Diplomatics

James Der Derian, *Antidiplomacy: Spies, Terror, Speed, and War*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.

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Since its very conception, diplomacy has functioned as a resistance against Europe's cultural-political deterritorialization. It has struggled to connect the unconnectable and to incessantly postulate the necessity and the continuity of the Nation-state with its geopolitical other. Diplomacy: delicate canape-reflections upon the communicability of de facto irreducibly opposed political entities. This is the story of political *Raison*, Enlightenment as talking-cure, the self-grounding Cartesian subject projected on the form of the self-legitimizing nation. The One with respect to the other, universality based on rational mediation of conceptualizable political differences. This mediation is the essence of diplomacy. *Ver-mittlung*: Hegel, mediation's master-theorist and a particularly good etymologist when he cares to be, overlooks the encroaching non-sense of this, his own key concept. Long before the Nation-state even manages to find its foothold as the dialectical other of its other, the otherness at its core to see the light of day. Long before the dialectical reinscription of the self in its other, the Nation-state in its diplomatic counter-part, long before the rational negation of sovereignty in the tea-dance of diplomatic recognition, long before all that, the self is already other. The immediate is mediation's emasculation. Confidence is already electronic disclosure. Intelligence is ambient. Absolutely everything there is to know is already streaming through the cable-laden walls and false floors of the CIA awaiting decoding. The external is already internally disengorged. The other is already here. Where? Here?

Antidiplomacy must be situated in relation to Der Derian's earlier historical analysis of international relations theory. In *On Diplomacy* (1987), he proposes a "genealogy of diplomacy" which revolves around a more or less Marxian model of dialectical estrangement. In Der Derian's view the historical aim of diplomacy has been to watch over that theoretical unity which is the basis for the diversity of the European State system, to nurture and tease out the ties which, in the final analysis, guarantee national differences. A nation is nothing without the recognition of its other. In the arena of traditional political stakes, the nurturing of difference in the name of identity is a delicate matter. Still the theoretical predicaments of diplomacy signal the fleeting evaporation of the pragmatics of the hand-shake. Diplomacy's essence is the recuperation and protection of a unity which is impossible to reconcile with the particularity of national-cultural experience. Diplomacy as mediation will have always preceded the sentimental unity which has been its pragmatic-traditional backbone. Diplomacy's origin has always been displaced, always been grounded in the search for stabilizing bridge-building. The geo-political sovereignty of the nation swims in the soup of cultural egoism. Geography, as Deleuze and Guattari note in *Geophilosophie*, is mental. The phenomenology of diplomacy, today as before, tolerates neither the category of the simply political nor the simply geographical as a stable referent. For the technological practices and "universal dangers" of our time have created a new and particular form of antidiplomacy. Estrangement remains the central figure, but in contrast to early modern forms of diplomacy, the contemporary form creates and mediates estrangement by new techniques of power and representations of danger. No longer subject to revolutions of mechanical technology, both powers and dangers are created and transmitted through semiological innovation: sign wars.

Antidiplomacy takes up where *On Diplomacy's* creeping *episteme* runs out of ground. Where *On Diplomacy* develops a genealogy of the Hegelian conflict between particularist states and universalist forces,

Antidiplomacy proposes a "semiology of International Relations," an analysis of the "textualization" of reality by global politics. *Antidiplomacy* is a study in the deterritorialization of the Western political landscape where technologies of time suppress technologies of space, where chronopolitical discursive power elevates chronology over the geography of global politics.

Alterity is the last holdout against the total ubiquity of the postmodern. The deconstruction of the opposition self/other is, in the domain of international relations, massively accelerated by the phenomenology of national-state security interests. The geo-political "other" is both unavoidable scapegoat and visionary paranoid source of the procession of the simulacra. The bureaucratic paranoia which motivates the field of espionage reaches a pitch which overtakes even the inner machinery of institutionalized national military command. Knowledge as paranoia, intelligence as panic. The very feedback loops of military intelligence systems reinforce paranoid behavior. As Der Derian suggests, decision-making is at once and everywhere overdetermined, overchecked, overcompartmentalized, overclassified.

The reassuring inside/outside border of geo-politics - the traditional self/other, is threatened by the networks of intelligence gathering: the spy is the intelligence source whose viability as well as security depends upon his indistinguishability, upon his non-identity. The essence of the spy is to be identical with the other. Being undercover is unveiling oneself as the other in the same. Thus the critical distance between spy and counter-spy, agent and double-agent, in the age of electronic espionage becomes ambiguous at best. Intelligence is fragmented internally: their signals and our signals, coded and over-coded, the geo-political estrangement which determines traditional diplomacy gives way to what might be called diplomatics: mediation persists as the operator of information as self-estrangement corresponding to the depoliticizing of information and the politicizing of the code. Espionage in our time is experienced as the power of information as such. Never mind the content, that sentimental trace of proto-modern what-ness. Surveillance, like war, has become a function of pure speed. The spy is no longer a penetrating point-source of hidden information. The information is everywhere. Espionage today consists of the processing, coding and de-coding of that which all always already knew. Ubiquitous espionage, panoptic power.

For Der Derian, the limits of the speed of analysis also mark the moment of terror. When information processing and decoding no longer keep pace with the production of information, intelligence itself becomes terror. In Lyotard's terms, the postmodern condition is that state of affairs which arises from an interruption of legitimizing reference to the "master narratives" of Western civilization. The information technologies of our time insure that legitimizing practices are far behind the movement of information which they pretend to regulate. Diplomacy in a traditional sense cannot mediate security in the postmodern scene. *Antidiplomacy* studies the emergence of the danger, the threat of the other from within. Terror is the moment of ubiquitous danger, the insight that no wall is high enough to provide protection from the other, that security itself is predicated upon insecurity. In order to confront and identify terrorism according to traditional (diplomatic) models, it must first be defined, domesticated, reduce to legitimizable, recognizable concepts which permit its identification, isolation and criminalization. And terrorism enacts a mode which resists domestication. The counter-strategy must be deployed at the level of the sign and of the episteme. Terrorism relies on symbolic power. Der Derian's point of departure is the notion that the response to terrorism must be archival. It must begin its search in a genealogy of knowledge.

Speed is thus the nexus dimension, warfare's third dimension is the surface of the postmodern battlefield. Already an impending potential in World War I, the politicizing of the spatial in geopolitics did not take long. As Virilio has shown, the politicizing of speed reflects the postmodern's "dromocratic revolution". Where 19th century society was founded on control, regulation - on the brake - speed is the pure object of our time. In contemporary warfare the axis of battle shifts from territorial, economic, and material gains to immaterial, perceptual fields. As Der Derian puts it: "The war of spectacle begins to replace the spectacle of war." The distribution of territory is outmoded. As Deleuze and Guattari affirm in *L'anti-oedipe*: the modern machine renders the concrete abstract, naturalizes the artificial and replaces territorial codes and despotic codes for

an "axiomatic of un-coded fluxes." To understand fully the force in "de-territorialized, hyper-mediated, late-modern war," says Der Derian, is to understand that force is never fixed, that conventional consideration is always too late. Global space is transformed into cyber-space. Only there can security and comfort be found. Cyber-war is thus neither politics authenticated by technical reproduction nor the contest of material referents, but rather the prosecution of the field of perception.

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