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The Importance of Diplomacy for the Foreign Policy and Modern Diplomacy Challenges

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Abstract

This paper analyses the importance of diplomacy for the foreign policy of the states. The paper is analysing evolution of diplomacy from a new and innovative perspective. The key element in the analysis is a concentration on the relationship between the diplomacy and foreign policy, and between states' needs and the functioning of the foreign policy. Also its related to the history of diplomacy and the ways in which modern diplomacy is conducted.

In the paper we clarify the relations between diplomacy and foreign policy. The terms are often confused, but they are not synonymous. Diplomacy is the most important, but not the only instrument of foreign policy. Diplomacy as a method deals with the articulation of foreign policy. It is about the means, not the ends, of foreign policy. Diplomacy thus serves as an great instrument of implementing foreign policy. In recent times, due to the deepening level of globalization and transnational activities, states also have to interact with non-state actors. Modern diplomacy which is different from the traditional one, requires a variety of skills, in particular: familiarity with the art of negotiation, ability to work in a multicultural environment, and openness to co-operation with different actors, in particular, civil society. Modern foreign policy has become quite complex, therefore the modern diplomacy is facing new challenges as technical developments and digitization. Also the paper underlined that reflecting general societal developments, there is need to be absorbed by diplomacy as part of state governance.

Keywords: states, international relations, diplomatic relations, multilateral systems, foreign affairs

1. Introduction

Diplomacy - established method of influencing the decisions and behavior of foreign governments and people through dialogue, negotiation, and other measures short of war or violence. Modern diplomatic practices are a product of the post-Renaissance European state system. Historically, diplomacy meant the conduct of official (usually bilateral) relations between sovereign states. By the 20th century, however, the diplomatic practices pioneered in Europe had been adopted throughout the world, and diplomacy had expanded to cover summit meetings and other international conferences, parliamentary diplomacy, the international activities of supranational and subnational entities, unofficial diplomacy by nongovernmental elements, and the work of international civil servants.¹

The term diplomacy is derived via French from the ancient Greek *diplōma*, composed of *diplo*, meaning “folded in two,” and the suffix *-ma*, meaning “an object.” The folded document conferred a privilege—often a permit to travel—on the bearer, and the term came to denote documents through which princes granted such favours. Later it applied to all solemn documents issued by chancelleries, especially those containing agreements between sovereigns. Diplomacy later became identified with international relations, and the direct tie to documents lapsed (except in diplomatics, which is the science of authenticating old official documents). In the

¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica, link:<https://www.britannica.com/topic/diplomacy>, last accessed: 08.08.2020

18th century the French term diplomate (“diplomat” or “diplomatist”) came to refer to a person authorized to negotiate on behalf of a state.

Foreign policy is designed to protect the national interests of the state. Modern foreign policy has become quite complex. In the past, foreign policy may have concerned itself primarily with policies solely related to national interest—for example, military power or treaties. A country’s foreign policy consists of self-interest strategies chosen by the state to safeguard its national interests and to achieve its own goals through relations with other countries. The approaches are strategically employed to interact with other countries.

In recent times, due to the deepening level of globalization and transnational activities, states also have to interact with non-state actors. The aforementioned interaction is evaluated and monitored in an attempt to maximize benefits of multilateral international cooperation. Since the national interests are paramount, foreign policies are designed by the government through high-level decision making processes. National interest accomplishments can occur as a result of peaceful cooperation with other nations or through exploitation².

Foreign policy has general objectives that guide the activities and relationships of one state in its interactions with other states. The development of foreign policy is influenced by domestic considerations, the policies or behaviour of other states, or plans to advance specific geopolitical designs. Leopold von Ranke emphasized the primacy of geography and external threats in shaping foreign policy, but later writers emphasized domestic factors. Diplomacy is the tool of foreign policy, and war, alliances, and international trade may all be manifestations of it³.

2. The relationship between foreign policy and diplomacy

Diplomacy is often confused with foreign policy, but the terms are not synonymous. Diplomacy is the chief, but is not the only instrument of foreign policy, which is set by political leaders, though diplomats (in addition to military and intelligence officers) may advise them. Foreign policy establishes goals, prescribes strategies, and sets the broad tactics to be used in their accomplishment. It may employ secret agents, subversion, war, or other forms of violence as well as diplomacy to achieve its objectives. Diplomacy is the principal substitute for the use of force or underhanded means in statecraft; it is how comprehensive national power is applied to the peaceful adjustment of differences between states. It may be coercive (i.e., backed by the threat to apply punitive measures or to use force) but is overtly nonviolent. Its primary tools are international dialogue and negotiation, primarily conducted by accredited envoys (a term derived from the French *envoyé*, meaning “one who is sent”) and other political leaders. Unlike foreign policy, which generally is enunciated publicly, most diplomacy is conducted in confidence, though both the fact that it is in progress and its results are almost always made public in contemporary international relations⁴. The main objective of foreign policy is to use diplomacy — or talking, meeting, and making agreements — to solve international problems. They try to keep problems from developing into conflicts that require military settlements. The President almost always has the primary responsibility for shaping foreign policy, but President is not the only person responsible. Diplomats are the primary—but far from the only—practitioners of diplomacy. They are specialists in carrying messages and negotiating adjustments in relations and the resolution of quarrels between states and peoples. Their weapons are words, backed by the power of the state or organization they represent. Diplomats help leaders to understand the attitudes and actions of foreigners and to develop strategies and tactics that will shape the behaviour of foreigners, especially foreign governments. The wise use of diplomats is a key to successful foreign policy⁵.

3. Modern diplomacy challenges

Traditional diplomacy is practised as the art and craft of communicating and interchanging among states acting through their representatives (diplomats) in the national interest (be it political, economic, scientific, social or other) by peaceful means. These means do not exclude the use of (political or economic) pressure (short of war) which is defined as coercive diplomacy. Raymond Aron already distinguished between “L’art de convaincre” and

² [Boundless Political Science](https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-politicalscience/chapter/foreign-policy/), “Foreign Policy”, link: <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-politicalscience/chapter/foreign-policy/>, last accessed: 08.08.2020

³ Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Foreign Policy”, link:<https://www.britannica.com/topic/foreign-policy>, last accessed: 08.08.2020

⁴ Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Diplomacy”, link:<https://www.britannica.com/topic/diplomacy>, last accessed: 08.08.2020

⁵ Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Foreign Policy”, link:<https://www.britannica.com/topic/foreign-policy>, last accessed: 08.08.2020

“L’art de contraindre”⁶. The difference between diplomacy and foreign policy is related to that of instruments (of execution) and of formulation and contents of policy. Diplomacy as a method deals with the articulation of foreign policy. It is about the means, not the ends, of foreign policy. Diplomacy thus serves as an instrument of implementing foreign policy. International relations on the other hand is the social science of analysing foreign policy. International relations deal with relations between states, while transnational relations concern transboundary interactions in which at least one societal actor is involved. Diplomacy uses a certain set of skills, tools, procedures, methods, norms and rules as social practises in order to orchestrate and moderate the dialogue between states and thus to optimize the content and quality of international relations, including the management of change⁷. Modern diplomacy requires a variety of skills, in particular, a familiarity with the art of negotiation, an ability to work in a multicultural environment, and openness to co-operation with different actors, in particular, civil society⁸. Modern diplomacy is currently experiencing fundamental changes at an unprecedented rate, which affect the very character of diplomacy as we know it. These changes also affect aspects of domestic and international politics that were once of no great concern to diplomacy. Technical developments, mainly digitization, affect how the work of the diplomat is understood; the number of domestic and international actors whose activity implicates (or is a form of) diplomacy is increasing; the public is more sensitive to foreign policy issues and seeks to influence diplomacy through social media and other platforms; the way exchange between states, as well as the interchange between government and other domestic actors, progresses is influencing diplomacy’s ability to act legitimately and effectively; and finally, diplomats themselves do not necessarily need the same attributes as they previously did. These trends, reflecting general societal developments, need to be absorbed by diplomacy as part of state governance.

Ministries of Foreign Affairs, diplomats and governments in general should therefore be proactive in four areas:

1. Diplomats must understand the tension between individual needs and state requirements, and engage with that tension without detriment to the state.
2. Digitization must be employed in such a way that gains in efficiency are not at the expense of efficacy.
3. Forms of mediation should be developed that reconcile the interests of all sides allowing governments to operate as sovereign states, and yet simultaneously use the influence and potential of other actors.
4. New and more open state activities need to be advanced that respond to the ways in which emotionalized publics who wish to participate in governance express themselves⁹.

The evolution of diplomacy is analysed from a new and innovative perspective by Professor Richard Langhorne. The key element in his analysis is a concentration on the relationship between the needs and the functioning of the international system. Sometimes, the needs of the international system are met, or even defined, by successful evolution of the diplomatic method, for example, in 1815 and to some extent again in 1919. On the other hand, the emergence of the resident ambassador and the current period could both be mentioned as examples of situations where the needs of the system were not met by diplomatic methods until the need eventually provoked evolution. Current developments in the international system are characterised by the emergence of a much wider range of entities operating in international relations, diffusion of power in the fields of economics and telecommunications, and decline of the sovereignty of states. These changes and challenges need to be met with evolution of diplomatic methods, which we can expect to see in the forthcoming period¹⁰.

The 21st century world will be a very different world from the 20th century world and, much more so, the 19th century world. It is a globalized, interdependent, technology-driven world. Yet the institutions that we are living

⁶ Raymond Aron, (1962), *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, Paris: Calmann-Lévy, p. 68

⁷ Wilfried Bolewski, “Diplomacy and International Law in Globalized Relations”, Part I – Essentials of modern diplomacy, Link: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/bfm%3A978-3-540-71101-8%2F2%2F1.pdf>, last accessed: 08.08.2020

⁸ DiploFondation, “Modern Diplomacy: A preface”. link:<https://www.diplomacy.edu/resources/general/modern-diplomacy-preface#:~:text=Modern%20diplomacy%20requires%20a%20variety,%2C%20in%20particular%2C%20civil%20society,> last accessed: 08.08.2020

⁹ German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Stanzel V., “New Realities in Foreign Affairs: Diplomacy in the 21st Century”, link: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/new-realities-in-foreign-affairs-diplomacy-in-the-21st-century/>, last accessed 08.08.2020

¹⁰ Academic Training Institute, “Modern diplomacy”, link: http://site.iugaza.edu.ps/wmodallal/files/2010/02/Modern_Diplomacy.pdf, last accessed: 08.08.2020

with and the mindset that we have belong to the 20th century. Nationalism was the idea of the 19th century. That is when the concept of nation-states was born. Today, pure nation-states do not exist. They have given way to multi-ethnic states. Earlier, we thought that a state in order to survive has to be viable. But today little statelets smaller than a district in India are recognized as independent states and are members of the United Nations. Other things have changed as well. There are new challenges that face the world today; water, food, energy security, and climate change. While the United States of America remains the leading global power, it is declining in relative terms. There is the rise of Asia: apart from China, there is a much more assertive Japan, as well as Indonesia, Vietnam, and of course, India. Europe, that once dominated the world and initiated world wars, is now pacifist and self-absorbed, focused on trying to make its integration project a success¹¹.

4. Conclusion

The terms “diplomacy” and “foreign policy” are often confused, but they are not synonymous. Diplomacy is the most important, but is not the only, instrument of foreign policy. Diplomacy as a method deals with the articulation of foreign policy. It is about the means, not the ends, of foreign policy. Diplomacy thus serves as a great instrument of implementing foreign policy. In recent times, due to the deepening level of globalization and transnational activities, states also have to interact with non-state actors. Modern diplomacy, beside the traditional one, requires a variety of skills, in particular, a familiarity with the art of negotiation, an ability to work in a multicultural environment, and openness to co-operation with different actors, in particular, civil society. Modern foreign policy has become quite complex, therefore we could conclude that the modern diplomacy is facing new challenges - technical developments, mainly digitization. Also, according to above mentioned we could underline that reflecting general societal developments, there is need to be absorbed by diplomacy as part of state governance.

Current developments in the international system are characterised by the emergence of a much wider range of entities operating in international relations, diffusion of power in the fields of economics and telecommunications, and decline of the sovereignty of states. These changes and challenges need to be met with evolution of diplomatic methods, which we can expect to see in the forthcoming period. In recent times, due to the deepening level of globalization and transnational activities, states also have to interact with non-state actors. The aforementioned interaction is evaluated and monitored in an attempt to maximize benefits of multilateral international cooperation for the states.

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¹¹ Rajiv Sikri, “Challenge and Strategy: Rethinking India’s Foreign Policy”, In: Indian Foreign Affairs Journal Vol. 9, No. 1, January–March 2014, pp.56-69

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