Diplomacy does not take place simply between states but wherever people live in different groups. Paul Sharp argues that the demand for diplomacy, and the need for the insights of diplomatic theory, are on the rise. In contrast to conventional texts which use international relations theories to make sense of what diplomacy and diplomats do, this book explores what diplomacy and diplomats can contribute to the big theoretical and practical debates in international relations today. Paul Sharp identifies a diplomatic tradition of international thought premised on the way people live in groups, the differences between intra- and inter-group relations, and the perspectives which those who handle inter-group relations develop about the sorts of international disputes which occur. He argues that the lessons of diplomacy are that we should be reluctant to judge, ready to appease, and alert to the partial grounds on which most universal claims about human beings are made.

Paul Sharp is Professor and Head of Political Science at the University of Minnesota, Duluth.
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PAUL SHARP

University of Minnesota, Duluth
To Janny, Patrick and Caroline
I am suggesting that after many of the more incidental features of the case have been peeled away, we shall find at the heart of everything a kernel of difficulty which is essentially a problem of diplomacy as such.

Herbert Butterfield, “The Tragic Element in Modern International Conflict,” in Herbert Butterfield, History and Human Relations, p. 26
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Acknowledgements

This book has had a long gestation and I owe a debt of gratitude to many people who have had to listen to parts of the argument over several years. I am particularly grateful to the following. Raymond Cohen and Geoffrey Berridge, though in their different ways they may regard this work as heresy, always provided reliable guides to what it is possible to say about diplomacy. Iver Neumann constantly reminded me that it is important not to keep saying the same old things in the same old ways and that, even in diplomacy, it is possible to say things of import without losing track of how profoundly funny life can be. Costas Constantinou encouraged me to see how emancipating to diplomacy and diplomatic thought it can be to see the Modern in historical terms. His insight that diplomacy can tell us about the world drives my argument, although not always in directions with which he would agree, I am sure.

James Mayall and Richard Langhorne read chapters and provided critical advice and encouragement at important moments. And to the anonymous external reviewers all I can say is thank you very much. Finally, I have benefited a great deal from the intellectual legacies of Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight. Therefore, it follows that I should also acknowledge the work of Barry Buzan and Richard Little in reviving the English School as an intellectual project.