

# Modern world affairs

Politics, International Relations



In Modern world affairs, diplomacy is less and less important in shaping relations between political actors. Do you agree? If so, why? If not, why not? The process of globalisation has affected the role of traditional diplomacy, which was originally confined to predominately deal with issues of war and peace between two political bodies. Traditional diplomacy is as a result, in a state of anachronism and is deemed losing its influential power in post-modern international relations (Leguey-Feilleux 2009, pp. 1-2). Despite this, traditional diplomacy is still relevant in that it is capable of broadening and deepening the content and conduct of its role in current international affairs and in shaping the relations between different political actors. The art of diplomacy has undergone an evolution in scope and dimension in order to be used as a versatile tool to adjust to the current global environment, despite being a useful tool even in its traditional capacity (Leguey-Feilleux 2009 p. 14). Therefore, although the narrow classical mode of diplomacy is being challenged, diplomacy in the modern world is as important as ever, if not more so, and has developed the ability to adapt to today's turbulent modern world. This paper firstly defines diplomacy with a brief historical evolution of the art and investigates how globalisation impacts on diplomatic roles. It then discusses and analyse the importance of diplomacy in the modern sphere.

**DEFINITION & REVOLUTION OF DIPLOMACY (BILATERALISM-MULTILATERALISM-POLYATERALISM)**

The conventional definition of diplomacy, that is, " the peaceful way of relations between political entities with their accredited representatives such as envoys and ambassadors by communication, interaction and negotiation" (Siracusa 2010, p. 2), has been around for many centuries and has been evolving over time. Traditional

diplomacy was primarily considered to be “ the art of managing bilateral relations between states” (Siracusa 2010, p. 6) and was viewed as a very rigid institution. Although diplomacy is still holding to the traditional practical grounds in the current international political realm, diplomacy is no longer limited to war and peace as in previous centuries and needs to be extended to deal with many issues which would be difficult to do under traditional diplomatic methodology. The traditional institution was characterised as bilateral diplomacy, and greatly focused on making treaties between two sovereign-states with its diplomatic norms typically embodied by professional diplomats (Sirasa 2010, p. 6). This diplomatic method was particularly recognised during the periods of the Italian city-states in the fifteenth century when Italy appointed the first permanent ambassadors (Saner & Yiu 2003, p. 9). A sovereign state would traditionally send an envoy to other political entities that had equal powers to conclude treaties and prevent wars (Rana 2007 p. 23). Then came the modern era of diplomacy, which is said to have started with the Peace of Westphalia, the Westphalia peace negotiations, at the end of the Thirty Years War in 1648. This event saw diplomacy officially recognised as a profession (Siracusa 2010, p. 2). The major turning point in diplomacy however, was between 1914 and 1918, when many nation states began to proclaim that ineffective traditional sovereignty such as the bilateral and secret system of diplomacy was a major cause of the First World War (Siddiqui & Alam 2010, p. 28). Woodrow Wilson, as a result of these claims, insisted that diplomacy should be more open and democratic in order to involve multiple states, which led to the emergence of a new style of diplomacy embedded in an open and

multilateral system under the League of the Nations (Siddiqui & Alam 2010, pp. 28-29). These changes allowed new international institutions to emerge (Pigman 2010, p. 23). Diplomacy since then has further evolved as a result of globalisation and can no longer be considered only in terms of relations between states (Wiseman 2004, pp. 40-41). The definition of diplomacy itself has been expanded in recent years as a result of the complexity of the current international environment, which has required that the role of diplomacy be broadened in order to be more suitable to modern governments and other political bodies (Black 2010, p. 254). Indeed, in order to survive modern diplomacy has had to embrace multilateral and polylateral relationships by engaging more non-traditional diplomatic entities such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), local and city governments, and transnational corporations (Wiseman 2004, p. 36). Diplomacy has the potential to play an important and integral part of relations between different political actors in this new role, and will in doing so regain some of the importance it held in previous eras. Wiseman (2004) insists that diplomacy has indeed adapted to a global world and moved beyond multilateralism to “ Polylateralism”, which further layer of diplomatic interaction and relations between states and other entities (p. 41). Supranational, subnational and transnational actors such as European Union, Quebec, and Microsoft are indeed currently engaging in complicated activities of diplomacy (Pigman 2010, pp. 18-19). The incident on September 11th in 2001, for example, occurred in the United States (state) in New York by non-state actor, Al-Qaeda and there were various alliances and networks around the world involved to solve the resulting conflict (Saner & Yiu 2003,

p. 10). The twenty-first century has undergone serious globalisation, meaning that diplomacy in its traditional but narrow capacity can no longer always solve the complex multiple boundary issues that frequently present themselves and therefore must expand its institutional capabilities in order to deal with non-state actors. In many senses diplomacy has already achieved such an evolution in practice however it still holds to its traditional guidelines as a baseline and in a theoretical capacity. The scope of the practice of modern diplomacy has certainly increased in recent times and is now without a doubt capable of dealing with complex issues. It has been developed in such a way that it will be easily adaptable to a changing world and can therefore be a tremendously relevant and potentially essential tool in modern world affairs. GLOBALISATION IMPACTS Diplomacy in the twenty first century has become more than the diplomacy of states and government, although the sovereign state remains as a key actor (Siracusa 2010, p. 106). Globalisation is constantly changing the nature and conduct of diplomacy and as a result it is becoming more rapidly deepened and broadened in current world affairs. Diplomacy today is used to deal with concerns about much broader subjects such as terrorism, human rights, economy, law and climate change, which were not issues in previous centuries and therefore as a result new actors and advanced information technology (IT) have been introduced into the role of diplomacy (Siddiqui & Alam 2010, p. 182). One such example is the speed of the conduct of diplomacy which as a result of IT and electronic communications has increased dramatically and brought international organisations, governments and civil societies much closer together (Murray 2011, p. 726). This, as a

result, has diversified the nature of diplomacy to be less state-centric and to have a system that is less state-hierarchical (Chatterjee 2007, p. 111). The wider availability of knowledge available through the internet, has helped one of diplomacy's key activities, that of gathering information for decision-making purposes. Information is not only available to diplomats but also to non-state entities and to the general public and as a result, diplomacy has become less state-centric. Particular types of information however, cannot be obtained without personal contact by the diplomat, nor can computers accurately analyse, interpret and report this information. The advancement in IT has therefore by no means replaced the need for this diplomatic activity (Siddiqui & Alam 2010, p. 189). Ambassadors today do not simply represent a particular entity, although that is a main part of their role; their primary function is to tactically apply their technical skills in order to promote their home countries image and to nurture good relationships with their host countries (Kerr & Wiseman 2013, p. 29). Satow (1979) also asserts that human nature and national character have not altered to any remarkable extent meaning that diplomacy will always be a required part of affairs and diplomats' roles cannot be replaced by IT (Gore-Booth 1979, p. 442). The new age of IT also improves the negotiation role of diplomacy. It boosts larger participation in policy discussion by members from different departments within a state and also with IGOs as discussion can take place without the necessity of being in the same physical location (Hamilton & Langhorne 2011, p. 233). This form of discussion was successfully applied in the negotiations with Bosnia and led to the Dayton agreement (Siddiqui & Alam 2010, p. 187). Modern technology can make diplomacy conduit a much

faster process, which means that issues can be resolved quickly. In matters of international safety and other significant and urgent matters, IT has become an essential tool for negotiation in modern international diplomacy (Chatterjee 2007, pp. 114-115). Another example of the effects of globalisation to diplomacy is the role played by intergovernmental organisations such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and transnational corporations. These entities play a large role in the complex international economic and political system of the modern world and affect diplomatic relations in a unique way (Saner & Yiu 2003, p. 3). Diplomats usually promote their home interests to other countries in relation to commerce and trade and invite private investors but state and private sector relations more often involve complex negotiations that handle the terms of private foreign investment and trade (Siddiqui & Alam 2010, p. 184). Exxon Mobile for instance put efforts to obstruct the United States from signing the Kyoto Protocol agreement in order to avoid its additional liabilities and taxes. Similarly, Microsoft tried to protect its software by influencing the Philippines government to pass a new intellectual property law with the United States government (Rugman 2008, pp. 98-99). These examples show how state entities and private corporation relations affect world and domestic foreign policy. Kerr and Wiseman (2013) assert however, that the involvement of corporations is confined to making international business deals, while nation-state governments ultimately make the decisions regarding the rules of trade (p. 29). The role of the state actor is still very essential to assess the political consequences but they may need to enlarge their capabilities in terms of diplomacy in order to deal with the non-state actors and to learn to

manage the multiple boundaries of today's complex economic and political realities (Sancer & Yiu 2003, p. 2). A final example of the effects of globalisation to diplomacy is illustrated through the issue of the rise of terrorism and localised wars. Global governance institutions (intergovernmental organisations) such as the United Nations (UN), the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have developed the appearance of holding importance international status (Siddiqui & Alam 2010, p. 184), but in reality may not be as productive as dealing with such issues as publicly assumed. The UN's ability as an effective mediator is unfortunately somewhat exaggerated, mainly due to a lack of military or significant cash flow of its own. It can hardly be a successful mediator without adequate resources. The Somalia intervention from 1992 to 1995, for instance, was a UN and US arranged Unified Task Force (UNITAF) that resulted in disastrous consequences because of a lack of humanitarian aid and other resources that were originally promised (Ketcher 2010, p. 20). Berridge (2010) asserts that intergovernmental organisations are "free-booting amateurs with limited usefulness" (p. 254). State actors such as official diplomats therefore should be in a key and immensely important position to monitor and regulate global governance institutions in order to ensure the maintenance of appropriate operation (Chatterjee 2007).

CONCLUSION Diplomacy as a professional institution is constantly evolving its definition and its practices while still remaining loyal to the key principles that were forged at the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations in 1961. Globalisation and the technological revolution have speedily changed the nature of diplomacy in terms of; technology-based international relations,



complex internationalisation problem solving, changing the international system of trade and commerce and the holding a crucial involvement in IGOs and transnational corporations. Diplomacy today is as a result becoming more rapidly depended and broadened in the world affair. Furthermore, it also has made it possible for non-state actors to establish supra-territorial relationships so that while state actors still hold a crucial status, they are able to actively cooperate with non-state actors to secure position and expand knowledge (Saner & Yiu 2003, p. 29). Despite contrary opinions diplomacy has clearly and successfully adapted to the modern world and as a result plays a very significant role in the relation between different political parties, albeit a slightly different and expanded role that is traditionally filled. In view of this it is likely that diplomacy will continue to be a very effective tool, capable of shaping and moulding modern world affairs between the different political partners and in doing so will continue to control the forefront of international relations in the future.