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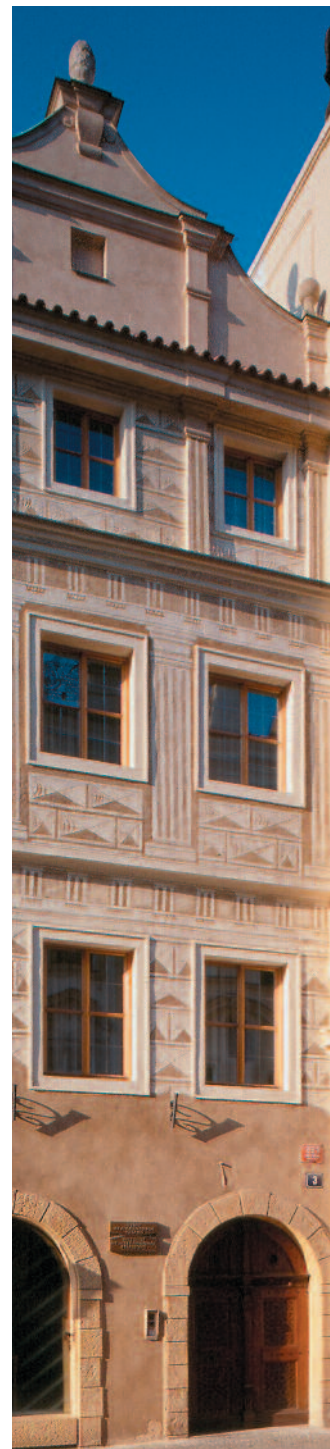
# The Future of Diplomacy: European and Global Challenges

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As identified by the participants of the 1<sup>st</sup> Czech-French Forum of Young Talents, diplomacy needs to face globalization, geopolitical shifts, the call for transparency and budgetary restrictions. The diplomat has to act as a manager and interpreter of knowledge in a world characterized by an overflow of information.

The need for a strong and effective EU diplomacy is not disputed but the European interest has not been clearly defined so far. The European External Action Service seems to offer an institutional setting that will help to articulate the European interest through everyday practice.

The contradictory ideal of a generalist diplomat has not waned, but the diplomat must update its competences, enter the public debate and keep updated with technological progress.



# Introduction

The 1<sup>st</sup> Czech-French Forum of Young Talents took place on 3 and 4 February 2011 in the framework of the renewed Strategic Partnership between France and the Czech Republic.<sup>1</sup> Almost twenty young talents of the Czech and French diplomacies met in Prague with their senior colleagues as well as with the directors of the Institute of International Relations in Prague and CERI-Sciences Po in Paris, Petr Drulák and Christian Lequesne, who set the scene and introduced the contemporary dilemmas of diplomacy.

The objective of the first edition of the forum was not only to deepen the bilateral diplomatic relations and mutual understanding, but also to discuss the future of diplomacy in a changing world. In a participatory approach, the diplomats and researchers have identified the challenges to diplomacy and to the diplomatic career at the global, EU and national levels. They have also proposed recommendations to the national and European diplomacies.

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## Is diplomacy a historical relic in a globalized world?

Historically, modern diplomacy is a medieval invention that spread from Italy across Europe in the Renaissance period. It finally turned global in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as its evolution was closely linked to that of the states. Nowadays, however, the nation-state is quickly eroding under the pressure of globalization and the growing role of markets and transnational businesses, including those in the military sphere. With the technological progress, the globalization process is accelerating at a faster pace than the national

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institutions can accommodate. This includes diplomacy with its archaic protocol and manners. At a time when political leaders can communicate immediately by video calls or meet personally within hours in any corner of the

globe, there is a legitimate fear that embassies are obsolete, a mere decorum in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The explosion of the “summit diplomacy” seems to confirm this trend.

The growing complexity of the international and global politics is accompanied by a proliferation of new actors. The economic growth in the emerging markets has boosted

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Samuel Berger and Rémy Queney for their comments on an earlier draft of the policy paper, and David Cadier for the minutes from a working group. The event took place under the Chatham House rule, and therefore the positions of the participants are not attributed. The policy paper does not reflect the official positions of the Czech and French governments.

the political influence of not only countries like China and India, but also Russia, Brazil and South Africa. Not only the West is being outpaced by the “Rest”, but other non-state actors are emerging. Large and influential non-governmental and transnational organizations and charities as well as powerful terrorist groups, for example, have de-territorialized and they cannot be easily controlled by the states. Moreover, the current global challenges of economic crisis, climate change and even poverty are tackled by the ministries of finance, environment and, in some cases, development rather than the foreign ministries. Therefore, there is a risk that the influence of diplomacy will continue to decline.

At the national level, the former distinction between domestic and foreign policies is waning and the public requires a democratic control of a state’s policies at home as well as abroad. The new media seemingly erase geographic distances and enter the political arena. The WikiLeaks scandal has questioned not only the legitimacy, but also the technical possibility of the traditional diplomatic secret. On the one hand, it has shown that diplomacy is often doing its job in an outstanding manner and that conspiracy theories have proven false. On the other hand, the leakages of the U.S. cables have sometimes questioned the benefit of the information provided by the embassies that did not differ much from that which was made available on the news. All these developments take place within a long-term trend of budgetary cuts, which limits the potential of diplomacy to respond to these multiple challenges, as expected by aware citizens.

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## To manage and interpret information: the renewed role of diplomacy

Yet, it seems that there still exists a legitimate place for the seemingly outmoded diplomacy. Nevertheless, the resistance of institutions is not the main reason. Even though the Roman Empire has disappeared, its legal tradition and institutions have survived. In the same way, the Western institutions are not doomed in a world that will not be shaped by the West alone. The EU may well be post-Westphalian, but it operates in a Westphalian world. But more essentially, the basic function of diplomacy, to manage information and to interpret it, is still relevant if not more important in an international environment that is characterized by an overflow of information from both non-diplo-

matic and diplomatic sources. This outside pressure must be tackled actively, not passively. The public can be easily manipulated by the unelected media, experts and lobbies as well as by elected politicians whose communication skills may be better than their knowledge of complex foreign affairs.

The role of the diplomat is hence to serve as a mediator who manages information and interprets it to very diverse stakeholders. In this way, s/he helps to identify the national interest. At home, the diplomat should openly legitimate the decisions of the government towards the public and, at the same time, inform the elected politicians on their policy options without stepping into their decision-making competence. At the international level, which is not subject to democratic governance, the issue of transparency is more delicate and confidence remains a crucial value. Since confidentiality is a precondition for confidence, the international politics still require an acceptable level of secrecy, especially in ensuring the anonymity of the diplomats and their informants. WikiLeaks – a new type of influential non-state actor – have recently breached this principle. At the same time, public diplomacy and the use of the internet have never been so important in a world composed by a multitude of diverse state and non-state actors.

Finally, the challenge of the rise of the “Rest” cannot be easily discarded. Since power is a relative concept, the West will be weakening and it can mitigate its long-term marginalization only by sharing its normative values. The Western values of liberal democra-

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cy, human rights, gender equality, environmental protection and (partly) the welfare state, however, are very often in conflict with its interests. The current uprisings in North Africa have attested the ambiguous if not contradictory position of the European countries and of the EU itself. If the emerging powers accept the reality of multipolarity, they are not interes-

ted in multilateralism and accept the competitive nature of today's globalized world. In this context, diplomacy must enter into a genuine dialogue with other cultures and help the West to face the external imposition of non-liberal values brought by the economic liberalization. The national states alone are not capable of this and Europe will not be taken seriously by its partners unless it has a firm and coherent common position.

# Vertical and horizontal cleavages in the European diplomacy

So far, the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU has had a rather negative image. The first hesitant steps in setting up the European External Action Service and the perceived weakness of the EU High Representative have not helped to improve it. However, not only is it too soon to assess the last developments of the policy but some tangible successes, such as the EU anti-piracy operation Atalanta in the Horn of Africa and a couple of peacekeeping operations, are often overseen. Nevertheless, the challenges to a single European policy remain huge. They can be divided into a vertical and a horizontal dimension.

Firstly, the EU was built as a “policy organization”, but not as a “politics organization”. The democratization of the EU by the growing role of the European Parliament, trade unions and social actors is insufficient. Moreover, in the realm of foreign policy, the consultations with the numerous actors at multiple levels may sometimes be at odds with the need for a quick reaction from the European diplomacy, not speaking about the necessity to explain the EU actions to the European citizens. The transparency of the EU policy-making process paradoxically gives the EU a disadvantage in the negotiations with the non-democratic and non-transparent partners (e.g. in the framework of WTO negotiations). These partners – or rather competitors – are also aware of the fragile unity of the Union and may undermine it by dealing with the member states separately, as was the case when China recently took over a part of the member states’ public debts.

Secondly, there is a clear power asymmetry between big and small member states, charged by prejudices and diverging interests. While the big states are capable of a strong leadership that could be generalized to the whole Union, such as the financial and economic policies of Germany, they still require smaller allies in order to gain a qualified majority in the Council of the EU. Nevertheless, if a big state such as Germany, for example, blocks the constitution of a common policy towards Russia, it can hardly be overcome. On the other hand, some smaller member states such as the Czech Republic are subject to a “Munich Syndrome” that translates into an innate mistrust in the big states’ intentions and policies. There can be no agreed common position without the creation of alliances and compromises, and therefore the reaction of the EU is much slower in comparison with the national diplomacies. The blame cannot be placed only on the High Representative. Finally, the ideal of the welfare state is not shared by the “new” member states, which is also visible in their positions when it comes to strengthening global governance.

# Constructing the European interest through institutions and practice?

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There cannot be an effective European diplomacy without a well-defined European interest. The international politics have probably become more pragmatic after the global economic crisis, and interests seem to outweigh values more than ever, at least in the current international discourse. The EU has quite clearly stated its values in the Lisbon Treaty, but did it define its interests, and if so, are these shared by the member states? Opinions differ on whether the EU foreign policy should be created through better coordination or integration. Nevertheless, there is a large consensus that the EU's interest is more important than national interests since passivity is no alternative to the on-

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going geopolitical dynamics. An inward-oriented "big Switzerland" is not an option for the European Union.

But who should define the EU's interest, and how? Would it be the Commission or the member states? Each country has a specific

way of "reading" Europe and therefore, it is difficult to define the common denominator. It seems that the Euro crisis has mobilized the member states around a common interest, but some non-members of the Eurozone such as the Czech Republic have raised their objections and the consensus is not complete. On the other hand, the economic interests of the member states still determine not only national policies, but also the EU's policies. This is the case with the EU's development cooperation and especially the European Development Fund. The wealthy Commission is still often seen as an external tool of national policy rather than an integral part of a country's own policy and identity.

There are more unknowns than answers about the European interest, and the national particularities question the very possibility of a unified European interest. It is on-

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ly natural that some member states take care of their respective neighbourhoods, which would give the EU diplomacy a shape of overlapping circles concentrated around conglomerates of individual member states' interests

such as the Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean. In any case, the EU is not in any sense a federal state but it is not clear whether it could gain or lose its



advantage of being more than a simple addition of twenty-seven member states in this way. The attractive idea of coordination and division of labour, which is actually a mainstream in the EU's development policy, for example, is also contradictory with a well-articulated and comprehensible single voice for the EU outside its borders. Some advocate that the EU should concentrate on common actions rather than policies and build its foreign policy bottom-up. In this way, the institutional cultures might be gradually overcome. The ambitions of the junior diplomats indicate that the European interest may be constructed gradually through everyday practice in common institutions, and especially in the EEAS.

## The day-to-day concerns vs. an ideal image of a diplomat

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Most of the junior diplomats are interested in spending at least a part of their career in the EEAS. The European experience, in Brussels or at the delegations, allows them to work with people of other nationalities and hence to understand better the history and current positions of the member states. Moreover, there are diplomats that do not see their diplomatic identity as a mission to serve their own country anymore but as a standard international job. Yet the current experiences with national delegates in the Commission show that such a practice will remain ambiguous: the nationals may actually serve their own country's particular interests under the European cap, but at the same time, the Commission may use them to learn about their national preferences and accommodate its proposals to the Council.

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At interstate level, the example of the exchange between French and German diplomats shows that an unrestricted circulation of information is beneficial to both countries.

Meanwhile, the junior diplomats face many day-to-day challenges that find their origin in the diversity of missions and tasks. The work in multilateral diplomacy differs considerably from the work in bilateral diplomacy, and in addition to this, the EU is an amalgam of both with specific particularities. The diplomats are also not understood or accepted by experts who work not only in other ministries, but also within the ministry of foreign affairs. With the proliferation of transnational relations, the diplomats may also feel bypassed by other state ministries. If the EU coordination takes place only at

COREPER level, it can be difficult to change the path dependency of a proposal and put a political dimension into a seemingly technical proposal. A feminization of diplomacy is taking place as women are attributed a good knowledge of foreign languages and as the salaries at the ministries are relatively low in comparison to the business sector. However, female diplomats spend their most productive years abroad, which puts pressure on their family lives, and male diplomats have to face family choices as well. Finally, junior diplomats are often confronted with an intra-ministerial hierarchy and cumbersome communication tools that are not always adapted to contemporary needs.

In spite of these numerous problems, the ideal of a generalist diplomat is still valued. The requirements for a “perfect” diplomat are very often in conflict with each other, but it seems that the appeal and pride of the job consists in its contradictions. The diplomat has to be analytical and practical at the same time, and his or her concrete tasks are of an ever-changing nature. S/he should be a good worker at both their home ministry and foreign missions even though the nature of each position (i.e. working as a desk officer and working at an embassy) is different. S/he has to have a long-term vision despite the invisible immediate effects. S/he needs to be self-confident and outspoken while modest and discreet. S/he has to understand his/her partners or opponents and gain their trust without “going native” even when s/he may strongly disagree with its own ministry. S/he has to be good in communication skills in private meetings and in the media. New agendas such as crisis management, where one has to act quickly and manage a large network of stakeholders, are good examples of the high requirements that the junior diplomats will face in the future.

## Final recommendations

The participants of the *1<sup>st</sup> Czech-French Forum of Young Talents* have identified challenges and proposed recommendations to diplomacy especially in the following areas:

- Diplomacy is under an external pressure induced by globalization and geopolitical shifts as well as under the internal pressure of the call for transparency and budgetary restrictions. The diplomat needs to face these changes actively and act as a manager and interpreter of knowledge in a world characterized by an overflow of information.
- The need for a strong and effective EU diplomacy is not disputed. However, European interest has not been clearly defined and agreed by the member states and the Commission so far. The creation of the European External Action Service seems to offer an institutional setting that will help to articulate the European interest through everyday practice.



- The ideal of a generalist diplomat has not waned. In a world dominated by transgovernmental cooperation and summit diplomacy, the seemingly contradictory requirements of a diplomat constitute a benefit for it. Nonetheless, diplomacy must update its competences, enter the public debate and keep updated with technological progress.

## Further reading

- Jean-Robert Leguey-Feilleux: *The Dynamics of Diplomacy*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009.

## Annex: Participants of the 1<sup>st</sup> Czech-French Forum of Young Talents

### The Young Talents

Kateřina Becková

Samantha Bonbayl

Thomas Bondiguel

Erik Colombeau

Barbora Čápová

Stéphane Harzelec

Roman Holý

Jana Králová

Jan Kubišta

Gautier Lekens

Lucie Marešová

Marie Paret

Rémy Queney

Adelin Royer

Vanessa Selk

Dora Svobodová

Marek Toman

Jaroslav Zamazal

## **Other participants and facilitators**

### **Embassy of France in the Czech Republic**

Pierre Lévy, Ambassador

Nicolas de Lacoste, First Counsellor

Fatih Akcal, First Secretary

Samuel Berger, Intern

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### **Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Pavel Fischer, Political Director

Petr Buriánek, Director General, European Section

Josef Kreuter, Former Head of Mission to the EU

Ivana Hlavsová, Director, South and Southeast European Countries Department

### **Institute of International Relations**

Petr Drulák, Director

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David Cadier, Visting Fellow

### **CERI – Sciences Po**

Christian Lequesne, Director