



DEFINING DEFENCE DIPLOMACY

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Abstract

Cognizance of theory in international politics is important to practise instruments of statecraft. The focus of this paper is to establish what the term 'defence diplomacy' consists of and what it does not. Before jumping to it, this paper discusses the nuances of terms, diplomacy, foreign policy and statecraft, that are used interchangeably in academia and officially quite often. It highlights the role of diplomacy and statecraft in a country's foreign policy strategy and how they are different from each other. Later, this paper also narrows down the definition of defence diplomacy. It will discuss nuances between defence, military and arms diplomacy since these terms are also used interchangeably. Unconscious use of these terms, due to lack of clarity of their definition, leads to textual ambiguity and avoidable complexity seeping in writings. The paper will describe the idea of diplomacy from the texts by Sun Tzu until now, to the 21st century. Russia-Ukraine conflict and responses of other countries are discussed to track a change in statecraft. It will also discuss the scope for further research on impact of global order on defence diplomacy. Discussion and clarity on these terms becomes important as in the 21st century, the role of uniformed personnel is expanding and ways of subduing an enemy have also changed. Also, even the policy makers need to be aware about the terms they mention and what does that term include.

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Introduction

This paper might seem quite theoretical to readers but these theories become important to discuss. Only after knowledge of what the terms mean can practise of these tools be correct. An engineer first learns the theories of physics and mechanics to build a car. Similarly, implementing diplomacy without enough theoretical understanding would be making a car without knowing physics and mechanics. A joint statement of countries or policy makers on the negotiation table ought to know what facets of defence they are discussing.

Now, the theory and origin of foreign policy and statecraft go back to Kautilya's and Sun Tzu's literature. Kautilya had written Arthashastra that described the philosophy of statecraft. Even though democracy was not a concept then, public welfare and their trust on the government was a priority which made going to wars expensive even then. Thus, diplomacy and statecraft were practised even before international relations was identified as a different domain of study. However, their definition and practice of defence diplomacy and politics depended upon the international politics of those times, which was more anarchic.

Gradually, with change in the milieu of international politics and means of interaction between states, the scope of diplomacy also expanded and therefore there were more ways to achieve the goals of foreign policy. Every country is calculating a strategy for its contribution to regional security and international security since it has become a way to increase influence in the sphere. Apart from aspiration to become a regional or a global power, there are other determinants of foreign policy such as domestic politics.

Domestic politics cannot be separated from foreign policy either (Vanaik, 2008). The social cracks in a country's domestic politics determine their issues of 'national security'. This further questions the legitimacy of 'national security' and if it is about the security of the public of a country or the security of the government. Apart from domestic politics, another determinant is the economic and political ability of a country. Further, every country has a different capacity to achieve foreign policy goals, thus a different diplomacy. Some countries might opt for military diplomacy i.e., hard power, while some might practise public diplomacy i.e., soft power. With the nature of diplomacy, even the usage of force changes.

Troops were used to only conquer or threaten other kingdoms once, but as the world headed towards a neoliberal global order and globalisation, now they

are also sent to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief or peacekeeping operations. Thus, defence diplomacy is experiencing changes with change in global order. With more humanitarian responsibility, economic motives and the concept of 'soft power' are also stepping in. Before the Cold War, arms races were in practice during and before World Wars as well, but export of technology and manufacturing for foreign clients was not a practice then. This process and field of cooperation had been adopted after liberal order was introduced and blocs were formed during the Cold War. Thus, it is important to understand gradual changes in diplomacy and foreign policy and if they have led to changes in the foundational definitions of the same. After the Manhattan project, even the USSR became a nuclear power. This gave rise to another concept called 'deterrence'.

Deterrence is a later development in international politics as well and it has given rise to development and trade of arms. In the post Cold War world order, deterrence is also considered peaceful. Defence diplomacy among states has become more prominent and the number of states have increased since the Cold War. This paved a way for more areas of defence diplomacy, countries sought better military communications among allies and more cooperation in defence arms manufacturing and development. Arms exports and manufacturing also have economic incentives attached to it. Thus, it is important to analyse the definition and nuances of defence, military and arms diplomacy to know what events led to these areas of diplomacy becoming prominent.

Why is this discussion important?

(Thomas, 2021) describes **foreign policy** as goals defined by a state to ensure its **national security**. **Statecraft** is the way to achieve those goals. **Diplomacy** is one egg in the basket of statecraft. Even under diplomacy, there are various ways to practise it, ranging from coercive ways to building soft power. This paper will focus on discussing defence diplomacy and understanding how it oscillates between coercive and cooperative and then establish a theoretical definition. It is important to discuss these topics because of their timeless relevance. Even today, going to war is an expensive decision for any country as it was during Chanakya's time. Chanakya has written his account on statecraft and how to **balance power** through it in his Mandala Theory of 12 states (Chanakya). Even Sun Tzu's Art of War mentions "The cost of materials such as glue and lacquer, and of chariots and armour, will amount to one thousand pieces of gold a day" (Tzu). Not only ancient examples, but

the Treaty of Versailles that created an imbalance of power became a reason behind WW 2. In the post- Cold War theatre, countries established defence diplomacy and looked for common interests even with their potential adversaries to avoid wars. However, since the Cold War, there has been a rise in the number of proxy wars. It becomes more threatening when combined with the rise of the private defence industry. Therefore, today even when neoliberal global order is in place and privatisation of security is achieved in most parts of the world, countries avoid going on a war. Thus, the hesitance surrounding war has been evergreen even though ways of achieving the goal have changed.

Foreign Policy

Foreign policy, in simple words, is the answer to the question: what do you want from a particular foreign country? And the even simpler answer to the question is: to ensure national security and 'reason of state' is different for every country. Foreign policy of a nation will be what is perceived as national requirements (Nicolson, 1954). According to (Hudson, 2012; 14), 'foreign policy is the strategy chosen by the national government to achieve its goals in its relations with external entities and it includes to do nothing as well'. However, if one digs even a layer deeper, they would know the answer has complex independent variables to it. As the classic work of (Sprout and Sprout, 1958) highlights the relationship between global and domestic milieu and their impact on the decisions of leaders. Thus, narrowing down foreign policy to a single sentence is nearly impossible. Having said that, its variables can be discussed to define the scope of foreign policy. Since national security is akin to foreign policy, it is pertinent to discuss that as well.

In the global realm, nations are mostly perceived cartographically and not sociologically which pumps the territorial identity of a nation rather than an ethnic or social identity. Realists would argue that this has little to do with the society and more with the government because the state is the primary actor. But, the sociological cracks in the population of the country determine the domestic politics of that country, further domestic politics becomes a prominent determinant of foreign policy of a nation. Thus, those societal cracks are a variable of foreign policy and two cannot be separated (Vanaik, 2008; 11). (Vanaik, 2008) also explains that these agendas are not national interests in their actual sense but rather state interests. However, with the rise in liberalism and

liberal internationalism during and after the Cold War, states cannot act unilaterally for their interest. Today, there are examples of national governments acting for their citizens during wars as they evacuate them. Therefore, national interest now also includes safety and status of diaspora as a variable since globalisation is a novel phenomenon. Ultimately, foreign policy is the goals set by the government and it is dependent on perception of national interest and domestic politics.

Statecraft

In simple words, statecraft is the answer to 'How does a nation want to achieve its foreign policy goals?'. Classic ways of achieving them are through war or diplomacy. According to Clausewitz, "War is an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will". However, even the means of practising statecraft have expanded. Most countries had put economic sanctions against Russia in 2022 after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, thus even economic aspects of statecraft have become prominent. Broadly there are three tools of statecraft i.e., military, economic and diplomatic statecraft. Even intelligence wings of nations' agencies are an arm of statecraft. Sir Herbert Butterfield defined statecraft as a skillful management of state affairs with politics being its centre, similar to the thought of Machiavelli (Butterfield, 1955). Realism would say that war is the only way two foreign entities would interact. Statecraft of war is still relevant and well in practice because quite evidently, the world is not free of wars today and never has been. The question "What are we after and what are they after?" is central to such statecraft (Codevilla, 2008). Such statecraft only looks towards the non-negotiable part of the agreement. Classic realists like Clausewitz, Kautilya and SunTzu did suggest conquering weaker nations but they did not undermine using non-violent means either. To look at the cost of failure in war, the Treaty of Versailles is a good example. Germany had to pay the price of losing the war by disarming itself and a harsh economic penalty on Germany that resulted in hyper-inflation. Thus, there are two learnings here. First, the cost of winning and losing a war is high for states and, second, economic sanctions can also weaken an adversary.

A more peaceful means to implement foreign policy is to negotiate. The answer to the question, "What will be our peace?" (Codevilla, 2008). This is where diplomacy comes into picture and diplomacy is what this paper focuses on. The textbook definition of diplomacy advocates it as a benign method to arrive at a solution in foreign

policy through cooperation. Meanwhile, Sun Tzu had stated, “To subdue the enemy without fighting is the supreme excellence” (Sullivan, 2019). Along with this Joseph Nye’s theory on Soft power mentions how states can make others think the way they want in order to get what they want. Thus, more than cooperation, diplomacy is about getting what you want without using coercive means. Although thinkers like Cicero and Seneca do not view diplomacy as a self-serving act (Constantinou, 2016; 14).

Diplomacy

Diplomacy has been a practice before international relations was a separate domain of research and has been wrongly interpreted synonymous to foreign policy. Diplomacy is formulated by diplomats while foreign policy is determined by the government (Satow). It is the practice of negotiation and mediation between two or more foreign representatives. It serves a nation's unilateral interest while giving statecraft an anarchic element as well. Ideologically, diplomacy is a realist concept as it sees the state as the rational and legitimate actor. Diplomatic talks are only held among state representatives and embassies. Negotiation is the key focus of diplomacy. Through negotiations, a state can achieve more with less expenditure.

Hans Morgenthau views diplomacy as an undervalued tool of statecraft. Diplomacy has the capacity of conflict resolution, confidence-building, peace-building and initiating dialogue between civilizations. Though even this purview of diplomacy has evolved. Diplomacy is a tool which ensures willingness of all parties in agreement. It simplifies different perspectives to establish cooperation through compromises and adjustments (Blannin). With neoliberalism in post-Cold War, non-state actors are also becoming a part of the diplomatic processes and links. It is also counter intuitive in a few cases as the number of stakeholders have increased. According to Alder-Nissen (2016, 93), non-state entities make diplomacy ‘crowded’. Post-Cold War, the US and the NATO bloc included more members in NATO to promote civil-military ties as per democratic norms. NATO’s Partnership for Peace is supposed to highlight the role of armed forces beyond violence and meanwhile, the US even used its hard power to establish democracy across regimes.

Gaspar Joseph Amand, Ducher treated diplomacy only as an extended arm to commercial interests. He had said that French foreign affairs should only aim to flourish trade. The scope of diplomacy has expanded to defence and cultural aspects too. As Geoffrey Wisemen in his review of the term

grouped schools of thought into four broad themes. One of them said that diplomatic culture exists and is underestimated (McConnell and Dittmer, 2016; 105). Therefore, it raises the question of how defence diplomacy is subject to global milieu. With respect to defence diplomacy, there are even further nuances about political milieu and defence that need to be explored.

How are defence, military and arms diplomacy different from each other?

Giles Harlow and George Maerz are quoted by (Thomas, 2021; 19), “you have no idea how much it contributes to the general politeness and pleasantries in diplomacy when you have a little, quiet armed force in the background”. This accurately states the importance of defence in diplomacy. As the noble laureate, Thomas Schelling said that power to hurt is most useful when held in reserve and it is rather the threat of damage that makes others comply (Thomas, 2021; 30). This is where artillery strength and military diplomacy plays a vital role. It is not the use of forces but the threat of its use, deterrence.

Like statecraft, diplomacy and foreign policy, even defence, military and arms diplomacy are used interchangeably and even sound synonymous. These stark differences need to be studied in academia. Learning these differences becomes important even for the diplomats. There should be clarity among those in the process to know what aspects of defence diplomacy includes civilian bodies and what doesn't. Ambiguity about these terms remains because there is no universally accepted definition of defence diplomacy.

Military Diplomacy

Military diplomacy is the interaction of uniformed personnel to prevent a conflict or promote peace. This includes military-to-military communication, military exercises, ship visits, military training and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief are a post-Cold War addition.

There are ways to use the military, first is to use armed forces to fight which is coercive diplomacy. Many scholars opine coerciveness as a facet of military diplomacy, but this paper would argue it to be rather a failure of diplomacy. Second is to use the military to establish cooperation with allies to persuade other countries or to deter. Third is to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (Plessis, 2008; 91). According to former British Shadow Secretary of State Jim Murphy, “defence diplomacy should aim to minimise hostility, build and maintain trust and assist in the development of democratically accountable armed forces and

military strategies” (Murphy, 2012). Although this is a naive representation because minimising hostility also includes subduing the enemy.

When pure diplomacy fails, coercive diplomacy comes into play with intimidation through hard power. Coercive diplomacy includes demonstration of weapons and army to intimidate a nation.

(Plessis, 2008) limits military diplomacy strictly to military-to-military interaction as well. ‘Civilian’ facets of defence would not be military but defence or arms diplomacy. (Cottey and Forster, 2004) define it as peaceful and cooperative use of armed forces and related infrastructure. Although this definition creates ambiguity about the non-uniformed involvement and also that military diplomacy might not always be practised for peaceful purposes. Thus, the definition excludes the coercive usage of the military.

Arms Diplomacy

Apart from the military, another aspect to defence is arms and weaponry. Thus, the definition of arms diplomacy would include trade of arms and sharing of technology of weapons. Yet, there are facets of defence technology and industry that would not come under the purview of arms diplomacy. For instance, a company setting up a manufacturing unit would come under ease of doing rather than arms diplomacy. Arms diplomacy is not just a transactional relationship of arms and money, it is also a basis for long-term relation of technology sharing and intelligence exchange. Defence diplomacy of any country would aim more than just providing security, it would also try to reap economic profits. Arms diplomacy combined with neoliberalism promotes domestic private industry. It makes the government look supportive not only of national security but also of the domestic industry and jobs (Thrall and Dorminey, 2023). Arms sales also paves a way for geopolitical influence for instance, the US and Russia. Looking at arms sales of the US and Russia, it contradicts the belief that defence diplomacy in the post-Cold War era promotes peace. Most buyers of American weapons are regarded as ‘risky customers’. In some cases, the US sells arms to opponents of a war (Lucas and Vassalotti, 2020).

Defence Diplomacy

Arms and military diplomacy is not the only subsets of defence diplomacy. There are defence assistance mechanisms which do not come under any of the subsets like refuelling of ships, access to military bases and logistical agreements. Defence diplomacy is perceived as a ‘military plus’

diplomacy. It gained importance during the Cold War when the US and USSR figured out that through exchange of military technology and arms exports they could win foreign governments’ votes and began providing military assistance from 1954 (Mott, 1999; Winger, 2014). Although this military assistance was in terms of providing personnel and technology because supplying arms was an old practice. Even England and France supplied arms to each other's enemies. According to the Marshall Plan, which is regarded as successful, the influx of money and assistance from the US to other countries would slow down the spread of communism. Therefore, defence diplomacy started making way due to the incentives it gave.

(Cottey and Forster, 2004) call the use of armed forces and related infrastructure for security policy as defence diplomacy. Meanwhile, Martin Edmonds defines it as a tool to use armed forces to achieve national goals on foreign land. However, (McConnell and Dittmer, 2016) brings a liberal perspective on defence diplomacy that the countries find common interest to further defence cooperation. Engagement of Russia in peacekeeping and counterterrorism operations by NATO is aimed to find common ground for defence cooperation. But efforts towards defence diplomacy were unsuccessful since in 2022, NATO and Russia did go on a full blown conflict due to expansionist policies from both sides. This proves that defence cooperation so far could not do much. Finally, most Western countries resorted to economic sanctions.

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