

**POST COLD WAR DIPLOMATIC TRAINING:
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MULTISTAKEHOLDER APPROACH
TO INTER- AND INTRA-STATE CONFLICTS**

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The demise of the Cold War has ushered in a new phase in international relations, a phase characterised by new forms of conflict. Whereas the Cold War conflict was mainly between the West and the East, with devastating effects on the Third World, the new era has seen the emergence of new and, in some countries, intensified intra-state conflict having the potential to assume an international character. The world also experiences higher levels of terrorism than has been seen before. The United States, Britain, and other European countries have become targets of ferocious attacks in which the enemy uses lethal strategies of destabilisation. The attack on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001 and suicide attacks in the Middle East demonstrate the ferocity of the strategies employed by terrorist organisations.

One consequence of the change from Cold War era conflict to conflict in the post Cold War era is that traditional diplomacy, also referred to as First Track diplomacy, has had to change its approach in order to cope with the new developments. Defined by Sir Harold Nicolson (1988) as the management of international relations and the method by which these relations are adjusted and managed by foreign service personnel, some scholars believe that traditional diplomacy is no longer adequate in addressing conflicts. They advocate Second Track citizen diplomacy that makes use of people outside the traditional diplomatic sphere. While not underestimating the strength of traditional diplomacy, these scholars argue that it may not be suitable in some settings, advocating co-harnessing traditional diplomats with other professionals.

A conundrum, however, lies in whether diplomatic training has to accommodate the various organisational and professional cultures or, whether, given the prevalence of terrorism and conflict, diplomats might prefer traditional diplomatic training. This paper examines multistakeholder diplomatic training and its importance as an approach in penetrating different cultures. The paper also examines whether this approach could be used to minimise intractable conflicts such as those in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in the Sudan, and in the Horn of Africa.

Contemporary Global Conflict

Many people had hoped that the end of the Cold War would see the arrival of a new, peaceful era in world politics. Instead, it saw the flourishing of conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, in Rwanda, and in many other countries. Unlike the First and Second World Wars and the Cold War where nation-states were clear enemies, recent and emerging conflicts are highly destructive both within and across state boundaries. Most of these conflicts involve ethnic groups who seek to control existing states or to establish their own states (Bradshaw, 1999). While these conflicts are political in nature, the underlying causes for these conflicts, particularly in African states, may be a dearth or absence of good governance, a scramble for natural resources, high levels of poverty, and inequitable distribution of resources.

Kelman (2003) indicates that nation-states used to be dominant actors within the global arena. However, issues of conflict and security are no longer the domain of states alone. Just as states have now become redundant, so has their exclusive exercise of diplomacy. One of the new, dominant actors in the field is the UN. Nonetheless, current conflicts are very difficult for the UN to contain, as they do not involve international aggression. The UN can act without hesitation only if the conflicts were of an increased intensity, consisting of disruptive interactions between two or more states. The UN could act decisively if the conflicts had a high likelihood for military hostilities that would not only destabilise their relationship, but also upset the structure of the international system. Consequently, it is necessary for diplomacy to take centre stage in creating more negotiation and less confrontation in international affairs.

The conflicts cannot be called wars because no state has declared war on another. Rather, they are civil wars as they often involve citizens of the same country. These have been hugely destructive and expensive. The intractable conflict in Angola where landmines have killed and crippled many people is a typical example. Likewise, the second American-led war on Iraq and others of its kind resist attempts to shift from confrontation to diplomacy. The use of military force by a country on another without UN sanction could have serious consequences to international relations. Countries that perceive themselves threatened may begin to strengthen their security by procuring arms. They may also form alliances with the super powers or, in the case of smaller states, allow foreign army bases in their territories as a defence strategy. It is

because of these possibilities that diplomacy has a greater importance than ever before.

Clearly, many countries will take some time before they refrain from the use of force. It would be myopic, therefore, to think that the use of force will end immediately. Despite this reality, the countries affected by these conflicts need to give diplomacy a chance before resorting to confrontation. The invasion of Iraq by the US and its allies offers a recent case. Much evidence suggests that the US was impatiently counting down days before the war on Iraq. The President made it clear around January 2003 that diplomatic efforts in Iraq would not continue indefinitely. He indicated that diplomacy would last for only “weeks not months” (Ross, 2003). It was unrealistic of those who promoted an invasion of Iraq (no matter whether right or wrong) to expect a quick and smooth military operation, given the hasty manner in which the diplomatic process was handled. As with many other conflict situations that culminate in full-blown wars, pre-war missteps always have negative outcomes in the post war period. The allied forces in Iraq are now having a difficult time trying to normalise the situation in Iraq – a problem that the US could have avoided had diplomacy been given a chance.

However, despite the prevalence of destructive conflicts and the consequent risks of regional instability, one can note a significant decline in the potential for conflicts to become international. However, the risk of external involvement exists, as one can see in the case of French involvement in the Ivorian conflict. The involvement of France has led to more tension in the Ivory Coast, resulting in the Ivorian president moving from being a friend of the French to being their foe.

Wilkenfiel and Brecher (2003) state that post Cold War crises have been more amenable to mediation by the international community and its organs than those that took place during the Cold War. The example of the Ivorian conflict illustrates that despite the recent escalation of this conflict, mediation by South African President Thabo Mbeki has resulted in a commitment from both the Ivorian government and the rebels to talk.

A number of institutions are usually involved in combating conflict at both the national and international levels, as in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These institutions vary from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), state agencies, and nations, all of which act through various representatives such as officers, state officials, and diplomats. Due to the numerous levels of cultural conflict, diplomats are well placed to tackle the conflicts that divide communities. They become involved in the processes

of developing and participating in policy networks that bring together the resources of governmental and non-governmental actors. They have been involved, for instance, in the issue of conflict diamonds and their role in financing the continuing conflicts in Southern Africa.

Diplomacy

The strategic objective of any state, irrespective of its size, in its relations with other states, is to direct and influence those relations for its maximum benefit, thus gaining political or economic advantages while promoting international co-operation and harmony (Nailatikau, 2003). Influence applied through diplomacy entails negotiations in which state representatives draw from an accumulated wealth of experience in international relations. In negotiations, parties reach some form of agreement based on common interests. Negotiation is one of the most effective ways of dealing with conflict, whether at interpersonal, state, or inter-state levels because it offers the parties an opportunity to communicate.

Given the fact that nations and their governments have not seen the last of wars and internal conflicts, diplomacy remains the best tool available to reach agreements, compromises, and settlements. This involves attempts to change the policies, actions, objectives, and attitudes of other governments and their diplomats by persuasion, reward, concession, or even threat (Holsti, 1995). As well, diplomacy not only attempts to change policies of other governments, but it also prepares the basis for the formulation of domestic foreign policy. Facilitated by international law at state and inter-state levels, in turn it generates treaties. As Starr (1995) puts it, both law and diplomacy create intergovernmental organisations that facilitate more diplomacy and more international law. In sum, diplomacy today involves highly technical, bureaucratized, mutual learning experiences in which governments construct formulas to address multi-faceted international challenges. It is not only concerned with persuasion, but also with creating new knowledge for the benefit of those who may not comprehend a problem. Diplomacy therefore entails the management of change that arises from time to time in international relations.

Like other processes, diplomacy has undergone a number of changes. The old diplomacy imitated the systems that it used to represent. A significant development in diplomatic procedure has been the growing sense of global unity, the importance of peoples' involvement in all matters that affect them,

and the rapid increase in direct communication between heads of state. High-ranking officials can now bypass the traditional diplomatic intermediary and maintain direct communication. Such diplomacy did not exist during the Cold War, yet it is now commonplace (Holsti, 1995).

Diplomatic Training

The main objective of diplomatic training is to provide relevant skills to enable diplomats to execute their mandate effectively. In many countries, the personnel in the foreign ministries receive training and orientation on the fundamentals of foreign service. The methods of recruitment and subsequent appointment differ from country to country. Nicolson (1988) points out that in Britain, for example, the recruitment of personnel entails a thorough training in languages and some of the basic techniques of the Foreign Service. After careful selection, the candidates for Foreign Service training undergo probation and examinations. The service training introduces them to some practical skills in conflict management, negotiation, trade and investment, promotion, rank, protocol, and etiquette. In Germany candidates also go through several stages of probation and then take examinations in international law, economics, and history.

The traditional and still predominant approach to diplomatic training is through courses or programmes taking place at diplomatic academies or ministries of foreign affairs. The traditional approach reflects the reality of the 19th and 20th centuries when diplomats communicated mainly among themselves. In his book on diplomacy, Sir Harold Nicolson (1988) enumerates seven ideal moral and intellectual qualities that diplomatic training inculcates in diplomats: truthfulness, precision, calmness, good temper, patience, modesty, and loyalty. A “diplomatist” requires all seven virtues, not easily found even in the ordinary politician. When explained in detail, truthfulness means a thorough care to avoid the suggestion of the false or the suppression of truth. A good diplomat should always ensure that the impression left with the people with whom he or she negotiates is free of incorrectness. Precision, on the other hand, means moral and intellectual accuracy. Accuracy in mind and in soul is, therefore, imperative.

Calmness refers to the ability to suspend judgement. A diplomat must be able to eschew all personal animosities, all enthusiasms, prejudices, and moral indignation. Good temper and exceptional patience are attributes of a real

diplomat. Patience is a fundamental quality required by any diplomat because, as indicated earlier, diplomacy is essentially about negotiation. Negotiation is an enormous task for each negotiator and the process consumes considerable time, hence, the need for patience. During a negotiation process, each negotiator decides what to offer, what to reject, and how many concessions to make. In terms of its psychological effect, the principle of equal concession has an effect on individual diplomats in that they have to be mentally ready to accommodate those with whom they negotiate.

Modesty is also another quality vital to diplomacy. A real diplomat should not suffer from vanity and should be able to put him- or herself in another person's situation to understand the other. As I have argued elsewhere, people see themselves in the image of another. It follows therefore that to understand the thinking and the feelings of others, they have to wear their shoes and walk in them (Shale, 2004). Accordingly, a diplomat owes loyalty to all those with whom he or she works, from superiors to colleagues. A diplomat represents the ideals, values, and beliefs of his or her people; he or she often waives individual beliefs and conscience in favour of those of superiors (Harvey, 1985). Therefore, quick decisions in diplomacy are rare, since a diplomat always has to accept a proposition of his or her counterpart *ad referendum*.

The Value of the Multistakeholder Approach to Diplomatic Training

Individual countries need to adopt multistakeholder diplomatic training in order to produce diplomats more qualified for information gathering and trade negotiations. One issue high on the international agenda today is trade. Unlike in the past, where countries held bilateral trade negotiations, regionalism is the current, preferred *modus vivendi*. Countries now form regional pacts to channel and receive funds. Bodies such as the European Union prefer to work with these regional pacts, rather than with individual countries. For this reason, it is fundamentally important for countries to include technical experts and NGOs from various professional cultures in delegations to multilateral conferences. The inclusion of private citizens in diplomacy provides an opportunity to form and discuss opinions that inform the decisions of government officials and heads of government (Holsti, 1995).

A multistakeholder approach to diplomatic training allows diverse cultural interaction and suggests that diplomatic staff members not confine

themselves to the accepted circle of embassy guests. The rigidity of traditional diplomacy can be a disadvantage to diplomats because they will not get information if they are selective in interacting with people. The rigidity can be extreme. For example, the former US Ambassador to the UN during the Carter Administration was “fired” for having a cup of coffee at the UN in New York with a representative of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (McDonald, 2003).

Also pertinent to the question of the rigidity of the traditional diplomatic training method is the issue of morality. The extent to which diplomats are free to make moral choices is a subject that realists have often questioned. For instance, Rosenthal (1995) cites Morgenthau as saying:

If we ask ourselves what statesmen and diplomats are capable of doing to further the power objectives of their respective nations and in what they actually do, we realize that they do less than they probably could and less than they actually did in other periods of history. They refuse to consider certain conditions, not because in the light of expediency they appear impractical or unwise, but because moral rules interpose an absolute barrier. (p. 223)

Actions such as those leading to the “firing” of a US Ambassador are discouraged by most diplomatic experts, particularly those who advocate a multistakeholder diplomatic approach because they believe that information is better obtained through informal means. It is easier to persuade and obtain information from local and foreign sources in a social setting that removes the strain of rigid protocol. Therefore, the training that current diplomats undergo should prepare them to be dynamic in their approach to international affairs.

The Role of Civil Society and Non Governmental Organisations

Civil society refers to sectors of society organised in any form and for any purpose (Selinyane, 1997). Civil society can be organised in trade unions, women’s organisations, human rights groups, media associations, lawyers associations, and other professional and non-professional groups (Kabemba, 2003). Given the inevitable shift in diplomacy, civil society needs to play an active role in influencing developments in international relations. Diplomatic training has to extend into incorporated civil society groups. A tailor-made

content must accommodate them so that they create not only pressures, but also new resources that can strengthen governmental endeavours to achieve peace by diplomatic means.

NGOs are autonomous non-profit and non-partisan UN-affiliated organisations that advance particular causes or sets of causes in the public interest. They focus on many issues and operate in a manner consistent with the objectives for which they receive funds. NGOs depend on funding from governments, the UN, private trusts and individual donations, religious institutions and other NGOs (Steinberg, 2003). They contribute tremendously to diplomacy through their meetings, making important resolutions and conveying them to official diplomats. For instance, as Holsti (1995) indicates, in the recent discussions and negotiations on human rights under the auspices of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, some NGO members were included. The collaboration between diplomats and NGOs is a requirement in the achievement of diplomatic goals.

The growing importance of civil society and NGOs in the last fifteen years has changed the way diplomats communicate with other professional cultures. Modern diplomats now communicate with very diverse professional cultures that have very specific ways of approaching issues. Diplomats can prepare for these changes by reforming training practices and adopting a multistakeholder approach as one of the basic principles of diplomatic training. Through close, daily contact with a variety of professions, diplomats can absorb information and develop the skills to communicate easily with different professional cultures (Kurbalija, 2004).

The range of relevant foreign affairs work experience that exists outside the Foreign Service is such that movement between the private sector, civil society, NGOs, and other foreign affairs related entities is now more feasible than ever before. In a world that is evolving rapidly, the constant infusion of talent from internationally engaged organisations is essential if government is to escape from what Quainton (2001) refers to as the sterile conservatism of an entrenched mandarin.

Citizen Diplomacy

Having looked at traditional diplomacy and the multistakeholder approach to diplomatic training, and cognisant of other existing forms of diplomacy, it is important to look at citizen diplomacy as a complement to official

diplomacy in managing conflicts. We can define *citizen diplomacy* as an approach to negotiation that brings together professionals, leaders of opinion, and other influential individuals from communities or countries in conflict, without regard to their official status, to collaborate in finding solutions to a conflict. According to Davies and Kaufman (2003), citizen diplomacy complements official diplomacy, therefore opening opportunities for communication, cross-cultural understanding, and joint efforts to address parties' needs. Citizen diplomacy also seeks to bridge the divide between government and civil society, between elite and grassroots levels within communities, and between different cultural worldviews on how to manage conflicts.

A multistakeholder approach to diplomatic training allows for the inclusion of technical experts and private citizens. It is similar to citizen diplomacy in terms of targeting these groups. Both create a rich environment for information sharing. The difference is that the multistakeholder approach, although including various professionals, trains them for an eventual involvement in official diplomacy. Citizen diplomacy, on the other hand, includes various professionals who operate in unofficial capacities during conflicts. The important point to underscore is that citizen diplomacy prepares the ground for official diplomacy because the resolutions taken in the former influence and often form the basis for discussions in the latter.

The former US diplomat John McDonald related an instance where citizen diplomacy assisted the official diplomatic process. He states that following the accusations and counter accusations between the US and the Soviet Union with regard to involvement in terrorist activities, ten US private citizens visited Moscow and met with ten Soviet experts. They engaged in constructive discussions that ended up with the signing of a document that had recommendations on areas of co-operation. Two years later, the presidents of the US and of the Soviet Union met to discuss their co-operation on the issue of terrorism and adopted the twenty recommendations that were a product of citizen diplomacy (MacDonald, 2003). This illustrates that citizen diplomacy can be an indispensable ingredient to diplomatic method. It also follows that diplomatic training has to expand and incorporate various professional cultures.

The importance of the multistakeholder approach to diplomatic training cannot be over-emphasised. It is axiomatic that by accommodating other professional cultures, diplomatic training builds bridges for diversity and the smooth flow of information. The flow of information breaks many conflicts, as people rely more on facts than on perceptions about each other. Many of the deep-rooted conflicts in Africa and in other countries today are a result of

stereotypes and misplaced perceptions between parties. The diplomatic efforts to prevent such conflicts as exist in the Democratic Republic of Congo from spilling into other countries are made difficult, in part, by greater involvement of government officials and heads of governments than of private citizens.

The weakness of the traditional approach to conflict is that officials are usually prejudiced and sometimes force agreements between parties and set deadlines for them without regard to the causes of the conflict and to proper knowledge or acknowledgement of all the parties in the conflict. Premature agreement was perhaps one of the reasons that delayed the implementation of the Pretoria Accord signed in July 2002. This accord cites the ex-Rwandan Armed Forces and the Interahamwe as responsible for the Rwandan genocide in 1994. It makes no mention of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda that was supported by the Congolese government (ICG, 2003). Forced agreements and deadlines have become anathema to the parties in the conflict, as it is in other parts of the world. It is important, therefore, that in any diplomatic engagement diplomats be augmented with skilled mediators trained in aspects other than traditional diplomatic training. This will assist diplomats to develop a broader and well-informed analysis framework to thwart conflicts.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have made a distinction between conflicts that occurred during the Cold War and those that have occurred since its end. Whereas conflicts during the Cold War were mainly polarised between the East and the West, with states acting as belligerents, contemporary conflicts are often between ethnic groups within and across state boundaries. These conflicts do not fit the description of international aggression as enshrined in the *Charter of the United Nations*. Consequently, it is difficult for the UN to apply an appropriate correction, such as intervention with peacekeepers. It remains a challenge to the UN and its member states to find solutions to these conflicts. The main question is whether the world will afford to have situations where diplomacy is insignificant in face of the use of force.

An important argument of this paper is that traditional diplomatic training is no longer adequate to address the global challenges that warrant diplomatic intervention. I have argued that the change in the form of global conflict requires a corresponding change in diplomatic strategies. Today's

diplomacy has to include technical experts from various professional cultures who are adept at handling the multifaceted nature of international affairs. Equally important is the involvement of civil society organisations and NGOs, since the current international agenda emphasises trade development. I have pointed out the importance of citizen diplomacy that makes use of various professionals as a supplement to official diplomacy.

It is fitting, therefore, to conclude that the inclusion of various professional cultures in diplomatic training is fundamental as states attempt to combat various conflicts within and across their borders and to pursue democracy and good governance. This paper takes cognisance of the importance of traditional diplomatic training such as diplomatic etiquette, state protocol, and itinerary preparation. The conjunction of traditional diplomatic training and other professional cultures could provide an impetus for the management of intra and inter-state conflicts. It is highly recommended if diplomacy is to be effective in its approach to the intractable conflicts that have arisen as a result of post Cold War changes – and as a result of factors that existed even before the end of the Cold War.

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CONCLUSIONS

