

# Erik Pajtinka

---

## Military Diplomacy and Its Present Functions

---

Security Dimensions. International & National Studies nr 4 (20), 179-194

---

2016

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

## **MILITARY DIPLOMACY AND ITS PRESENT FUNCTIONS**

PHDR. ERIK PAJTINKA, PH.D.

*Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, SLOVAKIA*

### **ABSTRACT**

---

Military diplomacy can be defined as a set of activities carried out mainly by the representatives of the defence department, as well as other state institutions, aimed at pursuing the foreign policy interests of the state in the field of security and defence policy, and whose actions are based on the use of negotiations and other diplomatic instruments. This meaning differs military diplomacy from some other related phenomena such as gunboat diplomacy or coercive diplomacy. Military diplomacy as such performs several basic functions, which include the following: 1. Gathering and analysing of information on the armed forces and the security situation in the receiving state, 2. Promotion of co-operation, communication and mutual relations between the armed forces of the sending and the receiving state, 3. Organization of working visits of representatives of the defence authorities and of peaceful stay of the military units of the sending state in the receiving state, 4. Support of business contracts with arms and military equipment between the sending and the receiving state, and 5. Representation of the sending state and its armed forces at official ceremonies and other events in the receiving state.

### **ARTICLE INFO**

---

#### *Article history*

Received: 23.07.2016 Accepted 02.09.2016

#### *Key words*

military diplomacy, definition of military diplomacy, functions of military diplomacy, coercive diplomacy, gunboat diplomacy

### **INTRODUCTION**

Military diplomacy as a specific field of diplomacy which focuses primarily on the pursuit of foreign policy interests of the state in the field of secu-

riety and defence policy. In the current practice of international relations it represents one of the most important forms of foreign-policy activities of most of the states. In the theory of international relations, and specifically within diplomatic science, however, only relatively little attention is paid to the topic of military diplomacy (in the meaning defined above) in comparison, for instance, with economic or cultural diplomacy. Similarly, in the area of security studies, the military diplomacy is not a widely studied subject. The reason why military diplomacy is a relatively rarely addressed topic in the theory of international relations is probably also the fact that in practice the field of military diplomacy often tends to be closely linked with the intelligence activities of military intelligence. In many cases this leads to competent public authorities not being willing to disclose information on this topic, as a result of which there is a lack of relevant sources based on which it would be possible to conduct comprehensive research. Another reason may also be a considerably different interpretation of the term 'military diplomacy' in the relevant scientific sources or among specific authors. Consequently, it may happen that the scope of issues that are explored under the heading of 'military diplomacy' is highly varied (although such issues may be related to this term), with the result that research in this field is highly fragmented and lacks a uniform concept.

The aim of this study is to attempt to define 'military diplomacy', on the one hand, through formulating its own characteristics and on the other hand, also through its distinction from selected related or similar phenomena. Simultaneously, the purpose of this paper is to identify the basic functions that military diplomacy performs or may perform in current practice, and based on this, to stress the importance of this specific dimension of diplomacy in the process of pursuing the foreign policy of a state.

In the elaboration of this study, we used mainly scientific articles, papers and chapters in scientific journals and monographs, and, last but not least, data from our own empirical research. In the first part of the work dealing with the definition of 'military diplomacy' the most important sources we used were the studies published by American author M. Edmonds and Indian scholar K. A. Muthanna, but also a monograph of British authors A. Cottey and A. Forster. At the same time, our sources also included certain papers published by Slovak authors, namely F. Škvrnda and P. Rusiňák, which we used in order to explain the views of "local" Slovak experts on the topic under review. In the second part of the study devoted to the functions of military diplomacy especially the monograph

of the German scholar A. Vagts *The Military Attaché* was a very helpful source, from which we used mainly information on the functions of military diplomacy in the past. In this part of work, we also used the results of our own empirical research conducted among military diplomats in February 2015<sup>1</sup>, which served as a useful source of data in identifying the present functions of military diplomacy.

The study is divided into two thematic parts. In the first part, attention is paid to the definition of 'military diplomacy', and then to the determination of its relationship with selected related phenomena, which are interconnected with it both in practice and in theory. The second part of this work is focused on the definition of the main functions of military diplomacy, both in the historical context and in the current practice, whereby a relative meaning of specific military-diplomatic functions is outlined, based on an empirical analysis of their implementation by military diplomats in practice.

It should be added that given its limited scope this paper focuses only on the topic of military diplomacy in bilateral relations, or on military diplomacy as a part of bilateral diplomacy (which is particularly true about the analysis of the functions of military diplomacy). Thus, the topics of multilateral military diplomacy, which is specific in several respects, will not be under review. At the same time, the paper places emphasis mainly on military diplomacy executed by military diplomats as its key actors, albeit other entities may also be involved in military-diplomatic activities (e.g. senior political representatives of the Ministry of Defence).

## 1. DEFINITION OF MILITARY DIPLOMACY

As mentioned in the introduction, in current scientific sources the term military diplomacy is often used in several different meanings. For this reason, before the analysis of present functions of military diplomacy as such it is necessary to outline its definition, and briefly explain its relation with several related phenomena which are often interconnected with it in practice.

---

<sup>1</sup> The research was conducted in the form of structured questionnaires and eight military diplomats from seven countries (Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Cyprus, France, Lithuania and Sweden) took part in it. Military diplomats from ten other countries were also asked to participate in the research, but they did not respond or, as in case of Slovakia, refused to take part in the research arguing that they are not in position to do so due to 'security reasons'. All data in this text referring to 'Research' are used from the above stated research.

### 1.1. THE TERM MILITARY DIPLOMACY

In scientific literature as well as in official documents we can find at least five different interpretations of the term military diplomacy, which differ from each other in particular with regard to the scope of definition of military-diplomatic activities depending mainly on the level of specificity of criteria based on which military-diplomatic activities are characterized.

In some sources, the term military diplomacy is understood in its broadest sense as *a set of all non-violent foreign-policy activities and/or programmes of a state the implementation of which is important in terms of securing its external security*<sup>2</sup>. The width of such understanding of the notion of military diplomacy is determined mainly by that in fact the “importance in terms of external security of a state” may cover a multitude of different diplomatic activities – including certain activities in the field of cultural diplomacy<sup>3</sup>. Thus, in this context, the notion of military diplomacy should theoretically also include some activities of cultural attachés<sup>4</sup> such as the managing of international cultural exchanges, which are organised to promote friendly relations among states, as ultimately such activities in some way also contribute to the strengthening of the security of the relevant state by creating conditions for the prevention or elimination of conflicts.

In another broader sense – in present specialized literature quite widespread – military diplomacy means *the activity of military and civilian forces of the Ministry of Defence of the state, which is carried out with a view to the enforcement of its foreign policy objectives, and which is of a non-combat (non-violent) nature*. In this sense, military diplomacy is defined, for example, by an American analyst M. Edmonds who defines military diplomacy as “the use of armed forces in other than combat operations (...) for the purpose of promoting the objectives of the state abroad”<sup>5</sup>. British

---

<sup>2</sup> Today, a similar understanding of the notion of military diplomacy can be found, for instance, in some Chinese foreign-policy documents (see: Y. Matsuda, *An essay on China's military diplomacy: examination of intentions in foreign strategy*, „NIDS Security Reports“, 2006, no. 7).

<sup>3</sup> Cultural diplomacy here means a specific part of diplomacy, which focuses on the pursuit of foreign policy interests of the state primarily in the field of cultural policy (see more: E. Pajtinka, *Slovník diplomacie*, PAMIKO, Bratislava 2013, p. 92).

<sup>4</sup> *Cultural attaché* is a diplomat who within his/her agenda specializes in the performance of tasks in the field of cultural diplomacy.

<sup>5</sup> M. Edmonds, *Beyond the Horizon: Defence, Diplomacy and South Africa's Naval Opportunities*, South African Institute of International Affairs and Centre for Defence and International Security Studies, [South Africa] 1998, p. 106.

scholars A. Cottey and A. Forster in turn characterize it as “a cooperative (non-violent) manner of use of armed forces and related infrastructure – mainly of the Ministry of Defence – as an instrument of foreign and security policy”<sup>6</sup>. Within such notion of military diplomacy we may include all activities and operations of the defence forces of a state which pursue foreign policy objectives and have non-violent character, i.e. not only diplomatic activities carried out by the members of defence, (e.g. discussions on the issues of military-defence cooperation), but also other various activities of state’s defence forces, which are carried out within their non-combat activity such as the organization of armed forces training of a partner state, or active participation in joint military exercises.

In the narrow sense, the notion of military diplomacy, in specialized sources, is understood as a *set of non-combat activities of military and civilian forces of the Ministry of Defence focused on the pursuit of foreign-policy objectives that are part of the overall state diplomacy*. In this sense, military diplomacy is defined, for example, by the Indian author K. Muthanna who characterizes it as “the use of armed forces as an instrument of foreign policy within the [execution] of state’s diplomacy”<sup>7</sup>, or by Slovak analyst F. Škvrnda who defines the term as “the activities of armed forces and their members within the framework of diplomacy”<sup>8</sup>. Thus, more narrowly, military diplomacy involves – unlike its previous broader definition – only the non-combat (non-violent) activities of defence units which are “diplomatic” in nature, or are part of *diplomacy*, as a specific foreign-policy instrument, which uses negotiations as the key method<sup>9</sup>.

Finally, in the narrowest sense, military diplomacy means *diplomatic activities of the Ministry of Defence units, pursuing interests of the state in the field of security policy*. Military diplomacy is defined in this sense, for in-

<sup>6</sup> A. Cottey, A. Forster, *Reshaping Defence Diplomacy: New Roles for Military Cooperation and Assistance*, Oxford University Press, New York 2004, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> K. Muthanna, *Military diplomacy*, „Journal of Defence Studies“, 2011, no. 1, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> F. Škvrnda, *Medzinárodná bezpečnosť a vojenská diplomacia*, [in:] *Hospodárska diplomacia v 21. storočí. Zborník z medzinárodnej vedeckej konferencie poriadanej pri príležitosti 70. narodenín prof. JUDr. Ludovíta Tótha, CSc.* Vydavateľstvo Ekonóm, Bratislava 2005, p. 137.

<sup>9</sup> Negotiations as a distinctive feature of *diplomacy* are highlighted by several authors in their works specialised in the topic of diplomacy such as G. R. Berridge (see G. R. Berridge, *Teória a prax diplomacie*, Fakulta politických vied a medzinárodných vzťahov UMB, Banská Bystrica 2000, p. 15) or H. Nicolson (H. Nicolson, *Diplomatie*, A. Francke AG Verlag, Bern 1947, p. 13) who took the definition over from the Oxford English Dictionary.

stance, by P. Rusiňák who characterizes it as “the activity of military diplomats (in the field of diplomacy) focused on political and security issues”<sup>10</sup>.

For completeness, we should add that the term military diplomacy is associated also with *diplomatic activities aimed at resolving armed conflicts or the issues of post-war order and the prevention of wars*<sup>11</sup>. In this context, the term military diplomacy is mainly used in the historical context, e.g., with respect to diplomatic negotiations within the Congress of Vienna or the Versailles Peace Conference.

For the purposes of this work, it is appropriate to understand the term ‘military diplomacy’ in its narrow sense because its wider interpretations that we may find in present specialized literature are too wide for the purposes of theoretical exploration, excessively general and, in many cases, considerably vague.

Thus, if we use the narrower definition of the term military diplomacy, it can be characterized by:

- *Actors* being primarily the members of armed forces and civilian forces of the Ministry of Defence of a state, but occasionally also other public authorities having powers in the field of execution of foreign security policy of the state;
- *Foreign policy objectives pursued*, which are directly linked to issues of external security and defence of the state and to international cooperation of armed forces, and
- *The nature of activities* which are not based on the use of military (armed) forces, but rather on diplomatic (non-violent) instruments and methods.

Based on the above stated characteristics, we could then define *military diplomacy* for the purposes of our research<sup>12</sup>, as a *set of activities carried out mainly by the representatives of the state defence bodies, as well as of other state institutions, aimed at pursuing the foreign policy interests of the state in the field of security and defence policy and whose actions are based on the use of negotiations and other diplomatic instruments*.

<sup>10</sup> P. Rusiňák, *Dimenzie diplomacie*, [in:] P. Rusiňák, B. Mattoš, J. Rusiňáková, L. Meričková, M. Polgár, *Diplomacia – úvod do štúdia*, Ekonóm, Bratislava 2012, p. 51.

<sup>11</sup> P. Rusiňák, *Dimenzie diplomacie*, [in:] P. Rusiňák, B. Mattoš, J. Rusiňáková, L. Meričková, M. Polgár, *Diplomacia – úvod do štúdia*, Ekonóm, Bratislava 2012, p. 51.

<sup>12</sup> The said definition appears to be appropriate also as a universal feature of military diplomacy for the purposes of theory of international relations, as it defines military diplomacy – unlike many of its broader definitions – sufficiently specifically and distinctively.

## 1.2. RELATED TERMS

As defined in the conclusion of the preceding part, military diplomacy tends to be interlinked, both in theory and in practice, with other related phenomena of international relations with which in some cases it is incorrectly identified or replaced. Such phenomena include, for instance, gunboat diplomacy or coercive diplomacy. We will explain briefly both phenomena in the text below and will also outline their relation to military diplomacy as such.

### 1.2.1. GUNBOAT DIPLOMACY

The notion of gunboat diplomacy – building on the original context where it was used<sup>13</sup> – in general denotes the method of pursuit of foreign policy interests of the state which is based on pressure exerted through either the threat or the actual use of military (naval) forces. In this respect, gunboat diplomacy is also defined, for instance, by a British specialist in this topic, J. Cable, which in his opinion means “the use of or threat to use the limited naval forces outside the state of war aimed at ensuring benefits or averting losses in an ongoing international conflict”<sup>14</sup>. Thus, in the context of its nature, gunboat diplomacy is not – unlike military diplomacy – a form of “diplomacy” in the sense of a non-violent instrument for the pursuit of foreign policy based mainly on negotiations<sup>15</sup>, but in fact it is a specific method of the use of military force – primarily as an instrument for intimidation and pressure – for the purpose of pursuing foreign-policy objectives of a state. In practice, gunboat diplomacy may involve, for instance, a situation when a state sends its naval forces off the coast of another foreign country to demonstrate its military power and thus to achieve a change in the behaviour or position of the relevant foreign country in harmony with the state’s own foreign policy interests.

---

<sup>13</sup> The term Gunboat Diplomacy comes from the 19th century, in the period of the so-called Opium Wars when Great Britain used a specific type of warships entitled “gunboats” to demonstrate its military dominance to dictate the conditions at diplomatic negotiations (see E. Pajtinka, *Slovník diplomacie*, PAMIKO, Bratislava 2013).

<sup>14</sup> J. Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy 1919–79: Political Applications of Limited Naval Force. Study in International Security*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 1981, p. 39.

<sup>15</sup> Within the phrase gunboat diplomacy, the term ‘diplomacy’ should be understood on its broader scale, as a general name of activities focused on the pursuit of foreign policy of a state (which may be non-violent or violent). On this (broader) scale, the term diplomacy is used often mainly in the works of authors from the USA.



### 1.2.2. COERCIVE DIPLOMACY

The term ‘coercive diplomacy’ – as well as the term ‘gunboat diplomacy’ – denotes a method of the pursuit of foreign policy interests of a state through either the threat to use or the actual use of limited military force. Unlike the term gunboat diplomacy which is used in specialized sources usually only with respect to the use of naval forces, the term coercive diplomacy associates the use of all components of the armed forces (i.e. both the air force and ground troops) as a tool of intimidation to achieve foreign policy objectives<sup>16</sup>. In accordance with the above stated characteristics, for instance, A. du Plessis offers an apt definition of coercive diplomacy by defining it as “bloodless military acts or the use of armed forces as coercive measures for the purposes of [...] enforcement of political interests”<sup>17</sup>. For instance, A. L. George perceives coercive diplomacy in a similar way and he also emphasizes that (within coercive diplomacy) military power tends to be used in an exemplary way, which demonstrates the commitment and the will of the state to escalate military acts if this is necessary<sup>18</sup> to achieve its objectives. In practice, various forms of intimidation may be used within coercive diplomacy through the demonstration of military power such as the concentration of military units, and/or their increased activity at the border with a foreign country; flights of military aircraft near the foreign country’s airspace, but sometimes even the execution of one or several minor combat operations using power (e.g. the occupation of a border station).

The implementation of coercive diplomacy or gunboat diplomacy (as one of its specific forms) in practice implicitly relies on the use of diplomacy in the narrow sense<sup>19</sup>. Specifically, for instance, the use of diplomatic negotiations which are often held in parallel with military operations, where addressing of the relevant contentious issues is negotiated<sup>20</sup>.

---

<sup>16</sup> Thus, gunboat diplomacy may be understood as one of the forms of coercive diplomacy.

<sup>17</sup> A. du Plessis, *Defence diplomacy: conceptual and practical dimensions with specific reference to South Africa*, „Strategic Review for Southern Africa“, 2008, no. 2, p. 94.

<sup>18</sup> A. L. George, *Introduction: The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, [in:] *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*. A. L. George, W. E. Simons (eds.), Westview Press, Boulder 1994.

<sup>19</sup> Here, the term *diplomacy* in its narrow sense is understood as a set of activities focused on the pursuit of foreign policy interests of the state without the threat to use power or the actual use of armed forces.

<sup>20</sup> Although it should be noted that at such diplomatic negotiations the state which is under pressure of the other country (pursuing coercive diplomacy or gunboat diplomacy) has a severely limited room for negotiation.

In practice, the use of coercive diplomacy as well as the use of gunboat diplomacy, which is associated with a more intensive activity of troops, may even lead to an increase of (some) military-diplomatic activities among the states concerned, namely, for instance, in the field of collection and analysis of selected relevant military information<sup>21</sup>.

## 2. FUNCTIONS OF MILITARY DIPLOMACY

Military diplomacy as a set of activities carried out mainly by the representatives of the state defence bodies, as well as of other state institutions, aimed at pursuing the foreign policy interests of the state in the field of security and defence policy, and whose actions are based on the use of negotiations and other diplomatic instruments, in practice may focus on the performance of several functions.

At the beginning of its modern existence, in the 19th century, military diplomacy focused almost exclusively on the performance of functions concerning the gathering and analysing of information on armed forces and on the security situation in foreign countries, with emphasis on the evaluation of current military threats and possibilities of military intervention. This traditional focus of military diplomacy is well-documented, for instance, in the instructions for Austrian imperial military officers working in the positions of military diplomats at the diplomatic missions of the Austrian Empire abroad, compiled by the outstanding military commander and strategist, Earl J. Radetzky. We learn from them that the role of military diplomats was in particular to:

- a) gain precise and detailed information on armed forces of their receiving state, namely, for instance, on the numbers of specific types of troops, their esprit-de-corps, training, tactics, internal organization of the headquarters, but, for instance, also on personal and professional qualities of significant military commanders,
- b) find out information on events significant from a military point of view, such as the construction of military fortresses or other military establishments, the supplies of new weapons or unusual concentration of troops in the receiving state,

---

<sup>21</sup> In the state of conflict with a foreign country where there is the threat of armed forces, naturally, there is an overriding need for the acquisition of information (including) on the current military security situation and developments in the relevant foreign country, which may be ensured also through military-diplomatic channels.

- c) find out information on the movement of troops and on the course of military operations executed by the receiving state with respect to a third country,
- d) gather knowledge about important military objectives and the nature of local environment in the receiving state with respect to potential options for the management of military operations against it, and, finally also
- e) gather information on official documents, specialist publications, maps and other documents that may contain military relevant information<sup>22</sup>.

In comparison with the 19th century today's portfolio of the functions of military diplomacy is considerably more diverse. Based on current scientific sources and on the results of our own empirical Research among military diplomats carried out in 2015, we concluded that at least the following five basic functions of military diplomacy can be distinguished in the contemporary practice:

1. Gathering and analysing of information on the armed forces and the security situation in the receiving state,
2. Promotion of cooperation, communication and mutual relations between the armed forces of the sending and the receiving state,
3. Organization of the working visits of the representatives of the defence authorities and of peaceful stay of the military units of the sending state in the receiving state,
4. Support of business contracts with arms and military equipment between the sending and the receiving state, and
5. Representation of the sending state and its armed forces at official ceremonies and other official events in the receiving state.

In practice, the performance of the function *gathering and analysing of information on the armed forces and the security situation in the receiving state* may involve either gathering of information from public sources, for instance, through media monitoring, press releases or public speeches of statesmen and the representatives of armed forces, or also gathering of information from private sources, for instance, through interviews or consultations with political and military representatives of the receiving state, or with the members of the military diplomatic corps in the relevant receiving state, or through observations of military exercises, visits of military units, etc. Given that similar activities were linked to the onset of modern military diplomacy<sup>23</sup>,

---

<sup>22</sup> A. Vagts, *The Military Attaché*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1967.

<sup>23</sup> See the description of activities of military diplomats in the instructions of J. Radetzky in the preceding part of the text.

gathering and analysing of information on the armed forces and the security situation in the receiving state may be designated as one of the oldest functions of military diplomacy. In current practice, however, this function of military diplomacy maintains its crucial importance, as confirmed by several expert analyses and empirical observations of scholars from the most recent period. For instance, in a study which is cited frequently, published by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces in 2007, also “the monitoring of conditions in the receiving state having influence on the security”<sup>24</sup> is mentioned as one of the basic functions of military diplomats, i.e. also of military diplomacy. Furthermore, the “gathering and analysing of information” is mentioned as one of the functions of military diplomacy; in fact, it is mentioned in the first place in the empirical work of the German scholar and former diplomat J. Kleiner<sup>25</sup>. The crucial importance of gathering and analysing of information on the armed forces and the security situation in the receiving state as one of the functions of military diplomacy is also indicated from the results of internal empirical Research among military diplomats carried out in 2015, in which all out of eight contacted military diplomats marked this functions as relevant, and three of them – military diplomats from Canada, Austria and Lithuania – even said that they have devoted most of their working time to this function (from among the five basic functions specified above) – in percentage terms estimated at 30, 40, or 55 per cent.

The performance of the second function of military diplomacy being the *promotion of cooperation, communication and mutual relations between the armed forces of the sending and the receiving state*, may practically cover, for instance, negotiations concerning the issues of military cooperation between the sending and the receiving state, including the preparation of international treaties related to military and security cooperation of both states, the mediation of contacts between the armed forces of both states, e.g., with respect to the organization of joint military exercises, preparation of joint military operations or exchanges of officers, etc. The importance of this function of military diplomacy is highlighted, for example, by the South African scholar A. du Plessis who includes, among the basic roles of military diplomats in the relevant context of military diploma-

<sup>24</sup> *Defence Attachés. DCAF Backgrounder*, The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces, Geneva 2007, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> See J. Kleiner, *Diplomatic Practice. Between Tradition and Innovation*, World Scientific Publishing, Singapore 2010, p. 60.

cy, also establishing and maintaining contacts between the armed forces<sup>26</sup> of the relevant sending and receiving state. We may mark the support of cooperation, communication and mutual relations between the armed forces of the sending and receiving state as one of important functions of military diplomacy also based on results of the 2015 Research, under which in most cases the performance of this function will take one fifth of military diplomat's working time<sup>27</sup>.

Another of the functions of military diplomacy is the *organization of working visits of the representatives of the defence authorities and of peaceful stay of the military units of the sending state in the receiving state*, the performance of which in practice may involve, for instance, the preparation of the agenda of working visits of the official representatives of the Ministry of Defence or of armed forces of the sending state in the receiving state, including the provision of necessary logistic, organizational and administrative formalities, and also, for example, dealing with administrative work with respect to a peaceful stay or movement of military troops of a foreign country (sending state) in the territory or through the territory of the receiving state (e.g. with respect to the participation of military troops in international military exercises abroad). This function of military diplomacy is highlighted in different forms in scientific literature, too – for instance, A. du Plessis defines planning, coordination and supervision over all visits of the units of the defence sector of the sending state in the receiving state as one of the basic functions of military diplomats or military diplomacy<sup>28</sup>. The relevance of the organization of working visits of the representatives of the defence authorities and of peaceful stay of the military units of the sending state in the receiving state as one of the functions of military diplomacy is also confirmed by the results of 2015 Research, in which all questioned military diplomats provided that the performance of this function was part of their working activities, and it took between 5 and 20 per cent of their total working time.

With respect to the development of international economic relations and related trend of the “economization” of diplomacy, *the support of busi-*

---

<sup>26</sup> A. du Plessis, *Defence diplomacy: conceptual and practical dimensions with specific reference to South Africa*, „Strategic Review for Southern Africa“, 2008, no. 2.

<sup>27</sup> In the survey, even six out of eight contacted military diplomats provided that they devoted 20 per cent of their working time to this function.

<sup>28</sup> A. du Plessis, *Defence diplomacy: conceptual and practical dimensions with specific reference to South Africa*, „Strategic Review for Southern Africa“, 2008, no. 2.

*ness contracts with arms and military equipment between the sending and the receiving state* is increasingly mentioned as one of the functions of military diplomacy. Although this diplomatic function may also be classified as a part of economic diplomacy because as a rule it is performed to promote the economic interests of a state, it is usually included in military diplomacy because the purpose of involvement of military diplomats in the trading in arms and military materials is mostly also an attempt to control and monitor these specific business contracts as these may have a significant influence on the military-defence capacities of states. Consequently, it is not only the pursuit of economic but also of military-security interests of the state. The inclusion of the support of business contracts with arms and military materials among the functions of military diplomacy may be found, for instance, in a study published by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces, which mentions as one of the basic roles of military diplomats or of military diplomacy also the “Promotion of defence-related products of the home state”<sup>29</sup>. The “purchase and sale of weapons” is classified as a function of military diplomacy also by the German scholar J. Kleiner<sup>30</sup>. The results of Research among military diplomats conducted in 2015 broadly confirmed that the support of business contracts with arms and military equipment belongs to the relevant functions of military diplomacy, but, at the same time, showed that this may not apply to all states. For instance, specifically military diplomats from the Republic of Austria and the Republic of Cyprus expressed in the survey that the support of business contracts with arms and military materials did not belong to the portfolio of functions performed by them within their diplomatic activity. Based on the results of the Research we may also establish that the support of business contracts with arms and military equipment – even if it is part of the functions of military diplomacy – in practice, it will not usually belong to its dominant functions. Indeed, two out of six military diplomats who marked this function as relevant estimated that they devoted relatively the smallest part of their working time to this function in comparison with other functions, whereas at the same time, none of the military diplomats marked

---

<sup>29</sup> *Defence Attachés. DCAF Backgrounder*, The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces, Geneva 2007, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> See J. Kleiner, *Diplomatic Practice. Between Tradition and Innovation*, World Scientific Publishing, Singapore 2010, p. 67.

this function as more important than the other ones in terms of the scope of working time spent on this function.

In practice, the *representation of the sending state and its armed forces at official ceremonies and other events in the receiving state* as one of the functions of military diplomacy may be carried out, for instance, through the participation of military diplomats in official ceremonies of public holidays or other significant anniversaries in the receiving state, official speeches at various ceremonial events, as well as in lectures or discussions in different local academic and specialist fora. Such a “representative” function of military diplomacy is mentioned in different forms in scientific sources, too, for instance, in the already cited study of the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces, which in the enumeration of the basic roles of military diplomats also mentions the representation of military institutions of the sending state in the receiving state<sup>31</sup>. Equally, our survey among military diplomats in 2015 confirmed the relevance of this function of military diplomacy; the representation of the sending state and of its armed forces in the receiving state was marked as part of the portfolio of functions by all eight contacted military diplomats.

## CONCLUSION

In the present scientific literature, military diplomacy has several broader or narrower interpretations. For the purposes of both theory and diplomatic practice it appears to be most appropriate to understand military diplomacy in the narrower sense, and to characterize it as a set of activities carried out mainly by the representatives of the ministry of defence and other state defence authorities, as well as of other state institutions, aimed at pursuing the foreign policy interests of the state in the field of security and defence policy, and whose actions are based on the use of negotiations and other diplomatic instruments. Broader definitions of military diplomacy usually allow for the inclusion under this term of an excessively extensive set of different activities, the conceptual exploration of which is practically impossible.

---

<sup>31</sup> *Defence Attachés. DCAF Backgrounder*, The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces, Geneva 2007.

On the basis of an analysis of relevant specialized literature and of the results of our own empirical Research, we may include among the basic functions that military diplomacy performs or may perform today, the following:

1. Gathering and analysing of information on the armed forces and the security situation in the receiving state,
2. Promotion of cooperation, communication and mutual relations between the armed forces of the sending and the receiving state,
3. Organization of the working visits of the representatives of the defence authorities and of peaceful stay of the military units of the sending state in the receiving state,
4. Support of business contracts with arms and military equipment between the sending and the receiving state, and
5. Representation of the sending state and its armed forces at official ceremonies and other events in the receiving state. Based on the analysis of relevant specialist source-books and of the results of survey among military diplomats, we may single out the gathering and analysing of information on the armed forces and the security situation in the receiving state, as relatively the most important function of military diplomacy.

#### REFERENCES

1. Berridge G. R., *Teória a prax diplomacie*, Fakulta politických vied a medzinárodných vzťahov UMB, Banská Bystrica 2000.
2. Cable J., *Gunboat Diplomacy 1919–79: Political Applications of Limited Naval Force. Study in International Security*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 1981.
3. *Defence Attachés. DCAF Backgrounder*, The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces, Geneva 2007.
4. Cottey A., Forster A., *Reshaping Defence Diplomacy: New Roles for Military Cooperation and Assistance*, Oxford University Press, New York 2004.
5. Edmonds M., *Beyond the Horizon: Defence, Diplomacy and South Africa's Naval Opportunities*, South African Institute of International Affairs and Centre for Defence and International Security Studies, [South Africa] 1998.
6. George A. L., *Introduction: The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, [in:] *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*. A. L. George, W. E. Simons (eds.), Westview Press, Boulder 1994.



7. Kleiner J., *Diplomatic Practice. Between Tradition and Innovation*, World Scientific Publishing, Singapore 2010.
8. Matsuda Y., *An essay on China's military diplomacy: examination of intentions in foreign strategy*, „NIDS Security Reports“, 2006, no. 7.
9. Muthanna K., *Military diplomacy*, „Journal of Defence Studies“, 2011, no. 1.
10. Nicolson H., *Diplomatie*, A. Francke AG Verlag, Bern 1947.
11. Pajtinka E., *Slovník diplomacie*, PAMIKO, Bratislava 2013.
12. du Plessis A., *Defence diplomacy: conceptual and practical dimensions with specific reference to South Africa*, „Strategic Review for Southern Africa“, 2008, no. 2.
13. Rusiňák P., *Dimenzie diplomacie*, [in:] P. Rusiňák, B. Mattoš, J. Rusiňáková, L. Meričková, M. Polgár, *Diplomacia – úvod do štúdia*, Ekonóm, Bratislava 2012.
14. Škvrnda F., *Medzinárodná bezpečnosť a vojenská diplomacia*, [in:] *Hospodárska diplomacia v 21. storočí. Zborník z medzinárodnej vedeckej konferencie poriadanej pri príležitosti 70. narodenín prof. JUDr. Ludovíta Tótha, CSc.* Vydavateľstvo Ekonóm, Bratislava 2005.
15. Vagts A., *The Military Attaché*. Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1967.

**AUTHOR:**

---

**ERIK PAJTINKA** is a lecturer at the Department of International Relations and Diplomacy of the Faculty of Political Science and International Relations of the Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica (Slovakia) and an external lecturer at the Institute of Political Science of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Charles University in Prague (Czech Republic). In the past he was a visiting scholar at the Netherlands Institute of International Relations “Clingendael” in the Hague (Netherlands) and a lecturer at the Faculty of International Relations of the Economic University in Bratislava (Slovakia). In his research he specialises in issues of current theory and practice of diplomacy, particularly bilateral diplomacy and diplomacy of the European Union.

---

**CITE THIS ARTICLE AS:**

E. Pajtinka, *Military Diplomacy and Its Present Functions*, “Security Dimensions. International and National Studies”, 2016, no 20, p. 179–194, DOI 10.24356/SD/20/9.