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Regional diplomacy: a piece in the neo-medieval puzzle?

La diplomatie régionale : une pièce du puzzle néomédiéval ?

Manuel Duran

Introduction

- 1 Until recently, diplomacy has been regarded as the exclusive domain of the State. Recent evolutions in diplomatic theory and practice however repudiate this State-centric exclusivity. By conceiving diplomacy as “the mechanism of representation, communication and negotiation through which States *and other international actors* (own italics) conduct their business” (Melissen, 1999) rather than “the official channels of communication employed *by the members of a system of States* (own italics) (Berridge, Keens-Soper *et al.*, 2001)”, a new and more dynamic picture of diplomacy emerges. Looking back at past diplomatic practices might shed new light on contemporary diplomacy. Looking through the lens of neo-medievalism can prove to be a fruitful way of looking back.
- 2 The neo-medieval paradigm claims that we are entering a new global setting that in certain aspects resembles that of the Middle Ages. Neo-medievalism has a significant added value in that it introduces an historical component in the current debate about the metamorphosis of the world. However, one important element seems under-researched in the literature on neo-medievalism: an analysis and comparison of the diplomatic relations between the various polities that form the constituent units of both the medieval and neo-medieval international system. When we see beyond the State-centric concept of diplomacy (Hoffmann, 2003, p. 541), a number of tendencies in today’s diplomacy come to the fore showing a striking resemblance with medieval diplomacy, and regions play a paramount role in this process.
- 3 Globalisation led to fundamental changes in sovereignty, statehood and the territorial character of the State. These changes have resulted in a shift from the modern so-called Westphalian State-system to a new postmodern international system (Cooper,

1996). This new international environment has been described in such different ways as “global governance” (Neuman, 2008), “new medievalism” or even “empire” (Negri, Hardt, 2000).

- 4 A number of scholars have been using the concept of neo-medievalism to map recent developments in international relations (Kratochwil, 2011). Especially in the 1990s and the first decade of our current millennium, new medievalism has been presented as a framework to analyze the simultaneous processes of fragmentation and integration, associated with globalisation. States are at the same time integrating into larger units (the European Union is the classic example) and disintegrating into smaller ones, such as regional or local entities. Although not so much *en vogue* anymore, the neo-medieval paradigm has a significant added value in that it introduces an historical component in the current debate about the metamorphosis of the world.
- 5 As of late diplomatic studies literature held a primarily State-centric view. According to the traditional canon diplomacy only came fully into being in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the appearance of foreign ministries, permanent embassies, diplomatic texts and a set of diplomatic norms and rules (Mattingly, 1955). Pre-modern (medieval) diplomacy was depicted as infrequent, slow and undeveloped. *Prima facie*, comparing medieval and present diplomacy would thus enfeeble the historical analogy of the neo-medieval paradigm. However, when we consider diplomacy to be an activity instead of an organisation a new picture emerges. Diplomacy as an activity is a collection of social practices, roles, norms and rules. Its aim is to mediate between processes of universalism and particularism. When we see beyond the State-centric concept of diplomacy and focus on the contrary on the diplomatic activities of other actors in the international arena, a number of tendencies in today’s diplomacy come to the fore that show a striking resemblance with medieval diplomacy.
- 6 This article will canvass the current international diplomatic environment, characterized by simultaneous and mutually influencing traditional and new actors and modes of diplomatic practice and thinking. It will then focus on the advent of new diplomatic actors that gainsay the primacy of the nation-State, particularly (European) regions. Third, the neo-medieval paradigm will be sketched. It will be argued that to better analyse what is often referred to as the post-Westphalian international order, it might be adjuvant to consider the pre-Westphalian, medieval international system. Medieval and contemporary diplomacy will then be compared. The article argues that contemporary diplomacy resembles medieval diplomacy, and that regions play a paramount role in this respect.

Diplomacy in a changing world, changing diplomacies?

- 7 After the end of the Cold War and as a result of the accelerated globalization, many authors argued that territoriality had ended as an organizing political principle. Ideas about the end of history (Fukuyama, 1992) and a borderless world (Ceglowski, 1998) went hand in hand with those of the waning importance of or even the final end of the State. There was talk of a post-territorial world (Van Staden, Vollaard, 2002), in which increasing regional integration (the EU, but also NAFTA, MERCOSUR, ASEAN, etc.), the primacy of the market and liberal democracy were a teleological endpoint of history. In this new post-territorial world, the State would at most have a supportive and

facilitating role, and thus be reduced to a “market-State” (Bobbitt, 2003). Diplomacy also seemed on its way out. Diplomacy, after all, was (and is) following one of its most generic definitions, the art and practice of negotiating, communicating and representing between sovereign States.

- 8 Some authors, such as Paul Sharp and Joe Clark (1997) even talked about the end of diplomacy, while Rik Coolsaet (1999) spoke about a new “post-territorial” diplomatic arrangement of international relations.
- 9 A number of events have put territoriality back on the forefront since the beginning of the new millennium: the 9/11 attacks and subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Arab Spring and the civil wars in Libya and Syria, the migration crisis in the European Union and its (domestic) political consequences, the economic-financial crisis and the growing gap between the Southern and Northern EU Member States, the growing Russian assertiveness at its Western border, and so on. Territoriality, the way in which man defines and organizes space, was never really gone, as were various processes of territorialization, the processes through which man exercises political power, wins or loses space. The popular American author and public intellectual Robert Kaplan (2012) held – rightfully so – a challenging view on “the revenge of geography”, an unmistakable warning for modern man, who thought he had eliminated the boundaries of space and time through a system of limitless economic globalization, political homogenization and accelerated digitization. However, only territoriality turned out to have become more complex and multi-layered. The State had not withered away, as some authors had suggested only a decade before. It even had (re)gained strength, especially in the military and security domain. At the same time, in addition to States, other actors of territoriality had arisen: NGOs and international organizations, sub-national and local authorities, but also multinational corporations and individuals, even transnational or ideological-religious communities. They all fought for part of the political power that could be divided after the Cold War and the so-called post-territorial intermezzo of the 1990s. The new world order resembled a hybrid mixture of pre-modern, modern and post-modern overlapping power centres. This observation led several authors to define our world as “new-Medieval”.
- 10 As in the Middle Ages, power in Europe was divided over several overlapping political centres: then it was counties and duchies, cities and towns, embryonic nation States like England and Hungary, but also the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation or the prince bishopric of Liège. Now they are States, supranational entities such as the EU, but also increasingly sub-entities, such as regions, urban governments, and even terrorist organizations, such as Islamic State.
- 11 Geography, territoriality and territorialization also brought diplomacy back to the forefront. But it also turned out to have got a different outlook and dynamics. The before-mentioned multitude of diplomatic actors (States, regions, cities, etc.) also practiced a multitude of diplomatic forms in an equally complex diplomatic setting: in addition to traditional bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, public diplomacy, digital diplomacy, economic, commercial or mega-diplomacy (Khanna, 2011) also emerged.

Figure 1. The territorial patchwork that was the Holy Roman Empire A.D. 1000.

Source: Creative Commons

The emergence of regional diplomacy

- 12 Regions are one of these new diplomatic actors. Their emergence as territorially bounded political agents coincided with global dynamics of regional integration, such as the EU, but also ASEAN, MERCOSUR, NAFTA, etc. This “new regionalism” led in an increasing number of countries to simultaneous processes of political decentralization and intergovernmental regional cooperation, thereby corroding the exclusivity of State-only political power (Keating, 1998). Regions and other sub-national entities are granted considerable competences, including in the international domain. One important tool in the hands of these actors are their external relations and diplomatic activities, of which they make ample use so as to further expand their influence, be it domestic or global. This has been a truly global phenomenon, with regions, provinces, cities and other local authorities from every continent “going abroad” (Tavares, 2016). The sub-State and the supra-State political level encounter one another in ever closer cross-border, transnational and inter-regional collaboration programs and projects, such as those of the European Territorial Policies (Cornago, 2010), or in the interregional cooperation within the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) (Riggirozzi, 2012), and numerous other examples in all other continents.
- 13 There has been a proliferation of academic and policy relevant literature on the topic of sub-national and regional diplomacy, often labelled *paradiplomacy*¹. Most literature on regional diplomacy focuses on the judicial delimitations of regional diplomacy, on the foreign policy instruments, or on the division of power between the central State and the regional entity. It would lead us too far to delve into the vast richness of this

paradiplomacy-literature, but one of the most interesting analyses was made by Belgian scholar David Crikemans (2010) who developed an analytical matrix to evaluate the myriad of diplomatic instruments and variations in the organizational structure of diplomacy and foreign policy within different sub-State entities. This analytical model has not only advanced our knowledge of the concrete elaboration and development of paradiplomacy but has also given rise to a more historical conceptualization of paradiplomacy as an evolving practiced concept of political reality, subject to constant and contingent change. Crikemans distinguishes three phases or waves in the development of sub-State diplomacy.

“The first wave manifested itself from the 1980s onwards: a growing number of non-central governments tried to attract foreign direct investment through own initiatives [...] or to use culture and identity as a lever to place oneself on the international map. The second wave in the 1990s was characterized by the creation, within the sub-State entities of certain (European) countries, of a judicially grounded set of instruments for their own (parallel as well as complementary) diplomatic activities [...]. The current third wave is characterized by steps towards a ‘verticalization’ of the organizational structure of the administration or department of external/foreign affairs, a strategic reorientation of the geopolitical and functional priorities, and attempts to integrate the external instruments of a sub-State foreign policy into a well-performing whole” (Crikemans, Duran & Melissen, 2009).

- 14 Henry Kissinger (1994) once poignantly said that the “actual range of diplomatic innovations is heavily circumscribed by history, domestic institutions and geography”. Attention towards the interaction between these three variables is frequently lacking in the study of international relations. To overcome this omission, I propose to take a closer look at the so-called neo-medieval paradigm.

Figure 2. The territorial patchwork that are the contemporary European régions.

Source: Assembly of the European Regions

A new framework to evaluate diplomatic changes? Neo-medievalism

- 15 As the term indicates neo-medievalism States we have now entered or are entering a new global epoch which resembles certain traits of the European Middle Ages. Proponents of neo-medievalism put forward that the beginning of the 16th century was the watershed between the medieval and modern eras. They claim we are again at the beginning or in the midst of a similar watershed, a transition to a new postmodern (or neo-medieval) era. These theorists state that looking back to medieval Europe may help us to understand the rough outlines of an emerging postmodern global setting. It allows us to think about other possible modes of political and economic organization (Friedrichs, 2001).
- 16 The concept of a new Middle Ages was first developed by Hedley Bull (1977). In his classic book *The Anarchical Society*, Bull draws a hypothetical picture of the dawn of a new Middle Ages, characterised by an increasing regional integration of States, the internal disintegration of a number of States, the restoration of private international violence, the growing importance of transnational organizations, and the technological unification of the world. The world has changed since the publication of *The Anarchical Society* in 1977 and we can safely say that the five criteria Bull cited can be found in the present international system (Ferguson, Mansbach, 2008, p. 373). It is not surprising then that a number of scholars took up the thread of Bull's work and further elaborated on and deepened the conceptualization of neo-medievalism and this from a number of vantage points, ranging from literary criticism², philosophy³ to social as well as political sciences. In an attempt to describe and explain the sequence of events that was rapidly altering the face of the world -the end of the bipolar world of the Cold War after the events of 1989, the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, the increasing number of "failed States" in the South, the perceived (at least by some) of a growing "clash of civilizations" - they decided to look back. These authors presented the new Middle Ages in a number of ways. The new Middle Ages can be a purely aesthetic phenomenon, a spiritual-cultural given or a new framework to analyse international relations, as a complex system of overlapping authorities and loyalties which are in turn overarched by several universal claims.
- 17 Within IR-theory, we can distinguish between two takes on neo-medievalism. Some (neo-)realist scholars use it to describe the frightening dark side of modern globalization. The Middle Ages are drawn here as the Dark Ages, a time when arbitrariness, political and social violence, and harsh conditions of living were the norm. Needless to say, that this depiction of the Middle Ages is too one-dimensional or even downright wrong. The dichotomy between modern order and medieval disorder does not stand the test of history. Medieval times on the one hand were also characterized by a strong tendency of ecclesiastical and secular universalism, while on the other hand modern times have witnessed some of the most horrifying examples of international violence and disorder.
- 18 The other approach to neo-medievalism ponders on the before mentioned "glocalization" dynamics. New medievalism in this respect is a framework to analyze the simultaneous processes of fragmentation and integration. One of the best analyses of neo-medievalism comes from Jörg Friedrichs (2007). He presents the new Middle Ages as a complex system of overlapping authorities and loyalties, comparable to the

situation before the Peace of Westphalia, which heralded the modern State system. Medieval territory differed fundamentally from modern territorial concepts in that the feudal world should be seen “as concentric circles of power projection” (Teschke, 2003). Various competing power centers or systems of authority could all lay different but rightful claims on the same territorial configuration. The major divide was that between ecclesiastical and secular authorities, but even within these two a great multitude of sometimes opposing dominions existed, each of them trying to exert control over a given territory. Moreover, medieval territoriality was not exclusive nor perfect, but dependent on the personal ties between the lord and his vassal (Spruyt, 1994). Vassals had different lords, secular or ecclesiastical, for different circumstances. The complexities of this system of overlapping, non-exclusive authorities are comprehensibly pictured by Spruyt when he states that “one could simultaneously be the vassal of the German emperor, the French king, and various counts and bishops, none of whom necessarily had precedence over the other” (Spruyt, 1994, p. 39). We are today once again entering a world of overlapping, polycentric and competing authorities, where the modern “vassals” can be bound by multiple loyalties. As early as in 1988 Lewis Lapham wrote a poignant article in Harper’s Magazine depicting the various societal forces pressuring the exclusivity of the State.

“The hierarchies of international capitalism resemble the feudal arrangements under which an Italian noble might swear fealty to a German prince, or a Norman duke declare himself the vassal of an English king” (Lapham, 1988, p. 10).

- 19 According to Friedrichs (2007), neo-medieval overlapping authorities are overarched by several universal claims. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476, the idea or better the ideal of the return of the Roman Empire survived in Western Europe. The coronation of Charlemagne in 800 was the consecration of the unification of the former Western Roman empire (minus Spain). After the death of Charlemagne and the division of his empire, the ideal still lived on, and soon the German emperor was considered Charlemagne’s heir to the title of Holy Roman Emperor. And although the empire wasn’t Roman, wasn’t holy and wasn’t an empire, it still lived on as a political ideal. Competing with this ideal of *imperium* was the so-called *sacerdotium*. In Western Europe, every man and woman, regardless of the place he or she lived, considered him- or herself in the first place as a Christian, belonging to the greater community of Christendom. The ecclesiastical hierarchy, with the pope at the top, the bishops, abbots, priests, formed a true transnational elite, unifying Western Europe, not in the least by means of their use of Latin, the *lingua franca* of the times.
- 20 To this neo-medieval paradigm is added a post-Westphalian conception of boundaries, a revival of the medieval boundaries, which more resembled a geographical zone than a fixed line. A notable example is the European Union. With each enlargement of the Union, the borders have been shifting, first to the South and the North and subsequently, after the collapse of the communist regimes to the East. Numerous unsolved debates have been raging on where one can pinpoint the exact border of the European Union and of Europe *tout court* (Christiansen, Petito *et al.*, 2000). Instead of tying up a specific EU-border, the European Neighborhood Policy sets up a large frontier zone at Europe’s southern and Eastern border, including the European neighbors in a number of cooperation programs, and at the same time excluding them from the political decision making in Brussels.

Neo-medievalism & regional diplomacy

- 21 Let us now take a closer look on how neo-medievalism might shed a new light on the subject of regional diplomacy. As Spruyt (1994, p. 17) has shown in his book on political systemic change from the Middle Ages to the modern era, it is “the agents that make up the State system that create a particular structure of interunit behaviour” Diplomacy being the means *par excellence* to engage in interunit exchange, a comparison between medieval and neo-medieval diplomacy might prove to be a valuable analysis.
- 22 Medieval diplomatic intercourse differed from modern diplomacy in that it was “spasmodic rather than continuous” (Anderson, 1998). A fixed system of delegations and a standing body of resident ambassadors, the core elements of modern diplomacy did not come to light until the end of the 15th century, when a number of Italian city-States established the first permanent foreign representations. Yet this does not mean that medieval polities did not engage in diplomacy. On the contrary, medieval diplomacy was thriving: political agents were communicating, negotiating and representing themselves, they were “doing business with one another”. Out of medieval diplomacy emerged a prototype of diplomacy to mediate the newly articulated States (Der Derian, 1987) that came to be during the late Middle Ages.
- 23 One of the key features of medieval diplomacy was the existence of a vast range of diplomatic actors, comparable to the various non-State actors that currently are engaging in diplomatic intercourse. Nowadays, a great number of non-State actors are involved in diplomatic activities (Hocking, 2004): regional and local authorities, corporations, non-governmental organisations and international organisations. Therefore, sub-national diplomacy is just one of the new postmodern diplomacies, next to NGO diplomacy, city diplomacy, citizen diplomacy or corporate diplomacy. While NGO-, corporate and citizen diplomacy assent to the post-territorial concept of diplomacy, sub-national and city diplomacy on the contrary support the re-territorialisation thesis, whereby next to the State, other territorial configurations engage in diplomatic activities.
- 24 Over the years sub-national diplomacy has become a normalized and normal feature of the international environment (Cornago, 2010). According to Robert Kaizer (2003), sub-national diplomacy can be divided into three clusters of activities: horizontal cooperation, vertical cooperation, and promotion of interests. We can add a fourth category, namely the use of innovative policy instruments. Horizontal cooperation are all forms of cross-border and interregional cooperation between regions. These often take the form of bilateral or multilateral cooperation with neighboring regions but can also be found in a European context. Vertical cooperation is the way in which regions participate in and design the foreign policy of the central or federal State. Germany does pioneering work in the way in which the representatives of the governments of the *Länder* delineate the foreign policy of the Federal Republic in the *Bundesrat*. The most striking form of interest promotion of sub-national entities is their own network of representatives or offices abroad. Regional entities also rely on a whole range of innovative policy tools like public diplomacy, informal networking, city diplomacy and an integrated international cultural policy.
- 25 One diplomatic site in particular of this new form of diplomacy shows great resemblance to medieval diplomacy: the importance of network diplomacy for regional authorities.

- 26 “Network diplomacy” is, next to virtual diplomacy and e-diplomacy one of the elements of the new diplomatic paradigm, which was *inter alia* conceived in the concepts of transformational diplomacy and the development of the European External Action Service. Since sub-national polities lack the diplomatic power international law grants to “traditional” nation-States (the *ius legationis* and the *ius tractati*), they had to resort to other means to go abroad, communicate and negotiate with international partners and to represent themselves. One of the most important tools in the hands of sub-national entities to overcome their relative weakness in this regard is the development of and adherence to a policy network. These networks can be formal or informal and have been paramount for the development of sub-national diplomacy. When considering the policy networks sub-national entities are involved in, one is struck by the very diverse nature of the frameworks in which they operate. Some regions are involved in single issue networks (e.g. Scotland on maritime issues), others focus on broader policy-issues (e.g. Wallonia and Québec via the *Francophonie*, or Catalonia within the ‘Four Motors for Europe’), and yet others have established global networks to bring together sub-State entities with a specific know-how (e.g. the ‘Flanders Districts of Creativity’- network on creativity and the economy, the last couple of years only referred to as the ‘DC-network’). Network diplomacy allows polities of different levels (provinces, regions, sub-national entities) to develop structural or ad-hoc contacts, without the need for physical embassies, although more and more sub-national entities are establishing an ever-vaster network of pseudo-diplomatic delegations (Tatham, 2008).
- 27 Before the establishment of resident ambassadors, medieval polities entered into diplomatic intercourse with each other by means of ad-hoc or more permanent diplomatic networks. Donald Queller (2005) puts it eloquently when he states that “the modern notion that only a sovereign State can be represented by an ambassador was as inchoate in the Middle Ages as the concept of sovereignty itself. During the Middle Ages, there was no such thing as an international community of nation-States. The concept of territorial sovereignty only gained ground after the Peace of Westphalia. Since sovereign nation-States did not exist, the act to represent them could not be fulfilled. Instead, there existed a plethora of infra-statal institutions, starting from the hybrid “national” kingdoms like England, France, and Aragon, principalities, duchies, free counties, bishoprics, free cities, commercial alliances (like the Hanseatic League), baronies, petty lordships but also corporate bodies like guilds, military orders, and religious orders (Nigro, 2010, p. 174). All of these institutions sent diplomatic agents to all sorts of recipients (Queller, o.c., p. 194). Or as 13th century legal scholar William Durandus put it:
- “A legate is [...] whoever has been sent from another [...], either from a prince, or from the pope to others [...], or from some city, or province to a prince or to another...” (Durandus, *Speculum legatorum*, 1, 1, cited and translated by Queller, 1967, p. 11).
- 28 These agents did not, as modern ambassadors do, reside in a particular place but were on the contrary of an ambulant nature. The Carolingian *missi* were later succeeded by the *nuncii* and the *procuratores*. *Missi*, *nuncii* and *procuratores* alike did not possess the prerogatives of the modern ambassadors. Instead, they acted as the moving mouths and ears, the magpie (Azo of Bologna) or the living letter of the sender (Queller, 1984, p. 201). In so doing, they allowed the feudal lords, the medieval cities, the popes and other clerics, the corporate bodies, etc. to communicate with one another, to negotiate treaties, to forge alliances and platforms for cooperation, simply said: to establish all

sorts of functional, geographic, genealogic or other networks and do business with each other.

- 29 Network diplomacy enabled the various medieval polities to act diplomatically without possessing the “traditional” or “modern” prerequisites of a ministry of foreign affairs, an international network of embassies or a system of resident ambassadors. Likewise, new diplomatic actors such as European regions overcome their limitations regarding the *ius legationis* and the *ius tractati* by means of network diplomacy.

Figure 3. The signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in Münster by Gerard Ter Borch, 1648: the watershed between medieval and modern diplomacy.

Conclusion

- 30 On February 10, 2016 a number of scholars from a variety of fields gathered at the *Academia Belgica* in Rome to ponder on the possibilities of cross-fertilization between Medieval History, International Relations and Diplomatic Studies⁴. The title of the symposium “Back to the future, forward to the past?”: Paradiplomacies as a site of neo-medievalism” could be read as an intellectual teaser for further research, of which this article is one of the first outcomes⁵. Changes in both the internal political structure of the State (decentralisation and devolution, as well as ceding political power to supranational institutions) and in international relations (the interdependence of political, security, economic, environmental and developmental issues on a continental and even global scale) change the diplomatic interaction between international agents. In order to find out whether these are merely temporary and superficial changes, or on the contrary fundamental changes with a more permanent character, we need an historical approach (Van Kemseke, 2000, p. 11). As we have tried to show, a comparison

between regional diplomacy and medieval diplomacy forms an additional piece in the neo-medieval puzzle by clarifying the relation between the constituent units of both the medieval and neo-medieval international system. All three generic dimensions of diplomacy, i.e. communication, representation and the reproduction (or socialization) of international society fitted the medieval feudal and city diplomacy and fit the current neo-medieval multilayered diplomacy, in which networks and city diplomacy play an important role.

- 31 This comparison also enables us to move beyond the historical dichotomy between an undeveloped medieval system of “proto-diplomacy” (to use James Der Derian’s expression) and the elaborate system of modern diplomacy, as depicted by Donald Queller and Garrett Mattingly. Both authors have been responsible for the linear teleological narrative concerning diplomatic history. This narrative repudiates the complexities of medieval diplomacy that, as John Watkins clearly indicates:

[...] still had an enormous impact on the shifting political, economic, religious, and cultural fortunes of European peoples and the emergence of national self-consciousness. Ironically, the divergent forms these contacts took sometimes provide striking analogues for the new practices that occupy a widening sector of our post-Cold War diplomatic practice (Watkins, 2008, pp. 4-5).

- 32 It also shows that:

It all comes down to alterity. For alterity does not exist in the singular: it does not reduce to how different ‘they’ all were from all of ‘us’. Alterity is about the tremendous variety within and between medieval cultures. If, despite the allure of pop-cultural over-simplifications, despite the bludgeoning effect of unwieldy and unhelpful historical labels, despite the inadequacies and difficulties of the evidence, despite the distraction of demands for facile relevance, we still manage to find that medieval people were fascinatingly diverse, then the same must, thank goodness, be true of us as well (Bull, 2005, p. 141).

- 33 In other words: looking back at the complexities of yesterday allows us to better understand the complexities of today.

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NOTES

1. Just to cite a number of recent examples: KUZNETSOV A.S. (2015), *Theory and practice of paradiplomacy: Subnational governments in international affairs*, Oxford, Routledge; TAVARES R. (2016), *Paradiplomacy: Cities and States as global players*, Oxford, Oxford University Press; CRIEKEMANS D. (ed.) (2010), *Regional sub-State diplomacy today*, Boston and Leiden, Brill.
2. See for example ECO U. (1986), "Dreaming of the Middle Ages", *Travels in Hyperreality*, NY, Harcourt Brace, pp. 61-72; LUKES D. (2014), "Comparative neomedievalisms: A little bit medieval", *Postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies*, pp. 1-9.
3. See amongst others MARSHALL D.W. (2011), "Neomedievalism, Identification, and the Haze of Medievalisms", in FUGELSO K. (ed.), *Defining neomedievalism(s)*, Studies in Medievalism XX, Cambridge, pp. 11-20.
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5. Another result of this symposium is the paper by Isabella LAZZARINI (2016), “Storia della diplomazia e International Relations Studies fra pre- e post- moderno”, in *Storica*, 65, pp. 9-41.

ABSTRACTS

Until recently, diplomacy has been regarded as the exclusive domain of the State. Recent evolutions in diplomatic theory and practice however repudiate this State-centric exclusivity. Looking back at past diplomatic practices might shed new light on contemporary diplomacy. The neo-medieval paradigm claims that we are entering a new global setting which in certain aspects resembles that of the Middle Ages. When we see beyond the State-centric concept of diplomacy, a number of tendencies in today's diplomacy come to the fore showing a striking resemblance with medieval diplomacy, and regional diplomacy plays a paramount role in this process.

Jusqu'il y a peu, la diplomatie était considérée comme une prérogative de l'Etat mais les évolutions récentes viennent contredire cette idée, tant en pratique qu'en théorie. L'analyse des pratiques du passé permet de jeter un éclairage nouveau sur celles d'aujourd'hui. Selon le paradigme néo-médiéval nous entrons dans un contexte mondial inédit qui, par certains aspects, s'apparente à celui du Moyen Age. Lorsqu'on regarde au-delà du concept de diplomatie centralisée, on peut constater que certaines tendances actuelles présentent une ressemblance frappante avec la diplomatie médiévale et que la diplomatie régionale joue un rôle capital dans ce processus.

INDEX

Mots-clés: régionalisme, diplomatie parallèle, diplomatie décentralisée, néomédiévalisme, géopolitique, diplomatie

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