000, 2003). He goes on to make the point that it is only the embassy on the spot that can deliver a broad overall assessment of the pattern of relations between Germany and the host EU state, and that such an awareness is critical to the management of an environment in which proximity requires a blending of forms of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. Thus, embassies remain instrumental in the promotion of national positions in intra-EU negotiations. The Slovak foreign ministry clarifies this in the following manner:

> [There is a need] to create ad hoc alliances with other EU Member
> States with similar views. [...] The process of increasing EU integration
> will hence require – seemingly paradoxically, but in fact quite logically –
> also the strengthening of bilateral relations between Slovakia and the

EU Member States, which will enable us to maintain an authentic Slovak voice on the European and the world scene. For these reasons it is necessary to finalize in particular the development of the network of our missions in EU Member States.[10]

Championing the implementation of specific organisational procedures for intra-EU diplomacy, the German Foreign Office maintains a network of designated EU-Affairs officers in charge of EU policy in all of its embassies inside the EU and in the accession countries. The system, which has been in place since 1995 and has been extended progressively as new countries joined the EU and the pre-accession negotiations, enables Germany 'to directly lobby our partners in favor of German positions and to fully assess those of the other member states on European policy issues. This is a major prerequisite for successfully bringing our interests into the process of formulating European policy objectives and demands.'[11] A focus on the EU-agenda is increasingly becoming the mainstay of member state bilateral missions' work inside the EU. As a recent roundtable discussion with representatives of EU-member states' bilateral embassies in Vienna[12] revealed, there is a clearly discernible trend of 're-gearing' political work of the embassies towards COREPER negotiations. While traditional bilateral relations remain on the agenda, the levels of concentration on issues negotiated in Brussels might be accounting for as much as 80-95% of the political work in some member state embassies in Vienna.

Furthermore, the erosion of space and time as a factor in diplomacy carries with it implications for how the foreign ministry and its network of posts relate to one another in terms of structures and allocation of tasks. Generally, the picture within EU foreign ministries is one where technological change has resulted in greater integration of the ministry and posts, with increasing

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10) *Správa o stave siete zastupiteľských úradov SR v zahraní i v r. 2005 a východiská pre jej alší rozvoj* [Report on the State of the Network of Slovak Missions Abroad in 2005 and Possibilities of its Further Development] Bratislava: Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005, p. 8.

11) There are currently EU Affairs Officers in the German embassies in all EU Member States, and also in the accession states Croatia and Turkey, and in the German Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels. For more information see 'The Making of German European Policy' at http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Europa/deutschland-in-europa/entscheidungsfindung.html

12) 'Vienna as a locus of change in intra-EU diplomacy' – roundtable discussion featuring academics and representatives of 11 bilateral embassies of EU member states in Vienna, organized by the Institute for European Integration Research of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, sponsored by the Cultural Department of the City of Vienna, and held at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna on February 7, 2008.

reliance being placed on the latter as the repository of country-related skills as geographical desks in the ministry are scaled down.[13] For instance, as one of the large member state embassies in Vienna reported at the above-mentioned roundtable in February 2008, there is only 35% of a junior officer position at headquarters in the home capital devoted to the management of the bilateral agenda related to Austria. At the same time, though, much of the inter-governmental communication between member states which previously flowed through embassies is now increasingly conducted directly between various levels of national public administrations, and accorsding to one practitioner, intra-EU embassies are increasingly becoming 'bus terminals for visiting delegations of home government servants and ministers as they visit their opposite numbers in ever-increasing numbers' (Ross 2007:215). Reflecting upon this change dynamic, Stephen Wall, former Europe Advisor to Tony Blair, argues that European integration processes have radically changed the work of British embassies in the EU. While previously embassy personnel in member states' capitals would spend most of their time hammering out EU negotiating positions and various policy issues, this function is now mostly centralized in the governmental offices in London, where the civil servants manage direct contacts to counterparts in the governments of other member states.[14] In the realm of foreign policy coordination, information exchange over the COREU network has also been a factor challenging the role of bilateral embassies in the EU. As a source from the Research Unit of the British foreign office pointed out in 1994,

> [b]ilateral contacts have increased due to CFSP; […] If I were to be posted in for example Dublin or Paris, it would not be much of this traffic that would pass through me, because it goes directly from the Foreign Office here to the Foreign Ministry in Dublin. To that extent the work of the bilateral embassy has become less intense, due to the direct communication between Foreign Ministries (cf Ekengren 1998:69).

Given these developments and, in part, the ambiguous or conflicting accounts and interpretations resulting from them, a key research question that arises is: What is the role of member states' bilateral embassies inside the EU? As suggested earlier, the evolution of diplomacy is marked by a balance between

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13) Thus the FCO business strategy published in November 2006 noted that posts `in a world of instant, real-time communications should normally need limited support from 'geographical desks' in London'. See 'FCO Business Strategy: from Strategy to Delivery' at http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/businessstrategy.pdf.

14) Stephen Wall, interview at http://fpc.org.uk/articles/160

patterns of change and continuity. But it is evident that in the EU there is potentially a significant re-balancing between the three core elements of modern diplomacy, and that possible shifts in function would pose issues for where access is required and the forms in which presence is deemed necessary and the shape that it assumes. Empirical data would need to be collected on the change dynamics in intra-EU diplomatic representation analyzing embassies of member states in one or more member state capitals along the dimensions of function, access and presence. The elements focused on would be those identified in table 1 (some would require further operationalization) and evidence would then allow us to make clearer assessments as to the possible shifts from diplomatic modernity in the EU towards possible post-modern patterns. But in the absence of such evidence, our purpose is to identify possible developmental patterns in the intra-EU diplomatic environment. At least three such patterns seem plausible.

a) Status-quo: all member states retain modern characteristics in organising their bilateral representations in the EU.

Institutions have been seen as buffers against radical and arbitrary change (March and Olsen 1984, 1989). As any other robust institution, diplomacy provides actors with 'institutional lenses' for interpretations of events in its environment, facilitates the creation of shared accounts of history, and hence produces a protective belt of ideas and meanings around its own existence. Thus changes in the environment, such as the process of European integration, are perceived and accommodated in accordance with the established logic of appropriateness informing diplomacy (i.e. in accordance with basic notions of what a state is and how it interacts with other states) and they are reflected through resistance to change of the organisational basis of diplomacy. The organising standards of the global organisational field of diplomacy would be maintained through isomorphic change at member states' embassies. The role of member states' embassies inside the EU would remain the same as outside the EU. This would mean that bilateral diplomatic representation in the EU would continue to focus primarily on issues of high politics. In terms of objectives of representation (function), targets of representation (access) and modes of representation (presence), member states' arrangements would correspond with the characteristics of modern diplomacy as set out in table 1.

b) Fragmentation: some member states retain characteristics of modern diplomacy in organising their bilateral representation in the EU, while others' arrangements fit the post-modern model of organising bilateral diplomacy.

The key premise here is the notion that public administrations in EU member states are characterised by different national traditions, histories, administrative structures and cultures, which lead to differences in their patterns of adaptation to EU-integration (Page and Wouters 1995, Wiener 2000, Börzel 2001, Knill 2001, Olsen 2003). This applies also to foreign affairs administrations (Steiner 1982, Hocking and Spence 2005). In response to the emerging changes in the intra-EU environment some individual Member States or their groupings may be introducing changes in the organisation of their intra-EU embassies including specific organisational structures, units or staff. An example might be the above mentioned German practice of appointing EU Affairs Officers in all German embassies in the EU and in the accession countries. Another example could concern change in the focus on particular functions of embassies such as the growing importance of the public diplomacy function identified by the Paschke report. Yet, while some member states may be introducing structural, functional and procedural changes shifting the objectives (function), the targets (access) and the modes (presence) of diplomatic representation, other member states may maintain the traditional 'modern' structures and procedures in their intra-EU embassies. One of the cleavage lines here may be the difference between large and small countries, which allows the former to devote specialized resources to EU-agenda coordination, while the latter need to multi-task their limited number of diplomats posted to an EU capital. An example may be the difference between the embassies of France and Denmark in Vienna, where the former has more than a dozen 'EU-attachés' in their political section (some of whom come from line ministries other than the French MFA), while the latter has in all two Denmark-based diplomats posted to Vienna.[15] Due to resource-restrictions, small member states' embassies hence often remain 'modern' in their function, access and presence, which for many of them represents a serious crisis of purpose in the 'post-modern' policy environment of the EU. As one of the small member states' diplomats posted to Vienna argued during the above mentioned roundtable 'with only me and my

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15) Differences may, of course, also be related to specific locations as it is hardly to be expected that the role of member states' embassies in a smaller capital like Ljubljana would be as broad and multifaceted as in a major global hub like London.

colleague representing our country in Austria, having an embassy here almost does not make sense anymore.'

Besides fragmentation due to country-specific strategies for organising intra-EU diplomacy, fragmentation in intra-EU diplomacy may also result from the variation in member states' participation in the different community policies. An example might be the Schengen agreement, which may lead to convergence in practices and operative procedures in consular affairs in the embassies of participating member states (Pasarín 2006), while there may be persistence of nationally-specific practices and structures in the embassies of non-participant member states (i.e. the U.K., Ireland and the twelve new Member States).

In theoretical terms, this would mean multiple adaptations of member states to the standards of multiple policy-regimes or intra-EU policy fields. These adaptations might bring about gradual re-ordering of functions, access and presence in some member states' arrangements for organising intra-EU diplomacy introducing new notions of what are appropriate structures, procedures and roles of diplomatic representation. Intra-EU diplomacy would hence be characterised by competing models of appropriate organising.

    c)   Transformation: all member states develop post-modern characteristics in organising their bilateral representation in the EU.

Following re-ordering of function, access and presence a new post-modern system of intra-EU diplomatic relations would be gradually institutionalised. This would not necessarily entail convergence around a given set of formal organisational structures and procedures and the differences among member states in organising their diplomatic machineries would persist. But the objectives, targets and modes of representation of all member states would shift in the direction of post-modern diplomacy as indicated in table 1. For instance, the previously discussed tendency of 're-gearing' of embassy function towards the COREPER negotiations both in terms of agenda, interlocutors and timing of activities, if found in most member states' embassies, would represent a profound functional reordering of bilateral diplomacy inside the EU. Intra-EU diplomacy would therefore emerge as a new organisational field featuring increasing convergence around a new post-modern set of notions concerning the appropriate function of diplomatic representation, the appropriate points and nodes of access, and the appropriate modes of diplomatic presence.

If support is found with the help of empirical data for one of these hypotheses, a number of further inferences may be made not only about the

nature of bilateral diplomacy in the EU, but more generally about the EU as a political entity. First, finding that 'modernity' remains the dominant mode of intra-EU diplomacy would lend support to the liberal intergovernmentalist view of the the EU (e.g. Moravcsik 1993, 1998) and perhaps even to neo-realist views seeing the EU as merely a long-term alliance (e.g. Waltz 2000, Mearsheimer 1994). Second, if fragmentation is found to characterise the intra-EU diplomatic environment, then the notion that there is a process of Europeanisation of diplomacy, understood as a form of unitary normative influence upon all the national diplomatic systems of the member states, would need to be questioned. In such a case, the shifts towards post-modern patterns in individual diplomatic services in some of the member states would more likely be related to broader changes in the global environment impacting not only on EU member states. Thirdly, if a broadly shared shift is found among the member states towards post-modern notions of function, access and presence in diplomatic representation, then one might consider proposing that the EU indeed does represent a post-modern community characterised by what may be a distinctive kind of post-modern diplomacy. This might lend support to an array of contributions to the literature such as Ruggie's (1993) view of the EU as a multiperspectival polity, Cooper's (2003) view of the EU as a post-modern community or to Zielonka's (2006) depiction of the EU as a neo-medieval empire.

Conclusion: Diplomacy in the EU between ceremonial modernity and practiced post-modernity?

This paper has attempted to highlight some issues relating to the development of diplomacy generally but in the context of the EU specifically. It seeks to provide a framework within which we might examine the structures and processes of intra-EU diplomacy and, in particular, the continuing exchange of missions by member states – seemingly an anomaly from an earlier era of diplomatic intercourse. In pursuing this theme, we have posed two related issues regarding the nature and operation of diplomacy in a transformational international environment through the lenses provided by representational structures and processes. The first of these issues relates to our understanding of what diplomacy is and how it is adapting to the demands flowing from both the international and domestic environments in which it operates. Employing a framework based on three dimensions: function, access and presence, we have tentatively explored the character of diplomatic representation in two contexts: first the 'modern' state-based environment associated with the

Westphalian order and second, what might be regarded as a post-modern environment. Whilst suggesting that, for analytical purposes, there are distinctive features associated with each of these, we have also pointed to the continuities that underscore the adaptive nature of diplomacy. The second set of issues explored in the paper builds on this but focuses on the EU as a diplomatic milieu. More specifically, we have examined, in general terms, the continuing presence of bilateral missions in the capitals of EU member states. In doing so, we have suggested three possible explanations for the continuing utilisation of this mode of bilateral communication and patterns for its future development. This, we have suggested, provides insights into both the nature of contemporary diplomacy and of the EU as a political entity which tests the traditional distinctions between diplomacy and domestic politics. Put another way, intra-EU bilateralism can be seen as one manifestation of the adaptation of diplomatic processes in which the symbolic functions of representation associated with modernity focused on the dominance of the state, are overlaid with new functions deriving from a more complex set of 'post-modern' processes of communication linking state and non-state actors in increasingly complex arenas. Thus intra-EU bilateral diplomacy keeps evolving between ceremonial modernity and practiced post-modernity. Empirical studies will be needed to test whether this entails the emergence of a new diplomatic order within the EU.

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