As the contributions to this book have clearly demonstrated, the processes accompanying the adaptation of EU member state foreign ministries are coloured by the interaction between an emerging European diplomacy and nationally generated international policy. But the European Constitution poses these complexities in a starker form than hitherto. The reprinting of the book has provided us with the opportunity to consider the implications of the creation of a European External Action Service both for the way in which the EU conducts its external relations and the likely responses of national diplomatic systems to a new phase in the Europeanisation of foreign policy. Against this background, the purpose of this chapter is to (a) summarise how a proto-European diplomatic system has developed; (b) outline what is being proposed in the new Constitution; and (c) consider the implications of these developments both for the conduct of EU international policy as well as member state diplomatic systems.

The Constitution for Europe is to be put before national publics in referenda before its mooted implementation in 2007. Since one of the major developments in the Constitution involves a European Foreign Minister as Vice-President of the European Commission and the creation of a European External Action Service (EEAS), this clearly has considerable significance for the issues addressed in this book. But just as the preceding chapters review the impact of ‘Europe’ on foreign ministries, there is also the issue of how national administrative arrangements affect those at the European level. Consular affairs are but one of the latest examples of a foreign (and interior) ministry function gradually being ‘Europeanised’. Some national administrations are even reflecting on whether the time is now ripe for national development aid to be channelled through new European arrangements. And they are all pondering the implications of the new constitution’s arrangements. Similar discussions are taking place within the Commission. The scope for the new External Action Service to cover CFSP, trade, aid,
technical assistance and humanitarian interventions demands new thinking on interaction within the Relex family of Directorates General (DGs). And the new thinking is not confined to administrative arrangements. It goes to the heart of how foreign policy is to be defined; whether, for example, humanitarian intervention stands apart from the representation of interests or forms part of a new view of the coherence of EU policies. The High Representative for CFSP, Javier Solana, has been clear in his views on the scope of future institutional arrangements.

The challenge now is to bring together the different instruments and capabilities: European assistance programmes, military and civilian capabilities from Member States and other instruments such as the European Development Fund... Our objective should be to create synergy through a more coherent and comprehensive approach. Diplomatic efforts, development, trade and environmental policies should follow the same agenda.²

Likewise, some Commissioners in the Prodi Commission also advocated a similar coherent and comprehensive institutional approach – although former Relex commissioner Chris Patten noticeably refrained from advocating a firm line on potential administrative arrangements.

Solana has already been nominated as the first holder of the post of Foreign Minister for Europe and Commission Vice-President. He will chair meetings of foreign ministers of the EU twenty-five and, with the Commission delegations at his disposal, he will lead what might have the makings of a European Foreign Ministry, complete with diplomatic service.³ Thus, the Commission’s external relations directorates and its delegations outside the EU are set to form the major administrative component of a new European diplomatic system. This heralds a series of reforms to complete an ongoing process by which the Commission’s team of international project managers has already become a quasi-diplomatic service. This process is a laboratory for students of modern diplomacy. It is not only the result of the European integration process, the spill-over from administrative, budgetary and project management tasks in the field of aid and technical assistance abroad to ‘high politics’, but also a telling reflection of major adaptations to the notions of representation and diplomacy in the international relations of the twenty-first century.

The key issues are the form the EEAS will take and what embellishments to existing structures, rules and procedures for external relations will be developed – not only after the implementation of the Constitution, but – thanks to a declaration on the Constitution – as EU member states move towards its ratification.⁴ Several phases of reform over fifty years have prepared the Commission’s delegations, through incremental change, for the challenges involved. Will the Commission’s existing structures form the core of the new system of European diplomatic representation? Or will the Commission’s delegations and external relations Directorates General be relegated to a purely