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virtual *Diplomacy*

REINVENTING DIPLOMACY: A VIRTUAL NECESSITY

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Introduction

As the world changes, so too must the means by which states conduct their international relations and advance their interests. Diplomacy can be said to consist of two elements. Over the past century, diplomacy referred to the art of advancing national interests through the sustained exchange of information among governments, nations, and other groups. Its purpose is to change attitudes and behavior as a way of reaching agreements and solving problems. It is the practice of persuasion.² This paper argues diplomacy is at present undergoing a major transformation, close to a revolution, in response to the recent rapid changes in information technology, the evolving global agendas of states, and the sudden explosion of new international "nonstate actors" in the post-World War II era. Today, diplomacy refers not only to the advancement of national interests and the practice of persuasion but also to the management of global issues.

A "revolution in diplomatic affairs" suggests major changes are afoot. Yet it is not clear that the sweep of change is widely accepted or recognized, much less welcomed. If this is correct and a revolution is indeed occurring

in diplomacy, scarce resources will be misspent, opportunities will be missed, and the results will be judged to be generally unsatisfactory.

Diplomacy has long roots. Its modus operandi is well established. The very mention of diplomacy indeed suggests conservatism and tradition. Revolutions are not generally welcomed in the world of diplomacy. Revolutions connote instability and uncertainty.

The reality is that diplomacy has weathered other "revolutions" in communications and transportation that some at the time thought would spell the end of the profession. Diplomacy has also adjusted before to changing agendas. It has moved from being dominated in the nineteenth and the first part of the twentieth century by the management of war and peace to include in the post-World War II period economic and trade policy issues as being of equal importance. Diplomacy has also already been significantly changed by an increase in the number of states, many of whom come to the table with different cultures.

Traditionalist practitioners who see the future of diplomacy as not being significantly affected by changes in their environment or in what is expected from them are in for a rude shock. The conduct of diplomacy is changing. Equally, those who believe that diplomacy is outmoded by the new technology and agenda will be surprised, indeed some may even be disappointed, by the capacity of diplomats to adapt, albeit more slowly than might be desired.

Diplomacy will survive the current period of change as it has previously survived other periods of change. Expertise will be developed in new areas. Diplomacy is far from being outmoded and, in fact, may be more necessary than ever since the management of global issues in an era of growing interdependence demands innovative governance. Governance, whether at the global, regional, or subregional level, is an area in which diplomats have considerable expertise. The golden age of diplomacy may thus be ahead, not in the past.

Portents of Change

The harbingers of change are visible. The priority given by the United States Institute of Peace to "virtual diplomacy" is one.³ Virtual diplomacy can be said to mean the conduct of what in the past has been regarded as classical diplomacy but that is now an activity being practiced in a different way both because of changes in technology and because it is being practiced by a broader range of people, including many who are not professional diplomats. The Institute is now putting virtual diplomacy explicitly in a broader context of "the changing nature of diplomacy," making clear that it is not simply the technology that is changing. The nature of diplomacy is changing. The Institute remains grounded in conflict management, but managing the sources of conflict, the types of conflict, and the participants in conflict are all changing.

The recently published study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), *Reinventing Diplomacy in the Information Age*, is another portent, although it focuses more on public diplomacy than on other aspects.⁴ It does, interestingly, address directly areas in which significant changes should be made in the U.S. State Department to respond to a modified environment.

The attention paid to the impact of information technology on diplomacy by the Diplomatic Academy of the University of Westminster in its practically oriented master's program is a third portent.⁵ More examples could be cited, such as, the work of the Henry Stimson Center in its project on "The Advocacy of U.S. Interests Abroad."⁶

The Force of Technology

The rapid pace of technological change has, in fact, altered the concept of what we consider information. Peter Drucker, writing in *Forbes*, has said, "So far, for fifty years, the information revolution has centered on data— their collection, storage, transmission, analysis and presentation... . The next revolution asks, what is the meaning of information, and what is its purpose? And this is leading rapidly to redefining the tasks to be done with the help of information, and with it, to redefining the institutions that do these tasks."⁷

Changes in information, communications, and transportation are not new. New technologies have enabled us to send information or traverse great distances in an ever-decreasing amount of time. The impact on diplomacy of the telegraph was major. Instructions could be sent from headquarters and reports received from embassies by cable in a matter of minutes. This marked an enormous change from the use of steamships and trains, themselves modern replacements of sailing ships and horse drawn carriages. The arrival of the telephone forever altered diplomacy, both within governments in the relationship between the foreign ministry and posts abroad as well as between leaders of different countries. It permitted direct voice communication, albeit insecure in its early days. Moreover, this permitted officials in, say, agricultural ministries of different countries to speak directly, even if "unofficially," challenging the prerogatives of those charged with "managing" foreign relations. Radio and then television brought both events and, more generally, information from around the world into the living rooms of citizens, first in the wealthier parts of the world and then more globally.

Air travel made as big an impact on the conduct of diplomacy. Not only can diplomats travel more easily, so can government personnel from capitals. Government leaders as well as foreign and other ministers now travel and meet directly with their counterparts more and more frequently. Leaders have come to know each other personally and have even become friends. Some, if not most, prefer being "hands on," not relying on subordinates. This development has served to undercut the role of diplomats in the field. Moreover, governments today often send functional specialists to meet counterparts in other countries, bypassing the involvement of diplomats. These events have produced a change in the role of diplomats posted in missions abroad. The management of foreign relations, once the unchallenged and exclusive purview of diplomats and foreign ministries, has adapted to these changes.

Former President George Bush has recently written about his personal relationship with Former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. It was "a good example of the value to me of personal relationships with foreign leaders.... He was a good asset, both as a friend and as a source of policy advice But even when we had our differences over policy, our personal relationship helped us talk about them frankly, and allowed us to try to solve them privately, without public posturing."⁸ Bush also describes how he used Mulroney to pass messages to third country leaders.

The "revolution" of the late 1990s in information and communications technology has produced what some have called virtual diplomacy. This development has been based on the proliferation of networked computers capable of passing information at an increasingly rapid pace. Networks can be either private, with limited access, or public, such as the Internet. It is predicted that the number of computers linked by the Internet will go from 100 million at present to 1 billion by 2005. The availability of cheap bandwidth, the pipe through which information flows, will increase substantially, permitting developments such as streaming or continuous real-time, high-quality video. With the increase in the number of satellites and the possibility of wireless access, the dependency on telephone lines and cable, installed originally for television, will disappear. The Iridium system is the first to be on the market.

The result of this technological change is that everybody who is online has access to vast amounts of information, both from restricted access sources for some and from open sources for everyone. Indeed, problems have arisen because of too much information and the sometimes-dubious quality of information.⁹ This in turn has spawned the need for high-quality filters, be they human or software based. Restricting access to information, a practice regrettably used in the past as a way of enhancing one's power in an organization, is now a way of life only for those operating in the rarefied world of intelligence. The information revolution is a great leveler in institutions. Unless barriers are installed, anybody who is on line can get access to an enormous amount of information. "Empowerment" has now technically been made possible.

A few years ago the Japanese Embassy in Lima was seized by guerillas belonging to the Tupac Amaru or MRTA. The evening of the attack and early the next morning, officials in the Canadian Embassy tried in vain to speak to someone in the Peruvian Foreign Ministry, the Interior Ministry, or the police, trying to find out more information than that provided through the media, both local and by the omnipresent CNN. While subordinate officials in Ottawa and Lima tried without success to make contact, the Canadian deputy minister of foreign affairs went to the basement of his home, logged onto the Internet, did a search, and in less than a minute had downloaded the MRTA manifesto. Within hours, the story of what had happened raced through the Pearson Building, the headquarters of the ministry. Suddenly, skeptics of the Internet started doing searches "just in case" the deputy had already done so.¹⁰ The culture changes; governments no longer know first through "official channels," or even know best.

Diplomacy in a World of Mutual Dependence, Globalization, and Fragmentation

The information revolution has fostered a sense of mutual sensitivity and vulnerability. Television displays to people what is occurring around the world or, at least, someone's version of it. Selectivity may be a bigger issue than objectivity, since there is so much more information available. Telephones and faxes enable people to exchange views about what is happening and discuss how to respond. Networked computers allow people to plan concerted action at an entirely different level of effectiveness and efficiency. This is as true throughout the "wired world" as well, of course, as within and between governments and civil society.

In work done a decade ago in Canada's International Development Research Centre, Ivan Head and Jorge Nef observed that there is now a reality of "mutual vulnerability."¹¹ The Rockefeller Brothers Fund has taken this concept of vulnerability further and advocated the need for a commitment to social stewardship.¹² Religious leaders are finding parallel references in the Bible and in the teachings of other religions.¹³ The ethics of sustainability parallel an enlightened view of our interests.

There has also been an increase in mutual sensitivity, a sense that even though events may not physically touch someone far away, that person feels affected or even implicated spiritually or emotionally. Citizens in Europe and North America demanded an end to the genocide in Bosnia, eventually pushing their governments to intervene. The reasons were only in part the danger of the conflict spilling over. We see the same process today in Kosovo, although with uncertain results at the time of this writing. In the fall of 1996, there was strong pressure on governments to "do something" to alleviate the developing disaster in the refugee camps of Eastern Zaire. The public had only a vague idea

of what that "something" might be. What is remarkable about this episode is that the arrival and subsequent departure of the international media, led by CNN, determined the willingness or lack thereof to participate in an international intervention. The same "mutual sensitivity" also pushed a number of governments to act to ban antipersonnel land mines.

Managers of global issues are facing two simultaneous yet apparently contradictory processes, those of increasing global interdependence and increasing fragmentation. James Rosenau has correctly described these processes as not contradictory but instead fundamentally linked.¹⁴ Indeed, he has invented a term for it--fraggementation. Technology makes globalization (defined here as growing interconnectedness in the world) possible, indeed inevitable. That reality leads to fragmentation, a human response to what some see as overwhelming and homogenizing pressures that looks for differentiation, distinctive identity, and group expression. Moreover, and very important, globalization is occurring at the same time as increasing stratification in the world, as noted by Erik Petersen of CSIS.¹⁵ This too contributes to fragmentation. Benjamin Barber and Robert Kaplan have both addressed these issues in recent books, although Barber focuses on the cultural dimension and Kaplan focuses on the evidence for fragmentation.¹⁶ Both received a great deal of attention, deservedly so.

The Changing Global Agenda

The implications of the transportation, communications, and information revolution and the growing impact of interdependence can be understood only in the context of the changing agenda of global issues.

The agenda of a diplomat has changed over the past two centuries. The main task of the nineteenth-century European diplomats was to represent their respective states' interests in the maintenance of peace, the process of alliance building, and the conduct of war. During the period in which the Concert of Europe prevailed, diplomats and leaders initially met at regular congresses in order to establish a set of rules, norms, and institutions that maintained the European balance of power and minimized the risks of war.¹⁷ The job of the diplomat was dominated by the agenda of traditional national security: state survival, the pursuit of power, and the balance of power. This role continued well into the twentieth century.

Until about thirty years ago, foreign ministries and diplomats maintained a focus on political and security questions. Increasingly, in the past thirty years, foreign ministries and diplomats have turned their attention more and more to economic and trade matters; although, in a number of countries, trade matters (policy and/or promotion) are handled by a separate, and often competing, ministry. This contributed to a process, described by Rosenau, of the breaking down of the distinction between domestic and foreign policy.¹⁸ In recent years the diplomat's job has also changed as national agenda and interests have reflected the ascendance of human security issues and the dilution of traditional national security concerns.

To demonstrate the changing nature and function of diplomacy, one needs only to compare the agenda of the Great Powers at the Concert of Europe Congresses with that of today's G7/8 summits. At Concert Congresses, the Great Powers concerned themselves primarily with the maintenance of peace. While the growth in trade and of global capital flows is on balance highly desirable for global economic development, it has led to serious problems of managing interdependence. For example, money managers move much more capital in an attempt to benefit from fluctuations in exchange rates than they do for investment and trade purposes. The herd mentality of these managers, with the attendant risk of overshooting and instability, is now clear to many. The inadequacy of transparency, supervision, and regulation in emerging markets is now quite widely accepted. It has led to initiatives to improve the "international financial architecture," an area in which the Canadian Minister of Finance, Paul Martin, has in the last few years taken a lead. The increasing importance of global trade and capital flows, underlining as it does our mutual vulnerability, have given rise to the emergence of Economic Summits.

Now the agenda is changing again and, interestingly, this is reflected in the preoccupation of the G8 leaders with a broader global agenda.¹⁹ Indeed, the G7 has turned over most of the international economic coordination issues to their finance ministers, and now the leaders in a G8 configuration concentrate more on issues such as the environment, health, and crime.²⁰ The changed global agenda, now increasingly influenced by human security concerns, has had a fundamental impact on the job of diplomats.

The Ascendance of Human Security and the need for Social Stewardship

There are few if any foreign ministries and diplomats who have spent much time worrying about infectious diseases, and the same is true, although perhaps to a lesser extent, about climate change and organized crime. Yet the summit leaders in the past few years have nonetheless wanted to discuss how to collaborate better to deal with these major issues, not at all satisfied to leave them to existing international machinery and specialists, both of which they thought inadequate to the task.

Human security issues refer to a variety of threats to human well-being, whether from violence or from other nontraditional threats such as environmental degradation, climate change, or transnational causes of the deterioration of human health. With respect to the former, conflict now is much more frequently intra- than interstate.²¹ With respect to the latter, there is a debate as to whether it is analytically helpful or confusing to group so many "threats" together.²² What is clearly important in acknowledging the value of the concept of human security is not to overlook the fact that the classic problems of security have not disappeared, and are unlikely ever to disappear in a world in which the destruction of all weapons of mass destruction, be they nuclear, biological or chemical, is impossible.

Global issues bureaus are now to be found in a number of foreign ministries. Such issues call for global public policy, as Wolfgang Reinicke has pointed out,²³ and for better global governance, the subject of a major international commission headed by Ingvar Carlsson, former prime minister of Sweden, and Sonny Ramphal, former secretary-general of the Commonwealth.²⁴

The global population will grow from 6 to 8 billion people in the next quarter century. More than one-quarter of the world's population today lives in absolute poverty. Their highest priority is economic opportunity, and few political leaders in developed countries, let alone in countries with annual per capita incomes under \$100US, are prepared, for example, to say they will compromise on economic growth to avert the risk of contributing to a future warming of the planet. Energy demand could therefore increase by 50 percent. It is imperative, in deciding how to respond to these needs, that political leaders act with full awareness of the implications for climate change. This means we must significantly reduce fossil fuel emissions from present levels, and certainly not allow them to increase.

The likelihood is that the prominence of climate change as a global issue will increase further in the next few years as it becomes clear that it is not just an environmental issue but one of human security. The International Panel on Climate Change, itself an interesting example of new forms of governance in the world, has predicted that average surface temperature will warm by 1 to 3.5°C in the next quarter century.²⁵ The increase will not be uniform, and the result will be more extremes in weather, already noted as a risk by the insurance industry; rising sea levels, which will cause serious flooding in low-lying places; and an increase in disease. The need for better governance, including a "grand bargain" among the various stakeholders, new policies, new instruments (both domestic and international), and perhaps new or revamped institutions, will become clear. Diplomats know a great deal about governance and how to establish it. They will need to know more about the substance of climate change, including the ways and means to mitigate and adapt, to produce the necessary solutions.

There are 14 million international refugees and 30 million internally displaced persons. Many, perhaps most, of these people have moved because of concerns about human security. There are critical shortages of fresh water ahead. Already it is clear that poor water quality has been a major factor in the rise in infectious diseases, underlying the linkages among many of the issues described as global. There is an uneven distribution of fresh water resources. The willingness to share is not clear. In some areas, consumption of fresh water is more rapid than replacement, with obvious effects on aquifers and water tables. All in all, one-third of the world's population lives in countries suffering from water stress. Climate change is likely to add to the problem. The consequences for human security are clear.

Population growth will occur almost exclusively in already overcrowded cities in the poorer countries of the world. Overpopulation will cause problems of shelter, food, and waste disposal, with implications for health and human security. Breathing dirty air is obviously a danger to human health. The challenge of poor air quality is likely to become even greater in megacities such as Beijing, Delhi, Jakarta, and Mexico City. At the present time, the World Health Organization estimates that almost one and a half billion people breathe substandard air. The annual mortality rate is 500,000.

Declining biodiversity is not just an issue for nature lovers. It is a consequence of population growth and development, and it will be aggravated by climate change. Fifty plant species are becoming extinct every day. By 2050, half the species alive today could be extinct. Loss of habitat is one of the major reasons. The consequences include a serious risk of reduced resiliency for the remaining living organisms. Again,

the implications for human security are obvious, although this issue is too often seen as an environmental rather than a security concern.

Deforestation remains a serious problem. At a time when the capacity to absorb carbon dioxide should not be being decreased, that is precisely what is happening. Fledgling organizations such as the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) need to be encouraged, since they offer opportunities to substitute for cutting down trees with a species that can be harvested after five or six years and which can sequester carbon as it grows.²⁶ INBAR was spawned by the International Development Research Council (IDRC), which remains a leader in helping developing countries to grow their own capacities to do research and make public policy in light of the global agenda.²⁷

Eight hundred million people now suffer from chronic malnutrition. Two hundred million are children. While there is sufficient production globally, there are major local failures, often because of distribution problems. The countries with food security problems are often those with shortages of fresh water and burgeoning populations concentrated in cities with poor air. This compounds the human security problem. It leads to migration pressures and increases the risk of violence. Once again the linkage among the global challenges is clear.

Another global issue that has an important human security dimension is that of transnational organized crime, consisting of a variety of activities including money laundering, trafficking in stolen or illicit goods as well as people, computer crimes, and theft of intellectual property. One leader at the Denver Summit said, "It is clear that crime is globalizing more rapidly than governments' capacity to collaborate to fight it."²⁸ Criminals are also becoming more high-tech. They have learned how to network and to form alliances of convenience. These alliances can run the gamut from cooperation between ethnically based criminal cartels to links between criminal and terrorist groups.

Citizens today see their security jeopardized not only, and probably in most cases not primarily, by the threat of war, whether inter- or even intrastate. There is clearly a need to address a much broader agenda. This is the case not simply because lives are in danger from other threats than bombs and bullets, but because many of the risks described above, if not adequately addressed, could and likely will lead to more classic security threats. The sources of conflict are changing.

Foreign ministries and diplomats therefore need to reinvent themselves. These global issues have not traditionally been in their purview. They should be. Diplomats need to be on top of the substance, not simply relying on the experts, and applying their creative genius and negotiating skills to responding to this new agenda. The environment is changing in other ways, however, beyond the impact of technology and the new agenda.

A More Crowded Stage: Multiple Centers of Power

The one trend that is sure to dominate the next few years, if not decades, is the declining power of the state. The state attained a preeminent status as the primary international actor in the past couple of centuries. Before that, from the late Middle Ages to the Napoleonic era, it was one entity among many, competing with others for loyalty, legitimacy, money, and armies.²⁹ Over the past two centuries, the central state wrested authority from hundreds of duchies and other principalities on its terrain that once fielded armies and collected taxes.

This dominance of the state will not disappear, but it will wane. The balance of power between the state and other elements of society has been shifting for the past quarter century.³⁰ The rise of fluid capital markets, information technology, global media, and the ineffectiveness of government to regulate such activities point to the decline in autonomy and power of the state. Diplomacy is beginning to reflect this change.

The distribution of power in the world is becoming more diffuse. The United States has come out of the Cold War as the only remaining superpower, but that power has clear limits. The dominance of the United States militarily is clear, at least in terms of the traditional (if revolutionary in its means) use of force. The capacity of the United States to exercise dominance economically, in spite of its relative size, has clear limits. Indeed its vulnerability is at least as clear as its dominance. And with respect to the global agenda, it is questionable whether the United States has the will or even the ability to lead in a decisive way.

The end of the Cold War has liberated many countries to pursue independent policies, and there are

more countries on the stage. The membership of the United Nations is pushing 200. There is no reason to believe that the end is near. Although much maligned, the United Nations has been at the forefront of the new global agenda. While its effectiveness offers much scope for improvement, not only is it essentially universal in its membership, its standing is higher with civil society than governments, and civil society is becoming more important.

International organizations, global and regional, are increasing in their importance. The same is true for levels of government below the state level. Indeed, often the global agenda centers on issues that are the constitutional prerogative of subordinate levels. This complicates global governance in a significant way, which is not to say that it is a bad thing.

The increasing importance of multinational corporations is well known. A number rank in economic size with quite large states. Their power is enormous, and it is not clear that they are under anybody's control, including their shareholders.

Less well known is the increasing importance of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). P. J. Simmons has described this phenomenon as an important dimension in understanding the development of multiple centers of power in the world.³¹ There are 15,000 NGOs operating internationally. At the Rio de Janeiro conference in 1992, 30,000 nongovernmental representatives were present.

Jean-Marie Guéhenno has written about the impact of these changes on sovereignty.³² This and other contributions to the debate on the changing role of the state have led the Canadian government, through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, to sponsor research on the implications for the making of foreign policy of the trend to "multiple centers of power," in connection with other research on the implications of globalization.³³ In a separate initiative, the Canadian government is also sponsoring a collaborative process involving practitioners in countries with federal systems, one of the priorities of which is to examine the impact of growing global interdependence on federations. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada is also inviting proposals on the impact of globalization on the Canadian federation, including on the making of foreign policy.³⁴ Suffice it to say that while the role of the state will change, the state will not disappear, and governments are making sure of that. The question is how quickly and how well it will adapt.

Joseph Nye has developed the concept of soft power over the past few years.³⁵ The increasing importance of NGOs is a significant factor in making soft power a possibility and indeed a reality. The power of ideas, activism, and networks is a force with which governments must reckon. Not to do so is to invite a repetition of the "defeat" of the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment. But to understand and to use soft power is to permit initiatives such as the recent efforts led by Canada's foreign minister, Lloyd Axworthy, to ban antipersonnel land mines and to create an international criminal court. Here, like-minded governments worked together with NGOs and used the media to produce a strong political sentiment in favor of change, a change that some of the more powerful traditional powers could not easily deflect. The coalitions that were created were essentially ad hoc, coalitions of "convenience," even though their purposes might be described in rather lofty terms.

Virtual diplomacy is more than the use of new technologies by the usual suspects involved in traditional activities. It involves old and new actors, traditional and nontraditional. Virtual diplomacy is particularly well suited to the new agenda. If foreign ministries and diplomats do not exploit the new technologies, they will be left in the dust. Soft power is not only for governments to use. Others will initiate and network. Diplomacy must adapt, not in a defensive way, but with the confident conviction that the information and communications revolution provides new opportunities.

Virtual Diplomacy and Conflict

Conflict will remain. Its roots may change. Its perpetrators may be different. Its manifestations may alter. But there will be conflict and some will be violent. The means of violence are certainly present in sufficient quantities. Conflict management now goes beyond conflict among states and within states. It must address the broader human security agenda. Citizens are demanding no less. Conflict management also requires more than crisis management. It must address the root causes of conflict, reflecting the need for a "culture of prevention."³⁶ This is easier to advocate than implement.

The United States Institute of Peace has indicated that, as part of its program on the changing nature of diplomacy, it will promote the study of innovative approaches to conflict and diplomacy more generally using information and communications technologies (ICTs). "The mission of the Virtual Diplomacy

initiative is to explore the role of new information and communication technologies in the conduct of international relations, particularly how they affect international conflict management and resolution. The Institute's educational objective is to extract lessons and insights for future training of international affairs specialists, whether in government, international organizations, or the private sector.³⁷ This is admirable and timely, if daunting. The inclusion of humanitarian crises and global relations suggests a willingness to look at the broader range of human security threats, and not just at armed conflict.

The first stage is situational awareness. There is a limit to what television and even newspapers can cover. Resources and space are limited. Viewers and readers reach a saturation point. Here the Internet can play a huge role. The UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs has already created Reliefweb, accessed by 10,000 people around the world daily.³⁸ This is an important means of keeping up to date on the latest reports from crisis locations. It provides a stepping stone for groups to act around the world to put pressure on governments to "do something". It might, one can hope, even provoke people to say that we should not wait until a crisis has broken out and that we must act preventively.

The NGOs, of course, have their own sites, which are regularly accessed. Governments, including aid agencies, are working more closely than ever with NGOs. The Internet can and does to a degree provide a basis for NGOs to coordinate amongst themselves, although this coordination remains a problem area. Reuters provides a service with AlertNet that combines Reuters' stories and releases from relief agencies.³⁹

Organizations that are active in conflict management have also established informative Web sites. They include the Conflict Management Group,⁴⁰ the International Crisis Group,⁴¹ the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy,⁴² and the Carter Center.⁴³ The Conflict Research Consortium at the University of Colorado is now offering on-line training.⁴⁴ Royal Roads University is offering a master's degree program in conflict analysis and management over a two-year period, with two-month-long residencies and distance learning for the remainder.⁴⁵

Conclusions: Forging a New Diplomacy

Foreign ministries and diplomats need to be plugged into this activity. Indeed they should be at the leading edge. The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade has put considerable effort into the use of ICT, including by developing its impressive Web site.⁴⁶ Its uses include trade promotion and consular advice, but it also focuses heavily on initiatives in the human security and peace-building area, including land mines. The information on the Web site is used internally as well as by the public. The cultural change involved should not be underestimated. Guéhenno has said that "the value of organizations will be defined by their openness."⁴⁷ It must be acknowledged that openness has not traditionally been one of the defining characteristics of foreign ministries and diplomats, but times are changing.

Bureaucracies by their nature are control oriented and risk averse. To get the maximum benefit from the ICT revolution demands a loosening of control and a willingness to take some risks. Not all senior managers take easily to the argument that empowerment of lower level officers is a positive development, or even a development to be regarded with equanimity. Nor do all senior officers regard with equanimity their subordinates surfing the Internet and communicating with NGOs and university professors by email and through discussion groups.

There is a great deal of information out there. The trick is to find what one needs and ensure its reliability. This will involve firewalls and filters, but also a redesign of the electronic desktop. This will come as security becomes better developed. It is only a matter of time until one screen (perhaps with more than one central processing unit) contains open-source, classified, and even intelligence information, the latter two being appropriately compartmentalized. The Stimson Center's report, *Equipped for the Future: Managing U.S. Foreign Affairs in the 21st Century* has an admirable table entitled "Technology and Implementing Tools".⁴⁸ The Canadian Foreign Ministry is well down this track, although the commitment has not been made in several areas, such as secure videoconferencing.

Significant changes are in the wind for diplomatic missions abroad. First, they can be much better plugged in to what is happening at home, whether by reading with their computers what is in the news or working on the same electronically based files. Physical location matters a great deal less. Given the high costs of stationing people abroad, this means that diplomats and support staff can focus strictly on what can only, or at least can best, be accomplished abroad. There are significant implications for

management.

This situation changes reporting and providing information in fundamental ways. Officers at headquarters can now read newspapers almost as easily as officers in embassies. Whether it be for trade or cultural promotion purposes, access can be provided to information at embassies, or indeed from embassy Web sites, that should dramatically reduce the demands on the time of people, an expensive resource.

This is just as well, as resource constraints are for many countries reducing staff abroad. Indeed, in the Canadian case, the number of foreign posts has gone up significantly and the number of people abroad has gone down. Greater use of ICTs is the only way to square the circle.

Changing the culture can produce other benefits as well. It is possible to create "virtual embassies," and Canada has done so on several occasions. All that is required is a computer with a modem, together with wire or wireless access. The latter can include a satellite link. Electrical power is also obviously needed. These "embassies" can be located in a hotel room. An issue is, of course, security but certain precautions can be taken, and for many operations high security, while desirable, is not absolutely essential. Much of the physical and human infrastructure associated with embassies can disappear.

It is also possible to create "virtual task forces." This is what Canada did after Prime Minister Chretien volunteered Canada to lead diplomatically and militarily the humanitarian intervention force into eastern Zaire in late 1996. The demands placed on the Foreign Ministry were very large. While some members of the task force were full time, either because of their existing responsibilities or because they had been temporarily assigned, others kept on with much of their normal work and participated electronically, in many cases in locations far from Ottawa. Collaborative software is essential for this to work.

In this period of cost cutting, travel budgets have been hit. More use of ICTs offsets the consequences of such cuts. Travel also takes time and is tiring. From the perspective of senior management, it makes sense to keep it to a minimum. Video conferencing is sometimes another alternative to travel. With more bandwidth, it will be increasingly feasible to make such "virtual meetings" secure. The military in many countries has been doing this for some time.

This is not to say that everything can be done electronically from headquarters. Negotiations are best done face to face, and even video does not work very well unless the parties know each other and the stakes are relatively minor. Nobody has yet figured out how to take a "virtual walk in the woods!"⁴⁹

It has become accepted that the world is changing so rapidly that organizations need to be continuously learning, even reinventing themselves. For a foreign ministry, this presents problems with people strung out around the globe. Travel back to headquarters is costly and disruptive. Distance learning offers an alternative that has yet to be fully exploited, although there is an explosion of course offerings from universities as they adapt to the opportunities and challenges posed by the revolution in information and communications technologies.

Reinventing diplomacy is a virtual necessity. The technology is largely there. Bandwidth is becoming available at lower cost, removing this impediment. The biggest challenges are cultural, overcoming fear and seizing opportunities. One key to success is bringing together users with the "techies" to find out more about what needs to be done and what can be done. Senior diplomats will discover that new arrivals, and even those who may have been around for a while, are eager to get on with it. All this requires leadership from the top. This leadership must be in more than words. It must demonstrate personal commitment and engagement. Less abstractly, top management must be and be seen to be part of the "revolution," at the keyboard surfing, experimenting, even periodically being exasperated (otherwise no one will believe they really are online)!

Endnotes

1. I would like to thank Daniel Wolfish and Jennifer Martin for their research and editing.
2. Chas. W. Freeman, Jr., *The Diplomat's Dictionary*, rev. ed. (United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997).
3. This research area is described at the United States Institute of Peace Web site at .
4. The report is available at <http://www.csis.org/ics/dia/final.html>, together with other material on the impact of information technology, for example on crime, terrorism, and warfare.

5. The Diplomatic Academy is located at <http://www.wmin.ac.uk/DAL/locate.htm>.
6. The project is described at <http://www.stimson.org/ausia/index.html>.
7. Peter F. Drucker, "[The Next Information Revolution](#)" Forbes, August 24, 1998.
8. George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (Knopf, 1998), p. 132.
9. Nik Gowing, "New Challenges and Problems for Information Management in Complex Emergencies: Ominous Lessons from the Great Lakes and Eastern Zaire in late 1996 and early 1997," Conference paper from *Dispatches from Disaster Zones: The Reporting of Humanitarian Emergencies*, Wilton Park, West Sussex, UK May 27--28, 1998.
10. The author was the Internet surfer in question.
11. Ivan Head, *On the Hinge of History: The Mutual Vulnerability of South and North*, (University of Toronto Press, 1991); and Jorge Nef, *Human Security and Mutual Vulnerability: An Exploration into the Global and Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment*, 2nd ed. (International Development and Research Centre, 1999).
12. As defined by Mazur and Sechler, the term and importance of social stewardship can be summarized as follows: "To meet the needs of current and future generations, it is also necessary to act as good steward of natural and human resources. Accordingly, social stewardship requires the careful use of natural resources as well as long-range efforts to improve public health, such as immunization and nutrition programs, basic sanitation, and reproductive health care. It includes efforts to promote greater social stability by fostering democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and more equitable distribution of resources. And it includes investments on human potential, such as public education and micro-credit initiatives." Laurie Ann Mazur and Susan E. Sechler, "[Global Interdependence and The Need for Social Stewardship: Paper No. 1.](#)"
13. Alanna Mitchell, "Mother Nature's Holy Alliance," *The Globe and Mail* (January 5, 1999), p. A1.
14. James Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity* (Princeton University Press, 1990).
15. Presentation given at Davos World Economic Forum in January 1998.
16. Benjamin R. Barber, *McWorld Vs. the Jihad* (Random House, 1995) and Robert D. Kaplan, *The Ends of the Earth: A Journey to the Dawn of The Twenty-first Century* (Random House, 1996).
17. K. J. Holsti, "Governance without Government: Polyarchy in Nineteenth-Century European International Politics," in James Rosenau, *Governance without Government* (Cambridge University Press, 1992) p. 30-57.
18. Rosenau, *Along the Domestic Foreign Frontier: Exploring Governance in a Turbulent World*. (Cambridge University Press, 1997).
19. See, for example, "[The Birmingham Summit: Final Communiqué](#)," G8, The Birmingham Summit, Birmingham, United Kingdom, May 17, 1998
20. Russia does not participate in the economic discussions, much to its regret, since it has been concluded by the other members that Russia is a relatively marginal player in the global economy.
21. Kalevi Holsti, *The State War and The State of War* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), especially chapters 1, 2, and 4.
22. Stephen Walt, "Renaissance of Security Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* Vol. 35, No. 2, 1991.
23. Wolfgang Reinicke, "Global Public Policy," *Foreign Affairs* (Vol. 76, No. 6), November/December 1997, pp. 127-138.
24. [Commission on Global Governance](#), *Our Global Neighbourhood: The Report of the Commission on Global Governance* (Oxford University Press, 1995).
25. See Robert T. Watson, Marufu C. Zinyowera, and Richard H. Moss, editors, [The Regional Impacts of](#)

[Climate Change: An Assessment of Vulnerability](#) (IPCC, 1997), chapter 2.

26. See their Web site at <http://www.inbar.org.cn>.

27. See their Web site at <http://www.idrc.ca>.

28. The author was Prime Minister Chretien's personal representative at the time and heard these words spoken, but is not at liberty to ascribe them to any one leader. Suffice it to note that no one disagreed.

29. Hendrick Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors* (Princeton University Press, 1994).

30. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, *The End of the Nation-State* (Minnesota University Press, 1995).

31. P. J. Simmons, "Learning to Live with NGOs," *Foreign Policy*, No. 112, fall 1998.

32. Guéhenno, *The End of the Nation-State*.

33. "Project on Trends: Multiple Centres of Power," [Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council](#).

34. "[Federalism and Federations](#)," Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

35. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (Basic Books, 1990); Joseph S. Nye, Jr., and William A. Owens, "America's Information Age," *Foreign Affairs*, (March/April 1996), p. 20; Joseph S. Nye, Jr. "In Government We Don't Trust," *Foreign Policy*, Fall 1997, p. 110-111.

36. Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, *Preventing Deadly Conflict*, (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1997), p. 127.

37. [/virtualdiplomacy/index.html](#).

38. [Reliefweb](#).

39. <http://www.alertnet.org/alertnet.nsf/>. See also the news service offered by [OneWorld](#).

40. <http://www.cmgroup.org/>.

41. <http://www.crisisweb.org/>.

42. <http://iqc.apc.org/imtd>.

43. <http://http://www.cartercenter.org/cr.html>.

44. <http://www.colorado.edu/conflict>.

45. <http://www.royalroads.ca/programs/>.

46. <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/>.

47. Guéhenno, *The End of the Nation-State*.

48. <http://www.stimson.org/pubs/ausia/ausr1.pdf>.

49. The reference is to Paul Nitze's famous "walk in the woods" during the Geneva strategic arms limitation negotiations.

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