



FACULTY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES

COURSE: B.A.LL.B

Semester

SUBJECT: POLITICAL

SCIENCE - II

SUBJECT CODE: BAL ,201

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Lecture 38



Diplomacy is often confused with [foreign policy](#), but the terms are not synonymous. Diplomacy is the chief, but not the only, instrument of foreign policy, which is set by political leaders, though diplomats (in addition to military and [intelligence](#) officers) may advise them. Foreign policy establishes goals, prescribes strategies, and sets the broad [tactics](#) to be used in their accomplishment. It may employ secret agents, subversion, war, or other forms of violence as well as diplomacy to achieve its objectives. Diplomacy is the principal substitute for the use of force or underhanded means in statecraft; it is how [comprehensive](#) national power is applied to the peaceful adjustment of differences between [states](#). It may be coercive (i.e., backed by the threat to apply punitive measures or to use force) but is overtly nonviolent. Its primary tools are international dialogue and negotiation, primarily conducted by accredited [envoys](#) (a term derived from the French *envoyé*, meaning “one who is sent”) and other political leaders. Unlike foreign policy, which generally is enunciated publicly, most diplomacy is conducted in confidence, though both the fact that it is in progress and its results are almost always made public in contemporary [international relations](#).
sidered in detail under that title.

The purpose of foreign policy is to further a state’s interests, which are derived from [geography](#), [history](#), [economics](#), and the distribution of international power. Safeguarding national independence, security, and integrity—territorial, political, economic, and moral—is viewed as a country’s primary obligation, followed by preserving a wide freedom of action for the [state](#). The political leaders, traditionally of sovereign states, who devise foreign policy pursue what they perceive to be the national interest, adjusting national policies to changes in external conditions and technology. Primary responsibility for supervising the execution of policy may lie with the head of state or government, a cabinet or a nominally nongovernmental [collective](#) leadership, the staff of the country’s leader, or a [minister](#) who presides over the foreign ministry, directs policy execution, supervises the ministry’s officials, and instructs the country’s diplomats abroad.

The purpose of diplomacy is to strengthen the state, nation, or organization it serves in relation to others by advancing the interests in its charge. To this end, diplomatic activity endeavours to maximize a group’s advantages without the risk and expense of using force and preferably without causing resentment. It habitually, but not invariably, strives to preserve peace; diplomacy is strongly inclined toward negotiation to achieve agreements and resolve issues between states. Even in times of peace, diplomacy may involve coercive threats of economic or other punitive measures or demonstrations of the capability to impose unilateral solutions to disputes by the application of military power. However, diplomacy normally seeks to develop goodwill toward the state it represents, nurturing relations with foreign states and peoples that will ensure their cooperation or—failing that—their neutrality.

When diplomacy fails, [war](#) may ensue; however, diplomacy is useful even during war. It conducts the passages from protest to menace, dialogue to negotiation, ultimatum to reprisal, and war to peace and reconciliation with other states. Diplomacy builds and tends the coalitions that deter or make war. It disrupts the [alliances](#) of enemies and sustains the passivity of potentially hostile powers. It contrives war’s termination, and it forms, strengthens, and sustains the peace that follows conflict. Over the long term, diplomacy strives to build an international order [conducive](#) to the nonviolent resolution of disputes and expanded cooperation between states.

Diplomats are the primary—but far from the only—practitioners of diplomacy. They are specialists in carrying messages and negotiating adjustments in relations and the resolution of quarrels between states and peoples. Their weapons are words, backed by the power of the state or organization they represent. Diplomats help leaders to understand the attitudes and actions of foreigners and to develop strategies and tactics that will shape the behaviour of foreigners, especially foreign governments. The wise use of diplomats is a key to successful foreign policy.
