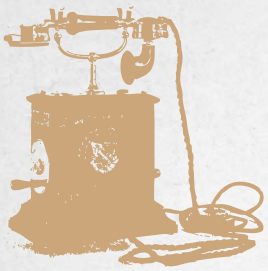

Jovan Kurbalija

History *of* Diplomacy *and* Technology

From smoke signals to artificial intelligence

Second edition

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HISTORY OF DIPLOMACY AND TECHNOLOGY
From smoke signals to artificial intelligence
Second edition

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Instead of including full URLs in footnotes, the word [link] is used to indicate that a particular source is available online. This approach reflects the fact that URLs are often excessively long, prone to change or disappearance, and that most online sources can be easily located using a search engine.

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Preface

I still remember my first days as a young diplomat in the early 1990s, juggling traditional in-person meetings with the emerging digital tools of emails and databases.

Witnessing the scepticism of senior colleagues towards technology, alongside the enthusiasm of my peers, I started exploring how diplomacy has adapted to technological shifts throughout history.

In 1991, during my master's studies in Malta, I had time to dive deeper into the impact of technology on diplomacy, while writing my thesis on AI in diplomacy and international law.

Around the same time, another development profoundly shaped my perspective on diplomacy. While I studied, my country of origin, Yugoslavia, dissolved into new states.

This traumatic experience, fueled by war, taught me firsthand that states are temporary social constructs we create to organise our collective life. It was a counterintuitive realisation, since we tend to regard nations and states as eternal, bolstered by narratives of a virtuous past, great heroes, and even divine origins.

Yet, newly formed states establish diplomatic services, demonstrating the enduring nature of diplomacy as a form of representation, whether for modern nation-states, or for tribes and empires in the past.

In this way, diplomacy transcends the surface manifestations of limousines, receptions, and flags to embody the much deeper human drive *to engage with others and resolve conflict peacefully*. That drive has been constant throughout history, ever since some of our distant ancestors discovered it was better to talk to each other than to kill one

another. The depth of this timeless diplomatic wisdom remains beyond our collective grasp, for now.

Rooted in both firsthand perspective and scholarly analysis, I continued uncovering the rich nexus between technology and diplomacy throughout history.

Technologies have relentlessly evolved from smoke signals and writing to the telegraph, satellites, the internet, and now AI. Yet diplomacy's core mission – representation and negotiation – has remained fundamentally the same.

This tension between technological change and diplomatic continuity became a central theme of my research and, ultimately, this book.

From ancient gift-giving to algorithmic diplomacy, one refrain echoes across time: What changed? What remained? And what wisdom can we carry forward?

History, of course, is no oracle. It won't hand us a step-by-step guide to the future of diplomacy and technology. But it does give us something just as important: perspective.

In the pages ahead, I trace patterns of adaptation – offering cautionary tales of hubris and inspiring stories of ingenuity – to shed light on our current crossroads.

Whenever we hear claims that AI will *replace diplomacy*, we should remember that the printing press, the telegraph, and the radio were each once seen as existential threats to statecraft. Yet diplomacy survived each of those upheavals not by resisting technological progress but by adapting to it.

This book is neither a eulogy for tradition nor a manifesto for disruption. It is a plea for balance: as we race toward the future, we must carry forward the wisdom of those who navigated similar tides before us.

The tools will keep evolving, but diplomacy's mission remains to represent, engage, and seek common ground with others in a world of constant change.

Acknowledgement

A project of this depth is never truly a solo journey - it thrives on the generosity and support of others. My deepest gratitude flows first to my wife, Aleksandra, whose unwavering patience and brilliant insights were my anchor through every challenge. Her belief in this work gave me the courage to keep going.

To the vibrant community at Diplo - students, researchers, and lecturers - thank you for opening my eyes to the richness of Asian, African, and Indigenous diplomatic traditions. Your perspectives didn't just inform this book; they transformed it, weaving threads of wisdom I could never have gathered alone.

I'm profoundly grateful to Mina Mudrić, whose consistent efforts and sharp instincts reignited momentum when it mattered most. For this edition, Dina Hrecak's thoughtful editing polished every page with care, Ivana Dunjić's meticulous research fortified its foundations, and Sorina Teleanu's keen eye refined its essence. Together, you turned a vision into something tangible, and far more meaningful.

To all of you: your fingerprints are on every chapter, and I'm endlessly thankful.

Jovan Kurbalija

Geneva, 21 July 2025

Introduction

A methodological toolkit for analysing the co-evolution of diplomacy and technology

No single historical, sociological, or technological research methodology can fully capture the interplay between diplomacy and technology across disciplines and time.[1]

A purely historical approach could end in a catalogue of events and inventions, while a strictly technological lens can fall into the trap of determinism, treating diplomacy as a passive follower of technological changes.[2]

This book follows an interdisciplinary approach combining various disciplines and methods as outlined in Table 1.

[1] An interdisciplinary approach is critical for analysing complex socio-technological changes as argued by Jasanoff, S. (2004). *States of Knowledge: The Co-production of Science and Social Order*. Routledge.

[2] Technological determinism has had a strong following in the Marxist theories and sociological thinking. For example, the American sociologist Thorsten Veblen saw technology as an autonomous and overarching force of societal changes with little room for human agency. It is interesting that technological determinism is getting revived in the AI era by arguing that AI has full agency in shaping modern society. On AI and technological determinism, consult: Héder, M. (2021). AI and the resurrection of Technological Determinism. *Információs Társadalom, XXI*(2), pp. 119–130. [link] Opposite of technological determinism is the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) approach arguing that human action shapes technology, not the other way around. The SCOT approach is described in the following texts: Bijker, W. E. (1995). Of bicycles, bakelites, and bulbs: Toward a theory of sociotechnical change. In W. E. Bijker, T. P. Hughes, & T. J. Pinch (Eds.), *The social construction of technological systems* (pp. 17–50). The MIT Press. [link]

Table 1: Methodologies used in this book's interdisciplinary approach

Methodology	Focus	Relevance to diplomacy and technology
Annales school of historiography[3]	Structure of historical time	Provides temporal layers (longue durée, etc.)
Socio-technical systems theory[4]	Co-evolution of technology and society	Supports a co-evolutionary perspective
Actor-network theory[5]	Networks of human and non-human actors	Analyses technology-diplomacy interactions
History of technology[6]	Technological impacts on society	Provides case studies for specific technologies
Diplomatic history[7]	Evolution of diplomatic practices	Outlines the main diplomatic events and treaties
Diplomatic theory[8]	Diplomatic organisation and functioning	Supports analysis of technologies and diplomatic functions
World-systems theory[9]	Global economic structures	Provides context for geopolitical analysis

[3] The *Annales School*, founded by Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch and later developed by Fernand Braudel, emphasises long-term historical analysis, interdisciplinarity, and 'total history.' Braudel introduced the concept of different historical times in his book: Braudel, F. (1972). *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. Harper & Row.

[4] Geels, F. W. (2004). From sectoral systems of innovation to socio-technical systems: Insights about dynamics and change from sociology and institutional theory. *Research Policy, 33*(6–7), pp. 897–920.

[5] Actor-network theory (ANT) addresses an interaction between diplomacy and technology by anchoring changes in network action by both human and non-human elements, including technology itself. For a comprehensive introduction to ANT consult Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford University Press; and Kamp, A. (2019). *Actor–Network Theory. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. Oxford University Press. [link]

[6] Kranzberg, M., & Pursell, C. W. (Eds.). (1967). *Technology in Western Civilization*. Oxford University Press.

[7] Diplomacy history was heavily influenced by the 19th-century German historian Leopold von Ranke, centered on the concept of *Primat der Aussenpolitik* (Primacy of Foreign Affairs). This methodology viewed international relations as the primary driver of a state's internal development and focused almost exclusively on the official documents and actions of foreign policy elites, including major conferences and events. For much of the 20th century, this remained the dominant paradigm, treating diplomacy as a history of interactions between states as represented by their leaders and official records.

[8] For theory of diplomacy, consult Berridge, G. R. (2015). *Diplomacy: Theory and practice* (5th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan. It provides a comprehensive overview of diplomatic practices, including the role of technology. See also Sharp, P. (2009). *Diplomatic Theory of International Relations*. Cambridge University Press.

[9] Wallerstein, I. (1974). *The modern world-system*. Academic Press.

The book inquiry also follows a co-evolutionary approach, arguing that diplomacy and technology are deeply intertwined domains that have mutually shaped each other throughout history.

For example, a new diplomatic tool (e.g. the printing press) altered the geopolitical and societal context (e.g. by helping to consolidate vernacular languages and foster national identities), which in turn created new diplomatic topics (e.g. the need to formalise relations between these emerging states, culminating in agreements like the Peace of Westphalia). Then, new geopolitics and diplomatic topics triggered technological development, such as refining cipher-protecting communication as a tool for diplomats and negotiators.

To dissect the complex interaction between diplomacy and technology, this book uses a methodological toolkit centred around *three* transformative technological revolutions through *three* distinct historical lenses, analysing their impact across *three* interdependent dimensions of diplomacy.

This '3×3×3' approach is not a rigid formula but a heuristic device that allows for a systematic yet flexible exploration of the tension between change and continuity at the heart of diplomacy's long history.

The three layers of historical time: A Braudelian approach

The temporal framework of the book is inspired by the *Annales School* historian Fernand Braudel, centred around three layers of historical time: specific events (*événement),* trends of the era (*conjoncture*), and structural dynamics (*longue durée*).

This layered temporal methodology helps avoid the risk of shallow focus on the surface historical level of events, individuals, and anecdotal accounts, typical of diplomatic history.

Événement: The surface events as historical laboratories

The *événement* is the surface layer of history, comprising specific, short-term events including battles, treaties, and major conferences.

While Braudel cautioned against overemphasising the relevance of specific historical moments, this study treats them as 'historical laboratories' where the deeper forces of the *longue durée* and *conjoncture* become visible and their effects can be tangible.

For instance, the Treaty of Kadesh (1259 BCE) is not just a singular peace agreement but an *événement* that reveals the mature diplomatic *conjoncture* of the Bronze Age, with its emphasis on written accords, divine witnesses, and parity between great powers.

Similarly, the Ems Telegram incident of 1870 is a powerful case study demonstrating the electric *conjoncture's* new perils, where the telegraph's speed could be misused to bypass deliberation and ignite conflict, as Prussian Chancellor Bismarck did.

The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis was a critical *événement* triggering the establishment of the Moscow-Washington hotline, allowing for direct communication between superpower leaders to deal with the crisis.

Conjoncture: The rhythms of change

The *conjoncture* is the medium-term layer of history, capturing the cyclical shifts in economic, social, and technological systems that unfold over decades or centuries. This temporal lens identifies distinct diplomatic eras, each defined by a prevailing set of technologies, political structures, and international norms.

For example, the Late Bronze Age was characterised by the Amarna system, a sophisticated diplomatic culture built on a shared *lingua franca* (Akkadian cuneiform), regular royal correspondence, and a balance of power among the great empires of the Near East.

Later, the Renaissance in Europe marked a new *conjoncture*, where the rise of the modern state system was facilitated by the printing press, which helped forge national identities, and the invention of the permanent resident embassy triggered institutionalisation of diplomacy.

The 19th and early 20th centuries constituted the electric era, a *conjoncture* defined by imperial competition and instantaneous global communication enabled by the telegraph and radio.

Today, we are in another turbulent *conjoncture* transition, moving from the internet era, based on the transmission control protocol/internet protocol (TCP/IP), into an AI era centred around the automation of access to knowledge and the augmentation of human cognition.

Longue durée: The deep constants of statecraft

The *longue durée* is the deepest and slowest-moving historical layer, spanning centuries or millennia. Geography, deep-seated cultural norms, and fundamental human impulses shape societies over vast periods.

In the context of this book, the *longue durée* illuminates what remains constant in statecraft, even as the technological landscape is radically transformed. The most profound constant is the human drive for survival through dialogue as an alternative to violence, an impulse visible from the earliest forms of proto-diplomacy, such as prehistoric gift exchanges designed to build trust and reciprocity between tribes.

This same impulse is echoed in the reconciliation rituals observed in primate societies, suggesting its roots run deeper than human history itself.[10]

Geography's influence remains stubbornly consistent across time. Digital submarine cables, for instance, often retrace the paths of early telegraph lines and even ancient sea navigation routes. Historically, locations like Gibraltar, Suez, Malacca, and Ormuz have maintained their critical geographical importance on humanity's political, trading, and communication maps.

Another enduring feature in diplomacy's history is the messenger's sanctity. The inviolability of the Greek *keryx*, who could traverse battle lines under divine protection, is an early formalisation of a norm that persists in the modern principle of diplomatic immunity, codified in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. This principle underscores a timeless requirement of diplomacy: for communication to occur, the channel must be secure and the messenger safe.

Furthermore, the *longue durée* reveals the persistent necessity of uniquely human qualities for diplomacy, like empathy, intuition, and trust. Even in an era of AI-assisted negotiations, these attributes remain irreplaceable for building rapport, understanding unspoken intentions, and forging genuine compromise.

[10] Frans de Waal showed that primates have drives for empathy, fairness, and negotiations, some of the key aspects of diplomacy.

The three technological revolutions in communication and information

Writing, electricity, and digitalisation are three technologies that have fundamentally altered key pillars of diplomacy: communication, information, and knowledge.

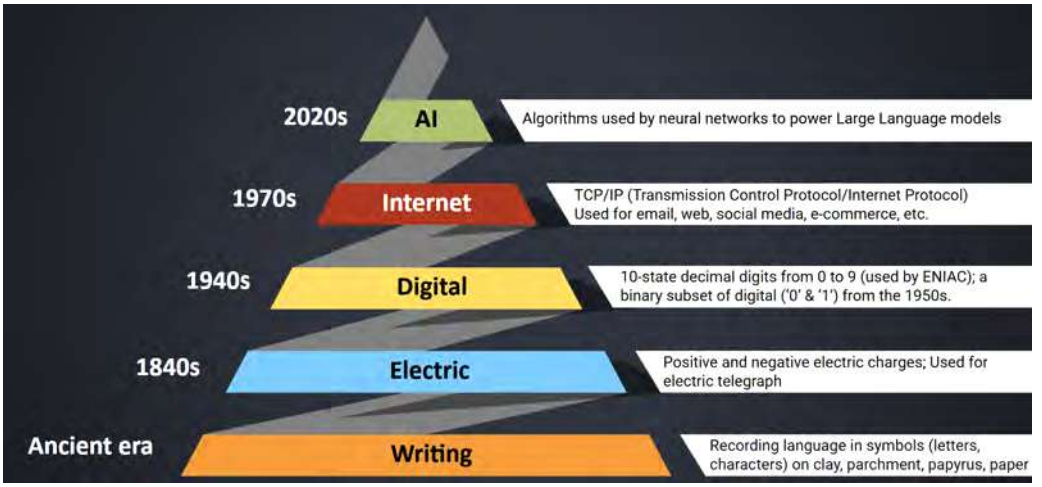

Figure 1: Evolution of technology from writing to AI

Each technology revolution introduced new forms of communication infrastructure (the physical means of communication) and new information management methods (the systems for organising, securing, and utilising data and information).

Writing, electricity, and digitalisation have altered 'proximity' in diplomacy related to the relationship between diplomats, their capitals, and the global public.

First revolution: Writing and archives

The invention of writing transformed diplomacy from a practice reliant on verbal communication and fallible human memory into one grounded in permanent, verifiable records. This shift from oral to literate culture laid the foundations for organised statecraft.

- *Infrastructure:* The first networks were built to carry written messages across vast territories, such as the organised courier relays of ancient Mesopotamia, the magnificent Persian Royal Road stretching from Sardis to Susa, the extensive road system of the Roman Empire, and the remarkably efficient *chasqui* runner system of the Inca Empire. These networks were the arteries of imperial administration and diplomatic communication.

- *Knowledge management:* Writing enabled new ways to capture and organise knowledge and information of critical relevance for diplomacy. The creation of archives, like the collection of cuneiform tablets known as the Amarna Letters, provided institutional memory, allowing rulers to reference past agreements and maintain continuity in foreign relations.

  The use of cylinder seals in Mesopotamia and later, wax seals in Europe, served as a technology for authenticating messages and ensuring their integrity. Scribes and their bureaucracies became the custodians of this knowledge, forming the proto-foreign ministries of the ancient world.

- *Proximity:* Writing did not reduce physical and cognitive distance. Envoys and ambassadors operated with significant autonomy, as courier instructions could take weeks or months to arrive. This distance provided a natural buffer for deliberation and on-the-ground decision-making.

Second revolution: Electricity and the annihilation of distance

The invention of electrical technologies sparked the second revolution, which led to the invention of the telegraph, telephone, and radio. This era was defined by the near-instantaneous transmission of information, effectively annihilating the constraints of distance that had shaped diplomacy for millennia.

- *Infrastructure:* In this era, networks became electrical, centred on the vast web of submarine telegraph cables that encircled the globe, epitomised by Britain's 'All Red Line,' which connected its empire without reliance on foreign powers. Telegraph cables later started carrying telephone voice messages. Another major shift was the use of radio communication that bridged the distance across continents.

- *Knowledge management:* Knowledge and information became central. The ability to intercept and decode enemy communications became a decisive strategic advantage. The speed of electrical communication created new challenges for securing information. Cryptography became an essential tool of statecraft, with foreign ministries developing sophisticated codebooks and dedicated 'Black Chambers' for cryptanalysis. Simultaneously, radio broadcasting emerged as a tool for mass propaganda and public diplomacy, a new form of knowledge management aimed at shaping public opinion on a global scale.

- *Proximity:* The telegraph introduced operational proximity between the foreign ministry and its ambassadors, dramatically reducing their autonomy and centralising control. The ambassador was now at 'the end of the wire' waiting for instructions from the capital.

  The telephone added vocal proximity, allowing for the direct transmission of information, tone, and emotions. The telephone was critical in de-escalating crises between the United States and the Soviet Union by using the Moscow-Washington hotline. Finally, radio and television created public proximity, presenting foreign events in real time to national audiences and adding the domestic public as another critical aspect of diplomacy.

Third revolution: Digitalisation and the augmentation of cognition

The third revolution, which we live through, is driven by digitalisation and the rise of AI. This shift is moving beyond the mere processing of information to the automation of knowledge and the augmentation of human cognition.

- *Infrastructure:* The infrastructure of the digital age is a complex, layered ecosystem. It includes the physical internet backbone of fibre-optic cables, a new generation of satellite constellations providing global connectivity, and the massive cloud data centres that store the world's information and powerful AI models.

- *Knowledge management:* Digitalisation has transformed knowledge management. Diplomacy now relies on vast databases, social media analytics, and sophisticated data processing. AI is taking this further, with models that can summarise complex negotiations, analyse geopolitical trends from unstructured data, and even assist in drafting diplomatic reports.

  AI has the potential to fundamentally transform foreign ministries' traditional 'archive function' from a static records repository into a dynamic, intelligent system for knowledge curation and generation.

- *Proximity:* AI is introducing a new form of cognitive proximity between humans and machines[11] with AI providing information processing and initial analysis freeing diplomats to focus on strategy, persuasion, and the uniquely human art of negotiation.

  This interaction between machines and humans initiates the next stage in the evolution of diplomacy and international relations.

[11] Cognitive proximity is about relations between humans and humans and machines. It is centered on rationality (*logos*), values (*ethos*), and emotions (*pathos*). Cognitive proximity concept has been developed by Jovan Kurbalija and used in operations of DiploFoundation. You can read more here: Diplo Foundation. (2023). *Cognitive proximity*. [link]

Three interdependent impacts of technology on diplomacy

Technology does not impact diplomacy monolithically; its effects ripple across three distinct yet interdependent dimensions: the geopolitical context, the diplomatic agenda, and diplomatic practice.

The following table maps the three technological revolutions against the three dimensions of diplomatic impact. This analytical matrix guides the analysis of the co-evolution of diplomacy and technology in this book. It serves as an initial research hypothesis. After being deployed throughout historical eras, this analytical matrix is revisited in the book's concluding section.

Table 2: Analytical matrix for an interplay between diplomacy and technology

The analytical matrix	Geopolitical & societal context	New diplomatic agenda: Topics for negotiations	Evolving diplomatic practices and tools
Writing revolution	Enabling centralised administration facilitated by writings and archives.	Formalisation of spoken agreements into written treaties and diplomatic communication.	The organisation of diplomacy through written correspondence and archives.
Electric revolution	Creation of global empires connected by submarine cables	Agreements on international standards for telegraphy and radio.	Instant communication between diplomats and headquarters.
Digital & AI revolution	Geopolitical relevance of data, semiconductors, satellites, and submarine cables.	Governance of the internet and AI.	Use of social media, video conferencing, and AI tools.

The geopolitical and societal context for diplomacy

This dimension examines how technology redistributes power, creates new geopolitical winners and losers, and reshapes the fundamental map of international relations.[12] Technological advantage often translates into geopolitical power. For example, the invention of the printing press was an essential factor in fueling the Protestant Reformation, forming the modern nation states and initiating the Westphalian international system.

In the 19th century, Britain's dominance over the global submarine telegraph cable network created a near-monopoly on international communication, providing its empire with an unparalleled strategic influence over global affairs.

Today, the geopolitical context is increasingly defined by the US-China rivalry, a competition fought over key technologies like AI, 5G networks, and semiconductor manufacturing.

The diplomatic agenda: New topics for negotiation

New technologies invariably create novel problems and frictions requiring negotiated solutions. New topics arise on the diplomatic agenda requiring international cooperation, establishing shared norms, and sometimes creating new treaties or international organisations to govern them.

The proliferation of the telegraph in the 19th century, for example, necessitated the creation of the International Telegraph Union in 1865 (the precursor to today's ITU) to standardise protocols and manage interconnections.

The sinking of the RMS Titanic in 1912, a disaster exacerbated by incompatible wireless systems, led directly to the 1912 Radiotelegraph Convention, which established SOS as the universal distress signal and mandated radio interoperability.

[12] Relations between power and technology is analysed in Jasanoff, S. (2004). *States of Knowledge: The Co-production of Science and Social Order*. Routledge.

More recently, the global expansion of the internet prompted the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in 2003–2005 to address the broader social and economic implications.

Today, AI is placing many complex new issues on the diplomatic agenda, from regulating lethal autonomous weapons and protecting knowledge to dealing with AI and digital divides.

The practice of diplomacy: Evolving tools and methods

This dimension focuses on the *how* of diplomacy: the tools, methods, and practices that diplomats use in their daily work. One of the first and still key tools of diplomacy is writing. According to the Sumerian epic *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* (c. 27th century BCE), the very invention of writing is triggered by the necessity of envoys to correctly pass the message to foreign rulers, avoiding the fallibility of memorising long messages.[13]

Millennia later, Gutenberg's printing press altered diplomacy by changing how diplomatic knowledge is organised and preserved. In the period of 1626–1629, Richelieu established the first ministries of foreign affairs centred around archives, a key feature of preserving institutional memory to this day. Printing also paved the way for newspapers and public awareness of both distinct places, wars, and negotiations.

During the Cold War, public radio broadcasts by services like the BBC, Voice of America, and Radio Free Europe became a central tool of public diplomacy and ideological competition.

In the 21st century, the modern diplomat's toolkit includes, among others, social media for public outreach and crisis communication, secure video conferencing for negotiations, and data analytics.

AI is becoming the next transformative tool, assisting with data analysis, drafting reports, and providing real-time support during negotiations, thereby augmenting the capabilities of the human diplomat.

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[13] Gong, Y. (2010). The Sumerian account of the invention of writing — A new interpretation. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences, 2*(5), pp. 7446–7453.

Many trajectories in the evolution of diplomacy and technology

Diplomacy and technology have many diverse origins, challenging the prevailing, often Eurocentric, narrative of reducing diplomatic history to important conferences and events of the last few centuries of modernity. The book shows that no single civilisation or culture 'invented' diplomacy or critical technologies.[14]

Rather, diplomacy is a universal human practice that has emerged and evolved in parallel across diverse cultures and continents, wherever communities have engaged in sustained interaction.

The study moves beyond a Westphalian narrative to explore the sophisticated diplomatic systems that flourished outside of Europe.[15] In Ancient India, the *Arthashastra* provided a detailed treatise on statecraft, espionage, and interstate relations that predated Machiavelli by millennia.

Imperial China developed a unique and enduring tributary system, a hierarchical model of diplomacy grounded in the pursuit of harmony and stable order, which managed relations with its vast periphery for centuries.

In the Americas, the Inca Empire engineered a high-speed communication network with its roads and *chasqui* runners, a system developed entirely independently of Old World models but serving the same function of administrative and diplomatic cohesion.

The book also recognises the diplomatic practices of African polities, fostering the trade and negotiation networks that sustained Afro-Eurasian linkages.

By adopting this comparative perspective, the book aims to expand the worldview by presenting a richer and more accurate tapestry of global diplomatic history. This approach underscores that while diplomacy's

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[14] Challenges dominant narrative of western-centered technological developments: Basalla, G. (1988). *The evolution of technology*. Cambridge University Press.
[15] Acharya, A. (2023). Before the Nation-State: Civilizations, World Orders, and the Origins of Global International Relations. *Chinese Journal of International Politics, 16*(3), 263–288. [link]

tools and cultural expressions may differ, the fundamental challenges of communication, negotiation, and coexistence are universal and timeless.

A note on method: An interplay between human and artificial intelligence

This book is a product of the AI era it seeks to analyse. It is written by a human with the help of AI, a 'desk researcher', helping identify sources and flag redundancies.

The writing process is an illustration of the emerging human-machine work. The author provides the strategic direction, the historical and theoretical framework, the critical analysis, and the narrative synthesis that form the intellectual core of the work.

The AI augments the author's research capabilities by efficiently managing and retrieving information from an extensive knowledge resource. The more AI was trained on authors' books, blogs, and videos, the more it reflected the way of thinking and framing arguments.

For example, AI has helped activate more than 2000 pages of notes and reflections gathered by the author over the last three decades. The main lesson from this work is that AI is a very useful *servant* but a bad *master*. By training and using AI, we also learn a lot about ourselves, our way of thinking and our biases.

Ultimately, this methodological approach brings the book's central argument full circle. Just as this text was created by synthesising human insights and AI efficiency, the book argues that future diplomacy will thrive on similar interactions.

This book is an invitation to reflect on how the practices of diplomacy shaped through history can guide the effective use of today's tools, ensuring that its core mission — to represent, engage, and seek common ground — continues to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

A journey of an idea

The idea for this book developed over many years of research, teaching, and dialogue. Its foundations were laid during 2013 and 2014, when Diplo organised a series of advanced-level webinars on the evolution of diplomacy and technology, led by Jovan Kurbalija. These sessions explored how major technological milestones — from early writing systems and the printing press to telegraphy and digital networks — influenced the tools and frameworks of diplomacy. Case studies from different civilisations and time periods illustrated these transformations, offering some of the first structured frameworks for understanding what would later be called digital diplomacy.

In 2021, this journey continued with the Masterclass series *Diplomacy and Technology: A Historical Journey*. Held monthly throughout the year, these sessions traced key moments in diplomatic history — from Mesopotamian scribes and Roman envoys to the rise of cyber diplomacy and artificial intelligence. They laid essential groundwork for what would become this book, expanding both the chronological scope and analytical depth of the original frameworks.

Finally, in December 2023, the first edition of *History of Diplomacy and Technology: From Smoke Signals to Artificial Intelligence* was published. Synthesising over two decades of research and teaching, the book offers a comprehensive narrative of how technological change has shaped the practice of diplomacy — from the earliest empires to the digital era.

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