

11-1-2012

## Diplomacy and Cosmopolitanism in a Globalized World

Adina Borcan Ph.D.

Alpen Adria University, adinanicoleta@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/jigs>



Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#), [Critical and Cultural Studies Commons](#), [Environmental Studies Commons](#), and the [Sociology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Borcan, Adina Ph.D. (2012) "Diplomacy and Cosmopolitanism in a Globalized World," *Journal of International and Global Studies*: Vol. 4: No. 1, Article 3.

DOI: 10.62608/2158-0669.1115

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/jigs/vol4/iss1/3>

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Digital Commons@Lindenwood University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of International and Global Studies by an authorized editor of Digital Commons@Lindenwood University. For more information, please contact [phuffman@lindenwood.edu](mailto:phuffman@lindenwood.edu).

## Diplomacy and Cosmopolitanism in a Globalized World

Adina Borcan PhD  
Alpen Adria University  
[adinanicoleta@yahoo.com](mailto:adinanicoleta@yahoo.com)

### Abstract

Due to the fact that there is a new world culture, with increasing connections of varied local cultures, the characteristics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century seem to be *globalization*, seen as “a matter of increasing long-distance interconnectedness, at least across national boundaries, preferably between continents as well” (Hannerz, 1996, p. 17). However, despite this tendency towards globalization, there are still some communities who have no contacts even within the same country (different tribes from an African country, for example) or countries which are isolated due to political doctrine (North Korea, for example), where contact with the rest of the world is not possible. The link depends on the place and time: the strength of the communist era in Eastern Europe compared to the openness of nowadays, for example, or the lack of interconnectedness in the Third World in the 21<sup>st</sup> century due to the financial situation while in the same period of time, in developed countries, globalization is no longer theory, but everyday life (consumer goods coming from the other side of the world, tourists, exchange programmes, etc.). In recent times, people everywhere have cultivated links and relationships to people and places in other countries and on other continents, especially in a political context. “Globalization creates First Worlds in the Third Worlds and Third Worlds in the First World” (Parameswaran, 2008, p. 116). The diplomat is one of the strangers who is playing an important and increasing role in globalizing the world. The diplomats’ status and challenges are analysed through the theories of Hannerz, Simmel, Luckmann, and Stonequist.

### The Diplomat as an Actor in the Globalized World

Globalization is a key word of our times and an issue for the day to day life. The question is not whether this leads to less or more culture, but how the contact between cultures is possible, for diplomats, in the era of globalization.

The main actor of the globalized world is the *cosmopolitan*. The term comes from the Greek and was coined by the stoics as *kosmou politês* (world citizen). If “the cosmopolitanism leads to a borderless society of strangers” (Ossewaarde, 2007, p. 377), the diplomats mission is not so difficult. But, even nowadays, with some closed societies or societies which are unfriendly towards strangers and with clear nation-states, this is not yet possible, even if the state has sometimes lost its quality as a sharp entity and the interactions are becoming easier and easier. We are not yet living in a world of cosmopolitans, because there are still communities which have not been touched by globalization, but the trend towards ‘Unions’, such as the European Union and the African Union, is moving in this direction. The semi-globalization of the world is a challenge for a diplomat, moving from country to country and trying to adapt himself in each place, being expected not only to survive, but to flourish without “local, immediate, concrete and exclusive bounds” (p. 384).

In Hannerz view (1996) there are two types of cosmopolitans: the individual who takes from the other culture only those elements which suit himself, this being the way, in the long term, to construct his own unique personal perspective or the one who does not make distinctions between the particular elements of the alien culture in order to admit some of them into his repertoire and refuse others. He does not negotiate with the other culture but accepts it as a package deal. This is the place to introduce the diplomat. His attitude must lie somewhere between the two mentioned above. He is not entitled to negotiate the culture in which he is a guest, he must take it as it is, without comment and complaint. He is not in a post in the country to criticize it. On the other hand, in order to find his way in the culture, to acculturate himself in order not to be rejected, to socialize and find connections (important in diplomacy), he needs his own perspective. Immersion in the other culture, although necessary for a diplomat, is, at the same time, limited by the constraints of the job and by his own constraints. The diplomat is a spectator and participant at one and the same time, which give him the quality of being involved and being objective all at once.

One important point to be mentioned is that cosmopolitanism represents not only the mobility of persons but also the mobility of the person’s perspective. Cosmopolitanism supposes a state of mind, characterized by openness toward other cultural experiences. This openness is expressed through listening, observing, being intuitive, and reflecting. These qualities as an observer and participant should be the result of one’s own state of mind (willingness) and not the result of requests imposed by the country. The involvement of the diplomat in the new culture is not thanks to his own good will. He has to build up connections and networks because it is part of his job, even if he does not necessary enjoy it.

Another characteristic of the cosmopolitan is the fact that he is more distant and reserved remaining objective, as Simmel (1992) says. He prefers to remain a stranger, not to be included by the locals (Ossewaarde, 2007, p. 376), always ready to leave the organization. This is another factor that transforms the diplomat into a cosmopolitan – he does not seek inclusion, and even when involved, he remains outside the local community, flexible and aware of the fact that he could, at any moment, be asked to leave by his own country or by the host country, in the case of a diplomatic conflict. In this context, we can speak about “we” and “others”, the latter being the society where a stranger – the diplomat – is (or is not) accepted. Perfect identification with the culture of the others and total intrusion is dangerous for a diplomat. If the diplomat becomes too familiar with the system and the people (in their attempt to become integrated and accepted), feelings of being at home in the culture of the others as well as in their own culture will ensue. If things are considered as normal and

familiar, the interests of their own country are overshadowed and there is a danger of becoming useless for their country.

### **Cosmopolitan-local Distinction**

The diplomat must be seen in the context of his new surroundings, not as space, but as society. As pointed out above, cosmopolitanism supposes more than just movement in the world from one space to another. Can an immigrant, a trader, or even a tourist be considered a cosmopolitan? Finally, the three of them are on the move, they get involved with the locals, interaction is present and the cultures could be contrasting cultures. However, a tourist is in contact only with a superficial side of a country and he cannot go in details, while someone living in a country can get in touch with the more profound side of the society. In addition, the reaction of the locals towards the tourists is different than the one towards the strangers who are living there for a longer period.

Someone can be given the attribute of cosmopolitan only in regards to the locals. The cosmopolitan-local distinction has been a part of sociological vocabulary since 1957, having been introduced by Merton in his book *Social Theory and Social Structures*. He made a study of two types of influential persons, the local and the cosmopolitan, pointing out the differences between these categories. In order to divide up people into these two categories, he used criteria such as geographical situation and patterns of communication behavior, but the main criterion for distinguishing the two was found in their orientation towards a certain place (in Merton's case a small city called Rovere). Merton adopted this terms from Zimmerman, who, translated Toennies' concept of *Gemeinschaft* as localistic and *Gesellschaft* as cosmopolitan (Merton, 1968). Although the terms are used in the literature to refer to types of social relationship or social organization, Merton uses them as types of influential persons, which includes, in our case, the diplomat as an influential person, due to his status. In Merton's conception, for the local, the place where he lives essentially represents his world. He is preoccupied with local problems and he is "parochial" (Merton, 1968, p. 447). The cosmopolitan type (who has previously lived in other places and in other communities) maintains a minimum relation with the community where he exercises a certain influence but he is oriented towards the outside world, because even when he is resident in a certain place, he lives in the "great society", feeling himself not to be rooted in that place. "If the local type is parochial, the cosmopolitan is ecumenical" (p. 447). In this regard, although I have shown that the diplomat fulfills the conditions for being a cosmopolitan, he does not fit in with Merton's criteria. He is sent to a certain place to be oriented towards this place; he has to be informed about what is happening in the place where he has been posted and he has to keep in the contact with the locals (officials and others). Although it is important for him to know what is happening in the outside world and especially in his home country in order to carry out his functions well, priority has to be given to the "parochial situation".

Of course, the diplomat does not feel rooted in the place where he is posted (this is not his home, after all), but he has to find his way about without putting down his roots, to keep to Merton's concept. Merton considers that the differences between locals and cosmopolitans do not only arise from education and knowledge, but also from their basic orientation, which is preordained by the structure of the social relations they construct, the "roads they have travelled to their present position" (p. 448), the utilization of their present status and their communicational behavior. Being familiar with the place, the local knows the "ins and outs of politics, business and social life" (p. 454). The cosmopolitan, being a new comer, has to learn these ins and outs. It is precisely this which is one of the missions of the diplomat. On the other hand, he arrives already equipped with the prestige and skills, which are associated with his profession, while the local has to gain them. In contact with other locals, the local has the advantage of understanding the cultural patterns, habits, and customs. The cosmopolitan has

the advantage of knowledge, but, in the case of the diplomat, he has to acquire the understanding. Acceptance and understanding of the local culture will help him to carry out his tasks. A distinction between local and global (with global standing for cosmopolitan here) is also made by Hannerz: the former is a source of cultural continuity and the latter is a source of change. The cosmopolitan introduces some changes into the life of the local. He brings new ideas, new habits, and new values. Because he travels with his meanings and perspectives and his social standards, he gives the local the possibility of making a comparison between his local culture and the outside world. Without intending to do so, through his contacts with the locals, the diplomat somehow contributes to globalizing them. This is way, the diplomat as a cosmopolitan is not only very mobile, moving from a country to another one, but he has (or he is supposed to have) a very mobile mind and perspective, being an active participant in the globalization process around the world.

Of course, it should not be forgotten that locals remain locals even without cosmopolitans, but someone cannot be a cosmopolitan without locals, without being placed in relation to the local society. Just as Cowan and Arsenault use the term *ubuntu* (from Ghanan language, other authors are given as source Kenyan language), the meaning being “I am human only through others” (2008, p. 616), I can say that the diplomat is cosmopolitan only through contact with “the others”. In order to become involved, the first condition is the willingness of the diplomat and the second is the willingness of the other, “Of the various conditions said to be important to the interpersonal domain, reciprocity stands out as one of the most significant” (Sampson, 2003, p. 158).

### A World Citizen

Constantinou considers that “The diplomat is a prominent citizens of the polis, ‘sent abroad to see the world’ with the purpose of finding out the laws and political ways of other peoples (non-Greeks) and bringing back this knowledge to inform and suggest reforms in the polis” (2005, p. 354).

Moving from his home country to a new country transforms the diplomat into a stranger, a concept that will be developed furthermore. Before being a stranger, a marginal man, or a member of an embassy, the diplomat is first and foremost a human being.

Constantinou has proposed a very interesting term, *homo-diplomacy*,

The first aspect concerns the non-professional dimension of diplomacy, by which I mean the interpersonal dealings of the homo sapiens, the experiential diplomacy of everyday life. The second aspect concerns the transformative potential of diplomacy, that is, a form of diplomacy (a more spiritual form of diplomacy) that engages in heterology to revisit and rearticulate homology, whose mission is not only, not just, the knowledge and control of the Other but fundamentally the knowledge of the Self.

(Constantinou, 2006, p. 352)

Even though he is abroad nearly all of the time, the diplomat does not lose contact with his “mother country” which he represents and where he goes back to every three or four years. As a world citizen, he does not deny his quality as a citizen of Germany, France, or the United States, for example, he simply adheres to a set of universal values. He is not in forced exile; he is in his chosen place in the world. In this context I can consider the diplomat as a new category of persons at home nowhere and everywhere in a worldwide chaos of cultural diversity, where the local remains local and the universal, universal.

Moving from one place to another, the diplomat is a stranger in all places (sometimes even at home, where he spends less time than away). Nussbaum stresses that the invitation to acquire world citizenship is an invitation to lose your friends, neighbors, and colleagues, an invitation to be in exile. It is a “lonely business” (Nussbaum, 1996, p. 15). In this situation, the diplomat has to remap his social order. “For the cosmopolitans, the breakdown of the group

boundaries opens up new possibilities for remapping the social order, in which they rule without local and national restraints” (Ossewaarde, 2007, p. 373). He needs full-time adjustment. He is in continuous transition; things have a “short life” for him, relations as well. He is on the move in the world. Sofer used the word impermanence for the situation of the diplomat abroad, the diplomat being “a wanderer among diverse cultures, climates and customs” (1997, p. 182). Another word to characterize the diplomat’s life is temporary, an ephemeral situation for him and his family, because diplomats usually take their wife/husband, children, and sometimes even servants, baby sitters, etc., abroad with them. Previous friendships are interrupted and old friends may be lost. In this special case, the difficulty was in learning the mother language. If the diplomats and their families are not able to react rapidly to the new situation to find their way in their new life, they always remain with nostalgia for the old place. In this case, integration is difficult. Some of the diplomats who have written books, memoirs, or articles about their lives mentioned the *Diplomatenkinderschicksal*<sup>1</sup>. “It is not easy for the children of the diplomats. Quite a few of them cannot cope with this life. The children, like their parents, are moving in a three-year rhythm... It can be painful.” (von Selchow, interview with U. Sante, 2006, p. 181). Short-lived relations with friends and surrounding are also the fate of the diplomat’s partner, whether wife or husband, as a collateral effect of his globalized life. Usually they are obliged to give up a profession or a job in order to follow their partners to the countries where they are sent. Those who do not do this of their own free will, or those who are doing it under constraints, might have difficulties adapting to their new lives and feel unhappy in the new country.

### The Diplomat, A Marginal Man – As Effect of Globalization Process

We cannot ignore the fact that the diplomat, as a stranger, somehow lives in two universes, but not as a full member of either of them; he does not totally adapt to the new culture and, at the same time, he is no longer part of his home culture either. Although some diplomats feel more like being member of the society at home compared to the country where they work and others feel the opposite, as fully integrated in the society where they are posted and like the marginal men at home, clear is that a diplomat lives between two cultures. Sharp found a metaphor to describe the situation of the diplomat abroad, being one of the first authors who describe the diplomat as a professional stranger, “the boat is pushed out, they leave, but they do not fully arrive in the place where they are to be received” (2009, p. 101). With one foot he is at home, in the country that he represents and that means he needs to keep in touch and have good knowledge of the political, economic, and social situation at home. However, as he is not physically there, he possibly loses partial touch with the people at home. With the other foot he is in the country where he is posted, where he must be well informed because he is the author of reports about the situation in that country which he has to send home. But he does not belong to that place. He has to respect the laws of the country where he is posted and generally accepted rules (regarding human rights, for example), but at the same time he has to conform with his own country’s laws.

Stonequist (1961) speaks about three types of strangers, using three French terms: *déraciné*<sup>2</sup>, *dépaysé*<sup>3</sup> and *déclassé*<sup>4</sup>. The diplomat is not *déraciné* because even when abroad, he still has somehow his roots in his home country; he has a clear origin and is supposed to go back to his original roots after his service is complete. He is also far from being *déclassé*, because he enjoys a high status. The best word from those three to describe his situation is maybe the term *dépaysé*, because it might happen, when the diplomat comes to live and work

<sup>1</sup> The destiny of the diplomats children (own translation from German).

<sup>2</sup> Uprooted

<sup>3</sup> Disoriented, not feeling at home

<sup>4</sup> Inferior rank, grade, prestige

in a new country, that he is disoriented at the beginning until he finds his way in the new culture. If he does not find his way in the new place, disorientation will turn into a culture shock. Park considers that the marginal man is “a personality type that arises at the time and place where, out of the conflict of races and cultures, new societies, new peoples and cultures are coming into existence” (as cited in Stonequist, 1961, p. xvii). In the case of the diplomat, he is not only “a new man”, but he brings with him a new culture, which due to his profession, is not ignored in the new place. On the contrary, he and everything that makes up his function is at the full attention of the officials in the place where he is posted. Park believes that the marginal man plays the role of the cosmopolitan and the stranger at the same time. He becomes a person with a wide horizon (which is normal for a diplomat because he moves from one place to another and has knowledge about all the places where he has been posted). He is “detached and rational”, says Park (as cited in Stonequist 1961, p. xviii). From this point of view he comes to the same conclusions as Simmel, who speaks about the objectivity of the stranger. Park also considers that the marginal man is the effect of imperialism, in economic, political, and cultural terms. In the case of the diplomat, the marginalization is the effect of political contacts and agreements between countries in the globalization era. Stonequist gives another definition of the marginal man as “the individual who, through migration, education, marriage, or some other influence leaves one social group or culture without making a satisfactory adjustment to another finds himself to the margins of each but a member of neither” (Stonequist, 1961, pp. 2-3). I agree that the diplomat is at the margins of two cultures, but he does not have peripheral participation. Sofer, on the other hand, considers the diplomat abroad a “peripheral man”, who lives at the edges of society (1997, p. 181), being entrapped in a false social position. Through his position and his job, he is in the centre and not at the periphery. He has a special status and he must be treated with consideration; he cannot be ostracized or rejected because of his nationality or race. From this point of view, the diplomat is not a marginal man. Another question that is raised from Stonequist’s theory is whether the diplomat could be considered a hybrid, from a cultural point of view. The answer is no because, although the diplomat has a mixed culture, he is not the result of contact between different races and neither is he the result of cultural diffusion, as Stonequist defines the hybrid. It is not the case that a whole cultural system moves into another system, which can only happen when a large group of people is involved. The diplomat is one person who represents one culture in another culture. Thus, the diplomat is somehow at the margins of the culture of the host country, suffering from incomplete incorporation in his new surroundings. Regarding his home culture, he is also at the margins. Being abroad, although permanently in contact with officials and colleagues from his ministry, the diplomat loses touch with his “real life” at home, which might make re-entry shock possible especially if he takes on two consecutive posts abroad and is away for up to eight years. However, it is very important to mention that the diplomat leaves his social group for a professional reason, he is not forced to do so, it is his choice. One of the criteria used by Stonequist to identify the marginal man is his nationality (based on the fact that in modern countries, society is formed upon the principle of nationality) and another is race superiority because “cultural differences among national groups are explained in terms of biological causation” (p. 8). He also mentions possible hostile social attitudes in the host country, but in diplomacy, even when countries are very different ideologically, the diplomat is paid the necessary respect. So normally, none of these criteria can be applied to diplomacy. Generally speaking, the question of nationality, race, or social attitude could maybe erase problems in the case of the immigrant but not in the case of the diplomat.

As has already been pointed out, in few years that he spends in a country, the diplomat is not able to fully encompass all the cultural patterns of that place. Stonequist claims that he cannot acquire a new and stable self. Moreover, total adaptation is not advised because he is, after all, representing his home country (that means its values, its culture, and its habits) and if

he takes on the new culture totally he is no longer useful for the country who sent him. "Without social distance and this enchanting strangeness, the diplomat may lose his usefulness" (Sofer, 1997, p. 185). That is one of the reasons for the unwritten rule in diplomacy about not keeping a diplomat in a post for more than three to four years (some exceptions being possible).

### **A New Identity**

The advantages and disadvantages of the globalized life for the diplomat abroad are obvious. The next question is if he needs, in this situation, a new identity. More than 30 years ago, personal identity was a sociological category of similar importance to the social institution, "In the course of the twentieth century the socio-political connotations of identity concepts faded whereas the psychological implications, linking identity to some 'inner self' gained in importance" (Luckmann, 2006). Some changes have occurred in the meantime. One of them was the increasing individualization of social relations, taking into account the perspective of "the others". "The individuals experience their actions not only in their own 'inner' perspective but also in the perspective of others" (Luckmann, 2006). As Luckmann says, personal identity is constituted through face-to-face interactions. Pekerti and Thomas have the same meaning, "it is possible that in interacting with a culturally different other, individuals felt obligated to reinforce, through their behavior, their own cultural identity" (2003, p. 139). In the case of the diplomat, he remodels his identity in face of the new reality of the country where he is posted, but he does not fake his own identity just to please others. Sofer speaks about the crisis of identity of the diplomat as stranger; the diplomat is called upon to refrain from being his true self, "Perhaps this is the cruelest price paid for the sake of diplomacy: to be a strange to oneself" (1997, p. 183). Each society is different to a certain degree and the cultural identity is different in each society. It might be the case that German and Austrian societies are similar to a certain degrees, but at the same time, German society is different to Eskimo society. The diplomat's system of values is primarily connected with the place he comes from and with common sense. If the 'guest society' is similar with his 'home society' and globalized enough to offer him the necessary comfort, there no need for a new identity. However, the challenge for the diplomat, in this context, is to retain his own identity and to find a way of managing contact with people with different identities, not losing his affection for, and identification with, his place of birth. "The Stoics stress that to be a citizen of the world one does not need to give up local identifications, which can be a source of great richness in life" (Nussbaum, 1996, p. 8). The diplomat does not suffer from a process of 'Americanization', 'Germanization', or 'Romanization', he remains who he was at birth. The process of learning influences membership, and the new skills and discourse become "part of developing one's identity as a full legitimate participant" (Castells, 2008, p. 298). Only moving easily and with an open minded from one circle to another gives the diplomat full access to world citizenship and transforms him into a world citizen with full intercultural skills.

### **Conclusion**

The diplomat, although having the characteristics of a world citizen, is not allowed to create a large gap between himself and his own culture in order to understand the new one. As a world citizen, the diplomat is one of many who hold world citizenship, just like managers who move from one country to another (especially in recent years), depending on the wishes of the company they work for. In a mobile world strangers attract a lot of attention in the societies in which they live. In this case, the diplomat can manage his situation better than the stranger without being rejected and without taking over, just by adapting and having an open



mind. On the other hand, moving from one place to another, with a biography that includes staying in different places, the diplomat takes the knowledge he has acquired with him, the final result being a flexible citizen with knowledge without boundaries. In this context, being all the time surrounded by cultural differences, the borders become, as Ossewaarde puts it, “superfluous” (2007). It is from this point of view that they must judge themselves and their actions for a diplomat. These persons are equipped (or at least they are supposed to be equipped, by the simple fact that they have been selected by their own country) with a special set of knowledge and “they could leave and take it with them without devaluing it” (Hannerz, 1996, p. 108).

Diplomacy remains, due to its characteristics, restraints, and advantages a special mixture of profession and vocation. The diplomat is in a continuous process of changing his relationship to match current patterns. Of course, in his case, moving from one country to another, and moving again after some years, the diplomat could be confronted with an identity crisis, new rules for the social constructions of identity. He does not know any longer where he belongs. He has become a world citizen, at home everywhere and nowhere.

## References

- Castells, M. (2008). The new public sphere, global civil society, communication networks, and global governance. In *Public diplomacy in a changing world, in the annals of the American academy of the political and social science* (pp. 291-317).
- Constantinou, C. M. (2006). On homo-diplomacy. In *Space and Culture* (pp. 351-364).
- Cowan G., & Arsenault, A. (2008). Moving from monologue to dialogue to collaboration: The three layers of public diplomacy. In *The annals of the American academy of political and social science*, 10(616), 10-30.
- Hannerz, U. (1996). *Transnational connections. Cultures, people, places*. London: Routledge.
- Luckmann, T. (2006). *Personal identity as a sociological category*. Lecture conducted from Zagreb.
- Merton, R. K. (1968). *Social theory and social structures*. Enlarged edition. New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Nussbaum, M. (1996). *For love of country: Debating the limits of patriotism*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Ossewaarde, M. (2007). Cosmopolitanism and the society of strangers. *Current Sociology*, 55.
- Parameswaran, R. (1968). The other sides of globalization: Communication, culture, and postcolonial critique. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 1. New York and London: Macmillian Publishers.
- Pekerti, A. A., & Thomas, D. C. (2003). Communication in intercultural interaction: An empirical investigation of idiocentric and sociocentric communication styles. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 34, 139-154.
- Sampson, E. E. (2003). Unconditional kindness to strangers. *Theory and Psychology*, 13, 147-175.
- Sharp, P. (2009). *Diplomatic theory of international relations* (pp. 100-110). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Simmel, G.. (1992). Exkurs über den fremden. *Soziologie. Untersuchung über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Sofer, S. (1997). The diplomat as a stranger. *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 8(3).
- Stonequist, E. V. (1961). *The marginal man*. New York: Russel and Russel.
- Ulrich Sante in Selchow, Stephanie von (2006). Traumjobs. *Wunsch und Wirklichkeit*, Munchen, Deutschen Taschenbuch Verlag, Munchen.