

International Conference

17-18 SEPTEMBER 2026
KOPER - CAPODISTRIA, SLOVENIA

DIPLOMACY 2.0:

NEW REALITIES, NEW AGENCY, NEW STRATEGIES

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

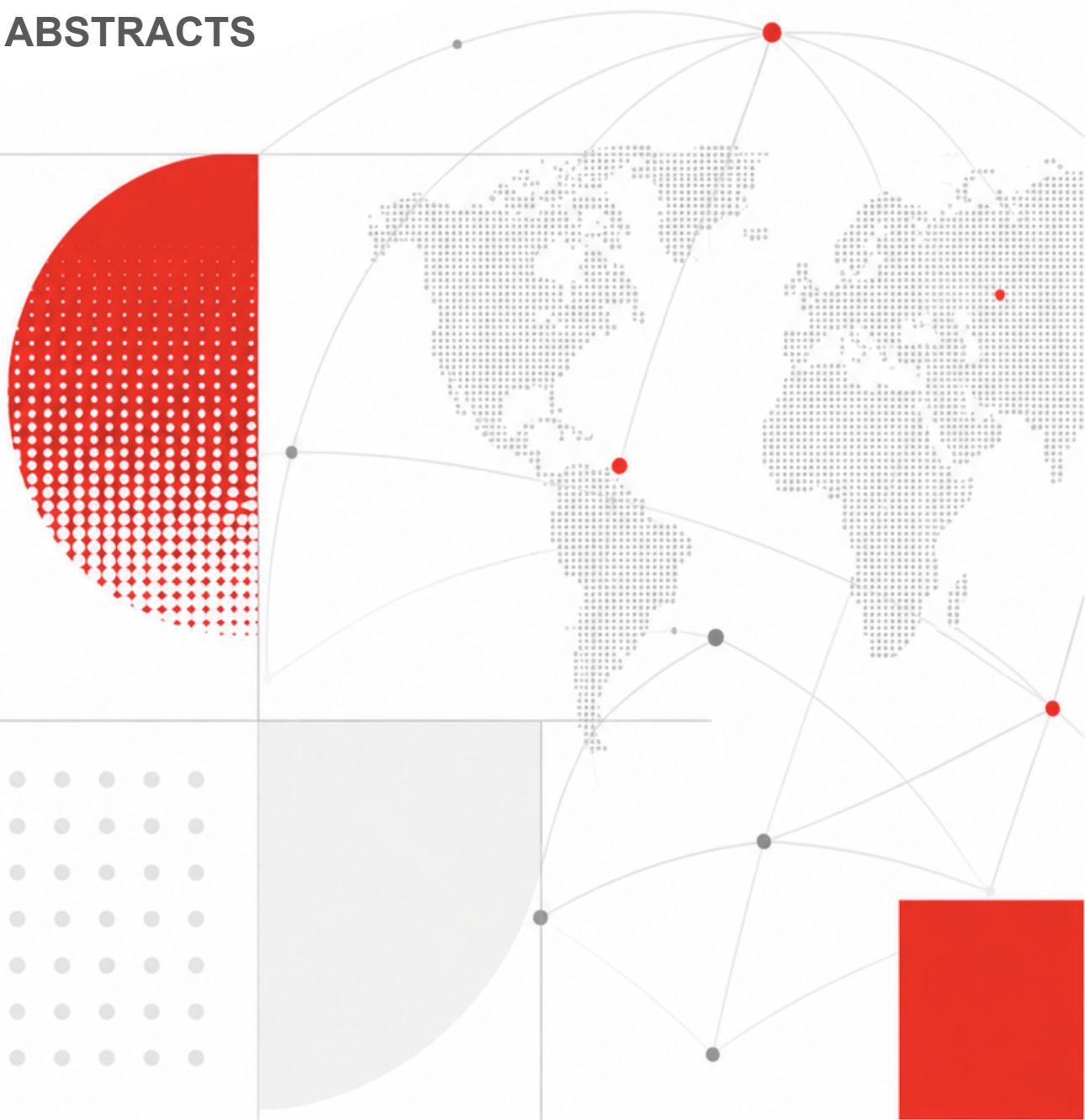
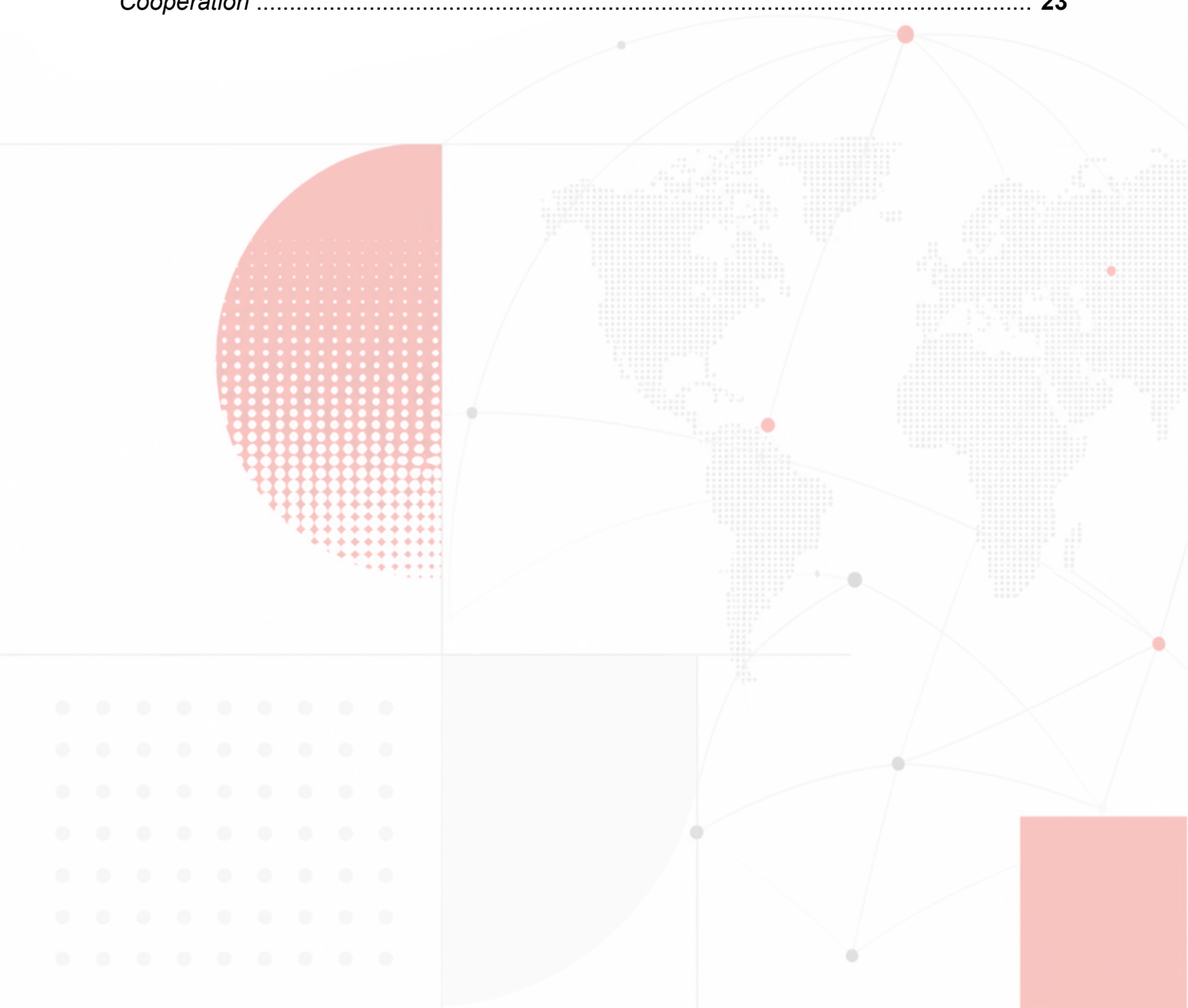


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DAY 1, SEPTEMBER 17

9:00 **Welcome coffee**

9:30 **Welcome address**

- **Prof. Dr Andreja Jaklič**, Vice Dean of Research at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences
- **Prof. Dr Rado Bohinc**, President of EMUNI University
- **Assist. Prof. Dr Jana Arbeiter**, Conference Organiser, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences

High-level panel

Moderated by **Prof. Mouin Hamzé**, Chairperson of the EMUNI Management Board

- **Teodoro Miano**, Secretary General of the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies
- **Ambassador Jernej Müller**, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovenia
- **Ambassador Tanja Miškova**, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovenia
- **Ambassador Hatem Atallah**, Member of the EMUNI Management Board - North African perspectives and practical strategies to address shared challenges
- **Mohammad Sanad Abu-Darwish**, Director of the Department of Science and Scientific Research, ALECSO - Regional preparedness and collective approaches to food and water security
- **Giuseppe Provenzano**, Project Manager for Research, Innovation, and Higher Education of the Union for the Mediterranean.

11:15 – 11:30 **Coffee Break**

11:30 – 13:00

Panel 1: Science, Sustainability, and the Art of Saving the World Through Diplomacy

Chair: **Jana Arbeiter**

- **Science Policy Models as Analytical Heuristics in Science Diplomacy** – **Simone Arnaldi** (University of Trieste)
- **Science Diplomacy in the Euro-Mediterranean: Bridging Nations through Research, Innovation and Higher Education** – **Mounir Ghribi** and **Jihene Nouairi** (Istituto Nazionale di Oceanografia e di Geofisica Sperimentale (OGS) and Euro-Mediterranean University)
- **Diplomacy and the New Space Race: Supporting Environmental and Social Sustainability Through Open Access to Earth Observation Data** – **Iris Koleča** (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences)
- **When Self-Interest Meets Narratives of Altruism: Diplomacy of Development Cooperation** – **Noémi Végi** (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences)
- **"Toeing the line ...": The Use of Social Networks in Slovenian Diplomacy** – **Boštjan Udovič** (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences)

13:00 – 14:00

Standing lunch

14:00 – 15:30

Panel 2: Soft, yet Powerful: Symbolism and Diplomatic Language

Chair: **Noémi Végi**

- **When Reports Rule: Diplomatic Language as International Governance** – **Nedžma Džananović Miraščija** (University of Sarajevo, Faculty of Political Sciences)
- **The End of Propriety: Vulgarity as a New Norm in Russian Diplomatic Practice Post-2022** – **Denis Mancevič** (New Century Corporate Communications)
- **Symbolic Power in Diplomacy: Rituals, Symbols and the Construction of Legitimacy** – **Jana Arbeiter** (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences)
- **Symbolism of Architecture in Diplomacy: The Cases of the Republic of Slovenia and the Swiss Confederation** – **Nejc Juritsch**

16:30	Optional walking tour of Koper
17:30	Organ Concert by Uroš Pele Location: Stolnica Koper, Titov trg 1
19:00	Dinner Location: Casa Popo, Kopališko nabrežje 1, 6000 Koper

DAY 2, SEPTEMBER 18

9:00 – 10:30	Panel 3: Polycrisis: The Future of Global Diplomacy Chair: Mounir Ghribi • Diplomacy and Three Types of its Proximity – H. E. Milan Jazbec (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovenia and New University) • Commercial Diplomacy in Disrupted Global Value Chains: Turning Reverse Real Options into New Strategic Options – Andreja Jaklič (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences) • From Sovereign Equality to Selective Rule-Making? Diplomacy as Practice in a Fragmenting Global Order – Milan Brglez (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences) • Objectivity in an Age of Multilayered Crises: Article 41 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and Sovereign Qualification – Arta Ibishi Puhek (New University, European Faculty of Law)
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee Break

11:00 – 12:30

Panel 4: New Realities: Strategy, Power and Geopolitics

Chair: **Boštjan Udovič**

- **Russian Diplomacy as an Instrument of Influence During the Full-Scale Invasion of Ukraine** – **Oleksii Polegkyi** (Institute of Political Sciences and Administration, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Non-Resident Fellow – IERES, George Washington University)
- **An Anti-democratic Pathway from National Identification to Nationalism: Evidence from Southeast Europe** – **Žan Lep** and **Žiga Mekiš Recek** (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, and Educational Research Institute, Slovenia)
- **Dynamic Power in Asymmetric Conflict: U.S.–Cuba Relations through the Dynamic Model of Negotiators' Power** – **Aleksander Jakobčič**

12:30

Closing remarks

13:00

Lunch

Symbolic Power in Diplomacy: Rituals, Symbols and the Construction of Legitimacy

Jana Arbeiter

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences

ABSTRACT

Although contemporary diplomacy is increasingly associated with digital technologies, new actors and evolving diplomatic practices, its effectiveness continues to depend on symbolic power as a fundamental dimension of diplomatic action. Diplomatic scholarship has extensively analysed negotiation, representation and communication as core elements of diplomacy, while paying comparatively little attention to symbolic power, which remains conceptually underdeveloped and is often treated as a secondary or merely ceremonial aspect of diplomatic practice. This paper argues that diplomacy is exercised not only through negotiation and material capabilities but also through rituals, protocol, ceremonies, state visits, gifts and other symbolic performances that communicate authority, status and legitimacy. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power, the paper develops a conceptual framework explaining how symbolic practices generate shared meanings, reinforce diplomatic norms and shape perceptions of legitimate political authority. It further analyses how symbolic practices evolve in response to contemporary transformations of diplomacy while retaining their essential legitimising function. By conceptualising symbolic power as a distinct mechanism of diplomatic practice, the paper demonstrates how symbolic acts contribute to the construction, maintenance and contestation of legitimacy across both traditional and emerging forms of diplomacy. In doing so, it advances the theoretical understanding of symbolism as a constitutive element of diplomacy rather than a peripheral or merely ceremonial feature.

KEY WORDS

symbolic power, diplomacy, diplomatic rituals, symbolism, diplomatic symbols

BIOGRAPHY

Jana Arbeiter is an Assistant Professor and Research Fellow at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Centre of Diplomatic, Economic and Legal Studies, University of Ljubljana. Her research focuses on diplomacy, with particular emphasis on diplomatic symbolism, protocol, ceremonial, legitimacy, and the performative dimensions of diplomatic practice. She has published on symbolism in diplomacy and diplomatic theory, analysing how rituals, symbols, and protocol shape international relations and political authority. Her current research explores symbolic power as a constitutive element of contemporary diplomatic studies.

Science Policy Models as Analytical Heuristics in Science Diplomacy

Simone Arnaldi

University of Trieste

ABSTRACT

Science diplomacy has become a prominent dimension of contemporary international relations, establishing itself as an innovative diplomatic domain. While the existing scientific literature primarily analyses science diplomacy through a foreign and international policy lens, less attention has been devoted to science policy and to the ways in which its different conceptions shape this emerging diplomatic field. This presentation argues that post–World War II models of science policy can serve as productive heuristics for analysing science diplomacy. From linear, curiosity-driven, and academia-centred models of knowledge production to more participatory, mission-oriented, and societally embedded approaches, evolving understandings of the science–society relationship have changed what science is expected to deliver, how it should be organised, and who is entitled to participate in its production. These transformations are reflected, albeit unevenly and sometimes inconsistently, in the contemporary science diplomacy discourse. By examining the science diplomacy discourse, the presentation analyses how it resonates with distinct science policy paradigms, highlighting the coexistence of references to societal impact, innovation ecosystems, and multistakeholder engagement alongside elements of more traditional, academic-centred and curiosity-driven models. By situating science diplomacy within the broader evolution of science policy thinking, the paper contributes to a more reflexive understanding of this emerging diplomatic field. By doing so, it proposes a conceptual framework for analysing how diplomatic actors navigate the changing interface between knowledge, technology, and policy in Diplomacy 2.0.

KEY WORDS

science diplomacy, science policy, policy models, policy discourse, convergence

BIOGRAPHY

Simone Arnaldi is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Trieste (Italy). His research focuses on science and technology studies, governance of emerging technologies, responsible research and innovation, and science diplomacy. Across these areas, he has participated in several national and European research projects and published books, book chapters, and peer-reviewed articles. He was President of the Italian Society for Science and Technology Studies (2022–2024) and Co-chair of the EU Science Diplomacy Alliance (2025–2026).

From Sovereign Equality to Selective Rule-Making? Diplomacy as Practice in a Fragmenting Global Order

Milan Brglez

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences

ABSTRACT

In an era of polycrisis and shifting power constellations, the language of a “rules-based international order” (RBO) increasingly displaces the traditional vocabulary of an international-law-based order (ILBO). This shift is not merely semantic. It reflects a transformation in how normative authority is produced and enacted in global politics. While the ILBO rests on codified principles of sovereign equality and consent, the RBO tends to blur the boundary between binding law and politically endorsed “rules,” thereby widening the space for selective interpretation and power-mediated enforcement. Building on the distinction between diplomacy as a regulative instrument and diplomacy as a constitutive institution of the international community, this paper argues that the rise of the RBO signals a move from legalized equality toward practice-based and potentially hierarchical rule production. Drawing on the practical turn in International Relations, diplomacy is conceptualized as a site where legality, legitimacy, and power intersect through everyday interpretative practices. The tension between the ILBO and the RBO is thus a struggle over interpretative authority: who defines the rules, who stabilizes them through practice, and whose agency is marginalized in the process. For small states in particular, the normalization of flexible, practice-based rule-making raises critical questions about predictability, protection, and the future of multilateralism. The paper concludes that without re-anchoring diplomatic practice in shared legal commitments, the “rules-based” discourse risks institutionalizing asymmetry under the guise of order.

KEY WORDS

diplomacy, diplomatic practice, international law, rules-based international order, small states

BIOGRAPHY

Milan Brglez is an Assistant Professor of International Relations whose research focuses on (meta-) theory, diplomacy, international law, and human rights. His work conceptualizes diplomacy as a constitutive institution of the international community and examines the normative foundations of global order, particularly from the perspective of small states operating within asymmetrical power structures. In addition to his academic career, he has served as President and Member of the Slovenian National Assembly, Member of the European Parliament, and State Secretary at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Slovenia. This combination of scholarly and political experience informs his research on the interaction between legal norms, diplomatic practice, and geopolitical power.

When Reports Rule: Diplomatic Language as International Governance

Nedžma Džananović Miraščija

University of Sarajevo, Faculty of Political Sciences

ABSTRACT

This research argues that the Office of the High Representative's (OHR) reports to the United Nations Security Council should be read as political acts of governance. Drawing on sixty-eight reports submitted between 1996 and 2025, it shows how diplomatic language operates as a discursive apparatus of authority: classifying actors, assigning legitimacy, identifying "threats" and "partners," and continually reasserting the authority of the "international community" in BiH. Thereporting appears as performative narration that stabilizes a particular account of sovereignty, responsibility, and acceptable regional involvement by Serbia and Croatia as Dayton co-signatories. Methodologically combining qualitative content analysis with regional political history, it demonstrates how the OHR governs by framing: translating contested domestic politics into internationally legible categories (rule of law, compliance, obstruction), normalizing some cross-border engagements as "constructive," and marking others as "interference" that endangers the constitutional order. In doing so, the reports not only describe Bosnia's political reality; they help make it by setting the terms through which international audiences understand crisis, progress, and permissible action. By foregrounding the UNSC report as a linguistic dispositive of governance, it contributes to debates on international supervision, post-liberal peacebuilding, and the discursive practices through which external authority sustains itself when coercive capacity and transformative momentum decline.

KEY WORDS

diplomatic language, governance, OHR, UN Security Council, Bosnia and Herzegovina

BIOGRAPHY

Nedžma Džananović is a Full Professor at the University of Sarajevo's Faculty of Political Science and a former Bosnian diplomat and senior foreign policy adviser. Her research focuses on contemporary diplomacy, EU foreign policy, European integration, and the Western Balkans. She has authored five books and numerous scholarly publications, coordinates the internationally accredited PoSIG joint master's programme, and serves as an expert evaluator in European research networks.

Science Diplomacy in the Euro-Mediterranean: Bridging Nations through Research, Innovation and Higher Education

Mounir Ghribi and Jihene Nouairi

Istituto Nazionale di Oceanografia e di Geofisica Sperimentale (OGS) and Euro-Mediterranean University

ABSTRACT

In an era marked by geopolitical instability and fragmentation, climate contingency, and technological acceleration, science diplomacy has emerged as a strategic instrument for fostering dialogue where traditional diplomacy faces constraints. By mobilising research, innovation, and higher education as neutral yet transformative platforms, science diplomacy bridges political divides and promotes cooperative solutions to shared challenges. This work explores the Euro-Mediterranean region as a laboratory of Science Diplomacy, where multilateral academic networks act as stabilising and trust-building mechanisms. Focusing on the Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI) as a case study, the contribution examines how higher education institutions can operate as diplomatic actors beyond state-centric frameworks. Through joint research initiatives, mobility schemes, capacity-building programmes, and sustainability-driven innovation ecosystems, EMUNI connects European, North African, and Middle Eastern partners in addressing climate change, Blue Economy transitions, digital transformation, and social resilience. The study argues that universities in transregional contexts function not merely as knowledge producers but as diplomatic infrastructures that cultivate long-term partnerships. In doing so, higher education institutions contribute to multilateralism from the bottom up, reinforcing stability and shared development across politically sensitive environments. Thus, science diplomacy within higher education cooperation extends beyond the boundaries of academic exchange, emerging as a structural driver of peacebuilding and a foundational pillar for resilient, inclusive, and sustainable regional integration.

KEY WORDS

science diplomacy, Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, higher education diplomacy, sustainability, multilateralism, regional integration

BIOGRAPHY

Mounir Ghribi is an international cooperation and science diplomacy professional with extensive experience in research, innovation, and Euro-Mediterranean collaboration. He has contributed to the development and coordination of international projects, partnerships, and academic initiatives, fostering dialogue among universities, research institutions, public authorities, and international organisations. His work focuses on strengthening cross-border cooperation, knowledge exchange, capacity building, and sustainable partnerships, particularly across Europe and the Mediterranean region.

Jihène Nouairi is an Assistant Professor, researcher, and project manager at the Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI) in Slovenia, where she serves as Director of the EMUNI Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Blue Economy and Ocean Governance and Director of the Master Programme in Eco-remediation and Sustainable Development. Her research focuses on marine sustainability, environmental risk assessment, circular economy solutions, and eco-materials for coastal and marine applications. She has extensive international research experience, including collaborations with OGS Italy, ICTP-Trieste, Ovidius University, and the University of Aveiro, and has coordinated numerous European projects, including Erasmus+, PRIMA, and Jean Monnet initiatives.

Objectivity in an Age of Multilayered Crises: Article 41 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and Sovereign Qualification

Arta Ibishi Puhek

New University, European Faculty of Law

ABSTRACT

In conditions of multilayered crises, erosion of multilateral trust, and intensified geopolitical tensions, diplomatic conduct is increasingly subject to contested qualifications. Article 41 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations establishes the prohibition of interference as a normative counterbalance to the jurisdictional exemption deriving from diplomatic privileges and immunities, and as a legal mechanism for stabilising relations between states. Within the framework of the law of state responsibility, a violation of this obligation should enable a legally determinable and objectively assessable determination of an internationally wrongful act. The central thesis is that multilayered crises not only strain the operational viability of this standard, but also reveal its structural fragility. In practice, the boundary of international unlawfulness is frequently established through unilateral sovereign qualification by the receiving state, without a formal legal determination of breach. This raises the question whether the prohibition of interference functions as an institutionally consolidated legal standard, or whether its objectivity remains normatively envisaged yet largely latent within a decentralised international legal order.

KEY WORDS

Article 41 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, law of state responsibility, sovereign qualification, diplomatic law, multilayered crises

BIOGRAPHY

Arta Ibishi Puhek is the Head of the Slovenian Business Register Department at AJPES, the Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Legal Records and Related Services. Her professional work focuses on business registration law, public law, and administrative procedures. She is currently pursuing a PhD at the European Faculty of Law, with research examining Article 41 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, with particular emphasis on the legal boundaries of diplomatic conduct, the principle of non-interference, and the sovereignty of the receiving State.

Commercial Diplomacy in Disrupted Global Value Chains: Turning Reverse Real Options into New Strategic Options

Andreja Jaklič

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences

ABSTRACT

This paper examines how economic diplomacy can restore firm-level strategic flexibility in an era of disrupted global value chains (GVCs) using real options theory. We begin by revisiting the traditional pillars of GVC-oriented diplomacy: (i) participation (integrating domestic firms through trade, investment, and infrastructure), (ii) value capture (industrial upgrading), and (iii) inclusiveness (diffusing benefits to local economies and SMEs). We argue that recent shocks – pandemics, protectionism, wars, and the politicisation of supply chains – have narrowed firms' feasible choice sets, adding two imperatives to the diplomatic agenda: (iv) security and (v) resilience. Under heightened geopolitical risk, firms increasingly face a reverse real options condition, where uncertainty erodes the value of switching, expansion, and orderly exit. The paper presents a framework showing how diplomacy – through predictable rules, trusted networks, and staged cooperation – can reopen choice, converting the reverse condition back into a renewed portfolio of real options. We further discuss how governments can leverage firms' diversification across suppliers, markets, and locations as policy options for forming new alliances in emerging technological and strategic domains. Conceptually, the paper integrates real options with economic diplomacy; analytically, it specifies mechanisms linking diplomatic instruments to option creation, thus offering actionable guidance for diplomats and firms co-designing more resilient and opportunity-rich GVC.

KEY WORDS

global value chains, economic diplomacy, real options theory, reversed real options, geopolitics

BIOGRAPHY

Andreja Jaklič is a Full Professor and researcher at the Centre of Diplomatic, Economic and Legal Studies, University of Ljubljana's Faculty of Social Sciences. Her expertise covers international trade, FDI, GVC and related policies. She teaches international economics, IB, and European integration. As an AIB-CEE Chapter Chair and leader of various academic and applied research projects, she contributes to understanding global economic changes and the formation of modern international strategies.

Dynamic Power in Asymmetric Conflict: U.S.–Cuba Relations through the Dynamic Model of Negotiators' Power

Aleksander Jakobčič

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the historical evolution of relations between the United States and Cuba through the Dynamic Model of Negotiators' Power (DMPM), situating the case within broader debates on geopolitical shifts and crises in global diplomacy. Although the bilateral relationship is frequently interpreted through structural asymmetry and hard power dominance, the study argues that the negotiation process itself constitutes the central arena in which power is constructed, perceived, and realized. Drawing on qualitative historical analysis, the paper traces key phases of interaction from the 1959 revolution and Cold War confrontation to the 2014 normalization process demonstrating how potential, perceived, and realized power evolved through continuous diplomatic engagement. Even during periods of overt hostility, negotiation remained embedded in the relationship, shaping strategic calculations and redefining domestic and international constraints. The findings suggest that power in diplomacy is not merely a precondition of negotiation but is dynamically produced within it. By applying DMPM to a protracted interstate conflict, the study demonstrates that diplomatic power is relational and adaptive rather than fixed. The U.S.–Cuba case thus illustrates how geopolitical tensions and shifting international contexts transform both the operation of power and the practice of negotiation in long-term diplomatic relations.

KEY WORDS

Dynamic Model of negotiators' Power, U.S.–Cuba relations, diplomatic negotiations, asymmetric power dynamics, protracted interstate conflict

BIOGRAPHY

Aleksander Jakobčič is President of the Slovene Association of Mediators, an international mediator and negotiator specialising in civil, commercial, and cross-border disputes. He serves as a mediator at several institutions and contributes internationally to dispute resolution initiatives, including the Rebooting the EU Mediation Directive – 2025 Edition study. He is a PhD candidate at the University of Ljubljana researching diplomatic negotiations, conflict, and diplomacy, and a member of the Advisory Body for Alternative Dispute Resolution at Slovenia's Ministry of Justice.

Diplomacy and Three Types of its Proximity

H. E. Milan Jazbec

Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovenia and New University

ABSTRACT

Diplomacy has been throughout its millennia long evolution always in the function of a historical situation as well as determined by it. Within this broad and decisive context, we can trace three types of proximity that has influenced the mode, level and intensity of diplomatic relations. They are geographical proximity, social and functional proximity, as well as cognitive proximity. The way proximity influenced diplomacy is closely connected with the development of technology, in particular media technology. During the time after the end of the Cold War, when the international community faced the question of survival (nuclear arsenal and climate change) this has been demonstrated as an influence of globalization. Recently, it is the influence of digitalization with the AI at the forefront that is challenging diplomacy as an activity, profession and intensive, complex social process of implementing foreign policy of the sending authority at the receiving authority. Here, the engagement of cognitive proximity could play a crucial and dividing role. States that will be able to catch up with this stream of change, will determine management of global trends and their global positioning.

KEY WORDS

postmodern diplomacy, diplomatic proximity, historical situation, technology, artificial intelligence

BIOGRAPHY

Milan Jazbec is a Full Professor of diplomacy at the New University and is employed at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovenia. He was Ambassador to Turkey (2010–2015, accredited also to Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria) and North Macedonia (2016–2020), and is a member of the first generation of Slovene diplomats. He has published more than 100 books in 17 languages, including fiction and poetry.

Symbolism of Architecture in Diplomacy: The Cases of the Republic of Slovenia and the Swiss Confederation

Nejc Juritsch

ABSTRACT

Diplomacy is inherently imbued with symbolism, expressed through tangible and intangible elements that communicate state identity, status, and political intent. While existing diplomatic studies emphasize language, rituals, and formal procedures, the symbolic dimension of architecture—particularly diplomatic buildings—remains underexplored. This doctoral dissertation examines architecture as a carrier of symbolic power in diplomacy, focusing on the spatial, urbanistic, and architectural characteristics of diplomatic missions as instruments of soft power and expressions of state prestige. The study conceptualizes and analyzes the notions of symbolic form, symbolic role, and symbolic meaning through an architectural lens, seeking to establish a theoretical and methodological framework that connects diplomatic studies and architecture. Drawing on interpretative approaches in diplomacy and perceptual urban-architectural analysis, the research develops a multi-level evaluative model for assessing the symbolic significance of diplomatic buildings. The empirical component tests the model through a comparative analysis of selected diplomatic missions of the Republic of Slovenia and the Swiss Confederation, two small, yet distinct states in terms of prestige, political systems, and international positioning. The dissertation aims to first define key dimensions of architectural symbolism in diplomatic buildings, second to construct a conceptual model linking diplomacy and architecture, and third, to empirically validate the model while developing a practical tool to support strategic decision-making in the selection, adaptation, and establishment of diplomatic missions. By addressing a gap in the literature and introducing architecture as a subdisciplinary perspective within diplomatic studies, the research contributes theoretically, methodologically, and empirically to a deeper understanding of how spatial representation shapes perceptions of state prestige and soft power in international relations.

KEY WORDS

symbolic power, diplomatic symbolism, diplomatic architecture, soft power, state prestige

BIOGRAPHY

Nejc Juritsch is an architect and PhD candidate in diplomacy, specialising in the intersection of urban design and global relations. His portfolio includes constructing 300 apartments in Zürich and designing a Dubai Expo pavilion. As an R&D team member, he co-launched Avant2Go, a pioneering electric car-sharing system in Ljubljana. Beyond his professional work, Juritsch is an active investor. He combines technical precision with diplomatic strategy to shape the future of spaces.

Diplomacy and the New Space Race: Supporting Environmental and Social Sustainability Through Open Access to Earth Observation Data

Iris Koleča

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences

ABSTRACT

The new space race is characterized by commercialization of space, unilateralism and involvement of non-state actors in space governance, complex power struggles between diverse actors in an area that is marked by an institutional vacuum, ambiguous property rights and outdated or deficient regulation, the merging of scientific, economic, commercial, military, climate and political interests, and newly emerging issues such as space debris and cybersecurity. In this race, diplomacy not only facilitates communication aimed at establishing the standards for maintaining the peaceful and safe use of space, but also fosters knowledge exchange and collaborative innovation aimed at (sustainable) development on Earth. This paper focuses on the Earth Observation sector as a key provider of data and services for environmental and social sustainability (e.g. through weather, climate, biodiversity, energy use, traffic flow and critical infrastructure monitoring and tracking). It studies how diplomatic efforts can foster emergency access to commercial data (i.e. imagery, telemetry) during crises – both proactively and reactively (e.g. through the so-called preventive diplomacy that uses OE data for forecasting the needs for humanitarian resources or planning damage control measures after larger natural disasters).

KEY WORDS

space diplomacy, earth observation, sustainability, open access data, crisis management

BIOGRAPHY

Iris Koleča is a researcher at the Centre of Diplomatic, Economic and Legal Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia). Her research focuses on various aspects of business internationalisation, science-industry collaboration, research, development, and innovation (RDI) policies, sustainable innovation, and most recently space diplomacy, economy and policy.

An Anti-democratic Pathway from National Identification to Nationalism: Evidence from Southeast Europe

Žan Lep and Žiga Mekiš Recek

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, and Educational Research Institute, Slovenia

ABSTRACT

Modern diplomacy responds to the shifting societal climate shaped by citizens' political attitudes. While attachment to the nation is considered positive, exclusionary attitudes may undermine diplomatic efforts. In Southeast Europe, the rise of anti-democratic attitudes highlights the need to examine their possible mediating role in translating national identification into nationalism. We used representative data of 8,929 participants aged 14–29 residing in 12 Southeast European countries (53% female, $M_{age} = 21.91$, $SD = 4.60$) drawn from the Youth Study SEE 2024/2025. A multilevel random-intercept SEM model explained a substantial proportion of variance in individual-level nationalism ($R^2 = .43$) and the differences between participants were greater than those between countries ($ICC = .13$). Stronger national identification was associated with stronger anti-democratic attitudes ($a = 0.07$, $p < .001$), suggesting salient national identity may lead to a preference for authority and conformity. Anti-democratic attitudes partially mediated the relationship between identification and nationalism ($a*b = 0.02$, $p < .001$), indicating such attitudes legitimize exclusionary conceptions of the nation. Nonetheless, most of the association was direct ($c = 0.59$, $p < .001$), consistent with the notion that nationalism emerges from identity salience, perhaps in pursuit of positive distinctiveness between in- and out-groups attributed to polarisation.

KEY WORDS

nationalism, anti-democratic attitudes, national identity, Southeast Europe, youth

BIOGRAPHY

Žan Lep is an Assistant Professor of Social Psychology and Head of the Social Psychology & Policy Lab at the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, as well as a research associate at the Centre for Applied Epistemology at the Educational Research Institute. His research focuses on the motivational and cognitive foundations of decision-making and behavior related to broader domains of civic engagement, politics, money, and health, which help in explaining complex social processes in contemporary society.

Žiga Mekiš Recek is a teaching assistant in psychology at the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, and at the Centre for Applied Epistemology at the Educational Research Institute. He is a doctoral student in Experimental Psychology. His research examines the cognitive and motivational aspects of social and political polarization, focusing on the mechanisms underlying attitude formation, perceptions, and affective responses during periods of social crises and uncertainty.

The End of Propriety: Vulgarities as a New Norm in Russian Diplomatic Practice Post-2022

Denis Mancevič

New Century Corporate Communications

ABSTRACT

For decades, Russian diplomacy was regarded as the archetype of the traditional, even "old school"—highly professional, rigidly adhering to protocol, and immune to the improvisations or emotional outbursts typical of populist leaders. However, the period following February 2022 reveals a drastic and systemic departure from this tradition: a shift toward the use of explicit vulgarities, profanities, and street (gang) slang by the highest state representatives (including President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov). This contribution relies on a qualitative analysis of primary sources in the Russian language (official speeches, statements, etc.), as (un)official translations often sanitize or dilute the semantic impact of the originals. The analysis explores how this "linguistic aggression" dismantles the myth of Russian diplomatic professionalism. The central research question examines whether this phenomenon is merely a temporary reflection of wartime psychosis, international isolation, and personal characteristics, or if we are witnessing a deeper, structural degradation of Russian diplomatic practice. In the latter case, linguistic vulgarity is no longer an anomaly but is becoming a systemic tool of a new foreign policy strategy, aimed at delegitimizing Western norms and signaling a complete rupture with the existing international order and established diplomatic practice.

KEY WORDS

Russian diplomacy, vulgarity, diplomatic language, political discourse analysis, post-2022 Russia

BIOGRAPHY

Denis Mancevič is a consultant and expert in international relations and diplomacy, focusing on international energy relations, energy security, economic sanctions, and the Russia & CIS region. His current research investigates the implications of G7/EU economic sanctions against Russia, as well as the intersection of diplomatic practice and political discourse in the context of contemporary Russian foreign policy.

Russian Diplomacy as an Instrument of Influence During the Full-Scale Invasion of Ukraine

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines Russian diplomatic engagement during the full-scale invasion of Ukraine (2022–2026) not as a parallel peace-seeking track but as an integrated component of political warfare. Drawing on the conceptual apparatus of reflexive control theory, active measures and strategic disinformation, the analysis traces how Moscow has instrumentalised negotiations to fracture Western cohesion, narrative manipulation, and redistribute perceived responsibility for the conflict's continuation. Four recurring structural patterns are identified: synchronisation of diplomatic and military operations, narrative pre-positioning, systematic exploitation of adversary institutional constraints, and escalating maximalism. The paper argues that these patterns are not ad hoc but reflect deep continuities with Soviet diplomatic culture, posing a fundamental challenge to Western assumptions that negotiation inherently constitutes progress toward resolution. By interrogating the boundary between diplomacy and coercion, the study contributes to broader debates on how rising geopolitical tensions reshape not only what diplomacy achieves but what diplomacy is - a central question to the future of multilateral conflict management in an era of poly-crisis's.

KEY WORDS

political warfare, Russia-Ukraine war, diplomatic deception, negotiations

BIOGRAPHY

Oleksii Polegkyi is an Assistant Professor at the Catholic University of Lublin and Non-Resident Fellow at the Elliott School of International Affairs, Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies (IERES), George Washington University. Additionally, he serves as Academic Director at the Centre for Public Diplomacy, Ukraine. He was an Adjunct at the Institute of Political Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, and a visiting researcher at the Digital Humanities Institute, EPFL in Switzerland. Previously, he was a Bayduza Fellow at the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, and a MOFA research fellow at the National Chengchi University in Taiwan. He earned his PhD in Political Sciences from the University of Wrocław, Poland, and the University of Antwerp, Belgium.

"Toeing the line ...": The Use of Social Networks in Slovenian Diplomacy

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ABSTRACT

The changes that have taken place in diplomatic relations over the last twenty years can be attributed primarily to the emergence of social networks, which have left a deep mark in this field, as in all others. Today, if you are not on social networks, you do not exist. This also applies to diplomacy. According to our interlocutors, what you do is becoming less and less important, while whether and how you report on what you do is becoming increasingly important. The purpose of this article is to present the development of communication at the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs over the last five years. Why did we choose this period? Firstly, because over the last five years, the ministry has been headed by two people who were already using social media before they joined the ministry. Secondly, because both ministers (Anže Logar and Tanja Fajon) were the first ministers to have 'special' advisors for communication via social networks. And thirdly, because it was during this period that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs significantly accelerated its presence on various social networks. In our article, we will present (1) the characteristics of the development of communication on the MFA's social networks from 2020 to 2025, (2) the requirements and challenges that have arisen in this process, and (3) the opinions of both ministers and members of their teams on what communication on social networks should be like, based on the specific nature of diplomacy.

KEY WORDS

social media diplomacy, Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, digital diplomacy, public diplomacy, communication strategy

BIOGRAPHY

Boštjan Udovič is a Professor of Diplomacy at the University of Ljubljana and a visiting professor at PLUS University Salzburg and the University of Regensburg. His research focuses on diplomacy, negotiations, innovation policy, and international political economy. He has served on numerous national and international advisory bodies, led major research projects, and authored over 500 publications, including more than 80 peer-reviewed SSCI and Scopus-indexed journal articles.

When Self-Interest Meets Narratives of Altruism: Diplomacy of Development Cooperation

Noémi Vegi

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ABSTRACT

Development cooperation and economic diplomacy are among the many strategic tools states use to achieve their foreign policy goals and economic and political interests. Despite initial notions of altruism in development aid, theory and practice indicate that development cooperation has important interest-driven dimensions. In an increasingly market- and profit-oriented world economy, states' interests are closely tied to economic gains. The literature has established the intertwining of development cooperation and economic diplomacy – this paper builds on that conversation, examining development cooperation as an instrument of China's diplomacy towards Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Through a comparative analysis of selected China–CEE partnerships, the paper explores how development cooperation is used to advance China's diplomatic, economic, and strategic objectives. It compares the forms, priorities, and outcomes of Chinese development engagement across selected CEE countries, assessing the relationship between development cooperation, economic diplomacy, and broader foreign policy goals. The paper contributes to the literature on development diplomacy by illustrating how development cooperation functions not only as a mechanism for economic engagement but also as a diplomatic tool in China's relations with the CEE region.

KEY WORDS

development diplomacy, development cooperation, economic diplomacy, People's Republic of China, Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)

BIOGRAPHY

Noémi Vegi is a young researcher at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, as of October 2025, with an MA in International Relations. She is preparing her doctoral thesis on China's development diplomacy in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Her broader research interests include diplomacy, development cooperation, South–South Cooperation (SSC), and country-specific perspectives in CEE, particularly Hungary's approach to global development and foreign policy.

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