
Diplomatic Security: A Comparative Analysis

Edited by Eugenio Cusumano and
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REVIEWED BY GREGORY STARR

In this new book, two adept editors, Eugenio Cusumano and Christopher Kinsey, combine and edit the work of eleven authors' different looks at diplomatic security as practiced in nine countries—China, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Russia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States—as well as some overall themes on the subject. The result is perhaps the most comprehensive public study of the topic released to date, and the work stands as a reminder of the high price nations have paid in pursuit of diplomacy, as well as the difficulties and tradeoffs of balancing diplomatic efforts and the security operations meant to protect them.

The United States may be the country with the widest diplomatic representation in the world today, but if asked about the state of U.S. foreign policy and diplomatic security, most Americans would recall only the attack on the U.S. diplomatic outpost in Benghazi, Libya, and the highly politicized hearings regarding U.S. presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's role in the affair. Their recollections would likely be based on an action-adventure movie on the Benghazi attack or on the nearly endless discussion by politicians and pundits leading up to the 2016 elections. Sadly, the general understanding of the incident and the outcomes are terribly flawed

representations of the real challenges of securing diplomats abroad so they can effectively represent their nation's interests.

Similarly, the book's stark litany of attacks against diplomats from other nations—as well as the information presented regarding the steps their individual nations have taken in the name of diplomatic security—reveals that too often, the attention of the public and members of national governments may have been momentarily seized by attacks on their diplomatic outposts. But discussions about anemic budgets and other higher priority matters quickly diluted the collective anger about the deaths of yet another diplomat serving their country, and little changes.

At one level, therefore, the importance of this book is that it can helpfully shape and perhaps change the short-term discussion after the inevitable future attacks on diplomats and diplomatic outposts, often far away and irregular events, by presenting the issues, difficulties, and challenges that attacks by nonstate actors can wreak on our collective global diplomatic efforts or how the weakening of diplomatic immunity by state actions tears at our global collective.

Rather than seeing the next attack on a diplomatic entity as a security failure (regardless of how effective the security countermeasures were), the book should help policymakers and oversight bodies understand that risk cannot be eliminated from diplomacy, and that diplomatic operations in insecure areas must come with adequate and balanced security. However, achieving the right balance can be very difficult.

On a second level, the book serves admirably as a resource for those concerned with the actual business of securing diplomats and diplomacy, providing a wealth of information to diplomats themselves, the security services attempting to

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provide adequate and appropriate security for them, and the governmental organs who must make the decisions about funding diplomacy and foreign affairs ministries as well as the concomitant security costs.

The most successful diplomatic security operators in high-threat countries reach out to like-minded embassies and other entities and their security officers to share threat information, coordinate security plans, and in many cases seek mutual support for essential options such as evacuation and protection. This book provides those operators with the background and organizational understanding of where security operations reside within a foreign ministry structure, or, as outlined, within a state security apparatus. Much of this information was just not readily available prior to this work, and the book is practically a must-read reference for international security officers, whether serving in the field or at their national headquarters.

The final few chapters skew from the earlier path of describing individual nations' diplomatic security entities to discussions of risk management, securing diplomacy in the war on terrorism, and a conclusion on the history, effectiveness, and implications of diplomatic security. It is in these sections,

each by a different author, where larger questions are raised about what effective diplomacy is, whether diplomacy is really concerned with discussing national differences or is merely another way to project power, and how diplomacy can work in a world increasingly faced with more dangerous nonstate actors. The diplomatic security element is present in all of these discussions, but the editors and authors lead readers to many of the same questions and discussions that professional diplomats, Foreign Service practitioners, and legislative and Executive branch representatives must consider when weighing the power and limits of diplomatic efforts in war zones or highly dangerous locations.

As one editor and the author of the conclusion of the book writes, "The evidence presented in this book suggests that the key factor shaping the propensity to accept risks to Foreign Service personnel is the perceived importance of keeping a diplomatic presence in a certain country." The corollary, then, must be that as long as national governments continue to find reasons—important or not—to keep diplomats operating in war zones or dangerous areas, there will always be relatively high risks to those intrepid officers serving their country abroad. **PRISM**