

Reform of Diplomacy. Toward diplomacy's reform?

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Abstract

*The scientific literature about diplomacy is becoming increasingly extensive globally, although its quality is quite rare at the level required by substantial intellectual criteria. However, we can positively mention that in 2023, a new comprehensive book signed by Paul Webster Hare, Juan Luis Manfredi-Sánchez, and Kenneth Weisbrode as Editors, under the title **The Palgrave Handbook of Diplomatic Reform and Innovation**, appeared in the publishing house Palgrave Macmillan. The book has 758 pages covering 36 chapters as follows:*

Part I Introduction; Diplomacy the Neglected Global Issue: Why Diplomacy Needs to Catch Up with the World; Part II State of Diplomacy; The Closing of the Diplomatic Mind; A Diplomatic Taxonomy for the New World Disorder; Knowledge Diplomacy: A Conceptual Analysis; Why Reforms Are Needed in Bilateral Diplomacy: A Global South Perspective; Part III Politicization of Diplomacy; Diplomats and Politicization; Digital Diplomacy and International Society in the Age of Populism; Withering Ministry of

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Foreign Affairs: Evidence from China; South Africa and its Foreign Alignment and Practice: From Hope to Dashed Expectations; Part IV Reforming Institutions; From Great Expectations to Dwindling Status: Brazilian Diplomacy's Response to Post-Cold War Upheavals; Crisis Prevention and Stabilization Made in Germany: Meeting the Demands of Modern Diplomacy? Integrated Statecraft and Australia's Diplomacy; African Union Reform: Challenges and Opportunities; What Motivates South Korea's Diplomatic Reform and Innovation? The Transformations of French Diplomacy; Part V Digital Revolution and Diplomatic Reform; Digital Diplomacy in the Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic: Lessons and Recommendations; Exploring the Usefulness of Artificial Intelligence for Diplomatic Negotiations: Two Case Studies; Beyond Meeting and Tweeting: The Next Challenges for Innovation in Diplomacy; Disinformation and Diplomacy; Digitalizing South American MFAs: Reform and Resistance ;

Part VI Multilateral Diplomacy and Innovation; Toward a More Credible Multilateralism at the United Nations: A Few Practical Steps; A New Logic of Multilateralism on Demand; About Spheres of Influence; Regional Diplomacy and Its Variations: Change and

Innovation; Why Collective Diplomacy Needs to Embrace Innovation; Innovating International Cooperation for Development: A New Model for Partnerships Between Developed and Middle-Income Countries; The UAE's Innovative Diplomacy: How the Abraham Accords Changed (or Did Not Change) Emirati Foreign Policy; Small States: From Intuitive to Smart Diplomacy; Urban Diplomacy: How Cities Will Leverage Multilateralism; Reforming Global Health Diplomacy in the Wake of COVID-19 ;

The Reform of Humanitarian Diplomacy; Geoeconomic Diplomacy: Reforming the Instrumentalization of Economic Interdependencies and Power; Science Diplomacy with

Diplomatic Relations to Facilitate Common-Interest Building; Climate Diplomacy for a 1.5 Degree World; Global Diplomacy and Multi-stakeholderism: Does the Promise of the 2030 Agenda Hold? Conclusions.

We have enumerated the titles of all the chapters of the book to offer a panoramic view of the whole volume, familiarizing the readers of this article with the integral content of this excellent collective research and underlining the complexity of any serious analysis dedicated to the reform of diplomacy during an era characterized by global vulnerabilities, perplexities, and discontinuities.

But how can diplomacy be reformed when it is experiencing a serious crisis, both at the bilateral and multilateral levels, and how can the crisis of diplomacy itself be defined?

A diplomacy crisis can be defined as a state of significant challenges, breakdowns, or shortcomings in the practice and effectiveness of diplomatic efforts and processes. It refers, in fact, to a situation in which traditional diplomatic approaches and mechanisms cannot adequately address or resolve complex international issues, mainly existing conflicts.

Any attentive observer will see that the international system constantly evolves, with power dynamics, alliances, and emerging issues reshaping the geopolitical landscape. Rapid and significant technological, economic, and political changes present new challenges that traditional diplomatic structures and practices may struggle to adapt to, but without real success.

Moreover, several current global challenges, such as climate change, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and cybersecurity, have become increasingly complex and interconnected. Life shows that these multifaceted issues require

genuine and sustainable diplomatic solutions that go beyond simple traditional state-to-state negotiations and involve a wide range of stakeholders, including non-state actors, multinational corporations, and civil society organizations.

It is a truism that trust is a fundamental element of diplomacy, but practice demonstrates that it can be frequently eroded by factors such as historical conflicts, ideological differences, misinformation, and the perception of biased or unfair diplomatic practices. When trust is undermined or compromised, it becomes harder to establish meaningful dialogue and cooperation between nations, with several consequences seriously hindering diplomatic efforts.

Even a short but objective scrutiny of international life shows that the global surge in populism and nationalism has led to more inward-looking policies encouraging a unilateral focus on national interests over multilateral international cooperation. This trend risks further strain diplomatic relations and affects the ability to find mutually beneficial solutions to shared unprecedented problems.

Diplomatic efforts can frequently reach an impasse, where negotiations stagnate, trust breaks down, or conflicting parties refuse to engage in dialogue or continue it. These deadlocks can lead to heightened tensions, escalations, or even the use of force, further exacerbating the diplomacy crisis.

Under current circumstances, technological advancements, particularly in communication and information dissemination, have positive and negative impacts on diplomacy. While they offer new opportunities for more effortless engagement and dialogue, they also enable disinformation campaigns,

cyberattacks, and the manipulation of public opinion, creating supplementary difficulties for diplomats.

Addressing the diplomacy crisis more practically requires innovative approaches, adaptive strategies, and a strong commitment to multilateralism. It involves strengthening diplomatic institutions, enhancing cross-cultural understanding, promoting permanent dialogue, rebuilding trust, and engaging many stakeholders to collaborate on global issues.

Even when dealing with the immediate consequences of the diplomacy crisis, we have to recognize that the world community of nations is in a state of affairs where traditional diplomatic methods, mechanisms, and processes cannot effectively address and resolve unprecedented global issues and existing or emerging conflicts. It is characterized by a breakdown or inefficiency in diplomatic relations and negotiations, leading to heightened tensions, impasses, and an inability to achieve desired results.

The functioning of the United Nations demonstrates that we are experiencing an erosion of multilateralism. This erosion leads to a decline in cooperation and increased unilateral actions by states, which undermines the effectiveness of diplomatic efforts. This dangerous shift can be seen in many instances where countries prioritize national interests over collective global solutions, resulting in diplomatic stalemates and diminished trust among nations.

History shows that diplomacy traditionally plays a crucial role in resolving conflicts and preventing their escalation into armed conflicts. However, in many cases, diplomacy fails to bring about peaceful resolutions of disputes and

conflicts due to deep-rooted historical, political, and cultural factors that can generate prolonged crises, even violence, and the use of military force.

Dealing with diplomacy's crisis

The book under consideration suggests that addressing the diplomacy crisis requires adapting diplomatic practices to the evolving global landscape, promoting genuine multilateralism and cooperation, fostering open and transparent communication, rebuilding trust, and employing innovative approaches to conflict resolution.

Embracing new diplomatic tools, such as digital diplomacy and track-two diplomacy, and revitalizing international institutions can also help overcome the challenges and difficulties diplomacy faces in the modern era.

Following a more detailed analysis, several key factors contribute to the diplomacy crisis, including the failure of multilateral institutions. The United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and various regional organizations are crucial in facilitating diplomacy and cooperation among nations. However, these institutions have faced intense criticism for their limited effectiveness, bureaucratic hurdles, and inability to adapt to evolving global challenges. This undermines their capacity to serve as effective platforms for diplomatic dialogue and problem-solving processes.

Technological advancements have transformed how people communicate and interact, but they have also presented new complex challenges to diplomacy. The proliferation of social media and digital platforms has amplified public scrutiny, making it harder for diplomats to conduct discreet negotiations.

Additionally, cyberattacks and digital espionage threaten diplomatic communications and sensitive information shared by negotiators. At the same time, disregard for international norms and treaties undermines the credibility and effectiveness of diplomatic efforts. This can result in a temporary breakdown of trust and cooperation among nations, escalating diplomatic crises.

The book under consideration illustrates that the increasing interconnectedness of nations and the complexity of global issues have surpassed the capabilities of traditional diplomatic approaches. Challenges like terrorism, climate change, cyber warfare, and economic interdependence require new and innovative diplomatic strategies.

Diplomatic deadlocks and gridlock while dealing with intractable conflicts, unproductive negotiations, and the inability to reach consensus on critical issues contribute to diplomatic crises. Disputes over territorial claims, ideological differences, or vested interests can hinder diplomatic progress and escalate tensions. All the above factors must be added to the declining public trust that stimulated public skepticism towards traditional diplomatic practices and institutions. Perceptions of diplomacy being opaque, elitist, or disconnected from the concerns of ordinary citizens risk eroding trust and legitimacy. This situation undermines the public support that remains necessary for effective diplomacy, which is strongly affected by polarization and fragmentation.

It is evident that diplomacy operates in a world where countries hold divergent interests, ideologies, and priorities. This makes consensus-building and finding common ground more challenging. Disagreements among major powers often lead to gridlock and hinder collective decision-making.

Diplomatic capacity and adequate resources are conditions sine qua non for success in international relations. The diplomacy crisis is exacerbated by many countries' weak diplomatic capacity and insufficient resources. Limited diplomatic presence, underfunding, and lack of expertise in emerging areas hinder the functioning of effective diplomacy.

The continuous disintegration of diplomatic norms illustrates the necessity of serious reforms in the diplomatic field. Many established standards and protocols guiding diplomatic interactions and negotiations are disregarded or violated by nations or actors, a phenomenon leading to a breakdown in trust and the erosion of diplomatic principles.

A diplomatic crisis can indicate a breakdown of diplomatic relations between nations or the isolation of certain countries from the international community. Diplomatic boycotts, trade wars, or geopolitical tensions can lead to a deterioration in diplomatic engagement and cooperation, hindering the resolution of conflicts or the pursuit of common goals.

There is a consensus view that addressing the diplomacy crisis requires a commitment to strengthening diplomatic channels, fostering open dialogue, rebuilding trust, and promoting cooperative approaches to global challenges. It also involves adapting to evolving geopolitical dynamics, leveraging diplomacy in conjunction with other instruments of statecraft, and upholding the principles of international law and mutual respect among nations.

Finding solutions

All the project's authors that resulted in the book under consideration agree that the practice of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy needs to be readdressed. It should be remembered that this book's intended audience comprises those interested in studying diplomacy in international relations, learning how it affects the solutions that are achieved, and how its failures affect the planet's evolution.

The book hopes that state representatives will recognize that diplomatic procedures should be adjusted to today's circumstances. Many of the authors address how diplomacy needs to catch up with contemporary power distribution and technology.

As Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General, noted, multilateral diplomacy has proved weak and fragmented. In more radical terms, William Burns, former U.S. ambassador to Russia and Deputy Secretary of State, sees the "schizophrenia of an emerging international system with the globalization of the world economy alongside the fragmentation of international politics." (p.12).

According to the reviewed book, what are the cardinal events in recent diplomatic history? It appears that a creative renewal occurred alongside a refinement of multilateral diplomacy primarily in or about Europe: the establishment of what would become the EU as well as NATO; the culmination of Cold War détente with the Helsinki Final Act; the peaceful termination of the Cold War at the Geneva and Reykjavik summits. Other events might be added to the list, like the Bandung Conference in 1955, when the international system became dramatically less Eurocentric. Still, the innovation represented by Bandung was primarily political (or geopolitical) rather than diplomatic per se.

Other events evoked in this volume can be mentioned, like the signing of the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and Consular Relations in the early 1960s, as evidence of a more focused attention on diplomatic practice. The development of multilateral institutions—the European Union and the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe have not supplanted nation-states, but instead “coexist with and in many instances have sustained and strengthened them”. (p.28)

In reality, the success of diplomacy depends on how far diplomats recognize each other’s functions. Raymond P. W. Hare focuses on cultural differences as a significant factor in how diplomacy is conducted. His analysis is concentrated on the prospects of reform of diplomacy. Traditionally, states view the value of diplomacy differently and though they recognize the mutual benefits of diplomatic relations, they attach different priorities to it. Some states may see it as fundamentally just a networking operation, where contacts are developed, but with little incentive to build consensus and lasting peaceful solutions.

Some academic studies have highlighted the areas where reform might be pursued. These studies refer mainly to the erosion of diplomatic norms and to the struggles for diplomacy to find a new identity. “And diplomats may be losing their unique status as communicators and negotiators. Technology has multiplied the capacity of others to seek to engage in the practice”. (pp.6-7)

From a purely practical perspective, a key issue in determining whether there is a real will for diplomacy reform is how contemporary leaders view its potential effectiveness. Do they recognize its shortcomings and the need for collective action? The answer is realistic.” There is indeed evidence that some contemporary leaders do have a sense of diplomatic malaise.”(p.10)

After the COVID-19 pandemic, a principal conclusion of the book under review is that “global health diplomacy reform will require diverse tools and methods since current disruptions and distrust will complicate any single overarching global effort to provide the health protections the world needs”.(p.602)

It should be recognized that the COVID-19 pandemic has included tragic loss of life, erosion of economic well-being, and depleted trust in global leadership and institutions. While COVID-19 is sometimes referred to as a once-in-a-century health event, the book warns that an even more virulent pathogen may be in store for humanity as the interface between humans and animals grows steadily closer in an ever more crowded and climate-stressed world. In this context, it is necessary to underline “the importance of effective health diplomacy reform and illuminate the avenues reform could take. The greatest danger would be if the world repeats past errors and permits urgency on health diplomacy to dissipate as the COVID-19 health crisis recedes. Complacency—not disease—is the greatest threat”.(p.633)

In a lucid approach to all these matters, the suggested improvements are of a practical order. They are inspired by the conviction that “it is high time to break with outdated, repetitive, and unimaginative habits in multilateral diplomacy, and to re-energize UN multilateral diplomacy with a sense of vision, of priority, and of common purpose”.(p.420)

The authors critically remind readers that in many countries, national departments of Foreign Affairs often consider multilateralists to belong to a separate branch, specializing in somewhat abstract issues, operating in a different universe, and relying on distinct networks and codes. So being the case, to reach

its full potential, multilateral diplomacy needs mainstreaming. Breaking traditional silos, and bringing in new ways and new actors, both at home and at the UN, is indispensable. In this regard, it is recognized that the contribution of bilateral diplomats, in their capitals or in the field, “can bring new dynamics to multilateral diplomacy.” Bilateral diplomats “can relay useful information on the perception of the role of the UN in specific countries. They can help develop or fine-tune targeted and convincing arguments for respective partners. They can bring a degree of realism into analyses and expectations”.(p.426)

From a strictly pragmatic point of view, it is reminded that the UN delegates’ daily practice consists of meetings, consultations, discussions, and negotiations, both formal and informal. This permanent exposure to different viewpoints and exchanges with colleagues from many countries is “one of the most enriching experiences, both at the personal and professional level”. There are also many “experts” who specialize, each in their area of work, in the drafting of texts and elaborating compromise formulations. This is, of course, a welcome and necessary skill at the United Nations”.(p.430)

While emerging technologies are considered to have a key role, they represent only a fraction of the spectrum of innovation. In this regard, the UN Secretary-General’s *Our Common Agenda* highlights other issues, such as “strategic foresight and behavioral science, which are seeing new momentum as instruments to advance multilateral diplomacy.” (p.515)

The book’s authors consider that these ideas “would give bilateral and multilateral diplomacy an opportunity for a new start. We hope those who read this book will contribute other ideas for its reform and innovation. All those

interested in the cause of diplomacy will recognize that its benefits cannot be taken for granted". (p.736)

Is a reform of diplomacy possible?

Yes, a diplomacy reform is possible and has been a topic of discussion among scholars, policymakers, and practitioners in recent years. Diplomacy, as the practice of conducting negotiations and managing international relations, has evolved over time to adapt to changing global dynamics. Here are a few areas where reforms in diplomacy have been suggested:

There is a growing recognition that diplomacy needs to be more inclusive, involving a broader range of actors beyond traditional diplomats. This includes engaging civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, businesses, and other stakeholders. Furthermore, diversifying the diplomatic corps by including more women, minorities, and representatives from different backgrounds can bring fresh perspectives and insights.

Nobody can deny that the digital age has transformed communication and connectivity, strongly influencing the practice of diplomacy. Embracing digital tools and platforms can enhance diplomatic efforts, such as using social media for public diplomacy, leveraging data analytics for decision-making, and employing virtual diplomacy to facilitate discussions and negotiations.

It is clear that traditional diplomacy has primarily been conducted by state actors, but contemporary challenges and practices often require collaborative efforts involving multiple stakeholders. In fact, emphasizing multistakeholder diplomacy can enable more effective responses to complex issues such as climate change, cybersecurity, and global health.

It is a platitude to repeat that public opinion and perceptions play an increasingly significant role in international relations. Governments and diplomats have recognized the importance of engaging with the public abroad to promote their countries' values, culture, and policies. Enhancing public diplomacy efforts, including cultural exchanges, educational programs, and media outreach, can foster better understanding and cooperation between nations.

Diplomacy can play a vital role in preventing conflicts and facilitating peaceful resolutions. Strengthening early warning systems, investing in preventive diplomacy, and developing mediation capacities can help address conflicts before they escalate into violence.

Given the pressing global challenges related to climate change and environmental degradation, integrating ecological considerations into diplomatic practices is crucial. This includes promoting international cooperation on climate agreements, sustainable development, and resource management.

These are just a few examples of potential reforms in diplomacy. The specific nature and scope of reforms may vary depending on geopolitical circumstances, evolving challenges, and the priorities of different countries and international organizations. Let's see how the specific proposals for the diplomacy reform as advanced by the book under consideration.

Specific proposals for reforms

First of all, the authors of the reviewed book ask the following question: **What Parts of Diplomacy Need Reform?** To answer this fundamental question, the authors refer to the fact that "The image on this book's cover is the broken

chair in front of The United Nations Palais de Nations in Geneva. This recognizes key arms control agreements achieved by diplomacy, but the incomplete nature of progress. And that diplomacy has fallen short in its aims. Diplomacy needs to be self-critical again.” (pp.11-12)

In this respect, a first needed reform concerns “The P5—The permanent members of the UN Security Council. Their role is pivotal in the UN Charter. Global diplomacy has to contend with its history of failures, procedural disputes, vetoes, and theatrics. But it is there, and it should not be avoided in any discussion about reform”.(p.13)

It is realistically recognized that “Because reform involves long-term processes of change and adaptation, it is difficult to identify a clear point in time for a final evaluation. In addition, the study of institutional reform suffers from a biased sample. Many reform proposals and ideas are discarded within bureaucracies and so never see the light of day.”(p.242)

Concerning the UN reform in general it is appropriate to keep in mind the following warning: “It is clear, however, that without the political will of governments to abide by their obligations under the Charter, no amount of reforms will be able to restore the authority and the legitimacy of the United Nations as a unique instrument for peace, global cooperation, and common solutions”.(p.433)

On the other hand, existing practice suggests that “Multilateral institutions need genuine reform beyond rhetoric, or they will face dissolution”.(p.448)This risk should not be underestimated.

It is quite normal in this book to find appropriate references to the text of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961), which is considered to be

an essential instrument “to identify the diplomatic challenges for humanity to evolve as a globally interconnected civilization, recognizing that 193 nations are parties to this framework agreement from last century after the Second World War. It is cogently reminded that “The words about diplomatic relations that have been negotiated by diplomats carry lessons and wisdom, which are important to preserve, reflecting national interests and in rare cases common interests with survival as the umbrella consideration for humanity across time”.(p.673)

The book ends with a list of specific suggestions about diplomacy reform. We will list them without commenting on their value and about the chances of being implemented, but with the hope that they may stimulate further discussions on this significant topic.

The first suggestion relates to the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and Consular Relations Revision. Neither has been revised since the 1960s. The existing Conventions were negotiated by less than a third of the organization's 193 present UN members. They were also negotiated in the context of the Cold War and bear the imprints of a Western model of diplomacy.

This is certainly true, but the current political atmosphere at the global level is not promising for such a complex codification process. What can be done is to infuse more substance into the deliberations on diplomatic matters under the guidance of the Six (legal) Committee of the UN General Assembly. The following reminder of an item to be considered during the 78th session of the UN General Assembly is self-explanatory: *Consideration of effective measures to enhance*

the protection, security, and safety of diplomatic and consular missions and representatives.

The following proposal is formulated as *Renewing Diplomacy's Vows*. This may be a feasible way of formally reaffirming some of the key principles of the UN Charter, such as respect for sovereignty and the renunciation of the use of force. In the absence of any realistic prospect of renegotiating the UN Charter itself in the near future, states might be asked to rededicate themselves to the framework ideals and commitments of 1945. From an organizational perspective, efforts must be made to revitalize the work of the UN Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization, which meets every year but does not seem to be sufficiently productive in giving tangibility to its own legal mandate.

The suggestions related to "The P5" and the role of the United Nations Security Council deserve special attention. Indeed, the increasing erosion of authority and respect for the UN Security Council's activity and resolutions is a long-standing, complex problem. The longer this goes there is an obvious risk that its members, including some of the P5 themselves, will continue to circumvent and marginalize the UN system.

There is a suggestion to strengthen the points of contact on the *Future Agenda of Diplomacy*. The way of implementing it is not clear and the absence of a coordinating center makes it controversial.

Restructuring of Foreign Ministries is a process going on with debatable success in many countries. It will certainly continue, but for financial reasons the small countries will be at a significant disadvantage, as they cannot expand the

costs required by an increasing number of civil servants, to say nothing about enlarging the national diplomatic corps.

An interesting idea is to establish a prize for diplomacy. It is inspired by the Nobel Peace Prize, which can continue to function based on the same legal criteria. Great diplomats can be awarded this Prize, as it was the case with Dr. Henry Kissinger in 1976. It is helpful to remember that this Prize is awarded for “the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and the holding and promotion of peace congresses.”

A critical suggestion concerns the Geneva Conventions, which “remain the landmark achievements of diplomacy in preventing the world returning to a state of barbarism where wars randomly massacre civilians, and there is little or no international accountability. The humanitarian focus of the Conventions now extends to intra-state conflicts”. While recognizing the role of these international legal instruments in promoting peace diplomacy; it is appropriate to join the authors of the book under review in emphasizing the fact that “ they need reaffirmation and revision”. (pp.732-735)

Conclusion

We will conclude the book review, whose coordinates and contents are mentioned at the beginning of this article, with the most recent references contained in the UN publication *Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9 A New Agenda for Peace*, published in New York in July 2023. They come under the heading of *Diplomacy for peace and say:*” The driving force for a new

multilateralism must be diplomacy. Diplomacy should be a tool not only for reducing the risks of conflict but also for managing the heightened fractures that mark the geopolitical order today and carving out spaces for cooperation for shared interests. Above all else, this demands a commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes. The underutilization of the different tools referred to in Article 33 of the Charter remains one of our greatest collective shortcomings.

The peaceful settlement of disputes does not demand new tools, for those that exist remain relevant, potent, and based on consent. However, they often fall short of their promise when the will of Member States to deploy them is lacking. It is incumbent on all actors to rely on peaceful means as their first line of defence to prevent armed conflict.

Diplomacy must be prioritized by all sides to bridge these growing divides and ensure that unmitigated competition does not trample humanity. Diplomatic engagement is critical among countries that think alike. However, it is crucial for those who disagree. During moments of high geopolitical tension in recent history, from Suez to the Cuban missile crisis, diplomacy saved the world from war or helped find ways to end it. It requires risk-taking, persistence, and creativity. The Black Sea Initiative shows that, even in the most complex of situations, diplomatic engagement and innovative use of multilateral instruments can help find common ground.²

Special attention should be paid to the results of research entitled *Futures for Diplomacy for practical and academic reasons. Integrative Diplomacy in the 21st Century*. This is a report prepared by Brian Hocking, Jan Melissen, Shaun

² See *Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9 A New Agenda for Peace*, United Nations, New York, July 2023, p.11.

Riordan, and Paul Sharp and published in October 2012 by the Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael'.

The last paragraph of the report contains a question and an answer which read as follows: " How will the diplomatic network adapt to a changing diplomatic environment?» Quite radically. Change will come from three directions. First, money – or lack of it – will be a determining factor in the shape of the diplomatic network. This will focus attention on the longstanding debate regarding the relationship between the requirements for access to centers of international activity and the form that presence might assume to achieve it. Large-scale closure of missions is unlikely, but resources will be redeployed. In the EU, for example, bilateral representation will continue to be scaled down. The EEAS may offer some solutions to the resource problem. Second, re-deployment will be reinforced by the need to respond to the emergence of new centers of political and economic power. Third, as missions become platforms for other government departments, tensions over ownership and operation will need careful handling".³ This assessment is lucid and realistic. Diplomacy will survive but in a reformed embodiment.

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) decided by consensus on 8 September 2022 to convene the Summit of the Future held on 22 and 23 September 2024 in New York. The theme of the Summit will be "Summit of the Future: multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow." It is already agreed that the Summit will have a cardinal role to play in reaffirming the Charter of the United

³ See the full text of the report available at https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20121030_research_melissen.pdf

Nations, reinvigorating multilateralism, boosting implementation of existing commitments, deciding on concrete solutions to challenges, and restoring trust among Member States. This might positively impact the future of diplomacy at all levels. We can wait with moderate optimism for the success of this multilateral diplomatic event.