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Book's review

ARREDONDO, Ricardo. *Diplomacia. Teoría y Práctica*, (Aranzadi, Pamplona, 2023)

It is inevitable to know, approximately, how many pages the book you have just started reading contains. But it is equally unavoidable to feel a certain anxiety when there are only twenty pages left, and you look at its thinness with surprise. This is exactly what happened to me with this book, which I review here from an academic perspective.

Not only are traditional politics and democracy in crisis in a constantly changing world – opening the door to dangerous figures who present themselves as new heroes fighting imaginary enemies – but global diplomacy, responsible for maintaining peaceful relations between states and other international actors, is also showing signs of wear and obsolescence. Therefore, it is urgent and necessary to make a case for restoring the sense and importance of diplomacy, which is precisely what we find in the book under review.

Diplomatic and consular law, as well as diplomacy, are complex fields. Mastery of regulatory techniques and legal categories, both public and private, must be coupled with an openness to new developments. As the author notes, diplomats are “conscientes de los cambios que se están produciendo en el ejercicio de la diplomacia. Entendemos, como se ha destacado a lo largo de esta obra, que si bien las funciones esenciales de la labor diplomática y consular siguen siendo las mismas; el modo de desempeñarlas ha cambiado y estamos preparados para ello” (p. 578).

This book is the result of the valuable work of Professor and diplomat Ricardo Arredondo, author of other manuals on diplomacy and various academic texts. His perspective is trustworthy, as it combines theoretical knowledge with practical experience. The work offers a comprehensive view, from the historical foundations of diplomacy and the consular function to their application in current contexts. Notably, it concludes with reflections and proposals on the future of diplomacy; thus, the work’s perspective encompasses the past, present, and future. In this way, it demonstrates that time is an agent of change in international relations.

Readers will observe the professor’s defense of diplomacy as key to peace, conflict resolution, and the building of strategic alliances, adapting to the times. Without diplomacy, global cooperation would be impossible, leaving the world in constant tension and uncertainty. Moreover, the book adopts a method infused with Latin soul, which should not surprise us, given the author’s academic background and sources.

The systematization is exemplary. The work is divided into twelve chapters, through which the author masterfully guides the reader both in depth and form, whether the reader is an expert in law or a general audience. This is achieved through excellent writing and highly pedagogical examples. The chapters can be read either continuously or independently. The text follows a classical structure with a continuous thread, beginning with a historical perspective, traversing the basic notions and development of the topic under analysis, and concluding with a view of diplomacy and the consular function in the present and, above all, with a look toward the future.

Chapter I is dedicated to the historical perspective. The author provides a meticulous description of the stages of diplomacy, particularly in Latin America, from a pre-Columbian, colonial perspective to the independence of the colonies from the colonizing state (mainly Spain). The author's notes on the various customs and cultures of the indigenous peoples in matters of diplomacy are particularly noteworthy, even though many of these customs gradually disappeared, while others persisted: "El uso de coca como instrumento para lograr la paz y como herramienta de protocolo, negociación y abordaje de múltiples problemas y solución de conflictos" (p. 49).

Chapter II presents the basic notions of diplomacy and diplomatic and consular law, and their connection with the general sources of Public International Law. Thus, Ricardo Arredondo conceptually situates the reader in the meaning of these notions, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter covered in the book.

Chapter III discusses general issues of Public International Law, such as the types of international actors and their legal personality in the international legal order. The author analyzes the expansion of state and non-state actors in international relations and their participation in the diplomatic realm, though the state remains the primary subject of International Law.

Chapter IV should be read together with Chapters V, VI, and VII, as they address diplomacy as a whole:

On the one hand (Chapters IV and V), the author describes various modalities of diplomacy, classified according to the actors involved (bilateral or multilateral), the method employed (conferences, summit meetings, special missions), its character (public or private), the intervening body (state, subnational, or others), or its areas of action (politics, culture, human rights, humanitarian issues, science, environment, among others). Regarding environmental diplomacy, the author covers both environmental and climate issues. However, as far as this issue is concerned, I disagree: I believe that climate diplomacy should be treated as an entity separate from environmental diplomacy, given their different legal norms and summits.

In Chapters VI and VII, the professor addresses the concept and types of diplomatic missions, as well as the members of such missions. What distinguishes this manual are the conceptual and contextual nuances the author introduces, such as the notion of "private servant" and the classist and pejorative reasoning that led to the change in this designation.

Chapter VIII is masterfully dedicated to the consular function. Its structure is classic among academic texts. The author particularly highlights consular protection and assistance, a key responsibility of consular officials. This topic has provoked significant disputes between states and generated numerous judicial rulings in both national and international courts. Historically, states' efforts to protect their citizens abroad have caused conflicts. Sometimes, this resulted in unjustified privileges, as occurred with the capitulation regimes during colonial and semi-colonial times. This chapter, like the entire work, is dense in content. It serves as a concise manual on consular law and practice, notable for its extensive and updated case studies.

I am particularly fond of Chapter IX because the author provides a critical view of the current perspectives on multilateralism and its future, especially regarding

global issues that need to be addressed collectively, such as climate change, migration, drug trafficking, etc. Additionally, he confronts the contrasting narratives on the crisis of multilateral diplomacy: those who advocate for “una restructuración profunda del sistema multilateral” and those who aspire to “la reactivación de las instituciones multilaterales existentes” (p. 397). Overall, the content of this chapter could be divided into Chapters IV and XII.

A substantial part of Diplomatic and Consular Law, specifically concerning privileges and immunities, is covered in Chapter X. In this chapter, the author analyzes the rules governing the immunity of the state and its central organs. Arredondo distinguishes between functional and personal immunities, paying special attention to the immunity of Heads of State and Foreign Ministers. This chapter is dense with analysis of the jurisprudence of the International Court of Justice, other international tribunals, and numerous domestic courts. It also stands out for its abundant incorporation of doctrine, which constitutes a significant contribution to the treatment of privileges and immunities. The analysis and systematization of these privileges and immunities are remarkable.

My inclination towards asylum is likely to influence my preference for Chapter XI. The chapter offers a comparative perspective on the legal treatment of asylum in Latin America compared to other regions of the world, particularly the United States and the European Union. Through various examples, such as the case of Julian Assange, the author highlights the differences in the conception of asylum. In Latin America, asylum is considered a right, whereas in the United States and the European Union, it is granted temporarily, without a clear *opinio iuris* on the matter due to the diversity of state approaches. The author proposes the need to address this issue through an international instrument that codifies it, based on the work done in 1975.

The author concludes the book with Chapter XII, where he emphasizes the importance of diplomacy in achieving peace and communication in international relations. He also underscores the need for adherence to an appropriate legal framework. Additionally, he reflects on classical diplomacy and its adaptation to current times: technology, the post-pandemic context, the inclusion of non-state actors, and the importance of in-person diplomacy (*zoon politikon*). According to the author, the latter is crucial for creating synergies that technological networks cannot achieve. Furthermore, he defends the figure of the diplomat, noting that, far from being elitist, they are highly educated individuals who represent their country abroad.

The author provides an extensive and well-structured bibliography, both historical and contemporary, in English and Spanish, confirming that not everything is published in English and that it is indeed very relevant. Additionally, the author demonstrates excellent command of academic, jurisprudential, legal, cultural, historical, and other bibliographic sources.

In summary, this work will be of theoretical and practical use and a reference of undeniable interest for anyone wishing to delve into diplomacy. There is nothing left but to wish the author continued success, deepening and updating this line of work over time.

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