Independent Diplomat (ID) was born from disillusionment. I had resigned from the British Foreign Office over the Iraq war. I had lost faith in my government and in diplomacy itself. There was something very wrong with the system. The people with most at stake were left out of the diplomatic discussion. That made the system less effective: the UN Security Council won’t bring about peace if it doesn’t bother to listen to those most affected on the ground. And it was just plain wrong. Everyone has a right to be heard.

That spirit of justice guides our work today. ID began after my wife Karmen suggested I advise the Kosovo government as it navigated the uncertain path to independence, a process then secretively controlled by just a few powerful countries. Next, we began work with Somaliland and the Frente POLISARIO, the representatives of the people of the Western Sahara, illegally occupied by Morocco. Today, we are helping countries and democratic groups all over the world, from the moderate Syrian opposition to the Marshall Islands, whose very existence is threatened if the world doesn’t agree to an effective treaty to fight global warming.

It is ten years since I threw back a glass of fiery raki in Pristina with Kosovo’s Prime Minister to celebrate our new contract. Today, ID is changing diplomacy itself. Before ID, neither the UN nor the EU discussed Morocco’s repression of the Saharawis; now they do. We can’t end the war in Syria, but because of ID, the Syrian opposition was able to voice its concerns forcefully to the UN Security Council and at the Geneva II peace negotiations. As I write this, ID staff members are helping advance critical elements of the UN climate treaty whose negotiations culminated in Paris in 2015. This isn’t advocacy. Our work is at the very heart of state-to-state diplomacy: engaging other diplomats, preparing texts of UN resolutions.

There is more to come. Those most affected by diplomatic decisions – whether peace treaties or climate agreements – deserve not only a hearing, but that those decisions fully account for their rights. We are designing an ID that can make this dream of justice a reality.

Our success is thanks to those who showed faith in ID. We thank our funders, board members, including those we have sadly lost, Trustees, Advisory Council and friends who have counselled and cheered us on. I thank my colleagues who have built ID and turn its ideals into hard-edged, professional diplomatic action. Above all, I thank our clients, who have given me some of the most extraordinary moments of my life, whether in Saharawi refugee camps, or plotting with the Syrian opposition in overheated hotel rooms.

Without our clients, Independent Diplomat would be nothing. With them, we can together bring about something both necessary and beautiful: justice in diplomacy.

Carne Ross
Executive Director, Independent Diplomat

Photo: Carne Ross meets with the Frente POLISARIO in the liberated territories of Western Sahara.
2008 - Kosovo declares independence

2011 - South Sudan becomes 193rd member of the UN

2011 - Frente POLISARIO defeats EU-Morocco fisheries agreement, preventing illegal exploitation in the waters off Western Sahara

2012 - Launch of Somaliland-Somalia Dialogue

2012 - Georgian Dream Coalition achieves a surprise win in Georgia’s national election

2012 - US Tamil Political Action Council helps secure UN Human Rights Council Resolution pursuing accountability for war crimes in Sri Lanka

2013 - Republic of the Marshall Islands hosts the Pacific Islands Forum which adopts the “Majuro Declaration for Climate Leadership”

2013 - Croatia joins the EU

2014 - Syrian Coalition takes part in the “Geneva II” UN peace talks

2010 - Moldova and the EU begin negotiations for an Association Agreement
ID has helped us to level the playing field by advising on diplomatic strategy, securing press coverage, and helping us get a seat at the table.

- H.E. Tony de Brum
Foreign Minister, Republic of the Marshall Islands
Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) / Climate Change

ID has worked with the RMI government on our climate diplomacy since 2009. Just two years earlier, the Marshall Islands were not even represented at the annual international climate negotiations. For one of the world’s lowest-lying atoll states, not being at the table to discuss an issue that poses no less than an existential threat to our nationhood is a travesty of justice. No issue is more central to our foreign policy than climate change. Securing an ambitious international climate change treaty in Paris at the end of 2015 is critical. Our future literally depends on it.

ID has helped us put climate change at the heart of RMI’s diplomacy. We are now among the loudest voices demanding that the world’s biggest polluters urgently cut their emissions. From diplomatic support and technical briefings at international climate meetings, to travel with me to important ministerial meetings we previously did not have access to, and helping us host the 2013 Pacific Islands Forum Leaders’ meeting in Majuro, ID has worked to put us at the forefront of the fight against climate change. We are now at the table with the big emitters and their vast delegations of diplomats, and will have an impact on the negotiated outcomes that will ultimately determine our future.

H.E. Tony de Brum
Foreign Minister, Republic of the Marshall Islands
Republic of Somaliland

The Government of the Republic of Somaliland works with Independent Diplomat on a variety of foreign policy goals, including our ultimate objective of achieving recognition as an independent state. In Somaliland we have succeeded in establishing democratic governance as well as sustained peace and stability, in stark contrast to Somalia which remains fragile.

Despite the challenges we face, ID has always supported us. They seek to understand our needs and think creatively with us about how best to achieve them. We are grateful for ID's continued support.

Mohamed Behi Yonis
Foreign Minister, Republic of Somaliland

ID has always supported us. They seek to understand our needs and think creatively with us about how best to achieve our objectives.

Photo: Located in Hargeisa, Somaliland’s capital, this memorial is dedicated to the victims of aerial bombing by the Siad Barre regime in 1988 and serves as a symbol of Somaliland’s quest for recognition as an independent state.
Frente POLISARIO / Government of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR)

Since 2006, Independent Diplomat has worked with the Frente POLISARIO on our quest to secure self-determination for the people of Western Sahara. For nearly 40 years we have been denied this right despite having international law on our side and countless UN resolutions endorsing a referendum. Independent Diplomat has helped us to navigate a diplomatic system which has failed to live up to its own principles and the international community’s responsibilities to Western Sahara, the last colony in Africa.

ID has been a valuable resource as we have expanded our foreign policy to include advocacy on vital issues such as the protection of the human rights of the Saharawi people and the illegal exploitation of our natural resources by Morocco. ID’s creative approach to diplomacy and knowledge of the UN system have helped us to take a more comprehensive message to more people within the diplomatic system as we continue to pursue peace and stability.

Emhamed Khadad
MINURSO Coordinator, Frente POLISARIO negotiating team
Advisor to the President, Government of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic

Photo: Saharawi refugee camps in Tindouf. Photo credit: emmabrownphotography.com.
ID’s creative approach to diplomacy and knowledge of the UN system have helped us to take a more comprehensive message to more people within the diplomatic system.

- Emhamed Khadad
MINURSO Coordinator, Frente POLISARIO

Photo: UN convoy in the liberated territories of Western Sahara.
When the conflict in Sri Lanka ended in May 2009 amidst serious allegations of war crimes, hundreds of thousands of Tamil civilians were left unprotected and vulnerable. The resolution passed at the UN Human Rights Council congratulating Sri Lanka on its “achievement” dealt a severe blow to the hope for accountability and justice. USTPAC, an advocacy organization of Tamil Americans formed after the end of the war, needed advice to navigate the UN and human rights landscape.

Edward Mortimer, former speech writer and director of communications for UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, told us about the good work of Independent Diplomat. ID’s professional diplomats and international lawyers sat down with us, listened carefully to our story, and understood our objectives. ID then identified the key players that could assist in ensuring accountability for the perpetrators and devised a comprehensive diplomatic and legal strategy for USTPAC to implement with ID’s assistance.

ID sat down with us, listened carefully to our story, and understood our objectives.

ID’s advice on how best to achieve scrutiny of and accountability for not just the past atrocities, but the ongoing violations of human rights that continue today against ethnic communities and religious minorities in Sri Lanka has been eye-opening. ID has a comprehensive understanding of diplomatic processes, and their advice has enabled us to play an effective role in those processes. We speak to the right people, we have a compelling message, and we see an impact. ID’s training has enabled us to develop our own sophisticated team within USTPAC that works independently and effectively, particularly at the UN Human Rights Council.

Dr. Elias Jeyarajah
Senior Vice President, US Tamil Political Action Council

Photo: Scene from “No Fire Zone: The Killing Fields of Sri Lanka”, directed by Callum Macrae.
Syrian National Coalition

In November 2012, a group of Syrian opposition figures came together to form the Syrian National Coalition. Our diverse group shared a common commitment to end the decades of oppression and violence which the Syrian people have suffered at the hands of the Bashar al-Assad regime. Our vision is of a peaceful, pluralistic and democratic future for our country, free of Assad's dictatorship and the extremism of ISIS and other extremist groups.

The Coalition first began working with Independent Diplomat in March 2013. Since then, ID has helped us to strengthen our voice at the United Nations and improve communications with the UN Security Council on a wide range of issues relating to cross-border humanitarian access, international justice, chemical weapons, and more. ID also works with us in the development and articulation of our overall goals and the diplomatic strategy to achieve them. During the Geneva II peace talks, ID provided valuable direct, on-the-ground support and advice to us. Most recently, ID supported us through a hectic week at the UN General Assembly. ID has just begun to help us take our case directly to key European countries by providing advice in Brussels.

Independent Diplomat’s creative approach to diplomacy provides us with an invaluable tool which is helping the Coalition give voice to the Syrian people in the often closed world of international diplomacy.

Dr. Najib Ghadbian
US Representative, Syrian National Coalition

“ID has helped us to strengthen our voice at the United Nations.”

Photo: Devastation in Homs, Syria. Photo credit: Reuters/Yazen Homsy.
Former Client: Republic of South Sudan

ID worked with the Government of the Republic of South Sudan from late 2009 until January 2014, helping South Sudan’s leadership to make the case internationally that the self-determination referendum agreed to in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement had to be held on time, and that its result needed to be respected. ID also supported South Sudan in its engagement with the UN Security Council in the run-up to independence and assisted with negotiations on South Sudan’s UN membership, which was agreed in record time.

Following South Sudan’s independence in July 2011, ID supported South Sudan in improving its diplomatic effectiveness. ID is guided by a clear set of ethical criteria, codified in our formal contracts with clients: it works only with governments and political actors that are committed to democracy, the rule of law and the protection of human rights, and that oppose unlawful violence. ID regularly assesses its clients’ performance against these ethical criteria. In the days following the outbreak of violence in South Sudan in December 2013, ID became concerned about serious allegations from a variety of credible sources regarding acts of unlawful violence by government forces, including extrajudicial and ethnically targeted killing. Independent Diplomat suspended its work with the Government of South Sudan in January 2014.

Photo: “The Day South Sudan was Given a Voice” - Pagan Amum, then Secretary-General of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement and Minister for Peace in the Government of Southern Sudan, addresses the UN Security Council in 2010. This was the first time a representative of South Sudan had ever addressed this important body. ID’s Carne Ross and Andrew Lewis are seated behind Amum. Photo Credit: UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe.
HOW ID ENGAGES CLIENTS

Independent Diplomat will only work with those who are committed to democracy, human rights and international law: our ethical criteria.

ID undertakes a three-stage due diligence process before it takes on a prospective client, sometimes lasting months or even years.

This involves background research, consultation with at least two reputable organizations with local knowledge and discussion with ID’s Advisory Council.

Once engaged, the advice that ID provides to its clients reflects respect for international law, including international human rights law. ID conducts periodic reviews of its work with each client: at its own discretion, ID will suspend or terminate a client relationship for any breaches of our ethical criteria.

ID is continually evaluating its capacity to take on new clients and provide support. Recently, the Generalitat of Catalonia hired ID to provide advice on the diplomacy surrounding the campaign to achieve self-determination for the Catalan people. ID recently began working with the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the UN.

Photo: ID’s Dean Bialek at the 2012 UN Climate Change conference in Doha.
First Pillar – Political Strategy

Independent Diplomat helps its clients navigate complex diplomatic processes by providing strategic political analysis and advice based on a thorough understanding of the diplomatic landscape.

Independent Diplomat’s first client was the government of Kosovo, which we advised from 2004 to 2007. After the end of Serbian rule, Kosovo remained in legal limbo with no international agreement on Kosovo’s aspirations for an independent state. The process to determine its “final” status was highly charged and controversial and was marked by deep international disagreement. At a time when Kosovo had no foreign service at all, Independent Diplomat digested and relayed key information from the informal grouping of major powers (the “Contact Group”) which controlled diplomacy over the Balkans, helping Kosovo leaders to clearly articulate their needs when negotiating their independence.

ID helped foster Kosovar understanding of this crucial and difficult diplomatic process. It offered a detailed strategy to navigate complex negotiations over issues like cultural heritage, the international security presence and decentralization – which many viewed as essential to stability and the protection of a Kosovo state.

Additional information about ID’s work with the Governments of Somaliland, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic, and the Syrian Coalition is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.
Second Pillar – Legal Advice

There is always a legal dimension to the diplomatic strategy that ID devises for its clients. It may be front and center of the strategy or deep background to ID’s advice. ID moreover requires that its clients be committed to the rule of law. By doing so ID contributes to the peaceful resolution of disputes and respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

For example, in December 2011 the Frente POLISARIO scored a significant legal victory when the European Parliament voted to reject the Fisheries Partnership Agreement (FPA) between the European Union and Morocco. This decision affirmed a basic requirement of international law – that any use of Western Sahara’s natural resources had to be with the consent of the Saharawi people. As a result, EU boats fishing off Western Sahara were withdrawn with immediate effect, and the European Commission was forced to reconsider its agreement with Morocco.

The Frente POLISARIO, with ID’s assistance, had laid the groundwork for this legal defense by declaring the maritime zones of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic in early 2009. A crucial new legal opinion by the European Parliament’s Legal Service followed several years of forceful and informed POLISARIO advocacy in Brussels which forced a series of votes in the European Council on whether to support a renewal of the fisheries agreement.

Third Pillar – Public Diplomacy

ID works with its clients so that their public diplomacy strategy reinforces their policy goals. ID’s public diplomacy advice employs the broad array of media and digital tools, including strategic use of speeches and talking points, op-eds, interviews, background briefings, communiqués, statements, social media campaigns, NGO briefings, and events. ID helps clients drive the narrative and shape policy.

For example, in the run-up to the 2014 UN General Assembly, ID worked with the Syrian National Coalition to define a diplomatic strategy that worked towards the larger objective of a political solution to the Syrian crisis. A public diplomacy strategy was woven into the diplomatic strategy and continuously and rapidly adapted depending on the outcomes of meetings or changing events on the ground, including the late-night launch of US-led coalition airstrikes in Syria.

Each public-facing opportunity, whether media interviews, speeches, Facebook posts, Tweets, or background conversations, was evaluated for its role in the overarching strategy. ID advised the client on how to use each opportunity effectively and end the week with tangible results.
Climate change, financial volatility and extremist violence do not respect borders. The traditional state-to-state diplomatic system struggles to address such challenges. ID recognizes the need to reach beyond borders for solutions. ID helped its client, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, to originate the “Majuro Declaration,” under which Pacific Island leaders implored all those responsible for CO2 emissions, not only governments but also private companies, NGOs and individuals – to make commitments “over and above” previous undertakings, garnering significant international attention and commitments.

The UN Security Council’s agenda includes more and more conflicts involving actors which are not established states. In mapping the multiple actors that affect diplomatic outcomes, ID considers all of those whom our clients need to engage in order to achieve their goals, including those outside the “traditional” government-to-government negotiation. During South Sudan’s independence process, for instance, ID identified multiple influential actors, including oil companies, NGOs, law firms and even film actors, and helped the client engage them effectively.

Social media and new technology allow individuals to interact with diplomats and decision-makers in new ways. ID tests innovations to communicate narratives, influence negotiations, garner support and achieve results. For instance, ID combined traditional intelligence gathering and media relations with digital tools such as Twitter to help secure a rapid change to the UN’s approach to cross-border aid delivery in Syria. Because of the nature of our work, ID also stays ahead of the curve in protecting communications and data.
“Carne Ross, more than anyone, appreciated that with his ruse he had not only destroyed a taboo, but established a new way of doing diplomacy: Independent Diplomat was born. Forget the old-style diplomacy. In its place he would establish a transparent, inclusive, unpretentious service that would help bring the marginalized to the decision-making table.”
- Source: Foreign Policy

“Independent Diplomat tries to ensure that those [marginalized] regions get access to the decision-makers and international forums where policy is made, such as the United Nations and European Union.”
- Source: New York Times
“[Carne] and his team at ID attracted our attention six years ago and Polisario decided to work with him and his team in charge of Western Sahara,” Ahmed Boukhari, the Polisario Front’s representative at the U.N., said of Ross in an email to BuzzFeed. The Front was one of Ross’ first clients.

“We trust them and they know also that Western Sahara case has offered ID great opportunities to measure their capabilities and to tune their diplomatic skills and performance,” Boukhari said. “The issue of Western Sahara is one of his priorities and it has achieved some tangible progress thanks to Carne and his team at ID.”

“We’re the only ones doing what we’re doing. It makes it fun, but it makes it tricky because it’s never been done before.”

- Carne Ross
ID worked with Dutch design firm Metahaven to produce a provocative and compelling depiction of Western Sahara’s quest for self-determination that appeared in Art in America magazine.
Independent Diplomat is a 501(c)(3) organization and a registered charity in the United Kingdom. ID is funded by generous donations from individuals, governments and foundations, as well as by fees from our clients who have the means.

**2014 Projected Revenue By Source**

- Government - 42.0%
- Foundation - 32.0%
- Client - 25.4%
- Individual - 0.3%
- Other - 0.3%

**2014 Expenses**

- Program Expenses - 76%
- Management & General - 18%
- Fundraising - 6%

**Total Revenue**

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Ten years of Independent Diplomat’s work has demonstrated the considerable demand for our services, and the impact we can achieve. ID’s ambition is to provide a comprehensive service that integrates the three “pillars” of effective diplomacy – political, legal and public. ID needs also to be present in the main diplomatic centers so that we can gather a full picture of the diplomatic landscape. With this architecture, ID can achieve extraordinary results. Diplomacy is changing. ID is set to help shape that change for the benefit of its clients, and for justice.

After ten years of incremental growth, we believe that ID can reach this optimum size within five years and with a modest budget increase. ID is a lean and efficient organization with a strong culture of teamwork, innovative use of technology and information sharing. This optimum structure will also require ID to have a diverse funding base of foundations, individuals, governments and client fees. ID’s work is subject to considerable and unavoidable political uncertainties, underlining the need for a secure and eclectic funding base to ensure its sustainability. Please join our mission by contributing to Independent Diplomat.
THANK YOU

We are tremendously grateful to all our donors and supporters who have contributed to the growth of ID over the last decade. It is your support for our work which made it possible to amplify the voices of marginalized groups around the world and promote the cause of justice in diplomacy. Thank you.

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And…
Karmen Ross, without whose inspiration ID would never have been, and Stefanie Grant, the first person to join the cause.

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IN MEMORY OF A. WHITNEY ELLSWORTH
This inaugural Annual Report is dedicated to A. Whitney Ellsworth, Independent Diplomat’s first Chairman. Whitney was a visionary leader and guide in ID’s early and often difficult years.

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