

THE DYNAMICS OF DIPLOMACY

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Abstract:

The world is now viewed, as a community where interconnectedness is the password. Interstate relations are being promoted in every field, individually as well as collectively, encompassing unbreakable alliances as well as controversies leading to confrontation. Thus, networking between states is fluid and dynamic in patterns of allegiance, alliances, connections, influence and decision-making. States are expected to mobilize their diplomatic capacity to deliver the best in both domestic and international governance, which means they are to understand the changing dynamics of diplomacy to make it effective as the most relevant tool in interstate relations. The contents of this article are being produced with the same focus and approach.

Key words: *Diplomacy, Cold War, Technology, Impact*

Since the end of the Cold War, a growing number of researchers have paid attention to diplomacy. However, in comparison with related fields, the concept of Diplomacy has not been studied profoundly and as Paul Sharp points out “the study of diplomacy remains marginal to and almost disconnected from the rest of the fields” (1999:34). Barry H. Steiner makes an even harsher statement arguing that “no area of world politics has reflected a greater gap between experience and theory than diplomatic state craft” (2004:493).

Diplomacy is a term, which is rather loosely used and is generally meant to refer in the course of foreign policy. It is a method of political interaction at the international level and this sense is to be communicated in this article presently. The core concept of diplomacy is the idea of communicating, interacting, maintaining contacts and negotiating with states but many of its approaches are the result of expediency or practicality institutionalized over the years, as part of customary international law codified in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961 and on Consular Relations, 1963.

The 19th century witnessed a new development in the field of diplomacy and a new trend in the form of Multilateral Diplomacy developed because the national state system was going for technology development and new problems required collective work. This led to the concert of Europe and between 1822 and 1914, 26 conferences were held at which all the great powers were represented and diplomacy had to adjust to the multilateral environment. World War I brought significant transformation in diplomatic methods, the League of Nations opened new channels of international relationships where the diplomatic agenda expanded, and multilateral efforts to solve economic, social and cultural issues were used. World War II generated an enormous amount of diplomacy, foremost of which was to organize a collective effort in the face of devastating aggression. This led to the establishment the United Nations – an organization of unprecedented dimensions and authority.

Today a large amount of diplomacy is now conducted in international organizations more than ever before. The EU is providing its own special type of interaction where its 27 members are still sovereign states (in the supranational sense) that must employ elaborate diplomacy within to keep it operating. The 20th century witnessed an expansion of ‘Conference diplomacy’ where not only diplomats but also chief executives, foreign ministers and heads of executive departments, travel more than ever before creating ‘trans-governmental relations’. Chief decision makers are able to interact directly and instantly because of the early warning systems which facilitate timely diplomatic responses. The diversity of international actors is also unprecedented wherein giant powerful states and micro states as well as a multiplicity of non-sovereign entities play an expanding role in diplomatic circles which is at times more potent than those of national decision makers (sending their own diplomats on special missions, intervening in international crisis and affecting the course of events). Diplomacy is made even more complex by the advent of transnational actors whose intervention potential is magnified by communication technology. Many NGOs intervene in diplomatic process in international conferences or as mediators in international conflicts. Even if their intervention is less than decisive, they have become part of international politics and the diplomatic process.

Interdependence means mutual dependence, a form of interconnectedness made more extensive by spectacular advances in technology and the integration of global economy. Global interdependence is not a new phenomenon. It has developed slowly, gaining momentum with the industrial revolution and is now moving faster.

Transnational relations are rapidly increasing between NGO’s, multinational corporations (MNC’s), other institutions of civil society and even private individuals. This expansion of knowledge fosters globalization, which generates more interdependence in all fields including trade, sports, entertainment, tourism, spread of disease, technology, communication, popular culture etc. But interdependence is not uniform around the world. No nation is self-sufficient but some states are better sheltered from upheavals and some need greater protection for events beyond their control which complicates international cooperation in addressing the effects of interdependence and globalization. Diplomats are now called upon to deal with a large variety of issues that were not on the traditional diplomatic agenda. In 1975, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger observed: dealing with the traditional agenda is no longer enough. “A new and unprecedented kind of issue has emerged. The problem of energy, resources, environment, population, the uses of space and the seas now rank with questions of military security, ideology and territorial rivalry, which have traditionally made up the diplomatic agenda” (1975:199).

Traditional embassies in foreign capitals, the classic form of diplomatic representation, remain important but their function is changing. Special missions sent by foreign ministries are used extensively for a wide variety of purposes including the important function of mediation. International conferences permit a multiplicity of specialized issues and this form of diplomacy is still expanding. Heads of states and governments now meet increasingly in Summit Diplomacy. Foreign ministers are engaged a great deal with their counterpart in Ministerial Diplomacy. Transnational channels play an increasing role in connecting societies. Doubtless governments play an active role in shaping the course of international affairs nevertheless transnational agents are now active participants and some governments in fact find it useful to work with

transnational institutions in attaining some of their international objectives. Nearly all UNO's specialized agencies have entered into consultative agreements with NGO's.

Secretary General Kofi Annan himself actively promoted "expanded UN partnership with civil society" (www.un.org/unjip).

As the international society changes and faces, new challenges one can anticipate new methods of interaction and some of these may be so different as not to qualify for diplomacy. Track II channels where people who do not formally represent governments, negotiate international issues occasionally at the secret invitation of government concerned. This happens when situation is too polarized for open conversation or too controversial for government intervention. They are at times identified as back-channel diplomacy. These channels have made diplomatic process more diverse and can be viewed under the following heads:

Impact of Technology: Technology is a factor of interdependence and contributes to the many changes in diplomacy. Life in the 21st century is fast and so is the tempo of diplomacy and there is less patience for formality. Multilateral conferences, many of them global, are proliferating and technology makes it possible to cope with the awesome logistics of global conferences. The CSIS, Centre for Strategic Studies, Washington DC has predicted that the internet would become the 'central nervous system of international relations.'

The CNN Factor: Unfolding events become known almost instantly around the world wherein the crisis tends to escalate more rapidly and for diplomatic response time is shorter hence decision making may be under pressure which is more problematic and more dangerous.

Virtual Diplomacy: Growing information and communication technology in foreign affairs is dramatizing the changes taking place while some speak of Digital Diplomacy, which is a fast means of sorting out a vast array of data. Though very effective but all countries cannot afford the expensive systems while some are attached to the well-established traditions and are slow in adjusting to the new modes of communication.

Satellite Imagery: is used in coordination of joint fieldwork between governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations. This involves computer systems capable of storing, processing and displaying data according to their geographical location using imagery acquired by orbiting satellites.

Early warning and crisis management: is done better and it promotes Preventive Diplomacy by rapid technology, which is becoming an effective method in controlling controversies.

Cyber Security: is expanding the use of information and communication technology in international affairs raises the issues of communication security. Cyber security will remain a continuing quest as hackers; code-breakers perhaps would be terrorists, will find new ways to bypass the defensive system to attain their aims.

Cyber Terrorism: is widely discussed among information technology professionals since September 11, 2001 attacks. Although no single instance can be quoted, computer attacks by hackers give an idea of the damage that can be done.

Network Power: is one of the hallmarks of transnational phenomenon and has significant political consequences and diplomatic ramifications. Information and communication technology is literally transforming this international political process and the transformation has just begun.

Electronic Spying: Since diplomacy involves the exchange of politically sensitive information, states develop information rules to protect their confidentiality but the harsh realities of international politics have led to obtain privileged information because technology has made it easier.

Structural changes have occurred because of the role of non-state actors apart from the nation-states, which have increased the complexity of diplomacy. NGO's are components of civil society and are active in open societies. Many have nothing to do with the political process, some have a broad purpose like improving the democratic process while others have a narrow focus, but all have an enormous impact on political institutions.

Hallway Diplomacy is often presented as a sign of NGO's being kept on the margin of the diplomatic process. (Where NGO representatives try to communicate with diplomats wherever they can be reached, hoping for leaks to be used as pressure on government) some diplomats value contacts with NGO's which can be a valuable source of information of the host society. Thus such interaction is profitable to both diplomats and NGO's in specific context. NGO's might affect the diplomatic process when they succeed in rallying public support behind diplomatic initiatives. International campaign to ban landmines in the 1990's shows how NGO's mobilization of support led historic Landmine Treaty against opposition from major states.

NGO's Mediation Diplomacy and Peace Keeping: have been practiced in international conflict, which has given them prominence as international actors. They are able to establish dialogue with underground forces or outlawed groups with whom states hesitate to maintain contacts for fear of giving them a degree of legitimacy. Some NGOs are extensively involved in conflict resolution e.g. ICRC (International court of the Red Cross) or the Carter Center in Atlanta (having a long history of humanitarian mediation). Apart from this, NGO's have intervened with political groups to avert a looming crisis in Preventive Diplomacy.

Changing Modes of Diplomacy: Resident Mission is the classic or old tool of diplomacy dating back to the 15th century but the transformation of the international system after the 1st and 2nd World Wars has created new channels of diplomatic interaction. This has steadily blurred the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs and more specialized government departments want direct contact with their counterparts abroad, which is now called trans-governmental relations. This does not mean that embassies are becoming irrelevant but that their role is evolving: highly specialized issues cannot be dealt with by embassy staff hence special missions (military attaches for gathering military intelligence) are sent separately as resident staff. New modes or the functions of already existing methods are changing and can be seen in the following:

Public Diplomacy: is based on public opinion, which plays an increasing role in the political life of a state, thus diplomats are extensively involved with the media creating a good impression on the host country. Some embassies go so far as to retain the services of public relations firms in the host country to conduct outreach campaigns.

Negotiations: are inherent in all forms of diplomacy but in an interdependent world, embassies are often left out of many international negotiations but they can facilitate negotiations undertaken by special missions.

Consular Functions: now involves not only help to their nationals abroad but also promotes humanitarian as well as commercial and additional relations. (Replacing lost documents, providing registration of newly born children etc.)

Ceremonial and Symbolic Functions: is much more developed at the embassy level than in other forms of diplomacy displayed in patriotic observances and state celebrations hence social functions are a part of the diplomatic culture and is rooted in tradition.

Provisional and Stopgap Diplomatic Arrangements: when relations of states are strained or broken, the interests of its citizens are entrusted to a third state. This is a known practice and established in Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations 1961. Neutral states like Switzerland have long provided this service.

Embassies in Disguise: Countries unable to maintain formal diplomatic relations because of non-recognition can maintain extensive but unofficial diplomatic contact by establishing liaison missions under whatever label or service. (US relations with Taiwan after recognition of China in 1979)

International organization Diplomacy: States cannot take-up to solve international issues (environmental degradation) single handedly. The bigger the organization the more complex the dealing as states have different perspectives to different issues. Besides participants are representatives, NGO's, state representations in non-national roles, non-agenda diplomats (on the margin of the agenda) Organizations involved in peace keeping diplomacy involves deployment of peace keeping missions for conflicts on the verge of escalation or high emotions or profound reluctance to compromise i.e. peace keeping in 1956 Suez Crisis etc.

Summit Diplomacy: involving major decision makers is directly responsible for governmental action. Though popular but it suffers from time constraints where heads of governments find it difficult to stay away from their capitals for a long time.

The Future of Diplomacy: Diplomacy is facing new challenges including an expanded foreign policy agenda, changing social demands and the rapid growth of domestic agencies operating abroad. One feature of the 21st century that is changing the character of diplomacy is the use of advanced information technologies in modern communication. (ICD Annual Academic Conference on Cultural Diplomacy 2011)

Interconnectedness and interdependence will no doubt increase international activity thereby leading to more conflicts and confrontation in the future. Some reject diplomatic dialogue being guided by ideology or self-righteousness even with those perceived as evil

i.e. President George W. Bush's mention of the Axis of evil in his State of the Union address on 29th January 2002 referring to Iraq, Iran and North Korea to which John Bolton, Under-Secretary of State added Libya, Syria and Cuba in his speech on 6th May 2002. So under these conditions diplomacy does not fare well. Another limitation is incompetent governance, which means unequal to task, disorganized and failing to bring professional talent. Many such cases can be seen in the 20th century like Myanmar under its military Junta, Afghanistan under Taliban, Sudan under Omar al Bashir. But despite the drawbacks diplomacy is helping the international society and has remarkably adjusted to its changing global environment. New and novel practices such as public relations (public diplomacy) will become established while well-established diplomatic norms rooted in the practice of centuries will endure hence diplomacy will remain a blend of novelty and continuity. Diversity among international actors is likely to become more pronounced, new political systems will inevitably come into practice, and new norms and new forums for participants will be introduced. International organizations will promote multilateral nature of the work. Adaptation and innovation will continue as international relations evolve. Undoubtedly, the impact of civil society (questions of human relations and social justice) on diplomatic process will remain limited when compared to the role of nation-states and intergovernmental organizations but their influence will grow. Regional Diplomacy through regional organizations is also likely to increase.

Diversity in the subject matter of diplomatic agenda will also increase and more domestic issues will have international ramification because of globalization and economic integration. Special missions will grow in popularity, which will increase their usefulness and future relevance. Tradition will not disappear from diplomacy and the basic skills that make diplomacy what it is, will remain indispensable like tact, understanding of other people's ways, respect, honesty, integrity, patience and of course linguistic ability and common sense. These traits permit us to bridge differences making diplomacy an enduring element in international relations. (Alan.K. Henrikson 2006)

Brain Hocking writes correctly therefore that "diplomacy is responding, as it has in the past, to change in the character of both state and society" (1997:170). Paul Sharp has also recently written on the role of diplomacy and diplomats saying 'the demand for both is currently on the rise' (2009:1-2).

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