

No. 8

**Asia-Pacific Diplomacies:  
Reading Discontinuity in Late-Modern  
Diplomatic Practice**

**Tan See Seng**

**Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies  
Singapore**

**FEBRUARY 2001**

***With Compliments***

This Working Paper series presents papers in a preliminary form and serves to stimulate comment and discussion. The views expressed are entirely the author's own and not that of the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies.

### *IDSS Working Paper Series*

1. Vietnam-China Relations Since The End of The Cold War (1998)  
*Ang Cheng Guan*
2. Multilateral Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region: Prospects and Possibilities (1999)  
*Desmond Ball*
3. Reordering Asia: “Cooperative Security” or Concert of Powers? (1999)  
*Amitav Acharya*
4. The South China Sea Dispute re-visited (1999)  
*Ang Cheng Guan*
5. Continuity and Change In Malaysian Politics: Assessing the Buildup to the 1999-2000 General Elections (1999)  
*Joseph Liow Chin Yong*
6. ‘Humanitarian Intervention in Kosovo’ as Justified, Executed and Mediated by NATO: Strategic Lessons for Singapore (2000)  
*Kumar Ramakrishna*
7. Taiwan’s Future: Mongolia or Tibet? (2001)  
*Chien-peng (C.P.) Chung*
8. Asia-Pacific Diplomacies: Reading Discontinuity in Late-Modern Diplomatic Practice (2001)  
*Tan See Seng*

*The Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies was established in 1996 to:*

- *Conduct research on security and strategic issues pertinent to Singapore and the region.*
- *Provide general and post-graduate training in strategic studies, defence management, and defence technology.*
- *Promote joint and exchange programmes with other think tanks and organise seminars/conferences on issues salient to the strategic studies and policy communities of the Asia Pacific.*

**ASIA-PACIFIC DIPLOMACIES:**  
**READING DISCONTINUITY IN LATE-MODERN DIPLOMATIC PRACTICE**

**Introduction**

One's ways of rendering life meaningful or intelligible are intimately tied to available representational resources.<sup>1</sup> However, as one writer has observed, 'there is almost always a degree of tension in practices of representation between the available representational resources and the shifting "nature", focus, and speed of the activities to be represented'.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, where diplomatic activities of late-modernity are concerned, one may go so far as to say that such activities, in their accelerating, transparent, and highly-mediated forms, invariably exceed the representational capabilities of orthodox theories of diplomacy and international relations. Stated differently, the heterological 'nature' of international diplomatic activity — 'diplomacies', if you will — resists even the most systematic and

---

<sup>1</sup> The use of 'representational' and its terminological variants in this paper is deliberate. Jonathan Culler has argued that the disposition of philosophy is representational: 'Reality is the presence behind representations, what accurate representations are representations of, and philosophy is above all a theory of representation'. Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 152. Orthodox diplomatic and IR discourses share a similar disposition towards representation, or what IR writer David Campbell has called 'epistemic realism': the task of analysis is to represent, as accurately and objectively as possible, the reality of international life 'out there'. See David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States' Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press, 1992). My understanding of representation is somewhat different in that I want to focus on the *productive* or constructive aspect of practices of representation. In this crucial respect, all discourses are productive of reality insofar as we acknowledge the ineluctable debt which all claims regarding the 'visible facticity' of international life — including mine — owe to language and interpretation. As one writer puts it, one can focus 'on *language* as the starting-point for a new kind of thought on politics and the subject [seeks] a new understanding of history as *text*; and of writing (*écriture*) as *production*, not representation'. Toril Moi, 'Introduction', in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 4. Significantly, such a view does not deny the existence of truth, justice, etc., much less that of material reality. What I hope to show below is the double-sidedness of modern diplomacy. On the one hand, in terms of what it says, it is above all a work of representation. On the other hand, what it *does* — hence a *practice* of representation — exceeds the limitations of representation by way of its continuous deployment of practices that variously accommodate and marginalise 'things diplomatic'. Insofar as diplomatic discourse performs — and subsequently conceals or erases its performance of — these sorts of disciplining or boundary-producing practices, one can say that discourse, whether theoretical or praxeological, formal or informal, *produces* rather than merely represents reality.

<sup>2</sup> Nevzat Soguk, 'Reflections on the "Orientalized Orientals"', *Alternatives* 18 (1993): 362.

totalising attempts by mainstream diplomatic and International Relations (IR) discourse to fix, reduce, and subject it to a single monological interpretation.<sup>3</sup>

This paper seeks to examine various ‘diplomacies’ practiced in the Asia-Pacific region. Drawing heavily upon the genealogical studies on diplomacy by James Der Derian,<sup>4</sup> it asks the following questions: How is it that modern diplomatic discourses frame diplomatic history in the monological way that they do, even though historical evidence hints, at times acutely, at the ambiguous, contradictory and diverse state of diplomacy? How is it possible that orthodox theories of diplomacy<sup>5</sup> can read diplomatic history in the reductionistic terms of a fixed teleology when activities conventionally viewed as irrelevant or inimical to diplomacy have, in significant ways, *facilitated* the diplomatic enterprise? If, as Harold Nicolson has argued, the so-called essence of diplomacy is ‘common sense’,<sup>6</sup> then one — to the extent that one acknowledges the limits of one’s own representational capabilities — can also speak of ‘forces which stand outside the pale of modern “common sense” ’ that play an integral part in the ongoing formation and preservation of modern diplomacy.<sup>7</sup> One can

---

<sup>3</sup> Recent readings, say, of the influential work of American diplomatist and diplomat extraordinaire, George F. Kennan, illustrate how Kennan’s monological construction of the Soviet ‘other’ provided the grounds upon which a variety of forms of Cold War logic stood. See, Campbell, *Writing Security*; Jim George, *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1994); Bradley S. Klein, *Strategic Studies and World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Charles Nathanson, ‘The Social Construction of the Soviet Threat: A Study in the Politics of Representation’, *Alternatives* 13 (1988): 443-83.

<sup>4</sup> James Der Derian, *On Diplomacy: A Genealogy of Western Estrangement* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), and, to a lesser extent, *Antidiplomacy: Spies, Terror, Speed, and War* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> For example, the works of diplomatic and IR writers such as Adam Watson, Martin Wight, Harold Nicolson, Gordon A. Craig, Elmer Plischke, and, of course, Ernest Satow. I am less concerned with their specific theories as I am with their more-or-less similar way of *framing* and defining the questions and parameters of what ‘properly’ constitutes as diplomacy; in short, their presuppositions regarding the ‘nature’ of diplomacy.

<sup>6</sup> Nicolson writes, ‘it is not religion which has been the main formative influence in diplomatic theory: it is common sense’. Harold Nicolson, *Diplomacy*, 3rd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 24.

speak of historical-structural discontinuities, of spatial and temporal disjunctions, that are pivotal to diplomatic *practice*, but which are almost always excluded from diplomatic *historiography*. In other words, by probing the ambiguities and contradictions of late-modern diplomacy, by highlighting the ever-present tensions in and complexities of diplomatic activities, one discovers that the enduring story of diplomacy has been, and is being, defined more by the demands of a hyper-statist reading of diplomacy and less by its actual day-to-day practices. Historical discontinuities and dislocations crucial to the emergence and ongoing exercise of modern diplomacy are conveniently ‘forgotten’ in the political struggle to define and fix the meaning of diplomacy. As Maurice Keens-Soper once conceded, it may ‘be more accurate to say that diplomacy is partly defined by the invasions and distortions which permanently threaten its purposes’.<sup>8</sup>

This, assuredly, is not an attempt to debunk orthodox renditions of diplomatic history. Nor is it to imply that orthodox contributions on ‘nongovernmental’ — or in contemporary Asia-Pacific argot, ‘track two’ — diplomacy offer no important insights for diplomatic and IR theory and practice.<sup>9</sup> Rather, it is to observe that both traditional diplomatic writings and the burgeoning literature on Asia-Pacific nongovernmental diplomacy share the common propensity to frame the overall history of modern diplomacy in terms of continuous rather than discontinuous change.<sup>10</sup> In so doing, a certain discursive

---

<sup>7</sup> Der Derian, *On Diplomacy*, 80.

<sup>8</sup> Maurice Keens-Soper, ‘The Liberal Disposition of Diplomacy’, *International Relations* V (1973): 913.

<sup>9</sup> See, Carolina G. Hernandez, *Track Two Diplomacy, Philippine Foreign Policy, and Regional Politics* (Manila: University of the Philippines Press, 1994); Lawrence T. Woods, *Asia-Pacific Diplomacy: Nongovernmental Organizations and International Relations* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> Admittedly, ‘continuous’ and ‘discontinuous’ are not the most apropos terms because of the kinds of problems that their usage brings, but they are employed here in keeping consistent with Der Derian’s

continuity is ensured wherein historicity or temporality — as in the case of IR writings that employ the anarchy problematique as a fundamental supposition — is understood as cyclical, marked by the ‘recurrence and repetition’ of war, diplomacy, and a general struggle for survival. In this sense, the most common ideas regarding diplomacy remain, in Robert Cox’s words:

the notions that people are organised and commanded by states which have authority over defined territories; that states relate to one another through diplomatic agents; that certain rules apply for the protection of diplomatic agents as being in the common interests of all states; and that certain kinds of behaviour are to be expected when conflicts arise between states, such as negotiation, confrontation, or war.<sup>11</sup>

But there is more. The fixing of international time as cyclical, juxtaposed against the fixing of domestic time as linear and progressive, is made possible through a corresponding division of geopolitical space into multiple sovereign states, which serve as temporal containers of domestic time. Conventional diplomatic and IR discourses memorialise states

---

terminology. By their use I do not mean to suggest that diplomatic history is thereby void of all mention of historical disjunctures. Nor am I implying, by my use of ‘discontinuous’ in this text, that history progresses in a relatively stable, continuous fashion only to experience, on occasion, radical or sharp breaks to an otherwise fixed pattern of development. When read monologically and teleologically, the complexities and contradictions that characterise historical change are either included, excluded, or reconfigured to the extent that historians narrate history in terms of different ‘eras’, ‘periods’, ‘stages’ or ‘forms’. In other words, a highly unsatisfactory accommodation at best precisely because it continues to visit violence upon historical diversity, making it fit the narrow contours of diplomatic ‘history’. As Richard Ashley has noted of this common *d*ehistorising of history: ‘Where historical change evidently defies such straightforward reduction to some timeless, universally recognized textual elements, a narrative becomes more complex. It seeks to accommodate diversity and change by rendering history in terms of a variety of distinct periods or forms — Auguste Comte’s “stages of development”, Walt Rostow’s “stages of growth”, Karl Marx’s historical “modes of production”, and “long-cycle” theorists’ historical “phases” provide good examples — each distinguished from others by virtue of the supposed homogeneity and continuity of meaning within a time or place and the supposedly sharp or even revolutionary discontinuities of meaning across times and places. At the same time, a narrative reasserts closure by imposing a central ordering principle whose categories and standards of interpretation are taken to express the essential and timeless truth integrating all of the historical times and places among which it discriminates. It constructs a story in which all time, all space, all difference, and all discontinuity are cast as part of a universal project in which the ordering principle is itself redeemed as necessarily, timelessly, and universally true’. Richard K. Ashley, ‘Living on Border Lines: Man, Poststructuralism, and War’, in *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, eds. James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (New York: Lexington, 1989), 263-4.

<sup>11</sup> Robert W. Cox, ‘Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory’, in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 218.

as ordered, progressive and bounded communities in need of constant vigilance against threats and dangers lurking beyond their borders. A monological reading of modern diplomacy is therefore linked inextricably to how we think about, how we organise, space and time.<sup>12</sup> These spatial and temporal strategies cast modern diplomatic history as a teleological narrative: the notion that we have arrived or will soon arrive, after a long and at times perilous journey, at the highest form of diplomacy for negotiating the chancy terrain of international anarchy.

Nevertheless, this Enlightenment-inspired notion of diplomacy as the unequivocal triumph of common sense is complicated when one considers the clash between the common sense, say, of Thomas Paine and the French authors of the *Rights of Man*, and that of Edmund Burke and other late feudal apologists for the ancien regime.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the modern valorisation of diplomatic civility — so crucial for Grotius with the rise of the Westphalian state system — seems remarkably odd in the light, say, of Molière’s observation that civility was not particularly endemic among the emerging French bourgeoisie (presumably the vanguard of the Enlightenment), given that diplomatic niceties were more the province of the courtier class of Europe in the late Middle Ages.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> This is not to imply that modern conceptions of social space and time are therefore not ‘real’. Simply put, in post-Enlightenment thought there is the very powerful sense that such elements can and should be administered. As a social scientific child of just this sort of logic that strives (but never quite succeeding) to absolutise and universalise, orthodox diplomatic and IR theory’s conception of the spatial and temporal may be described, in Althusser’s words, as: ‘Spaces without places; time without duration’. Louis Althusser, *Montesquieu, Rousseau, Marx* (London: Verso, 1972), 78.

<sup>13</sup> Der Derian, *On Diplomacy*, 88-9.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

As Meinecke has remarked concerning the inextricable connection between modern diplomacy and the state:

It was the diplomat, sending in his reports, who was the acknowledged discoverer of the interests of states... [H]e found himself compelled to try and bring events, plans, and the possibilities at any particular time, over one common denominator. So it is that the beginnings of the new doctrine [i.e., *raison d'état*] reach back to the beginnings of modern diplomacy — in what was for it the classic period of Machiavelli.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, if *raison d'état*, again à la Meinecke, concerns the 'path and the goal for the state to reach its highest existence',<sup>16</sup> then diplomacy, as a practice of representation, is the never-ending task of re-presenting the state into effect.<sup>17</sup> In other words, not only does the diplomat 'discover' state interests, he is also a practitioner of statecraft in the less understood sense of the defining of state identity by incessantly engaging in representational or productional practices, by doing the endless work of 'crafting' the state.<sup>18</sup> As a discursive practice in (uncoordinated) alliance with material and institutional forces, diplomacy thereby serves to fix and instantiate the sovereign state as the foundational genera of international life — whose naturalisation and reification, nevertheless, face mounting resistance in 'the shifting nature, focus, and speed' of late-modernity. It is precisely this tension between

---

<sup>15</sup> Friedrich Meinecke, *Machiavellianism: The Doctrine of Raison D'état and Its Place in Modern History*, trans. D. Scott (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), 148-9.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>17</sup> States, to be sure, are never 'preestablished' entities; indeed, conventional IR wisdom holds that states are essentially creatures of representation. Moreover, efforts to satisfy the requisites of the ideal state of affairs, purportedly representable by the statist concept, ultimately fail. Nevertheless, many if not most historical instances whereby just such a concept is announced or invoked are often in themselves *effective* to the extent that they affirm the necessity for the indefinite repetition of statements regarding the state. See Richard K. Ashley, 'Lakatos, Sovereignty, and the Statecraft of English-Language International Relations Theory'. A paper presented at the Conference on 'Progress in International Relations Theory: A Collaborative Assessment of Imre Lakatos' Methodology of Scientific Research Programs', Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, 14-16 January 1999.

<sup>18</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security*.



diplomatic practices and the available resources summoned to represent them that makes possible the attention given below to neglected aspects of diplomacy. Such ‘missing’ elements, it is suggested, are marginalised precisely because they are antithetical to traditional diplomacy even as much as they are crucial to its formation and preservation.

The following reading proceeds in three parts. First, it examines key contributions that discuss the rise of nongovernmental diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in the period immediately prior to and following the end of the Cold War. Quite interesting works on nongovernmental diplomacy, particularly Lawrence T. Woods’ 1993 study on international nongovernmental organisations (or INGOs) of the Asia-Pacific as (in his view) diplomatic ‘actors’, implicitly addresses the conceptual limitations of diplomatic theory.<sup>19</sup> However, the proposition of this paper is that the radical implications for diplomatic and IR theory afforded by Woods’ questionings are ultimately left undeveloped, owing to his reversion to a monological, reductionistic reading of diplomacy and international relations and his ontological commitment to the state, notwithstanding a neoliberal penchant for institutions. Next, this paper discusses specific parts of James Der Derian’s ‘interventions’ that provide some conceptual tools for exploring various dynamic and dispersed forces behind the diplomatic enterprise in the Asia-Pacific, forces which define purposes contrary to the traditional teleology of Asia-Pacific diplomacy. Finally, it highlights some historical evidence of just such forces or diplomacies. As one writer has intimated, ‘if we continue to speak the same language to each other, we will reproduce the same story’.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, the

---

<sup>19</sup> Woods, *Asia-Pacific Diplomacy*.

argument below is that an unreflective commitment to the language and foundational categories of diplomatic historiography as it has been traditionally employed will, in effect, reproduce the same teleological story of diplomacy, a story void of any appreciation for a host of activities and practices as elements of diplomacy.

### **Nongovernmental Diplomacy: New Wine, Old Wineskins?**

A brief comment on diplomatic theory in the main before delving into Asia-Pacific nongovernmental diplomacy might be of help. According to modern diplomatic theory, diplomacy refers to the means or processes by which states interact with one another in order to achieve their interests. For example, the eminent diplomatist Ernest Satow defines diplomacy as:

the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the governments of independent states, extending sometimes also to their relations with vassal states; or more briefly still, the conduct of business between states by peaceful means ... skill or address in the conduct of international intercourse and negotiations.<sup>21</sup>

Consider as well the following definition by Plischke:

Diplomacy is the political process by which political entities (generally states) establish and maintain official relations, direct and indirect, with one another, in pursuing their respective goals, objectives, interests, and substantive and procedural policies in the international environment; as a political process it is dynamic, adaptive, and changing, and it constitutes a continuum.<sup>22</sup>

Others, however, view the proliferation of international organisations and other nonstate entities especially in postwar international relations as challenges to the status of the

---

<sup>20</sup> Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 205-6, cited in Cynthia Weber, 'Reading Martin Wight's "Why is There No International Theory?" as History', *Alternatives* 23 (1998): 453.

<sup>21</sup> Ernest Satow, *A Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, ed. Neville Blank, 4th ed. (London: Longmans, Green, 1957), 1-3.

<sup>22</sup> Elmer Plischke, 'The Optimum Scope of Instruction in Diplomacy', in *Instruction in Diplomacy: The Liberal Arts Approach*, ed. Smith Simpson (Philadelphia, PA: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1972), 20.

state as primary actor. For example, as Arnold Wolfers, writing at a time of intense interest within the IR community in European integration and the global reach of multinational corporations, has argued:

When this happens [i.e., nonstate forces become influential], these entities become actors in the international arena and *competitors of the nation-state*. Their ability to operate as international or transnational actors may be traced to the fact that men identify themselves and their interests with corporate bodies other than the nation-state.<sup>23</sup>

Nonetheless, most diplomatic theorists are quick to point out the state-imposed limits of such influence. Responding to the functionalists' claim that the proliferation of nonstate actors in international relations may constitute the 'embryo of a new collective administration of the world's affairs', Adam Watson dismissed the notion as 'in part wishful thinking given restraints presented by state concerns, especially on more controversial issues'.<sup>24</sup> The intention of this paper is not to ascertain whether statist or nonstatist arguments are right, but simply to demonstrate the monological, reductionist quality of representational resources deployed in the service of late-modern diplomacy, the consequences of which do not bode well for our grasp of the richness of international life. Too often, the singular face of orthodox diplomatic theory, not unlike mainstream IR discourse, portrays international relations in a manner that reduces 'a complex and turbulent world', as one IR writer has it, 'to a patterned and rigidly ordered framework of understanding'.<sup>25</sup> Nor is the intention here to imply that most if not all proponents of nongovernmental or track two diplomacy regard the 'withering away' of the state as a

---

<sup>23</sup> Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays in International Politics* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 23.

<sup>24</sup> Adam Watson, *Diplomacy: The Dialogue Between States* (London: Methuen, 1982), 190-4.

<sup>25</sup> George, *Discourses of Global Politics*, xi.

foregone conclusion. Indeed, track two diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region — as practiced by unofficial policy communities such as the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), and especially the Council for Security Cooperation in Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) and the ASEAN<sup>26</sup> Institutes for Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS) — is, for the most part, a conservative enterprise in that it seeks to preserve the status quo view of international life as primarily about states as pre-given international subjects par excellence interacting in an anarchic world.<sup>27</sup>

Nongovernmental diplomacy is neither novel nor unique because ‘it takes place regularly’.<sup>28</sup> In describing the historical European fascination with multilateral activity, Hanns Maull suggests that the perceived need among interested parties for networks and dialogue programs possibly dates back to medieval or absolutist times where mutual understanding between members of different elites was easier, both linguistically and culturally.<sup>29</sup> Maull also notes that such archaic multilateralisation did not necessarily preclude conflict or war between communities.<sup>30</sup> Nongovernmental diplomacy today in the Asia-Pacific acts both in concert and at odds with official diplomacy to mediate the horizontal relations between

---

<sup>26</sup> ASEAN is the acronym for the now ten-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

<sup>27</sup> See Seng Tan, ‘Constituting Asia-Pacific (In)Security: A Radical Constructivist Study in “Track II” Security Dialogues’. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Arizona State University, May 1999.

<sup>28</sup> Gerald Segal, ‘Asia/Pacific Studies in Europe’, in *Studying Asia Pacific Security*, ed. Paul M. Evans (Toronto: Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies, York University Press), 132.

<sup>29</sup> Hanns W. Maull, ‘Call Girls in the Old World: Of Multilateral Think Tanks, Dialogue Programs and Other Promiscuous Activities in and Around Europe’, in Evans, ed., *Studying Asia-Pacific Security*, 275-76.

<sup>30</sup> Understood from the perspective of *alienation*, diplomacy became the means to mediate estranged relations between ecclesial authorities and communities. See the discussions on ‘mytho-diplomacy’ and ‘proto-diplomacy’ in Der Derian, *On Diplomacy*, chapters four and five.

‘sovereign’ political communities. As members of ‘epistemic communities’,<sup>31</sup> unofficial diplomatic agents seek to influence political leaders; they are modern day Machiavellis to their princes. Woods also notes that the growing complexity of technical, social, and environmental issues require that epistemic communities participate to a greater extent in policymaking, thereby further altering diplomatic practices.<sup>32</sup>

Ostensibly, nongovernmental diplomacy provides a venue for ‘thinking the unthinkable’, as an Indonesian analyst has expressed.<sup>33</sup> Members of the ASEAN-ISIS or of CSCAP pride themselves on dealing with issues deemed sensitive or even taboo by governments and consequently excluded from the official diplomatic agenda. This is an equivocal claim at best. On the one hand, it is arguable whether political-security issues are particularly sensitive in the light of the heavily institutionalised — and mostly bilateral — military ties already shared between ASEAN member states. Indeed, that the Association’s

---

<sup>31</sup> Epistemic communities, according to Peter Haas, are primarily ‘networks of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area’. Peter M. Haas, ‘Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination’, *International Organization* 46 (Winter 1992): 3. In the context of the formative years of strategic nuclear expansion in the US, for example, the vast military project and its articulation, ironically, was overseen by *civilians*. Michael McGwire, an insider-critic of the US nuclear program, commented on this significant shift to dependence on civilian experts: ‘In the wake of the First World War, war was seen as too important to be left to the generals, and it was taken over by the politicians. They, having done little better in the Second World War, left the field to the academics’. Cited in Klein, *Strategic Studies and World Order*, 111.

<sup>32</sup> Woods, *Asia-Pacific Diplomacy*, 23-4. As Carolina Hernandez has written: ‘Track two [or nongovernmental] diplomacy refers to the generation and conduct of foreign policy by nonstate actors, including government officials in their private capacity. It includes the participation of scholars, analysts, media, business, people’s sector representatives, and other opinion makers who shape and influence foreign policy and/or actually facilitate the conduct of foreign policy by government officials through various consultations and cooperative activities, networking and policy advocacy. Among the measures of their effectiveness are the extent to which their policy recommendations find their way into official policy, the value attached by government officials to their views and the presence or absence of institutionalized mechanisms for the transmission of their policy advice to official policy makers’. Hernandez, *Track Two Diplomacy*, 6.

<sup>33</sup> CSIS analyst Bantarto Bandoro’s use of Herman Kahn’s famous phrase. Conversely, it is also on the basis of ‘sensitive’ matters as a track two prerogative that a Malaysian senior scholar views the effectiveness of track two diplomacy as essentially ‘limited’. Author interviews, 1996.

very formation had to do with political-security rather than economic reasons (as originally mandated) has never been in doubt except for some sceptics of ASEAN cooperation. On the other hand, the issue of human rights (i.e., civil and political rights and freedoms) for ASEAN governments (and, one suspects, for dominant sectors of civil society as well) clearly *is*; again, track two diplomats evidently took the lead in encouraging a still incipient indigenous, but doubtless ‘government-endorsed’, discourse on the matter.<sup>34</sup>

We turn now in greater detail to Lawrence T. Woods’ study on nongovernmental diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific.<sup>35</sup> Woods has argued that international nongovernmental organisations (INGOs) are to be considered diplomatic actors because they serve the four main diplomatic functions: representation, information, communication, and negotiation.<sup>36</sup> Representation refers to the act of representing or symbolizing one’s nation-state in its relations with other states. This can mean the representation of both the official ‘national’ interests as well as the private interests of individuals and groups in civil society.<sup>37</sup> By information Woods means the generation, collection, analysis, and dissemination of information about the countries or regions to which the diplomat is accredited or issues

---

<sup>34</sup> Author’s 1996 interview with CSIS analyst Clara Joewono. Let me be clear that this does not imply that the ASEAN-ISIS necessarily agrees with other nongovernmental efforts to promote human rights concerns in the region, such as recent NGO conferences on East Timor in Manila and the aborted one in Kuala Lumpur — a point further emphasised below (*Straits Times*, 15 November 1996). Views on this and other issues may differ within the ASEAN-ISIS. Commenting on the effect that democratisation has on foreign policy, a senior member of the ASEAN-ISIS expressed to this author that ‘democracy must be controlled’ — a sentiment not dissimilar to that propounded by Burke in his reflections on the French Revolution and implications thereof for the European order (see below). See Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: Dent, 1967).

<sup>35</sup> Woods, *Asia-Pacific Diplomacy*.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* Woods’ discussion of diplomatic functions synthesises the arguments of diplomatists such as Nicolson, Satow, Watson, and Wight, among others.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

which that diplomat has been tasked to monitor.<sup>38</sup> The diplomatic agent performing this function thus provides a service to her (or, if an institution, its) constituents. Communication is the act of facilitating the exchange of views, positions, and/or policies of states between diplomats — a function often performed by forum organisations.<sup>39</sup> The ASEAN Regional Forum, described by many as a talkshop, more-or-less fulfills the communicative function of diplomacy for its member states. Finally, negotiation refers to the attempt by diplomats to resolve differences which may arise in the course of state-to-state interactions.<sup>40</sup>

Diplomacy has as much to do with the collective preservation of a stable, prosperous regional order as the avoidance of war. Woods notes, correctly, that the dominance of the ‘warrior’ or soldier conception of diplomacy over the ‘shopkeeper’ school has yielded a lopsided view which privileges matters of war, peace, and security over that of commerce as the essential affairs of diplomacy. According to the warrior concept, diplomatic functions such as information and negotiation are deployed to serve high political ends. The collection and reporting of information is hence viewed in ‘intelligence-gathering’ terms, while negotiation is regarded as a zero-sum game and as part of grand strategy, usually presented in uncompromising, nonconciliatory terms.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, the shopkeeper school emphasizes commercial activities which, ironically, have historically provided a big part of the impetus for the formation of the modern diplomatic corps.<sup>42</sup> (Der Derian, for example, has noted

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 19-20.

<sup>39</sup> Robert W. Cox and Harold K. Jacobson, *The Anatomy of Influence: Decision Making in International Organization* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 5-7.

<sup>40</sup> Woods, *Asia-Pacific Diplomacy*, 7.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 19.

that the Treaty of Utrecht, widely interpreted today as the archetypal agreement premised upon balance of power principles, was traditionally regarded by its signatories and their contemporaries as an equally important commercial treaty.<sup>43</sup>) Lending support to this notion, Nicolson noted that the origins of diplomatic service of the Italian city-state of Venice are found in commercial machinery. In the case of the British foreign service, he observed that commercial forays into parts of the Middle East and Asia in the course of colonialism meant as well the marrying of commerce and politics in diplomatic practice.<sup>44</sup> In other words, to disregard the shopkeeping or trading element *within* the diplomatic enterprise — as modern diplomatic and IR theory has seemingly done — in effect constitutes a failure of theory to appreciate the complexities that characterise international life.

What of Wolfers' proposition that nonstate entities, to the extent that they 'become actors', can thus be regarded as competitors of the state?<sup>45</sup> According to Woods, the relationship between INGOs and states is highly complex. Writing about the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), he notes that 'state presence [is] an integral element of the PECC process, thereby strengthening the interaction between academe, the business community, and state apparatuses'.<sup>46</sup> (The same can be said for track two networks for political-security affairs, the ASEAN-ISIS and CSCAP.) Moreover, Woods notes that Asia-Pacific governments (at the time of his work's publication) have begun appointing members of national PECC committees. For him, this does not mean that the state has

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>43</sup> Der Derian, *On Diplomacy*, 70.

<sup>44</sup> Nicolson, *Diplomacy*, 162-3.

<sup>45</sup> Wolfers, *On Discord and Collaboration*, 23.



dominant control over the agenda of track two networks, however. Nor does it mean that state-sponsored networks are endemic only to the Asia-Pacific.<sup>47</sup> Although PECC diplomats have in the past conceded that their nongovernmental economic network — or, for that matter, PECC's security-oriented brethren, CSCAP or ASEAN-ISIS — would cease altogether in some countries were government support to be halted completely, they nonetheless insist, rightly or not, that no government has been able either to manipulate Asia-Pacific INGOs for its own purposes or to achieve foreign policy objectives against the weight of consensus.<sup>48</sup>

Woods' observations regarding the ambiguous and diverse 'nature' of diplomatic practices clearly unsettle some of the most cherished presuppositions of diplomatic and IR theory. At the same time, however, his commitment to those same presuppositions is equally evident from the manner in which he forecloses the theoretical openings prompted by his inquiry. The disparate snapshots taken above of diplomatic theory and (Woods' version of) Asia-Pacific nongovernmental diplomacy draw attention to little appreciated practices of representation/production taking place not only in the porticos of government, embassies and high commissions, and the endless cocktail circuits where diplomats do what they do in the interest of *raison d'état*. One can say that such practices are also the province of 'the hordes of specialists, the "security intellectuals", who formulate policy, study international

---

<sup>46</sup> Woods, *Asia-Pacific Diplomacy*, 150.

<sup>47</sup> For instance, discussing the founding of the Council of Foreign Relations in the US and the Royal Institute of International Affairs in the UK, neoliberal IR scholars Richard Higgott and Diane Stone once noted in 1994 that the leadership of these proto-think tanks quickly learned that their institutes 'function better as *state-based* entities' (reference unavailable).

<sup>48</sup> That track two networks in the Asia Pacific, state support and participation notwithstanding, are to a large extent 'semi-autonomous' is an opinion rather consistent among major track two participants, as I found in

politics, and pontificate on the television screens of an anxious world'.<sup>49</sup> Diplomatic and IR writers who presume to observe, analyse, theorise about and explain the world of modern diplomacy are no exception — a common enough claim these days even in mainstream IR circles.

Moreover, diplomatic theorists correctly speak, as Plischke has done, of diplomacy as a 'dynamic, adaptive, and changing' activity. And as we have seen, Woods has given due recognition in his work to historical elements of modern diplomacy that clearly suggest that the diplomatic enterprise is not just about soldiers and statesmen (i.e., 'macho-diplomacy', to quote Der Derian). However, one gets the sense that the discourse of diplomatic historiography continues unproblematically to frame, via inclusionary and exclusionary practices, the multifarious activities that variously make and shake the diplomatic enterprise as constituting an evolutionary process that is rationally driven by the dictates of common sense. Such a claim, as argued earlier, is troubling if not dubious.<sup>50</sup> Discontinuities that

---

several interviews with leading scholars, analysts, and government officials from the ASEAN region, all of whom are active in nongovernmental diplomacy.

<sup>49</sup> Simon Dalby, 'Security, Modernity, Ecology: The Dilemmas of Post-Cold War Security Discourse', *Alternatives* 17 (1992): 95. Also, see Robin Luckham, 'Of Arms and Culture', *Current Research on Peace and Violence* 7, no. 1 (1984): 1-64. Along similar lines, Roxanne Doty has argued that when foreign policy-making is understood as a discursive activity involving the imposing of meanings and the social constructing of reality, then 'foreign policy-makers' need not be limited to prominent decision-makers or official government institutions, but could conceivably include anonymous members of bureaucracies, research centres, and academic institutions who produce and circulate reports, memorandums, and research papers within policy circles. Roxanne Lynn Doty, 'Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines', *International Studies Quarterly* 37 (1993): 303.

<sup>50</sup> As Richard Bernstein wryly notes of his philosopher colleagues: 'Perhaps, despite the self-understanding of many philosophers that they are the defenders of rational argument, the positions they take are influenced more by social practices, metaphors, matters of temperament, and other nonrational factors than the arguments upon which they place so much emphasis. Perhaps, despite grand claims about clear and distinct ideas, transcendental proofs, conceptual necessities, philosophy never has been and never will be more than a shifting battleground of competing opinions'. Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 15. The same can be said of diplomatists and IR writers who purport, as Robert Keohane has vociferously championed, to conduct 'rationally driven' research — in diametric opposition to those who do 'reflectivist' research — in international relations, and who

distort this neatly drawn teleology are either marginalised by diplomatic and IR discourse or, if accommodated, are recast in order to fit with the statist logics of *raison d'état*.

Consider the following orthodox readings of nongovernmental diplomacy. As Daoed Joesoef, a former director of the Indonesian component of ASEAN-ISIS, once remarked about his institute's role in nongovernmental diplomacy (quoted below at some length):

The CSIS [Centre for Strategic and International Studies] is fully aware of the compartmentalization of the world community into nation states, and the CSIS is convinced that relations between nation states, in order to be sound and healthy, ought to be based on relations between individual citizens. In fact, democracies conduct their foreign relations through two channels. The one channel which is the formal channel is 'state-to-state diplomacy' and our familiarity with this practice requires no further elaboration. The other channel of relationship between nations is an outgrowth of the concept of popular sovereignty applied to foreign affairs. It conducts no negotiations, dispatches no notes, signs no treaties, presents no demarches. It has come to be called 'people-to-people diplomacy' — the direct reaching out of people to speak to other people, quite apart from the formal practice of their governments. In trying to accelerate this people-to-people diplomacy, CSIS has organized its seminars as a forum for dialogue between individuals.<sup>51</sup>

A certain tension, caused by elements in his representational practice that resist total containment or enclosure, is evident in Joesoef's attempt to represent nongovernmental diplomacy. Hence the repetitious deployment and circulation of representational practices — discourses upon discourses — to resist the incessant proliferation of discontinuities in

---

use their own epistemological suppositions — contested by 'reflectivists' — as a basis for evaluating and marginalising 'reflectivist' scholarship. Robert O. Keohane, 'International Institutions: Two Approaches', *International Studies Quarterly* 32 (1988): 379-96. Similarly, the processes — always violent in kind — of inclusion and exclusion of the sorts of day-to-day activities and practices that ostensibly and properly constitutes 'diplomacy' do not happen in an ordered, fair and rational way, moderated (as diplomatists tell us) by common sense. Rather, they occur in much the same way as Bernstein has described the processes of knowledge constitution in the context of the philosophical enterprise — a kind of 'mob psychology', for want of a better term, that is reminiscent of the Kuhnian view of the history of scientific revolutions as captive to various social cum psychological forces. See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). This is not a novel observation, since it goes back as far as Nietzsche, if not farther.

<sup>51</sup> Daoed Joesoef, 'Preface', in *Southeast Asia and the World of Tomorrow* (Jakarta: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 1977), ix-xi.

countless sites of diplomatic activity in order to stabilise and secure meaning. A second illustration, from Maureen Berman and Joseph Johnson, defines unofficial diplomats as ‘private citizens acting alone or attached to nongovernmental organizations [who] become involved *in the conduct of interstate relations* [by having] contact with private citizens or government officials from other countries as well as their own government’.<sup>52</sup> What is evident within the neoliberal orientation of these definitions is an ontological commitment to the state. In this respect, neoliberalism offers a highly limited foundation for reconceptualising diplomatic theory, much less IR theory. Central to this limitation is the abiding disposition in neoliberalism towards the classic levels-of-analysis paradigm which is predominantly state-centric.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, one does not have to dig deep in nongovernmental diplomatic literature to find support for this contention.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Maureen R. Berman and Joseph E. Johnson, *Unofficial Diplomats* (New York: Columbia University, 1977), 3-5, emphasis added.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Latham, ‘Getting Out From Under: Rethinking Security Beyond Liberalism and the Levels-of-Analysis Problem’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 25, no. 1 (1996): 78. This is not to imply that all liberal IR study is therefore state-centric. The levels-of-analysis framework to which both realist and liberal discourses, for better or worse, owe a huge debt is surely that of Waltz’s famous three ‘images’: individual, state and society, international system. See Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959). To be fair, some neoliberal IR theorists have made important modifications to Waltz’s original framework, such as Rosenau’s contribution of ‘multi-centricity’ in addition to state-centricity, and in doing so has provided conceptual space for thinking in terms of ‘subgroupism’ or ‘micronationalism’. James N. Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990). But this in no way nullifies the point I seek to make here regarding the state as sacred cow. Indeed, neoliberal IR theory legitimates if not enhances the metaphysics of state. As Bradley Klein has contended, that which for the most part passed as ‘theory’ among postwar IR scholars — particular but not exclusive to the behavioralists, including neorealists — was largely ‘a collection of totalizing efforts to isolate various levels of analysis and to reduce political dynamics to static hypotheses and predictions’ (Klein, *Strategic Studies and World Order*, 2). Furthermore, in Vasquez’s astute summary of the peace research enterprise, the state emerged time and again as the pivot upon which issues of war and peace turn. See John A. Vasquez, *The Power of Power Politics: A Critique* (London: Frances Pinter, 1983).

<sup>54</sup> For instance, commenting on the appropriation of the neoliberal concept of cooperative security to the Asia-Pacific region, track two diplomat Jim Rolfe writes: ‘Cooperative security approaches acknowledge the *centrality of the state* in security processes and the *primacy of state interests* in the achievement of security’. Jim Rolfe, ‘Preface’, in *Unresolved Futures: Comprehensive Security in the Asia-Pacific*, ed. Jim Rolfe (Wellington: Centre for Strategic Studies, 1995), vii, emphasis added. Similarly, a highly praised collection of essays by several prominent IR scholars specialising in Asia-Pacific security and economic affairs — most of whom are self-professed neoliberals — acknowledges, approvingly so in some cases, the centrality and inviolability of the state

Woods' reading of nongovernmental diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific shares the monological quality and fidelity to statist ontology of the neoliberal perspective.<sup>55</sup> To be sure, his work implicitly points to ambiguities and contradictions that arise between nongovernmental diplomatic activities and representational practices that pivot upon conventional spatial and temporal images of diplomacy and international relations. As such, it moves towards some interesting conceptual and theoretical openings, for diplomatic practices of the kind discussed by Woods are potentially subversive of the meaning of modern diplomacy. In granting the fact that conceptual distinctions between governmental/nongovernmental or state/nonstate can, in situations of symbiotic interdependence, become fuzzy, Woods' reading implicitly suggests that there are circumstances in which the split — so crucial for modern diplomacy — between the inside realm of order and security and the outside realm of anarchy and insecurity can no longer be innocently maintained.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, his ultimate reversion to a static conception of space and time — upon which a hyper-statist reading of international life, whether dressed in realist or neoliberal habiliment, turns — means that those openings remain unexplored. This is not to imply that there are no significant differences between realism and neoliberalism. Rather, it is draw attention to the workings of different and even competing IR discourses in the service of the state in late-modernity wherein, as William E. Connolly has intimated, 'the

---

in all its analyses. See, Andrew Mack and John Ravenhill, eds., *Pacific Cooperation: Building Economic and Security Regimes in the Asia-Pacific Region* (St. Leonard's: Allen and Unwin, 1994).

<sup>55</sup> Woods, *Asia-Pacific Diplomacy*.

<sup>56</sup> In other words, the space of the nation-state becomes 'deterritorialised' in the sense that territory, collective identity, and political community no longer share the same neatly mapped spatial and temporal configurations; that is, they contradict one another. In reaction to such erasures, urgent responses, in the form of practices of representation, that are aimed at 'reterritorialising the state' are summoned forth from the keepers of the *raison d'état* principle — as Meinecke, quoted earlier, has reminded us — whose task is to (re)constitute ever tenuous statist boundaries. Roxanne Lynn Doty, 'Racism, Desire, and the Politics of Immigration', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 28, no. 3 (1999): 587.

nostalgic idealism of territorial democracy fosters the nostalgic realism of international relations and vice versa'.<sup>57</sup>

A genealogical strategy of the kind proposed by James Der Derian allows one to better apprehend the ambiguities and contradictions of diplomacy precisely because it resists domestication by a statist metaphysics.<sup>58</sup> Discontinuities that invade and distort the monological meaning and teleological tale of modern diplomacy are found in the margins and borderlines between domestic and international, between inside and outside, where protean space and time make for difficult administering. Therein the lacunae diplomatic orthodoxy meets its so-called *other* — anti-diplomacy and neo-diplomacy — without which there, paradoxically, can be no diplomacy.

### **Diplomacy, Anti-diplomacy, Neo-diplomacy**

Der Derian's conceptual categories of diplomacy, anti-diplomacy, and neo-diplomacy, this paper suggests, are particularly useful for reading various diplomatic activities that exceed the representational capabilities of modern diplomatic theory.<sup>59</sup> *Diplomacy* follows

---

<sup>57</sup> William E. Connolly, 'Democracy and Territoriality', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 20, no. 3 (1991): 463.

<sup>58</sup> By resistance to domestication I do not mean to imply that Der Derian's genealogical strategy introduced in *On Diplomacy* is hence an emancipated theory, liberated from all games of power. As a perspective on diplomacy it remains, in various ways, associated with the notion of the state even as it refuses committing to a statist ontology.

<sup>59</sup> In *On Diplomacy*, Der Derian introduces six categories of diplomacy which he has identified in his historical review of myriad diplomatic practices: mytho-diplomacy, proto-diplomacy, diplomacy, anti-diplomacy, neo-diplomacy, and techno-diplomacy. I have chosen to highlight only the third, fourth, and fifth of those categories in my discussion. Der Derian's study is an extremely rich, complex genealogy of diplomacy framed within a broader theoretical discussion of the themes of alienation and estrangement. For example, he notes that pre-statist forms of diplomacy, such as mytho-diplomacy and proto-diplomacy, had much to do with mediation on a vertical or hierarchical basis — between gods and men and medieval authorities and the common weal — rather than the horizontal mediations characterized by state-to-state or people-to-people

closely the modern conception of diplomacy as essentially state-to-state relations characterised by order and continuity, ruled by common sense, and which preserve the *raison d'état* principle.<sup>60</sup> *Anti-diplomacy* refers to the vertical or hierarchical relationship between modern state and society.<sup>61</sup> More specifically, it emphasizes the kinds of interactions between government and nongovernmental, or between state and societal, that are anathema to the purposes of modern diplomacy. They include, among others, dissident and resistance movements; in the case of revolutionary France, anti-diplomatic pressures emerged in the form of the bourgeoisie's push for political power. To the extent that horizontal mediations between sovereign statist entities are actually affected by anti-diplomatic forces, one may think of the rise of 'revisionist' regimes whose revolutionary experiences are perceived by other statist communities as threatening the international status quo. In this sense, anti-diplomatic threats may arise in terms of the revolutionary regime's newfound international aggressiveness or the possible 'spill-over' of anti-diplomatic practices to other communities. Finally, *neo-diplomacy* refers to alternative forms of mediation practiced by nontraditional diplomatic agents that may prove either instrumental or detrimental to the purposes of diplomacy.<sup>62</sup> Neo-diplomatic forms, such as 'people-to-people diplomacy', are not necessarily new to the extent that historically they have, in effect, been in existence. That they have attained a greater visibility in recent times, such as the case of nongovernmental

---

diplomacy as we know them today. I am not so much interested in those themes as in the author's reading of the contradictions and dislocations which, in his view, played a significant role in defining diplomacy as is conventionally represented today.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., chapter six.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., chapter seven.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., chapter eight. A possible objection to Der Derian's approach — or, to be exact, my particular reading of Der Derian — is that while it implicitly claims to resist domestication by a statist metaphysics, its categories nevertheless *reinscribe*, if only unintentionally, a view of diplomacy as organised around the very domestic/international distinction germane to statist assumptions. For a similar critique of David Campbell's

diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific, is due to the proliferation of track two networks linking various interested individuals and groups throughout the region.

It is entirely possible that the interplay of incipient diplomatic forms, anti-diplomatic resistances, and compromises between those opposites heralded the arrival of modern diplomacy. Revolutionary France is an interesting historical example of how diplomatic, anti-diplomatic, and neo-diplomatic forms have clashed, reformulated, regressed and stabilised, but remain ever 'at risk' of further transformations. However, quite unlike the teleological story of modern diplomacy, such alternating subversions and consolidations did not 'evolve' in a rational course, guided by — in ways reminiscent of Kant's appeal to universal Reason — a common sense at once heroic, universal and un beholden to history, and eventuating in the current diplomatic form. Understanding common sense as a complex, dynamic product of history, Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci opined that it (common sense)

is not something rigid or immobile but is continually transforming itself, enriching itself with scientific ideas and with philosophical opinions which have entered ordinary life. 'Common sense' is the folklore of philosophy, and is always halfway between folklore properly and the philosophy, science and economics of the specialists.<sup>63</sup>

In their dealings with anti-diplomatic forces, proponents of old-style diplomacy resort to tactics of accommodation and marginalisation that, a la Nietzsche, are of 'lowly origins'.<sup>64</sup> In *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Edmund Burke eloquently inveighed against threats posed by the French Revolution to the diplomatic culture and enterprise shared by

---

critical approach to IR and foreign policy theory, see Mark Laffey, 'Locating identity: performativity, foreign policy and state action', *Review of International Studies* 26 (2000): 429-44.

<sup>63</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 326.

<sup>64</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1956), 288.



the monarchical European powers as well as to the very identity of Britain. Furthermore, in a parliamentary debate with Charles Fox in 1790, Burke waxed in no uncertain terms of the ‘present danger’ that the ‘tyrannical democracy’ of revolutionary France meant for England:

Our present danger from of a people, whose character knows no medium, is, with regard to government, a danger from anarchy; a danger of being led through an admiration of successful fraud and violence, to an imitation of the excesses of an irrational, unprincipled, proscribing, confiscating, plundering, ferocious, bloody, and tyrannical democracy.<sup>65</sup>

That the Revolution was an estrangement from, if not repudiation of, the social composition, crypto-diplomacy, and power politics of the ancien regime meant that the ‘emancipatory’ logic of the Revolution was, in an important sense, anti-diplomatic.<sup>66</sup>

Amid these conflicts there also rose a new diplomatic form — neo-diplomacy — which, in accordance with Enlightenment objectives, aimed to transcend the intrigue, suspicions, and machinations of old-style diplomacy. The diplomatic innovations of

---

<sup>65</sup> Cited in Der Derian, *On Diplomacy*, 174. Der Derian proceeds to remark about Burke’s use of threat discourse: ‘Burke’s indictment of the French revolutionary regime today reads like a report from some member of the Committee on the Present Danger on US Defence-spending’ (*On Diplomacy*, 173-4). However, Burke, it should be noted, was neither a consistent apologist for old-style diplomacy nor an unequivocal defender of monarchical constitutionalism cum imperialism. Frequently defending American colonists — an occasional apologist, as it were, for anti-diplomacy(!) — during the critical years leading up to the War of Independence, his 1775 speech ‘On Reconciliation with America’ earned him the reputation as ‘America’s greatest friend in England’. See Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, no date), 269 fn.

<sup>66</sup> In this respect, the memorialisation of the founding of ‘America’, of the ‘New World’, as in part the repudiation of much of that for which the ‘Old World’ stands suggests that revolutionary America also evinced a form of anti-diplomacy in its fight for independence against the British. Indeed, the memory of anti-diplomacy remains a salient one in the ongoing re-presenting of what America ‘is’ and ‘is not’. For instance, when referring to the alleged deep-seated American distrust of diplomacy and diplomats, Barbara Tuchman wrote that, for many of her fellow Americans, ‘Diplomacy means all the wicked devices of the Old World, spheres of influence, balances of power, secret treaties, triple alliances, and, during the interwar period, appeasement of Fascism’. Barbara Tuchman, ‘If Mao Had Come to Washington: An Essay in Alternatives’, *Foreign Affairs* 51 (1972): 44-64. That such a representation runs counter to the *other* story of American diplomacy — one which has included, on numerous occasions, Old World-type diplomatic practices (e.g., Doty, ‘Foreign Policy as a Social Construction’, 297-320) — suggests that the conventional image of diplomacy is but one among many images, whose ‘orthodoxy’ is not at all natural nor self-evident. Instead, it is sustained, and only tenuously so, by practices of representation, of statecraft, that continually disperse representational resources to various sites and locales to quell resistance and silence opposition. Alternatively, accommodation and co-optation of those forces takes place to the extent that those forces are amenable to a statist logic.

Dumouriez, French foreign minister in 1792, were quite radical even by today's standards: the call for a totally open diplomacy, with all diplomatic correspondence rendered available to the people, including the senior officials of other European powers.<sup>67</sup> According to that logic, diplomatic agents represent all the people, not simply the aristocracy;<sup>68</sup> it constitutes, as it were, a form of people-to-people diplomacy as well as state-to-state diplomacy. The durability of post-Revolution neo-diplomacy was short-lived, however, for the exigencies, logic, and rhetoric of war — culminating in Napoleonic adventurism — rapidly obtruded upon the principles and practice of neo-diplomacy. In other words, the neo-diplomacy of revolutionary France was overwhelmed, more-or-less, by a hyper-statism cum hyper-realism, wherein the 'signs and symbols of realist realpolitik'<sup>69</sup> are circulated in the economy of power and discourse in order to tame the incipient neo-diplomacy. In short, neo-diplomatic forms were domesticated, if not colonised, by old-style diplomacy such that the former came to be deployed in diplomatic discourse as well as other related social discourses — albeit never quite in a totalising way — in the service of *raison d'état*.<sup>70</sup>

As such, one can say that post-Revolution France instituted a form of diplomatic practice suitable for mediating relations with emerging democracies as well as absolutist regimes. From the *nouveau regime* came the beginnings of a diplomatic culture, expressed in

---

<sup>67</sup> Der Derian, *On Diplomacy*, 175-6.

<sup>68</sup> According to Thomas Paine, American statesman and leader Benjamin Franklin was the embodiment of the new diplomacy after the French Revolution: 'He was not the diplomatic of a Court, but of *MAN*'. Cited in F. H. Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 77.

<sup>69</sup> Timothy W. Luke, 'The Discipline of Security Studies and the Codes of Containment: Learning From Kuwait', *Alternatives* 16 (1991): 341.

<sup>70</sup> The concept reached fruition, as Der Derian put it, in the work of Machiavelli, wherein it became the singular value all the Italian city-states shared, i.e., *survival* itself, by the preservation and extension of the power of the prince. Der Derian, *On Diplomacy*, 103.

the ongoing inclusion and exclusion of diplomatic forms both clashing and converging, that invokes the modern disposition towards the organising of space and time along inside/outside divisions, especially the domestic/international divide of inter-*nation*-al diplomatic relations. With the co-optation of the neo-diplomatic form by old-style diplomacy, the alliance between diplomacy and hyper-statism was again stabilised. That such a stabilisation remains tentative and unfinished at best — but which is treated in diplomatic and IR discourse as if all ambiguities have been resolved, all contradictions (in the Hegelian sense) invariably synthesised — is therefore testament to the discursive power of practices of representation to erect and, in turn, erase traces of representational or productional activity. Albert Sorel offers a terse summary of the clash of diplomacies and their ever-precarious consolidation:

Not being able to destroy all the monarchies, she [the post-Revolution French regime] was forced to come to terms with the monarchs. She vanguished her enemies, she pursued them on their own territory, she effected magnificent conquests; but to keep them at peace, it was necessary to treat; to treat it was necessary to negotiate, and to negotiate was to return to custom. The *ancien regime* and the French Revolution compromised not on principles which were irreconcilable but on frontiers which were changeable. There existed only one idea in common on which the old Europe and Republican France could understand each other and come to an agreement: it was *raison d'état*.<sup>71</sup>

In *raison d'état*, then, the Machiavellian strategy for riding the vicissitudes of a crumbling medieval hierarchy comes full circle in the compromise between old Europe and revolutionary France. However, as the preceding discussion has shown, to say that diplomacy ultimately recurs to *raison d'état* is not to imply that the meaning of diplomacy is hence without contestation. After all, the above reading of multiple diplomatic forms

---

conflicting as well as consolidating in the historical context of revolutionary France underscores the protean ‘nature’ of meaning production, of representation. But, in much the same way as has been observed regarding the contested meanings of concepts such security, sovereignty, and balance of power, orthodox diplomatic discourse treats diplomacy as if its contesting interpretations have already been settled.<sup>72</sup> Notwithstanding their occasional concessions to diplomacy as ‘dynamic, adaptive, and changing’, most diplomatic theorists and historians tend to read diplomacy as if its meaning were essentially *un*contested.

### **Asia-Pacific Diplomacies**

Describing the Asia-Pacific region shortly after the Cold War ended, an IR writer wrote:

This task is by no means an easy one. For most of the apocalyptic changes, that have brought the Cold War to an end, are still playing themselves out, causing perhaps greater fluidity and complexity in the politics among nations than any other time since the tumultuous French Revolution and its equally tumultuous Napoleonic aftermath.<sup>73</sup>

The allusion to ‘greater fluidity and complexity’ in international relations, brought about by the abrupt ending of the Cold War, is common enough among IR watchers and is not entirely without justification. In the light of its reference to the ‘tumultuous’ period of the French Revolution and its ‘Napoleonic aftermath’, the above quote implicitly underscores (in a manner unintended by its author) the contemporary Asia-Pacific region as

---

<sup>71</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, 183. Also, see Issac Deutscher, ‘The French Revolution and the Russian Revolution: Some Suggestive Analogies’, *World Politics* IV (1951/2): 369-81.

<sup>72</sup> See R. B. J. Walker, ‘Gender and Critique in the Theory of International Relations’, in *Gendered States*, ed. V. Spike Anderson (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992).

<sup>73</sup> Sukhumbhand Paribatra, ‘Asia-Pacific Regional Security Issues’, in *Conflict Building and Conflict Reduction in the Pacific*, eds. Rohana Mahmood and Rustam A. Sani (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Strategic and International Studies, 1993), 33.

a loosely-knit ensemble of sites upon which diplomatic, anti-diplomatic and neo-diplomatic forces clash, converge, consolidate and crumble. These forces meet in ways that unsettle the monological understanding of modern diplomacy to which orthodox diplomatists, variously accommodating and marginalising, have reduced the heterology of diplomatic activity. That diplomatists and diplomats, in ways similar as well as dissimilar to Burke's efforts to tame the unruly forces of anti-diplomacy and neo-diplomacy, continue to discipline the multifarious diplomacies that 'transgress' the boundaries which ostensibly define the limits of what properly constitutes diplomacy is evident in their security discourses. In short, diplomatic orthodoxy is, *inter alia*, also about 'the forceful delimitation of the spaces in which [diplomatic interpretation] can operate'.<sup>74</sup>

Nevertheless, that one is led to think of the post-Cold War, Asia-Pacific region in the foregoing terms underscores, in a sense, the thrall in which Cold War master narratives have held us. The historical evidence suggests that the Asia-Pacific of the Cold War years, replete with discontinuities, proved just as fluid and complex. In Southeast Asia, for example, post-colonialism unleashed forces of ideology, nationalism and chauvinism that could be construed in anti-diplomatic terms: Communist contumacy during the Malayan Emergency; the belligerence of Sukarno's Confrontation policy; the military threat posed by Vietnamese aggression; the sheer horror of Cambodia's killing fields; and so on. In Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew's administration, after achieving power in 1959, subsequently suppressed its erstwhile allies the Communists out of concern that anti-diplomatic excesses would destabilise the government and severely disrupt the nascent state's fragile diplomatic ties with its larger

---

<sup>74</sup> Michael Dillon, 'Sovereignty and Governmentality: From the Problematics of the "New World Order" to the Ethical Problematic of the World Order', *Alternatives* 20 (1995): 333.

Malay neighbours, Indonesia and Malaysia.<sup>75</sup> Not unlike official responses from around the region to President Suharto of Indonesia's downfall in 1998, ASEAN governments initially greeted the collapse, in 1986, of the Marcos regime and President Corazon Aquino's ascension to power in the Philippines with awkward silence.<sup>76</sup> Just as the less-than-enthusiastic reactions of conservative forces in old Europe towards revolutionary France reflected anxiety over elements whose aims are antithetical to diplomatic conventions, the regional hush in Southeast Asia in reaction to events in Manila (and over a decade later in Jakarta) underscored the concern of the other ASEAN regimes about possible anti- and neo-diplomatic subversions of *raison d'état* in their own backyards.

Malaysia's suppression of the Second Asia-Pacific Conference on East Timor held at Kuala Lumpur in November 1996, ostensibly for having flouted Malaysian laws, also reflects similar anxieties over anti- and neo-diplomatic ebullition. The conference was organized by nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) dedicated to human rights.<sup>77</sup> The Malaysian premier, Mahathir Mohamad, labelled the NGOs' decision to defy the advice of Malaysian

---

<sup>75</sup> See Lee's discussion of these events in his first set of memoirs: Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew* (Singapore: Singapore Press Holdings, Times Editions, 1998).

<sup>76</sup> Hans Indorf, 'People Power: Fallout on ASEAN Neighbours', *Far Eastern Economic Review* (27 March 1986), 32-33. The Philippine case of 1986 has proved extraordinary in its uniqueness vis-a-vis ASEAN modern diplomacy. Indorf suggests that several elements of Marcos' political demise stood out: the startling phenomenon of 'people power', a popular movement predating better known examples in Beijing in 1989 (Tianamen) and across Eastern Europe during the unanticipated collapse of communism; the overt use of religion, the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines, as a political force for regime change; and American intervention in a domestic crisis (*ibid.*). Besides resistance efforts such as the New People's Army, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLFF), and the Reform AFP Movement consisting of disgruntled military personnel, those elements, in the view of neighboring ASEAN regimes, may be perceived as anti-diplomatic in essence to the extent that they affect, if at all, the domestic situations in *their* own countries — not unlike the motivation driving Burke's repudiation of the French Revolution.

<sup>77</sup> In the view of some, the recent proliferation of NGOs specializing in areas such as legal aid, the environment, community development, and social research throughout Southeast Asia is partly the result of perceived failure of many Asian governments in dealing with politically unpalatable but important new issues.

authorities to abort the conference ‘an irresponsible act’. Mahathir explained his government’s subsequent crackdown on the conference in terms that Burke might well have approved: ‘We do not want to do something which will damage our relations with [Indonesia]’; and, ‘[the NGOs had] this meeting in Malaysia purely to make our relations with Indonesia bad’.<sup>78</sup> Beyond the immediate concern of inadvertently condoning or endorsing a social movement and others like it that could potentially subvert the Mahathir government’s legitimacy, the regional stability which Mahathir and his ASEAN colleagues had worked and continue to work assiduously to establish and maintain was, according to diplomatic convention, something that could not be compromised.<sup>79</sup> The much-touted ASEAN norm of ‘noninterference in domestic affairs’<sup>80</sup> is thereby re-presented — in some cases with neighbourly intervention,<sup>81</sup> ironically — and the distortive forces suppressed in both the discursive realm (diplomatic discourse) as well as the extra-discursive realm (the physical activity of crackdown). In another context, the decisions by Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, and Singapore, also in 1996, to manage their island disputes — Ligitan and Sipadan (Malaysia and Indonesia); Pedra Branca (Malaysia and Singapore) — by acceding to the International

---

See, Garry Rodan, Kevin Hewison, and Richard Robison, eds., *The Political Economy of Southeast Asia: An Introduction* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>78</sup> *Strait Times*, 11 and 20 November 1996.

<sup>79</sup> Such regional concern is evident as well in the diplomatic and military assistance some ASEAN states provide to their Association members in dealing with internal resistance movements. The *Far Eastern Economic Review* reported in its 30 May 1996 issue that Indonesian government’s rescue of nine European and Indonesian hostages from the hands of Irian rebels in Irian Jaya — after ‘diplomatic efforts’ by the International Red Cross failed — was made possible in part by Singapore government’s provision of Mazlat Scout pilotless drone planes to locate the hostages. Similarly, the success of Indonesia’s ex-foreign minister, Ali Alatas, and his team in mediating the peaceful cessation of hostilities between Manila and the MNLF led by the former political science professor Nur Misuari in the Mindanao region of the Philippines indicates a greater concern in Jakarta for preserving the regional status quo rather than abetting an Islamic movement’s secessionist effort. Indeed, this is not the first time Jakarta has assisted Manila in dealing with anti-diplomatic forces. Ten years ago, Indonesian President Suharto dispatched his top military commander, General Benny Murdani, to Manila with two aircraft for use against NPA insurgents. *Far Eastern Economic Review* (27 March 1986), 32.

<sup>80</sup> See, for example, the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation.

Court of Justice for third-party arbitration can similarly be interpreted as their way of handling the irrational, discontinuous, and ultimately anti-diplomatic demands of their constituents via recourse to conventional diplomatic measures and, as a track two diplomat underscored, *common sense*.<sup>82</sup>

Nongovernmental diplomatic activity can take on forms that alternatively threaten or bolster the purposes of diplomacy. Although neo-diplomatic forms in the Asia-Pacific do not share all the characteristics of their French predecessor, they present some interesting comparisons, however. Recalling (from above) Daoed Joesoef's words to the effect that track two diplomacy 'conducts no negotiations, dispatches no notes, signs no treaties [and] presents no demarches',<sup>83</sup> that it seeks, on most occasions, to render its research available to the general public — all this suggests certain parallels with the 'open diplomacy' practiced by the post-Revolution, *nouveau regime* in France. Nevertheless, just as France's open diplomacy was domesticated by hyper-statist and hyper-realist practices of representation and, for the most part, co-opted by old-style diplomacy in the service of *raison d'état*, similar disciplinary practices also take place among Asia-Pacific INGOs. As has already been shown, orthodox renditions of nongovernmental diplomacy, whether consciously realist or neoliberal in orientation, are fundamentally state-centric owing to their reductionism and fidelity to a statist ontology. As this paper's reading of Woods' study on INGOs<sup>84</sup> has argued, this is true even of many works that implicitly move towards — but which ultimately

---

<sup>81</sup> Refer to the brief accounts of 'friendly intervention' between ASEAN countries described earlier.

<sup>82</sup> Simon Tay, 'ASEAN, the ARF and Preventive Diplomacy: Principles and Possibilities in International Law'. A paper prepared for the CSCAP Working Group on Confidence and Building Measures in the Asia-Pacific, Singapore, 30-31 October 1996.

<sup>83</sup> Joesoef, 'Preface', ix-xi.



stop well short of — interesting conceptual and theoretical openings that threaten to destabilise the static conception of space and time upon which orthodox diplomatic and IR theories depend.

Where the diplomatic activities of INGOs such as the ASEAN-ISIS and CSCAP are concerned, just this sort of self-surveillance and regulation is evidenced in the ways practices of representation effected by track two diplomats work to accommodate discourse that supports a statist ontology and to marginalise discourse that subverts that ontology.<sup>85</sup> For example, both ASEAN-ISIS and CSCAP are reticent about expanding the security dialogue process to include participation by other NGOs whose primary focus, say, is on the Timor question or other such questions inimical to the diplomatic enterprise.<sup>86</sup> According to an ASEAN-ISIS insider, the option of including certain NGOs has been debated by the grouping and found unacceptable out of concern that the ASEAN-ISIS's 'hard-earned legitimacy' as well as its agenda would be compromised.<sup>87</sup> Evidently, 'thinking the unthinkable' is, in practice, a highly circumscribed exercise. In another context, a track two

---

<sup>84</sup> Woods, *Asia-Pacific Diplomacy*.

<sup>85</sup> The current fad in Asia-Pacific policy circles over 'nontraditional security issues' — economics, environment, gender, cross-border migration, narcotics, etc. — is a good illustration. Not unlike orthodox accounts of nongovernmental diplomacy, the bulk, if not all, of studies on nontraditional issues as taken up by ASEAN-ISIS and CSCAP analysts and their ancillaries centre on *statist* responses to those concerns insofar as they impact the former. For instance, all the papers, except one, submitted at a recent track two security conference in Singapore shared a commitment to a state-centred metaphysics. See paper submissions to the Ford-IDSS Research Program on 'Non-traditional Security Issues in Southeast Asia', volumes 1 and 2, Singapore, 21-22 September 2000.

<sup>86</sup> Several ASEAN-ISIS and CSCAP members, in conversations with this author, expressed concern that expanding the dialogue process would only dilute its viability; more specifically, they argued that limiting the latitude of the process as well as participation is necessary in order to preserve the 'legitimacy' of the track two process.

<sup>87</sup> Author's interview with Malaya Ronas of the Institute for Strategic and Development Studies (ISDS), the Philippine component of ASEAN-ISIS. Ronas also argued that 'pragmatism' is the key to preparing proposals to the meetings with ASEAN senior officials (SOMs). If ideas are viewed by officials as threatening to national interests, they would likely be rejected.

diplomat, commenting on ASEAN's official position on the China-Taiwan issue — which the ASEAN-ISIS appears to accept as well — explained the Association's endorsement of Beijing's 'one-China' policy in the light of *irredentist* (read anti-diplomatic) concerns which most if not all ASEAN countries have had to deal with at one time or another.<sup>88</sup> That the goal of most Asia-Pacific INGOs is to yield 'policy relevant' ideas and proposals is to subordinate anti- or neo-diplomatic initiatives (or the potential for such) to the aims of modern diplomacy and, therefore, to the primacy of the state.

What is evident is the diplomatic compromise to which ASEAN-ISIS and CSCAP seem to have 'resigned' themselves. Paradoxically, as sites for engaging in neo-diplomacy, they exercise the self-regulation of such potentially radical tendencies by implicitly subscribing to what Meinecke has referred to as the 'one common denominator' pivotal to modern diplomacy: *raison d'état*.<sup>89</sup> To be sure, track two intellectuals are not the only voices of diplomatic orthodoxy. Just as monarchists in revolutionary France were able to secure modern diplomacy from the dangers of anti-diplomacy and neo-diplomacy by recourse to hyper-realism — aided, doubtless, by the outbreak of war in Europe — there are equally vigilant practitioners of statecraft in the wider intellectual and policy communities, who, troubled by what they see as the giddy fantasies of dreamers who enthuse idealistically about the 'emerging civil society in the Asia Pacific',<sup>90</sup> or about complex interdependence as the key

---

<sup>88</sup> *Straits Times*, 22 November 1996. Based on views shared by ASEAN-ISIS insiders at an ASEAN-Taiwan track two forum in September 1996, some key ASEAN-ISIS analysts are not particularly pleased with what they perceive as Taiwan's 'deviation' from the one-China policy through its then efforts to reestablish its lost UN membership and apparent thrust for independence (author's interviews).

<sup>89</sup> Meinecke, *Machiavellianism*.

to region-wide stability and peace,<sup>91</sup> have spoken out against the ‘madness’. As one security analyst has rejoined in no uncertain terms:

To say that these suppositions are wide off the mark does not quite capture the sense of my disagreement with those who have had the tendency to glibly and complacently advance them. If anything, the first half of the last decade of the 20th century have given clear indications that power is still very much anchored in the classic notion of the concept, that is, military terms, even if economic strength has grown more significant within our understanding of the power equation.<sup>92</sup>

Other examples abound: an IR writer, reasoning that peace in post-Cold War Europe, relative to East Asia, is more plausible due to ‘the apparent satisfaction of the great powers with the status quo’, notes that in the latter region ‘an ample pool of festering grievances [exists] with more potential for generating conflict than during the Cold War, when bipolarity helped stifle the escalation of parochial disputes’.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, another IR writer has contended that:

While civil war and ethnic strife will continue for some time to smoulder along Europe’s peripheries, in the long run it is Asia that seems more likely to be the cockpit of great power conflict. The half millennium during which Europe was the world’s primary generator of war (as well as wealth and knowledge) is coming to a close. But, for better or worse, Europe’s past could be Asia’s future.<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> See, for example, the various contributions to *Emerging Civil Society in the Asia Pacific Community*, ed. Tadashi Yamamoto (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and Japan Center for International Exchange, 1995).

<sup>91</sup> See especially Hernandez, *Track Two Diplomacy*.

<sup>92</sup> Derek da Cunha, ‘Preface’, in *The Evolving Pacific Power Structure*, ed. Derek da Cunha (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1996), ix-x.

<sup>93</sup> Richard K. Betts, ‘Wealth, Power, and Instability: East Asia and the United States After the Cold War’, *International Security* 18 (1993/4): 64.

<sup>94</sup> Aaron L. Friedberg, ‘Ripe for Rivalry: Prospects for Peace in a Multipolar Asia’, *International Security* 18 (1993/4): 7.

A third writer makes the even more interesting, but hard to sustain, move of grounding a hyper-statist desire — temporarily deferred, in his view, for the sake of commercial enterprise — in ‘certain primordial impulses, like ... a type of domination founded upon classical *raison d'état*, inherent in the human condition will somehow remain dormant as long as the peoples and governments of the Asia-Pacific preoccupy themselves with the business of making money’.<sup>95</sup> By deploying and circulating practices of representation that naturalise and reify a monological and teleological rendition of the state, war and of course diplomacy, these preceding illustrations can be understood as ‘semi-official narratives that authorize and provoke certain sequences of cause and effect, while at the same time preventing counter-narratives from emerging’.<sup>96</sup>

On a more recent note, the writings of Kishore Mahbubani, a prominent Singapore diplomat (and eloquent ‘Asian values’ advocate), also illustrate the workings of representational practices as understood in the terms addressed above.<sup>97</sup> Highlighting the need for governments in the contemporary Asia-Pacific to eschew the high probability of conflict and turbulence in the region — a ‘natural groove of history’, as he puts it<sup>98</sup> —

---

<sup>95</sup> Da Cunha, ‘Preface’, x.

<sup>96</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 324.

<sup>97</sup> The choice of some of the excellent writings of Mahbubani (republished in a 1998 collection) quite possibly the most highly regarded diplomat in Singapore’s Foreign Service, as a textual source for interpretation here is not because I want to single out this particular individual deliberately. See his various essays in Kishore Mahbubani, *Can Asians Think?* (Singapore: Times Books International, 1998). Among the few notable ‘Asian’ contributions to the recent Asian values debate, Mahbubani’s was an early, proverbial ‘voice in the wilderness’ of Asia that dared to defy simplistic Western categorisations. However, to the extent that his remarks can also be considered as a part of orthodox diplomatic and IR discourse, the contention here is that his contributions, among a host of other competing or concurring opinions regarding Asia-Pacific diplomacy, are but an example of representational practices that do what they do — or, in Thucydides’ words, ‘what they must’ — in the service of the state, of *raison d'état*.

Mahbubani identifies what he sees as the fundamental diplomatic question of the moment: 'If the Asia-Pacific is to defy the historical odds and make a smooth transition from one order to another, *a new consensus must soon be forged*'.<sup>99</sup> That is, a new *diplomatic* consensus regarding 'what is to be done' in a region fraught with the tensions and contradictions that pervade and distort the diplomatic enterprise. Mahbubani draws attention to oft-cited regional 'flashpoints' (e.g., the Korean peninsula, the Taiwan straits) and prescribes roles that are (in his view) apropos to major powers in the Asia-Pacific. Mahbubani understandably and wisely refrains from overt commentary on questions of 'internal' subversions and threats in Southeast Asia, lest (this author presumes) he be accused of 'interfering' in the domestic affairs of neighbour nations. Other than an exception or two, his apparent silence on the proliferation of anti-diplomatic forces in the form of ethnic, religious and political resistance movements in Aceh, Chechnya, Hong Kong, Irian Jaya, Kelantan and Timor; or neo-diplomatic pressures from nascent democracies such as Indonesia, Korea, Taiwan (which he discusses, though obviously not in terms of neo-diplomacy); or the anti- and neo-diplomatic actions of INGOs and NGOs that strew the diplomatic landscape of the Asia-Pacific, is deafening. This is not to imply that diplomatic discourse is conspicuously silent about such things. But it is to point out that such issues, as and when they are raised in diplomatic discourse, are almost always problematised in terms of the state — whether in the sense of strengthening or that of subverting the status quo. In both instances, the domesticating effect serves the same purpose: the rationalisation of *raison d'état* via the accommodation of collusive forces and the defeat of subversive forces.

---

<sup>98</sup> Recall Wight's view of international relations as all about the 'recurrence and repetition' of war and diplomacy. Martin Wight, 'Why is There No International Theory?', in *Diplomatic Investigations*, eds. Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), 17-34.

<sup>99</sup> Mahbubani, *Can Asians Think?*, 148, emphasis added.

Hence, the question of forging such a diplomatic consensus is necessarily assumed to be of a *technical*, not political, nature. As several IR writers have shown, the representing of dangers, threats and opportunities as implicitly technical concerns by many of their colleagues — including diplomatists — is a common discursive practice to depoliticise particular issues or entire fields, so as to discourage serious critical reflection on things of fundamental importance.<sup>100</sup> To be sure, nowhere in his comments does Mahbubani explicitly insist that the process of regional consensus building is ‘technical’, much less that it should be depoliticised. Indeed, his eloquent articulation of the enormous stakes at hand for one and all seems to invite, not dissuade, political discussion on regional affairs. However, less than a year after his call to fellow statesmen and others in policy circles to forge consensus, Mahbubani again addresses the issue, this time in the context of the 1996 missile crisis in the Taiwan straits<sup>101</sup>:

We faced a danger then [the missile crisis], but we also saw a new opportunity because it woke up key minds in Washington, DC, Tokyo and Beijing on the importance of preserving the status quo. A new consensus emerged in the region: ‘Let sleeping dogs lie’. This is why we have not had any major geopolitical crisis in East Asia since March 1996, despite phenomenal historical change in our region.<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup> See, Richard K. Ashley, ‘Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematique’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 17, no. 2 (1988): 249-50; ‘The Powers of Anarchy: Theory, Sovereignty, and the Domestication of Global Life’, in *International Theory: Critical Investigations*, ed. James Der Derian (Washington Square, NY: New York University Press, 1995), 98; and, Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 11. For example, in his oft-cited piece on epistemic communities, Peter Haas discusses the role of such communities of experts in highly specialised fields who attend to ‘growing *technical* uncertainties and complexities of problems of global concern’ which have made the task of ‘international policy coordination’ increasingly difficult, and hence ‘necessary’ (Haas, ‘Introduction’, 1, emphasis added). Haas, who identifies himself in that same article as a ‘moderate constructivist’, nevertheless seems oblivious to the fact that he, in deploying what I have called here a practice of representation, has constructed — or, to use Foucault’s term, ‘problematized’ — the matter in such a way as to close off — or at least attempt to close off — any politicising of his particular construction or problematisation.

<sup>101</sup> The first statement appeared initially in an article entitled ‘An Asia-Pacific Consensus’, *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 1997), whereas the comment on the Taiwan missile crisis was made during remarks addressed to the Europe Asia Forum held in Singapore, 21 February 1998. See Mahbubani, *Can Asians Think?*, 138-54.

He further elaborates on the ‘nature’ of that new consensus:

This consensus could rest on three distinct and somewhat unusual pillars. First, the current geopolitical order should be frozen in place. Under present circumstances no better order can be achieved. Second, all key players must develop a common understanding of the region’s constraints and realities. Third, they will need a vision that draws out common elements from the region’s tremendous diversity and so lay the groundwork for a sense of community.<sup>103</sup>

From the above statements, two things are clear. First, in raising the ostensible need to forge a new diplomatic consensus in the contemporary Asia-Pacific, what appears to be an open invitation to discussion, when understood in terms of representational or productional practices of statecraft, can conversely be seen as a move to effect closure of the diplomatic enterprise and its core assumptions to politicisation. It is a move to ‘securitise’<sup>104</sup> or sanitise the statist presuppositions of diplomacy from the sorts of questions which orthodox diplomatic and IR discourses ‘must refuse to ask if they are to affirm their foundations and sustain the limits that define them’.<sup>105</sup> Mahbubani’s disciplining gesture is

---

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 150-1.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>104</sup> In their widely cited book, Buzan, Waever and de Wilde define *securitisation* as the presenting of an issue as an ‘existential threat’ which requires ‘emergency measures’ that justify the use of ‘actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure’. Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 23-4. In much the same way as representing issues as primarily technical in nature, securitisation can also be understood — though clearly not in the way Buzan, Waever and de Wilde understand it or would necessarily want it to be understood — as a practice of representation deployed and circulated in order to ward off questions like, ‘Who defines security?’, ‘Who presumes to speak on behalf of the “community’s” security?’, ‘Whose security is being referred to?’, etc. Just such questions, inter alia, form the research agenda, say, of IR critical scholars concerned about the practices of representation that produced a highly delimited view of national security within Australia’s defence establishment in the 1990s, as exemplified by the unapologetically hyper-realist discourse of Australian security specialist par excellence, Paul Dibb, who coordinated the infamous Dibb Report. See the essays in Graeme Cheesman and Robert Bruce, eds., *Discourses of Danger and Dread Frontiers: Australian Defence and Security Thinking After the Cold War* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996). All of which leads ultimately to the indefinite deferral of questionings which may politicise or denaturalise the ontology of the state.

<sup>105</sup> Ashley, ‘Living on Border Lines’, 259.

effected by way of a discourse implicitly predicated on *raison d'état*: preserve the status quo of hyper-statism; freeze in place the 'current geopolitical order'; adduce a 'vision' of, 'lay the groundwork' for, a 'sense of community' among states<sup>106</sup> — in short, maintain and strengthen the ontological commitment to the state. On the one hand, the vaunted, new diplomatic consensus urged for and which, in ways not entirely clear, suddenly 'emerged' in the aftermath of a missile crisis does not seem to merit the sense of triumphalism that permeates this diplomat's rendition; his message, after all, is an earth-shattering 'do nothing'. On the other hand, it is triumphalist in that it implicitly celebrates the logic of reason-of-state by disseminating it over and over again in diplomatic discourse to discipline those who dare (with apologies to the Bard) let loose the dogs of anti- and neo-diplomacy with terrifying consequences. In the diplomat's own words, 'Let sleeping dogs lie'.

The preceding point already anticipates the second. In Mahbubani's comment vis-à-vis the Taiwan missile crisis, the neo-diplomacy expressed in the Taiwanese quest for independence is tacitly taken to task for its *irrational* rejection of the 'one-China' policy and the international status quo — irrational because it goes against the common sense of modern diplomacy. That Taiwan's neo-diplomatic agenda is the direct consequence of its recent democratisation underscores again the complex relationship between anti-diplomacy, neo-diplomacy, and the domesticating disposition of diplomatic orthodoxy. Hence, the call to 'forge a new consensus' in present-day Asia-Pacific international relations can be understood as an invitation, a summons, to diplomatic agents both official and unofficial to increase their vigilance against the proliferation of diplomatic activities that resist the conceptual (and, even more fundamentally, presuppositional) confines that define and

---



sustain that which all practitioners of statecraft worth their salt know as truly representative of diplomacy. Indeed, Mahbubani's persistent use of 'we' — '*we* faced a danger'; '*we* ... saw a new opportunity'; '*we* have not had any major geopolitical crisis'<sup>107</sup> — is in itself an interesting practice of representation. The proviso 'we' is redolent with the presupposition of homogeneity and 'consensus' among those who make it their vocation and avocation to speak, write and act vis-à-vis Asia-Pacific diplomacy and international relations. 'We' therefore refers not only to members of the diplomatic community who, presumably, already know themselves to be, but also to the unstated assumption purportedly shared within the interpretive community-at-large that the *state* in which 'we' have invested must continually be protected from the most dangerous threat of all: anti-diplomatic and neo-diplomatic activities that refuse to affirm the foundations and secure the limits that render viable a hyper-statist discourse, and which, in doing so, 'expose' the state as an endless, rather unstable effect of practices of representation.

## **Conclusion**

Practices of representation bring meaning and intelligibility to international life. This paper has sought to argue that representational resources — in the form of modern discourses on diplomacy and international relations — privileged by orthodox diplomatic and IR students have fixed, reduced and subjected the heterological 'nature' of international practice in general, and of diplomatic practice in particular, to a single monological meaning. As a universalising effect of representational or productional practices circulated repeatedly in the discursive economy, conventional accounts of diplomacy, in their representational

---

<sup>106</sup> Mahbubani, *Can Asians Think?*, 139.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 150-1.

efficacy, are never actually universal or absolute to the extent that a degree of tension almost always exists between the representational capabilities of diplomatic and IR orthodoxy, on the one hand, and the speed and transparency of multifarious diplomatic activities of late-modernity, on the other. But as James Der Derian's reading of revolutionary France as a spatial and temporal site of clashing and converging forces has shown, a not dissimilar tension existed in then-contemporary discourses to forcefully represent and construct those events in terms of a particular diplomatic reality.<sup>108</sup> Hence, we can say that representational practices are powerful or effective only insofar as they continually reaffirm the limits that make them possible in the first place.

Recent and current diplomatic and IR discourses have also sought to reduce the ambiguous, complex world of Asia-Pacific diplomacy to rather simplistic categorisations. Such categorisations have rendered exempt, from serious critical reflection, the practices and predispositions — the *power politics*, as it were — that make it possible for us at all to think and speak of modern diplomacy according to the delimitations that define and sustain diplomatic orthodoxy. As this paper has shown, the representational practices that make possible, over and over again, the (in the Nietzschean sense) 'active forgetting' of one's complicity in the never-ending process of effecting the state is fundamental to diplomacy.<sup>109</sup> Hence, specific to this concern is the division which privileges the domestic or 'inside' as a realm of order and security and the international or 'outside' as a realm of anarchy and danger — a categorisation foundational to mainstream diplomatic and IR discourses,

---

<sup>108</sup> Der Derian, *On Diplomacy*.

<sup>109</sup> See the discussion on 'forgetting' in the 'Translator's Preface' in Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), ix-lxxxvii.

especially those apposite to the Asia-Pacific region. Nevertheless, by politicising or decentring this division, an alternative reading of diplomacy as heterological and ambiguous, rather than monological and self-evident, ‘emerges’. To that end, especially useful are the conceptual categories of diplomacy, anti-diplomacy and neo-diplomacy introduced in Der Derian’s genealogical approach to diplomacy. How modern diplomatic agents have been able, for the most part, to affirm and sustain a reductionistic account of Asia-Pacific diplomacy — in the face of historical and contemporary instances of discontinuity and dislocation — is the result of a diplomatic historiography that presupposes an unproblematic monology and teleology in international life. The ambiguous, contradictory and undoubtedly complex world of Asia-Pacific diplomacies makes such reductionisms untenable.