

# L'État, c'est moi !

or

## ***The antonym of the Talleyrand-Castlereagh-Metternich School of Diplomacy***

(December 2024)

"**L'État, c'est moi !**" ("*I am the state*", lit. "*the state, it is me*") is an apocryphal saying attributed to **Louis XIV**, King of France and Navarre. It was allegedly said on 13 April 1655 before the Parlement of Paris. It is supposed to recall the primacy of the royal authority in a context of defiance with the Parliament, which contests royal edicts taken in *lit de justice* on 20 March 1655. The phrase symbolizes absolute monarchy and absolutism. [from Wikipedia]

Let us now try to analyze two different models of Diplomacy:

### **A. A Renewed Model of Diplomacy, in which "L'État, c'est moi !"**

Should he reign aujourd'hui, His Majesty, **Louis XIV**, King of France and Navarre, the absolute monarch also known as *Louis le Grand* (Louis the Great) or *le Roi Soleil* (the Sun King), would declare that:

**There can be no Diplomacy but with those with whom I have a  
"very good personal relationship".**

He would add that he "*got along very well*" with a number of foreign Heads of State. He would stress that Diplomacy can absolutely not exist outside this friendly circle.

Here is a partial list of 11 such Very Good Personal Relationships His Contemporaneous Majesty would boast:

1. Vladimir Putin of Russia;
2. Kim Jong Un of North Korea;
3. Xi Jinping of China;
4. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey;

5. Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia;
6. Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel;
7. Shinzo Abe of Japan;
8. Narendra Modi of India;
9. Boris Johnson of the United Kingdom;
10. Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil;
11. Andrzej Duda of Poland.

### **B. The Historic Model of Diplomacy à la Talleyrand, Castlereagh, and Metternich, in which "L'État, c'est pas moi !"**

On the other hand, diplomats more in the line with their predecessors Talleyrand, Castlereagh, or Metternich, are adept at more refined strategies that lead to successful diplomacy despite mutual animosity between negotiators.

Here is a partial list of 11 such endeavors:

1. **The Camp David Accords (1978)**: Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, facilitated by U.S. President Jimmy Carter, overcame deep mistrust to agree on a peace treaty ending decades of conflict between Egypt and Israel;
2. **Cold War Arms Control Treaties**: Despite mutual hatred and suspicion, the U.S. and Soviet Union negotiated treaties like SALT and INF to limit nuclear weapons;
3. **Good Friday Agreement (1998)**: Bitter rivals from Northern Ireland's factions reached a historic peace accord with UK and Irish governments' mediation;
4. **Treaty of Versailles (1919)**: Leaders from Germany and the Allied Powers negotiated the treaty ending World War I despite intense hostility;
5. **Cuban Missile Crisis (1962)**: U.S. President John F. Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev reached a deal to avoid nuclear war, despite deeply adversarial relations;

6. **Iran Nuclear Deal (2015):** The P5+1 nations and Iran negotiated to limit Iran's nuclear program despite long-standing tensions, particularly between Iran and the U.S.;
7. **South Africa's Apartheid Negotiations:** Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk worked together despite mutual distrust to end apartheid;
8. **Treaty of Portsmouth (1905):** Negotiated by Russian and Japanese delegations with U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt mediating, it ended the Russo-Japanese War despite intense mutual enmity;
9. **Dayton Accords (1995):** Leaders of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia—who had been engaged in a brutal conflict—agreed to peace terms under U.S. mediation;
10. **Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty (1994):** Despite historical conflicts, King Hussein of Jordan and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin signed a treaty to normalize relations;
11. **North Korea-U.S. Agreed Framework (1994):** Despite adversarial relations, the U.S. and North Korea reached a deal to freeze Pyongyang's nuclear program.

### C. Doctoral assignment

Doctoral candidates are hereby directed to submit a dissertation on the relative merits of the two schools of diplomatic thought:

- a. "L'État, c'est moi !", or
- b. "L'État, c'est pas moi !"

Hints: **Model A** seems to imply that short of a providentially warm personal relationship between Heads of State there can be no diplomacy, while **Model B** assumes that there can be constructive and beneficial diplomacy even when hostility, distrust, or even hatred reign supreme. **Model A** is based on whimsical autocratic egos (and consequently no diplomacy whatsoever in the absence of some providential mutual affinity between the autocratic individuals), while **Model B** rests on reason, diplomacy being precisely the art of conversing with those for whom one feels very little sympathy, if any.