When Diplomacy Works

A Book Proposal

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1 Overview of the book

The book presents the first comprehensive theory of diplomacy and its role in international disputes. It examines when and how diplomacy, as opposed to military instruments, facilitates (or sometimes hinders) conflict prevention and resolution short of war. Diplomacy is a primary form of politics among nations. Yet, the field of international relations does not have an intellectual tradition that is capable of explaining how diplomacy works. Scholars of international relations have largely remained agnostic on issues of diplomacy. The conventional view even suggests that diplomacy is ineffective on its own or secondary to military might in international politics.

This book challenges this conventional wisdom and attempts to fill a most puzzling lacuna in the discipline of international relations. While the dearth of scholarship on diplomacy is puzzling in itself, it also presents a rich opportunity for fertile research programs. The book demonstrates that diplomacy matters in international politics and that understanding diplomacy also improves our understanding of other aspects of international politics. I argue that diplomacy is a set of mechanisms that help states avoid unwarranted crisis escalation and achieve peaceful settlements that military instruments or coercive diplomacy cannot achieve. My theory describes these mechanisms.

The main challenge we face in studying diplomacy is not that the scholarly literature does not have well defined answers to questions of diplomacy; rather, the real problem is the lack of well defined questions. In fact, the existing scholarship is already abundant in empirical descriptions about diplomatic statecraft, though often enmeshed in other types of international processes. The book, therefore, places a great amount of emphasis on the development of a theoretical foundation, which tells us how to begin to ask questions about the role of diplomacy both theoretically and empirically. Specifically, I take the following steps to construct a theory: (1) describe a natural history of diplomacy and its institutions to identify several classes of diplomatic mechanisms at work in international conflict and (inter)national security strategy; (2) map each mechanism onto a well-established (game-theoretic) model of international conflict; and (3) explore how, why, and when each mechanism might influence crisis dynamics and outcomes through the combination of game-theoretic, statistical, and historical analysis.

The mechanisms that the book identifies are peacetime diplomatic communication, diplomatic negotiation in international conflict, and diplomatic manipulation once diplomatic negotiation fails and a military crisis occurs. Although this list of mechanisms is by no means comprehensive, or even the only means of categorization, they encompass most of the functional forms that are referenced in the literature. For each mechanism, I use an original game-theoretic model to analyze the causal mechanism that shapes conflict behavior and outcomes, and to document the incentives and constraints surrounding the choices and outcomes of diplomatic interactions. Briefly, the three mechanisms can be summarized as follows.

The primary function of diplomatic communication is the revelation of states’ preferences so that they can identify whether and where their preferences overlap in the bargaining range in order to avoid war. Diplomatic negotiation is often utilized to sort through states’ preferences so that they can reach an agreeable settlement in order to avoid
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an imposed settlement via coercion and force. Diplomatic manipulation restructures states’ incentives and the strategic environment so as to expand the range of agreeable settlements, and hence reduces the risk of war.

While the book examines three distinctive mechanisms at the different stages of international conflict, my analysis reveals several common properties found across these mechanisms. First, diplomacy offers various effective instruments of statecraft not only for the “weak” powers but also for the “strong” powers. Note that diplomacy is often considered as the instrument for middle to small powers in the international system, where as Thucydides reminds us, “the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.” Since the “weak” lack the military capabilities, they are forced to device other means for security and survival. Indeed, my description of a natural history of diplomacy confirms that middle to minor powers were the driving force of the birth and development of diplomacy. However, my theoretical and empirical analysis suggests that the “strong” can also benefit from diplomatic instruments. For the weak, diplomacy may be the only viable instrument/strategy for survival. For the strong, diplomacy gives them more efficient instrument for statecraft. Diplomacy is more efficient because it often achieves the same policy goals as coercive, military instruments without raising the risk of inefficient outcomes that military instruments often need to generate.

Second, all of the models have two classes of equilibria—the diplomatic equilibrium and the military equilibrium. The military equilibrium is a previously well-studied equilibrium, in which diplomacy is ineffective and therefore only military instruments can shape the outcome. This equilibrium is responsible for the common belief that diplomacy itself is ineffective or irrelevant for international politics on its own. The diplomatic equilibrium is the new equilibrium that my research in this book identifies, where diplomatic instruments achieve policy goals as effectively as military instruments. The literature on international conflict has overlooked the existence of this diplomatic equilibrium, focusing on the military equilibrium. This has an important policy implication. If we take the advice of Roger Myerson (1991) and consider each equilibrium as a distinctive set of policy options, the multiplicity of the equilibria implies that two alternative policy options—diplomatic and coercive—are both available in managing conflicts. Leaders have complete freedom in deciding which option to take as long as they realize that the equilibrium diplomatic option is available.

Third, the models show that the rationality of diplomacy does not lie in its informational role. This marks a sharp contrast to recent scholarship that tends to see communication as the essence of diplomacy (e.g., Jönsson and Hall 2005; Trager 2010; Sartori 2005; Regan and Aydin 2006). My equilibrium models of two mechanisms—diplomatic negotiation and diplomatic manipulation—show that when diplomacy works, bargainers have to forego their ability to convey information to the opponent—that is, diplomacy is an ineffective communication tool. Similarly, my analysis of diplomatic communication shows that information is counter-productive—that is, the factors and conditions that enhance the credible diplomatic communication increase the risk of crisis escalation. This is a significant insight in contrast to coercive instruments, such as military threats and military mobilization, for its rationality is the informational transmission. Contemporary theorists (Fearon 1994) and diplomatic historians (Lauren 1994)
alike often downplay the utility of diplomacy by citing a lack of informational benefit (or credibility). Yet, my analysis suggests that the lack of informational efficacy does not necessarily mean the ineffectiveness of diplomatic statecraft. The book emphasizes that other unique features of diplomatic institutions embody the rationality of diplomacy (see the chapter synopsis below for details).

The theory that I advance in this book is that of the rational choice tradition. Because my formal analysis builds on, and expands, common bargaining models of international conflict, the theory allows us to analyze diplomacy in the same way as we understand military coercion and war in standard rationalist explanations (e.g.,Fearon 1995; Powell 2002). This is counterintuitive because while common bargaining theories previously suggested that diplomacy was either irrelevant or ineffective, now I use the same theoretical baseline to explain why diplomacy matters.

The use of the standard bargaining theory also allows us to contrast the rationale and efficacy of diplomatic machinery to those of military coercion. This makes my theory of diplomacy a part of the family of studies that uses rationalist, bargaining theory to explain various issues of world politics, including Kenneth Schultz’s study of democratic peace (Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy, Cambridge University Press), Barbara Walter’s study on civil war (Committing to Peace, Princeton University Press), Daniel Drezner’s study on economic sanctions (The Sanctions Paradox, Cambridge University Press), Andrew Kydd’s study on trust and international cooperation (Trust and Mistrust in International Relations, Princeton University Press) among others.

My theory also advances the notion that diplomacy is an institutional solution to strategic problems hampering peace and security, such as bargaining failure between states. Throughout history, state leaders have responded to various political and security challenges with some successes and some failures. At times those responses involved institutional innovations. In historical hindsight, diplomacy can be seen as having evolved as a set of norms and institutions to address various strategic issues at various historical turning points. Moreover, my analysis suggests that for the most part the rationality of diplomacy is embedded in enduring features of diplomatic institutions such as face-saving protocols, the norm of nonprovocative means, secrecy, among other. My theory of diplomacy therefore explains a strategic logic of otherwise seemingly irrational aspects of diplomatic institutions.

From a more empirical, behavioral perspective, the book also advances the idea that diplomacy and its institutions can be seen as a new addition to the list of the “Correlates of War” such as regime type, alliance, material capabilities, trade. In one chapter, the statistical analysis utilizes a new, original data set on diplomatic exchanges, which revives an early effort in the 1960’s.

This book speaks to at least three areas in the international relations literature. First of all, it demonstrates that a rigorous social scientific approach can meaningfully be applied to the study of diplomacy, which had predominantly been historical and interpretational (c.f., Sharp 2002). Second, it pushes forward the frontier of the rationalist approach, as my book shows that an important class of phenomena that the existing rationalist explanations rule out as an anomaly—i.e., diplomacy—can be explained using the same framework. Third, since the behavioral revolution, the quantitative approach
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to international relations has discouraged the study of diplomacy. Yet, this book shows that, with help of equilibrium models, rigorous quantitative analysis can be possible.

Beyond the subject matter of diplomacy, my findings in this book have implications for much broader questions of general interest in the field of international relations. For example, the logic of success and failure of diplomacy in conflict resolution sheds light on why peace cannot be sought peacefully and why sometimes force must be employed to achieve peace. In general, the book offers a new way to look at issues of international security as it places the standard rationalist theory of war and coercive diplomacy in perspective.

2 Why a book on diplomacy?

During the 2008 presidential debate, Barak Obama advocated the use of diplomacy to address the issues in the Middle East, which set him apart from his rivals John McCain and Hillary Clinton who claimed to pursue coercive diplomacy or military solutions. The question of whether and when to use diplomacy or military coercion in pursuing foreign policy goals is ubiquitous in policy debates. Criticizing President Bush’s decision in 2003 to go to war with Iraq, Senator Kerry claimed, during the 2004 Presidential debates, that the Bush administration had not exhausted diplomatic options before going to war: “They just decided” he argued “that the time for diplomacy is over and rushed to war. […] he didn’t go to war as a last resort.” President Bush responded that “We tried diplomacy. We did our best. [But] it was failing apart.” This recurring issue is not limited to the policy community; it also emerged as the underlying theme of the public debate in 2003 following the U.S. military campaign in Iraq, epitomized by the anti-war sentiment that “war is not the answer.”

The problem with such policy debates, however, is that they seldom provide strategies for diplomatic solutions with equally persuasive arguments to those of military solutions that are substantiated with empirical and theoretical foundations. The lack of concrete diplomatic strategies alternative to coercive diplomacy represents a major gap in international security. This gap marks a sharp contrast to the strategic studies and military science that underpin coercive diplomacy, or what Thomas Schelling (1966) calls “The Diplomacy of Violence.” Furthermore, this gap in knowledge on diplomacy might also be causing fundamental mistrust of diplomacy. Criticizing the public outcry against war, Douglas Faith—former undersecretary of Defense in the Bush administration—says in a New Yorker article, “What I was hearing from the antiwar movement . . . were thoughts about how war is not the answer. The kind of people who put bumper stickers on their car that declare that ‘war is not the answer,’ are they making a serious comment?” Because the gist of the antiwar movement was essentially a call for diplomacy, it prompted Mr. Faith to ask if war is not the answer, then what is?

Scholars of international relations and political science share the blame. We, political scientists, have not addressed the role of diplomacy in international disputes. In fact, few theories if any attempt to define a specific, empirically identifiable mechanism of diplomacy and fewer yet consider the role of diplomacy in conflict resolution.

There exist three intellectual traditions related to the subject matter here. First, the
English School and other European scholarship have produced a large volume of writings on the history of diplomatic practice and institutions (e.g., Butterfield 1953, Der Derian 1987, Watson 1982, Wight 1977). This tradition understands diplomacy as one of the key institutions parallel to war, sovereignty, the balance of power, etc. that maintain order in the “anarchical society” (Bull 1977). Yet, because of its substantive focus, the analysis of diplomacy in this tradition is rarely grounded in key insights about why states go to war. It simply does not address questions regarding how and why diplomacy works in international disputes.

Second, Alexander George and his associates have coined the phrase “coercive diplomacy” to denote the use of threats and limited force as instruments of forceful persuasion in deterrence and compellence. Contrary to the name coercive diplomacy, this intellectual tradition is primarily concerned with how military coercion can be effectively utilized in statecraft in general and the efficacy of threats in particular. The “coercive diplomacy” literature therefore effectively presumes the use of military coercion as a form of diplomacy by definition (e.g., Art and Cronin 2003, George 1984, George, Hall and Simmons 1971). Hence, their analytical framework and empirical scholarship are not helpful in answering questions regarding the role of normal forms of diplomacy, and the logic behind the decision to resort to military coercion in the first place.

Third, the rationalist literature on war and crisis bargaining is at the center stage of the recent scholarship on war and peace. Since theoretical models in this literature are developed to explain how and why bargaining breaks down in war and the role of military coercion in crises, their explanations typically focus on the role of threats to use force and other forms of military coercion (Fearon 1995; Schultz 2001). Because of this focus, the process of diplomacy often remains implicit in their theoretical models and the distinction between coercion and negotiation is rarely made explicit in the analysis. As a result, one of the critical features of normal forms of diplomacy that distinguishes it from military coercion—peaceful means (Morgenthau 1973; Bull 1977)—does not come into the picture in this literature. Due to its inadequate attention to diplomacy, the main implication on its role in this literature is pessimistic as it suggests that diplomacy is ineffective or secondary to military might in international relations.

In sum, international relations theory does not have an intellectual tradition that is capable of addressing the pressing issues of diplomacy. As a result, we are not equipped with a scientific standard to evaluate Bush’s justification for opting out of diplomacy or Obama’s claim about the utility of diplomacy. While the dearth of scholarship on diplomacy is puzzling in itself, it also presents a rich opportunity for fertile research programs. This book, When Diplomacy Works, is a first cut at addressing this fundamental weakness in our understanding of diplomacy in international relations theory.

3 Title

The current working title for the book proposed here is When Diplomacy Works. This title describes two kinds of questions that the proposed book seeks to answer. First, the book explains when diplomacy works—the condition under which diplomacy works to facilitate peaceful settlement of international conflict. Second, the book also explains
what would happen when diplomacy works. In particular, I show that when diplomacy
works, it sometimes hinders rather than facilitates conflict prevention and resolution
short of war under certain conditions.

4 Chapter Outline and Synopsis

The current chapter outline of this book is as follows:

Chapter 1: Why Diplomacy?
Chapter 2: Diplomacy and War: Puzzles
Chapter 3: A Natural History of Diplomatic Institutions
Chapter 4: Diplomacy Games: Causes of War and Origins of Diplomacy
Chapter 5: Diplomatic Communication
Chapter 6: Testing Diplomatic Communication
Chapter 7: Diplomatic Negotiation
Chapter 8: Diplomatic Manipulation
Chapter 9: Testing Diplomatic Manipulation
Chapter 10: Conclusion

Chapter 1: Why Diplomacy?

In the introductory chapter, I first define the subject matter that this book explores,
identify the gap in knowledge about how diplomacy works, and explain why it is impor-
tant to improve our understanding of diplomacy. In doing so, I emphasize the importance
of this study from a normative and practical perspective. In addition to laying out the
motivation for the book, Chapter 1 also briefly reviews how the international relations
literature has addressed the issue of diplomacy. This literature review examines why
diplomacy is understudied in the contemporary scholarship on international relations. It
offers a conjecture about the role played by the nuclear revolution and the behavioral
revolution of the 1950’s in the puzzling dismissal of diplomacy from the scholarly agenda.

Chapter 2: Diplomacy and War: Puzzles

This relatively short chapter presents a key theoretical puzzle of diplomacy to underscore
why improving our understanding of diplomacy is important from a purely academic per-
spective. In particular, I argue that the puzzle of diplomacy has important implications
for the rationalist explanations for war, so that until the puzzle of diplomacy is ade-
quately addressed, the puzzle of war cannot be fully solved.

Chapter 3: A Natural History

Compactly presented, this chapter traces the origin and development of diplomacy and
its institutions from antiquity to the modern day. This comprehensive overview, based
on secondary sources, provides the language and vocabulary necessary to carry out the
theoretical and empirical analysis in the following chapters.
The analysis emphasizes that key institutional innovations are rational responses to the strategic problem faced by political leaders, as they offer institutional solutions to their problem. This lead to various idiosyncratic aspects of diplomatic institutions including, for example, a system of resident embassies that was created by city states in Northern Italy during the Renaissance to stabilize communication among governments in the face external threats of invasion, and the rise of awe and ceremonial procedures that were the result of the Byzantine manipulation of incentive structure of neighboring countries to maintain security with the wake of the fall of the Roman Empire. In addition, while the literature review in Chapter 1 demonstrates that the academic interest in diplomacy has declined since the beginning of the Cold War, this chapter shows that the demise of diplomacy in the practice of statecraft also began with the advent of two superpowers in the 20th century.

Chapter 4: Diplomatic Games

Chapter 4 describes the overarching theoretical framework for the analysis of more specific mechanisms of diplomacy in the ensuing chapters. In doing so, this chapter makes the transition from the complexity of diplomacy displayed by the natural history in Chapter 3 to more stylized representation of diplomatic mechanisms suitable for rigorous analysis. It takes three steps to accomplish this goal. First, based on the natural history in Chapter 3, I classify and organize diplomatic practices and institutions into taxonomical groups in terms of their key functional forms: diplomacy as communication; diplomacy as negotiation; and diplomacy as manipulation. Each of these functions represents a distinctive class of diplomatic mechanism. Second, I use a standard game-theoretic model developed by Fearon (1995) and Powell (1996) to describe international conflict as a bargaining game and identify the conditions for peaceful settlements of the dispute and the conditions under which bargaining fails and war can occur. Using this model, I explain how the lack of relevant information necessary to reach a peaceful settlement (or the asymmetric distribution of such information between disputants) can cause the outbreak of war. As the final step, I map each mechanism of diplomacy to this bargaining model to specify how each mechanism addresses the problem of the bargaining failure.

Chapter 5: Diplomatic Communication

If information failure may prevent peaceful settlement of a dispute, one feasible solution is to allow states to communicate their relevant military and political information to each other prior to a crisis. Peacetime diplomatic communication between governments is essentially envisioned to do just that. While the communicative function is relatively well studied, the previous work is at odd with the empirical reality—it has shown that pre-crisis diplomacy is not effective at communicating messages (Fearon 1995; Guisinger and Smith 2002) and does not mitigate the risk of war in subsequent crises (Sartori 2005; Guisinger and Smith 2002; Ramsay 2011). Generalizing previous models of repeated crises with cheap-talk that are responsible for these results, I challenge this conventional wisdom by describing how two processes of diplomacy—communication and
Diplomacy shows some novel results. Pre-crisis diplomacy can effectively convey information under much broader conditions than previously suggested including those conditions that previous authors believe diplomacy lacks information capacity. In doing so, this analysis shows that previous models were a special case of the equilibrium model presented in this chapter. It also shows that although diplomatic communication almost always reduces the risk that the adversary will attack, the factors and conditions that enhance the credibility of diplomatic messages always force the sender of messages to resist if attacked. Consequently, diplomacy, if informative, can simultaneously increase and reduce the net risk of war, depending on the strategic environment. These countervailing effects of pre-crisis diplomacy make theoretical predictions of the effect of diplomacy on war highly sensitive to the strategic environment. This (rather subtle) theoretical result has important policy and normative implications since although diplomatic talks can deter the attack under the right conditions, doing so risks crisis escalation due to the commitment trap.

Chapter 6: Testing Diplomatic Communication

To overcome theoretical ambiguity, I use statistical analysis to identify the overall effect of credible diplomatic communication on the risk of war. Since the functional form of the theoretical predictions itself is uncertain, I used nonparametric methods to uncover what the data themselves “say” about a ceteris paribus structure that may exist in the data. Since pre-crisis/peacetime diplomatic exchange is hardly observable in a systematic manner, I have collected data on the exchange of permanent, resident diplomatic missions as a proxy measure for the presence of reliable diplomatic communication among European powers (plus the United States and the Ottoman empire) during 1816-1914. Estimation of a general additive model shows that credible communication generally decreases the risk of war by 20% on average unless one of the parties to a dispute enjoys an overwhelming preponderance of relative power in a disputing dyad.

To illustrate how diplomatic communication can prevent crisis escalation, I draw anecdotal evidence from the Anglo-French crisis in 1839-40, in which two countries almost went to war over a disagreement on the settlement of the Egyptian crisis triggered by the revolt of Mehemet Ali. This case study highlights the role that the British Embassy in Paris played conveying a warning to Louis Philippe and his premier Thiers that Britain would resist if France attacked. Using primary materials and secondary sources, I demonstrate that British foreign minister Palmerston successfully convinced Louis Philippe to back down without utilizing coercive pressure. Although the British were engaged in a military campaign in the Levant, the news of their military success did not reach London or Paris until after France’s capitulation. It also demonstrate the importance of resident diplomatic missions in communication. While Palmerston communicated with the British ambassador Granville and his secretary Bulwer, he primarily relied on Bulwer for his decision making because Granville was often absent from Paris for sick leaves.
Chapter 7: Diplomatic Negotiation

Although negotiation is obviously at the core of diplomacy, how it works is less obvious. Many practitioners and observers emphasize the importance of negotiation, but they rarely add much to the seminal contribution by Cardinal Richelieu in the 18th century when he first defined diplomatic negotiation explicitly as a key instrument to settle a dispute. Standard bargaining models of international conflict suggest that bargaining should be terminated immediately either with an initial offer being accepted or with the outbreak of war. This result is inconsistent with the historical record showing that states attempt diplomacy for an extended period of time and some disputes are indeed settled by diplomatic negotiations (Huth and Allee 2002). This gap, I argue, results from a modeling assumption introduced to focus on coercive bargaining rather than a more normal form of diplomacy. In this chapter, I remedy this shortcoming by allowing bargainers to engage in both negotiation and coercion in a model where bargainers take turns deciding whether to continue diplomacy or opt out to resort to military coercion. Unlike standard bargaining models, the “military” outside option is not a game-ending costly-lottery but instead is modeled as a process itself where the bargainers play a costly signaling game. Although the conventional approach lumps negotiation and coercion into the rubric of “coercive bargaining” (more technically, the typical model conflates bargaining through negotiation and signaling through coercion), my model explicitly distinguishes the bargaining process from the signaling dynamics.

While the analysis of this model is currently under revision, my preliminary result shows that countries with “weaker” bargaining power have an incentive to opt out from diplomacy to send costly signals through military coercion to gamble for a greater bargain. This is because military coercion carries more information than diplomatic bargaining does. Consequently, countries with “stronger” bargaining power can signal more efficiently at the negotiation table, so that they are less likely to have to run the risk of military coercion. On the one hand, this result suggests that the rationality of diplomacy does not rely on its informational efficacy. On the other hand, it also shows that the bargainers who are concerned with their credibility (or need to signal their strength) have a greater risk of abandoning diplomacy to resort to coercion. This result may help explain an empirical puzzle found by Huth and Allee (2002): a militarily more capable challenger is more likely to offer concessions in negotiations on territorial disputes. The result also sheds light on other questions, for example, as to why states frequently rely on military coercion that entails a risk of war in seeking a peaceful settlement and how peace can (and cannot) be sought peacefully rather than forcefully.

Chapter 8: Diplomatic Manipulation

If diplomatic negotiation revealed only that a mutually acceptable settlement is not attainable given the current incentive structure and strategic environment, the only way to avoid the outbreak of a military confrontation through the last round of diplomacy may well be the manipulation of the strategic environment and the incentive structure. Diplomatic manipulation is less obvious mechanism of diplomacy but it has been a long-standing feature of diplomatic statecraft. Its primary function is to alter the willingness
of a state to accept coercive demands or to make concessionary offers, so that the disputants may be able to locate a new negotiated settlement that they could otherwise not achieve without coercive pressures of military force. In principle, there are two ways to accomplish this. One is a positive inducement that makes offering compromises or accepting demands a more attractive option either by reducing the cost or increasing the benefit of doing so. Another is a negative inducement, which makes it more difficult not to comply with the demand by increasing the cost of disagreement.

In this chapter, I analyze the role of secrecy, a specific empirical case of a positive inducement. Elsewhere, I developed a game-theoretic model of crisis bargaining, where the challenger can either go public or private with its threat. Using this model, I examine when—if at all—secrecy in crisis diplomacy changes state leaders’ incentive structure so that they can achieve a peaceful settlement that would otherwise not be available. The conventional wisdom holds that the challenger must go public and generate the risk of crisis escalation in order to change the status quo while avoid war (e.g., Fearon 1994; Schultz 2001). If so, it would be puzzling if a private threat could convince the opponent to back down because secrecy undermines the credibility of the threat.

My analysis solves this conundrum by showing that, under broad conditions, private diplomacy can produce more efficient “solutions” than can coercive contests in a public crisis. The key is that private diplomacy frees state leaders from political repercussion against making concessions. Because private diplomacy reduces credibility of threats and public tactics almost always conveys greater credibility, the only reason not to go public is to allow the opponent to concede without political retribution. Despite the loss of credibility, however, private diplomacy can be equally compelling as a fully credible military threat. Moreover, private diplomacy achieves compellence without raising the risk of suboptimal outcomes (i.e., costly conflict or public concessions). Hence, private diplomacy Pareto dominates publicly demonstrated coercive measures. As such, private diplomacy is an instrument for peaceful settlement without the price of peace.

Chapter 9: Testing Diplomatic Manipulation

Empirical testing of this theory faces a serious challenge, primarily because both private threats and subsequent private concessions are essentially unobservable. When private diplomacy works, the political audience cannot distinguish it from the status quo ante by design. Thus, analysts cannot observe it systematically by definition. I offer a new, innovative empirical strategy to provide two types of statistical evidence for the mechanism behind private diplomacy. While technically involved, the intuition is as follows. First, I derive a necessary condition for private diplomacy as a falsifiable hypothesis that enables us to use the observational data to reject (or confirm) the hypothetical existence of such a secret mechanism. If it exists, the model says that the defender’s payoff from a public concession is negative, while the payoff is zero if it does not exist. I use a new structural estimator to test if this payoff is statistically distinguishable from zero and negative. The result strongly supports my theory. Second, when a private threat works, the defender in the model must adjust its assessment (i.e., belief in game theory) about the challengers’ resolve downward, while the defender generally revises its belief upward.
upon receiving a public threat. Because successful private diplomacy should be observationally equivalent to the status quo ante, the defender must change its belief in the status quo downward even though the standard theory predicts that the belief should not change in that case. I use the same structural estimator to estimate the amount of belief-updating with the data on international conflict. The result strongly supports my hypothesis.

Because the statistical evidence, while innovative, does not identify either a private threat or a private concession, I conduct a comparative case study of three crisis episodes involving secret threats. I document successful private threats by Theodore Roosevelt in the Alaska boundary disputes in 1903 and by Richard Nixon in the Cienfuegos Crisis in 1970, and an unsuccessful use of a secret nuclear warning in 1972. I then show how secret threats worked in the first two cases because private manipulation was intended to allow the opponent to save face and find the demand acceptable. The third did not work because Nixon went private only because he needed to hide his nuclear threat from public scrutiny, which undermined the credibility of the threat. This is consistent with the necessary condition for private diplomacy mentioned above.

5 Proposed Length and Amount of Illustration

The manuscript—in a standard format with double-spacing, Times Roman 12 point font, 1-inch margins—should approximate 300 pages in length. The main analytical chapters—Chapters 4 through 9—include tables and figures (on average, about two to three per chapter, tables and figures combined).

6 Intended Completion Date

I anticipate completing the manuscript revisions by May 2012. I have finished all of the substantive chapters except for Chapter 7. Some rearranging and editing as well as more work on the Conclusion are required.

7 Competition

As noted earlier, the supply of the scholarly output is remarkably limited compared to the growing demand for diplomacy in world politics and theoretical insights of diplomacy. There are at least two books currently available on the market that address some topics that I address in When Diplomacy Works.


This is the only book-length work that examines diplomacy and relates it to international security. My book differs along several dimensions, pushing forward the frontier of the study. First, the most notable is that while the Sartori book only examines the communicative function of diplomacy, my book also examines two other mechanisms.
Exercising three mechanisms offers a comparative perspective to each mechanism and the relations between them. As I mentioned above, there are several properties that are commonly found in all three models. These remarkable similarities and common results allow me to make broad statements about the properties and structures of diplomatic mechanisms in general. Second, Sartori’s book does not directly address the issues of diplomatic communication. Her book’s primary concern is to advance a theory of reputation rather than diplomacy itself. Consequently, Sartori’s case study demonstrates how diplomatic communication did not work and failed to facilitate peaceful settlement of the Korean war. Her statistical analysis primarily examines the relationship between the past conflict behavior and current behavior, lacking any variables on diplomacy processes or institutions.

In contrast, my chapter on diplomatic communication provides a general discussion of diplomatic communication and its history, offers a theoretical model that directly addresses the effect of diplomatic institutions on diplomatic communication, examines statistical evidence on the effect of diplomatic channels on conflict behavior, and studies a historical case where diplomatic communication worked and successfully prevented crisis escalation.


Sharp advances an international relations theory that is based on diplomatic tradition. The objective of his thesis on the diplomatic tradition of international thought is to present the landscape of international relations theory that one can view from the eyes of diplomats and other practitioners of diplomacy.

In contrast, my book attempts to use the social scientific toolkit to explain diplomacy and its mechanisms, rather than take diplomacy as given. My social scientific approach also differs from the English school approach adopted in the Sharp book, in that it requires the development of empirically identifiable mechanisms using an analytically rigorous formal models and systematic analysis of both qualitative and quantitative empirical evidence. Moreover, my book looks at the role of diplomacy in the context of war and conflict resolution. These differences make the readership differ drastically between the Sharp book and mine.

8 Readership

As the first book to present the social scientific study of diplomacy, the book should not only appeal to a wide range of audiences, but also define a new research field. This book therefore should be appropriate for course adoption both at the graduate and advanced undergraduate levels. Beyond classrooms, my principal audience will be political scientists who study international security, foreign policy, causes of war, international organization, and diplomatic history.

This book should also draw attention from scholars outside of North America. Scholars of the English school and other European scholarship on diplomacy are expected to
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have interest in the book. Scholars in East Asia (particularly in Japan), where Diplomacy is also a frequent theme of international studies, may find the book interesting as well.

The natural history in Chapter 3 should prove useful for readers without much factual knowledge of diplomacy. Likewise, the construction of the overarching theoretical framework for the analysis of diplomacy around the fundamental puzzle about the causes of war in Chapter 4 should prove useful for those who are not versed in bargaining theory of international conflict.

The topic, and my findings, may also draw the attention of non-academics, including interested political consultants and foreign policy experts at think-tanks and governments as well as attentive citizens.

In terms of style and level of writing, I envision this book to be within the reach of non-scholarly audiences as well as academic specialists in my field. I animate each chapter with important normative and policy questions, illustrate key issues with historical examples, use technical details and disciplinary jargon only sparingly in the text, and use tables and figures effectively. While many chapters present game-theoretic or statistical analysis, the technicalities and formal derivation of the results are relegated to an appendix at the end of each chapter and the technical details and jargon are minimized, if not eliminated, within the text. Kenneth A. Schultz’s *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) is most similar to my book in this light.

9 About the Author

I am an assistant professor of political science at Texas A&M University. I was a Predoctoral fellow in National Security at the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University in 2005-2006, and a visiting professor at Waseda University in Tokyo during Summer 2009. My research interests include diplomacy, the origins of war and peace, and formal, game-theoretic analysis of politics and international relations. My articles appeared in journals such as the *American Political Science Review* and *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*. I am the recipient of the Carl Beck Award, given by the International Studies Association in 2005, the Dina Zinnes Award, given by the Scientific Study of International Processes (SSIP) Section of the International Studies Association in 2006, and the Miyake Ichiro Award for the best article published in 2007 by a Japanese political scientist. My courses explore international relations, the causes of war and peace, the history of diplomacy, and formal models in political science. I hold a Ph.D. in political science from UCLA and a B.A. in Law from Sophia University in Tokyo.

References


