

REFLECTIONS ON MULTISTAKEHOLDER DIPLOMACY

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For centuries, the Westphalian system of nations has been the dominant feature of international order. The classical understanding of sovereignty is that the state, with its territorial control and institutional authority, has had ultimate legitimacy to define and represent the aspirations and interests of its people in relations with other nations. In this concept, international law assigns to the state a principal role in conducting diplomacy.

The state centric approach persists in traditional definitions of diplomacy, which emphasise the interstate character of diplomatic process. Harold Nicolson perceives diplomacy as the “*management of relations between independent states* through the process of negotiation;” and Ernest Satow, as “the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of *official relations between governments of independent states*.” Likewise, Elmer Plischke considers it a “political process by which *political entities (generally states) establish and maintain official relations . . . in pursuing their goals, objectives, interests, substantive policies . . . in an international environment*” (Freeman, 1997, pp. 70-76).

However, complex geo-political, socio-economic, technological, cultural, and military developments in international fora have greatly affected this state-based concept of diplomacy in the last fifteen years. With the end of the cold war, the world has grappled with new realities of globalisation. The international system is no longer exclusively run by states, although states retain the privileged place of principal generators of diplomacy. A system of overlapping societies, rules, and allegiances focused around acknowledgement of global interdependence is eroding the Westphalian system of sovereign nations. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), pressure groups, transnational companies, and multinational lobbies are now a sizeable factor in international relations. Thus, the international system is no longer manageable in the old pattern because of a growing web of non-state actors that operate beyond the fixed limits of a monolithic state apparatus and territorial sovereignty.

Human civilisation has reached a point where its further development and sustainability becomes the subject of shared responsibility and engagement of states, the private sector, and civil society. Essential problems such as global poverty, environmental pollution, exploitation of natural resources

on a massive scale, trade disputes, and inter- and intrastate conflicts cannot be resolved through conventional formats of bilateral and multilateral intergovernmental diplomacy. New participatory modes of interaction and approaches require consideration. A multistakeholder approach seems to offer promising opportunities.

Socio-economic and development theorists often apply a multistakeholder approach in their studies, yet it has found a way into diplomatic practice only recently. The core characteristic of the multistakeholder approach is an equitable interaction between a multitude of actors (state and non-state) of varying power and position. Interaction takes the form of a dialogue, consultation, and, in ideal cases, formal negotiation. The actors hold particular interests or stakes in the issues discussed and in the outcomes of consultation and negotiation processes. They may have divergent interests, yet have the mutual goal of finding a crossing point or common ground in addressing a particular issue and arriving at mutually acceptable, win/win solutions. The multistakeholder model involves participatory mechanisms that facilitate policy formation and collaborative decision-making. A set of participation modalities and decision-making mechanisms regulates each multistakeholder process and partnership.

The multistakeholder model has been a subject of numerous analytical case studies in the research and practitioner community. The studies cover multistakeholder processes (Hemmati, 2002), multistakeholder dialogues (Susskind, Fuller, Ferenz, and Fairman, 2003), and multistakeholder partnerships (Global Knowledge Partnership Secretariat, 2005). This paper looks into multistakeholder practices at the international level and analyses their impact on the conduct of modern diplomacy. The existing institutional and procedural framework for involvement of non-state actors in multistakeholder diplomacy and international policy making receives special attention. Through comparative analysis of procedural, issue, and policy documents of the UN and other international organisations, and through the study of press releases and research-based monographs, the author attempts to identify the principal stakeholders and modalities of interaction in the process of intergovernmental (diplomatic) negotiation and decision making. The examination also includes multistakeholder arrangements within some regional intergovernmental organisations and ends with brief review of the multistakeholder patterns of interaction in the context of national diplomatic systems and national foreign policy making.

The case-study approach used here relies on relevant web-based resources, evidence of the growing significance of the Internet as a valuable source and repository not just of data and information, but also of systematic knowledge.

Current Multistakeholder Practices in the UN System

The UN system of international conferences constitutes the background for the conduct of multistakeholder diplomacy. These multilateral diplomacy forums encompass multifaceted layers of activities often extending beyond a traditional intergovernmental framework and involving stakeholder participation both in preparatory and final stages of negotiation processes.

UN conference diplomacy is intergovernmental in character, which, as a rule, confines the negotiation process to state delegations and representatives of intergovernmental organisations. This rule, however, is slowly changing as the diplomatic community begins to acknowledge the growing relevance of NGOs, international business and financial entities, and civil society groups as actors in intergovernmental negotiation. By acting as individuals or as representatives of a group, these agents have a direct stake in influencing a particular decision or in wording a particular resolution. Non-state actors contribute to the outcomes of diplomatic summits in areas in which they hold special competence and within the range of their activities. States recognise their expertise and input in tackling global soft-security issues such as environmental protection, sustainable development, disaster relief efforts, international trade, human rights, gender issues, and the information society.

A participatory framework branded as “multistakeholder dialogues” evolved in the 90s. “Rio ’92,” the UN Conference on Environment and Development (the “Earth Summit”), was one of the first major global events to adopt a multistakeholder network model. The conference resulted in the adoption of Agenda 21, recognising nine major groups as equitable stakeholders in the setting and implementation of a sustainable development agenda. The institutional post conference arrangements in the form of a Commission of Sustainable Development ensured effective monitoring and reporting of the agreements at local, national, regional, and international levels (UNSD, 2005). Commission deliberations took the format of informal multistakeholder dialogues between governments and major groups. A steering committee composed of the major groups and the Secretariat facilitated the dialogues.

The dialogues offered a platform for many major groups (women, youth, indigenous people, NGOs, local authorities, workers, trade unions, business and industry associations, scientific and technological communities, farmers) to share concerns, experiences, and proposals in their discussions with governments on an equal representation basis (UNDSEA, 2005). By 1997, the informal consultations had become formal multistakeholder panels for each meeting.

Likewise, the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg incorporated multistakeholder meetings into the official intergovernmental preparatory process. Session results were delivered by the Chair to the conference preparatory committee and included in its records. The summit itself gave a good opportunity for representatives of major groups to participate in a number of plenary sessions and, thus, to contribute to the multilateral negotiation process (WSSD, 2002). Nonetheless, analysts, like Dana Fisher from Columbia University, shared views that, in the end, the Johannesburg framework agreement was negotiated primarily by diplomats, while civil society organisations and citizens' groups were "disfranchised" – that is, restricted from international environmental policy making. In their post-Johannesburg recommendations, analysts highlighted the need for inclusive participatory and organisational mechanisms designed to enhance policy dialogue between national governments and other relevant stakeholders (Fisher, 2002).

The 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterey is another example of proactive multistakeholder practices. Multistakeholder consultations involving governments, international financial and trade organisations (so called institutional stakeholders), NGOs and civil society agencies, and members of the private sector produced an exchange of views on global economic issues. Seventy participants grouped in twelve roundtables took part in the deliberations chaired by heads of states, ministers of finance, trade and foreign affairs, heads of the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, and the World Bank, as well as regional bank managers. These multistakeholder dialogues were recognised as formal conference events meant to enhance the outcome of intergovernmental plenary negotiations. Participation modalities allowed all stakeholders to enjoy the right to table proposals first discussed and circulated in conference side events. Summaries of these meetings appeared in the final conference report and in the Monterey Consensus Resolution. Multistakeholder deliberations, therefore, provided meaningful input for conference diplomacy. In follow-up

multistakeholder meetings, the important issues of discussion concerned mobilisation of resources for financing development and poverty eradication. The meetings were co-ordinated by UN bodies, institutional stakeholders, and the NGO, Global Finance Coalition. Meetings took the form of thematic workshops and hearings. For instance, the UN Secretariat organised informal hearings of civil society and private sector agencies in preparation for high level intergovernmental “financing for development” follow-up activities. Parliamentarians, represented by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, also contributed significantly in the follow-up activities (UNDSEA, 2005).

In multistakeholder practices, active participation of the private sector is essential. The sector acts as engine of growth and economic development. Businesses mobilise funds for UN development programs; they also bring financial, technical, and managerial expertise and skills to multistakeholder processes. Together with other stakeholders, they are instrumental in solving complex global and regional problems. Yet, the international system needs a place where stakeholders can work constructively, free from the constraints of intergovernmental protocol and corporate pressures. The World Economic Forum gatherings in Davos, Switzerland offer conditions for informal settings where leaders from varying backgrounds can engage in collaborative problem-solving exercises through multistakeholder dialogues.

It is becoming a practice for multistakeholder dialogues to grow into problem-driven partnerships. The Report of the Secretary General to the UN General Assembly in 2003 defines “partnerships as voluntary and collaborative relationships between parties, both state and non-state, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and share risks, responsibilities and resources, competencies and benefits” (UNGPP, 2003).

One problem-driven issue is disaster relief. The recent Indian Ocean earthquake and subsequent tsunami demonstrated the urgent need for consistent human response to prevent and reduce the risks of natural disasters. Emergencies of such magnitude exceed the boundaries of a single state, since their socio-economic consequences are global in nature and require global response. It is still necessary to form an appropriate co-ordination format for effective international efforts. Multistakeholder partnerships are a suitable venue for all agencies concerned – governments, international organisations with expertise and experience in disaster relief, local municipalities, scientific communities, industry and business associations – to adopt and implement joint measures to reduce risks and to minimise human loss, as well as to man-

age relief aid. In support of such an undertaking, the UN sponsored World Conference on Disaster Reduction brought together concerned stakeholders in an effort to establish a partnership mechanism that could share knowledge and good practices (WCDR, 2005). A two-year negotiation marathon resulted in two sessional and intersessional conferences preparatory to the Conference, as well as a thematic segment consisting of various regional workshops and roundtables. Partnerships proposed during the multistakeholder consultation process built on the partnership framework launched at the WSSD, in turn based on the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation for vulnerability, risk assessment, and disaster management.

Disaster reduction partnerships come up as specific initiatives taken by various institutions at different levels aimed at implementing disaster risk reduction goals and targets (UNGA, 2004). The conference proved that multistakeholder partnerships are not about to replace inter-governmental diplomatic negotiations and are still complementary to conference processes. Non-state actors involved in the Conference failed to accomplish their objectives, as the final agreement excluded many of their proposals. The text of the Conference final document was watered down and reflected the unwillingness of governmental delegations to undertake concrete commitments to reduce the death toll in future disasters and to raise funds for the development of early warning systems. The Conference also found no accord on international funding mechanisms for disaster prevention. The positive outcomes are the linkages made between climate change disasters and sustainable development disasters (Large, 2005).

The utilisation of non-state actor capacities in intergovernmental diplomacy remains a controversial issue. The World Organisation has invested considerable resources and expertise in developing a common denominator for meaningful multistakeholder interactions in UN fora. According to the Cardoso Report (Cardoso, 2003), the effectiveness of the international system depends on the ability of member states to make full use of NGOs, the private sector, parliamentarians, and local authorities. The report urges states to define clear rules of engagement (participation modalities) for non-state actors and procedures of political representation, and to allow innovative forms of partnership and collaboration. In any case, most UN member states cautiously welcome civil society and private sector know-how and influence (this assessment varies from state to state) and encourage flexible forms of multistakeholder diplomacy, rather than direct political engagement (Cardoso, 2003).

Participation modalities for non-state actors have been subject of institutional and procedural regulation by the UN. For example, *The Charter of the United Nations* (article 71) formally accepts NGOs as partners and allows the Economic and Social Council to make arrangements for national and international NGOs. The ECOSOC *Resolution of 1996/31* (articles 51 and 52) (UN ECOSOC, 1996) provide for NGOs to “address the preparatory committee and the conference in plenary meetings and subsidiary bodies [as well] as make written presentations during the preparatory process. Those written presentations shall not be issued as official documents except in accordance with UN rules of procedure.” The Report of the Secretary-General issued for consideration at the 53rd United Nations General Assembly in 1998 (UNGA, 1998) goes even further, regarding non-state actors not only as “disseminators of information, but as shapers of policy and indispensable bridges between the general public and intergovernmental processes.” The General Assembly’s *Millennium Declaration* (UNGA, 2000) broadens the interpretation of non-state actors, generally associated with NGOs, to include private sector, civil society, and national parliaments and elaborates on the notion of multistakeholder partnerships.

However, each UN conference sets its own rules of procedure, based on the main parameters adopted in the UN legislative framework. Rules can be restrictive or open-ended for non-state actor participation. In recent years, one can see incremental shifts in the participation modalities of non-state actors. Each forum introduced procedural precedents that were then institutionalised in conference proceedings. Yet, despite existing political and procedural limitations to non-state actor involvement, they often contribute substantially in terms of expertise and policy advice. Non-state actors, in particular NGOs and private sector actors, take part in the deliberations through panel discussions, round tables, hearings, and multistakeholder parallel events. In multistakeholder fora, the secretariat and presiding chairperson play essential roles in interpreting and applying the procedural rules in deliberations. Historically, the role of non-state actors has been consultative rather than negotiative as they have enjoyed observer’s status within the UN system without the right to vote.

One specific feature of the World Summit on Information Society deliberations, for instance, is the lack of unanimity among governments regarding the treatment of non-state actors. Some wish to elevate the status of non-state participants to that of negotiators, while others attempt to marginalise their observer’s role. During the July 2003 inter-sessional meeting, the presid-

ing chair of Working Group 2 opened the room to observers, with limited rights to deliberate in the negotiation groups. While the principal negotiators – governments – debated particular paragraphs, the chair made procedural interruptions to invite representatives from NGOs, the private sector, and civil society to consider their suggestions and propose amendments to the proposed text. In the words of Wolfgang Kleinwaechter, such “stop-and-go-negotiations” would not change the *de jure* character of inter-governmental negotiations, but could bring *de facto* innovative input and transparency to the process” (Kleinwaechter, 2004).

Table 1 summarises the risks and opportunities for non-state actors in assuming the role of equals to governments in the system of intergovernmental (diplomatic) negotiations.

	Pros	Cons
Negotiating Status	Governments often fail to address legitimate concerns of particular segments of society at the negotiating table. The business sector and civil society have a substantial stake in the management of modern international relations and should have equal say in addressing the complex issues of environmental protection, sustainable development, and information society governance alongside government negotiators	This could change the nature of diplomatic negotiation and undermine the status of nation states as the exclusive sovereign representative of their people.
Equitable Participation in the Decision Making Process, Right to Table Motions and Vote	This will lift the status of non-state actors to that of full-fledged negotiators and bring greater legitimacy to their participation in the conference process; they could have a greater say over international norms and regime setting.	Decision taking may become difficult and reaching consensus less attainable.

Table 1: Pros and Cons of Changing Negotiating Roles of Non-State Actors

Some of the UN specialised agencies and partnership initiatives whose organisational structures resemble multistakeholder umbrellas allow non-

state actors to contribute beyond their official observer's status. For example, the International Telecommunication Union organisational structure consists of sector members that enjoy equal rights alongside government delegates, participating in and contributing written input to conferences. The UN Programme on HIV/AIDS allows NGO representatives to act in the Programme Co-ordinating Body as full-fledged members rather than observers, together with delegates from the business community, donors, and recipient states. The tripartite structure of the International Labour Union puts governments, employers, and workers' representative on an equal footing as far as agenda setting and decision making processes are concerned. Non-state actors share equal decision making powers in the UN Information and Communication Technology Task Force, which creates mechanisms for collaborative multistakeholder co-operation in the field of high technology.

Credibility and legitimacy remain critical and contentious aspects for non-state actors. Unlike governments, they do not stand elections and the problem of representability is pending. They are accountable only to boards of directors, membership entities, and constituencies that sponsor their activities. Non-state actors having consultative status with ECOSOC are approved by the member states and submit reports of their activity to the UN (Niggli and Rothenbühler, 2003). However, non-state actors have failed to acquire permanent presence in the deliberations of the two bastions of power of the UN, the Security Council and the General Assembly, despite their efforts to modify operational procedures. They work with those bodies on an *ad hoc* basis through working groups. For instance, the NGO Working Group on the Security Council has evolved into an important stakeholder channel between NGOs and the UN diplomatic community on issues of human security.

An independent review conducted by the Consensus Building Institute of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Consensus Building Institute, 2002) has identified professional and organisational limitations and advantages to forging a more proactive relationship between state and non-state actors in intergovernmental diplomatic negotiation. In their summary, they claim that

governments never devise their negotiating positions in a vacuum. But which elements of "civil society" wield how much influence on policy making in intergovernmental fora – and what avenues are available to them to make themselves heard – currently varies... Some diplomats are deeply apprehensive about assigning an

enhanced role to actors that escape government restraint. They are concerned about possible repercussions on both the global stage and in their domestic settings, and they adhere to the conventional notion of governance based on state dominance. Others see the “independent sector” (civil society, private sector, academia and technical community) as the repository of skills, knowledge and resources that are essential to making real aspirations of a more prosperous and equitable world. Governments, as a matter of course, retain strong co-ordination and leadership functions. (p. 45)

Multistakeholder diplomacy provides ways for non-state actors to influence formation of multilateral regimes and take part in global policy making. Through emerging patterns of interaction, levels of co-ordination, and linkages, multistakeholder diplomacy opens the door for “mobilising skills of diplomacy in fashioning ever-shifting ‘coalitions of willing’ to tackle the problems that no one actor, governmental or non-governmental, has the capacity to manage alone” (Hocking, 2002, p. 5).

Non-state actors do not enjoy legal international status under international law. “Although they cannot conclude international treaties and agreements, they advance such agreements and therefore wield considerable influence in international affairs” (Burnett, 2005, p. 1). NGOs have contributed to the adoption of a number of essential international agreements:

- The Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer, 1987, approved with the help of NGO-based expertise;
- The Mine Ban Treaty (also referred to as Ottawa Convention), 1997, approved by governments thanks to a vigorous, NGO Internet-based international campaign to ban land mines;
- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, 1998, adopted with active involvement of the NGO-based Coalition for an International Criminal Court.

Multistakeholder Practices in Regional Intergovernmental Organisations

The input of non-state actors enhances, at least to a certain degree, the functioning of intergovernmental organisations. Non-state actors bring essential information, expertise, services, and support to governmental delegations.

Multistakeholder partnership schemes established by intergovernmental bodies allow for shared responsibility and accountability of major stakeholders (public, business, and civil society sectors) in co-ordinated implementation of educational, sustainable development, humanitarian assistance, and aid projects.

The European Union complements the traditional framework of relations with third parties for realisation of the Union's foreign policy and development aid objectives. The EU recognises the importance of multistakeholder involvement in the implementation of its development strategy plans. This requires active communication and liaison with non-state actors (EUROPA, 2003; European NGO Confederation, 2003). The European Commission has established policy guidelines for NGO participation in the implementation of EU development policy towards developing countries. Development, aid, or humanitarian projects demand complex organisational, operational, and financial efforts of relevant stakeholders. Establishing multistakeholder committees could facilitate the level of co-ordination between parties and help examine capacity building needs, and funding and procedural mechanisms that accompany the realisation of each initiative. EU delegations (outposts of EU common diplomacy abroad) seek the expertise of Northern and Southern NGOs, the business sector, and other stakeholders for successful planning and implementation of programs. EU co-operation programmes such as the EU Water Initiative (Institute for Environmental Security, 2005), the APS-EU Partnership with the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (Wikipedia, 2005), the EU ICT Initiative for the Middle East and Northern Africa (European Commission, 2005), and the ASEAN-EU University Network (Delegation of the EU Commission to Thailand, 2005) illustrate well how the EU operates through multistakeholder networks and partnerships.

The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat is another example of regional intergovernmental organisations. Established in 1971, the Forum has a mandate to co-operate with regional non-state actors (representing, among others, the interests of educators, trade unionists, disabled people, women, and environmentalists) and to involve them actively in setting a social development, trade and investment agenda for the region. In October 2004, the Australian diplomat G. Urwin, the Secretary General of the Forum, welcomed input from eleven NGO groups on the implementation of the Pacific Plan for regional co-operation and integration.

At the invitation of the Secretariat, non-state actors attend Forum constituencies events and high level regional meetings as observers. These ac-

tors participate in the inter-governmental deliberations of *ad hoc* working groups, taking part in the formulation of policy. In setting working priorities for the organisation, the Secretariat consults biennially with non-state actors prior to formal ministerial meetings. These meetings take the format of round table dialogues between the representatives of member states and all regional stakeholders. Among the stakeholders are also partners from other intergovernmental organisations. Focal group meetings are another proactive approach to working with intergovernmental partner organisations and non-state actors. The latter present background papers and table recommendations for inter-governmental consideration on technically complex matters (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2002).

Multistakeholder Practices within National Diplomatic Services

Nationally, multistakeholder practices include interaction between domestic stakeholders on issues of national importance. Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) are no longer the “gatekeepers” of national foreign policy shaping. They tend to take the role of co-ordinators in synchronising a broad spectrum of bureaucratic, institutional, legal, commercial, and public policy interests. These interests, articulated by domestic stakeholders, are taken into account in the formation of national foreign policy values and priorities. Non-state actors (industry associations, think-tanks, churches, trade unions, civil society pressure groups) often enter into a dialogue with government structures (parliament, MFA, defence and finance ministries) in promoting specific agendas and in influencing foreign policy behaviour.

The way governments of Eastern European nations have negotiated the accession treaties with the European Union may exemplify national multistakeholder practices. Eastern European nations have kept their domestic audiences closely and regularly informed regarding every stage of the process, as the outcomes affect the livelihoods of millions of people and determine the socio-economic development of generations ahead. National negotiating positions crystallised as a result of the intensive interaction between core negotiating teams (comprised mainly of diplomats) and domestic stakeholder representatives. Thus, governments were able to defend national interests in the negotiations only after carefully considering specific interests and needs of their domestic constituencies.

The citizenry of an increasing number of countries begins to exercise greater public control over the work of government agencies, including national diplomatic services. Foreign policy, previously exclusively realm of “professional diplomacy” is becoming more transparent and open to public scrutiny and accountability.

Ad hoc interactions are common, but one sees an obvious trend towards institutionalisation of domestic stakeholder relationships with the professional diplomatic guild. Usually, the foreign office keeps a special liaison section or department responsible for relationships with non-state actors in the realisation of national foreign policy agendas. NGOs assist national diplomatic machineries in the conduct of economic, public, cultural, humanitarian, and development assistance diplomacies. Several concrete examples illustrate this co-operation.

The Liaison Mission of the Office of Policy Planning Department of the US State Department has formed an inter-professional team of diplomats, academics, intelligent analysts, military officers, business consultants, and arms control experts to act as a source of independent policy examination and advice. The Mission utilises views of experts and practitioners from non-state entities on matters relevant to US foreign policy and ensures the involvement of the public in policy formulation (United States, 2005).

Likewise, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade successfully integrates a multistakeholder model in its diplomatic practice. The Canadian Foreign Office holds regular dialogues with the business community, state and territory governments, consumer-based NGOs, labour unions, community groups, and all others with stakes in trade related issues. Appropriate platforms such as National Trade Consultations and Trade Policy Advisory Councils enable this on-going discussion. NGOs are also part of the group advising the Foreign Minister on multilateral trade policies and bilateral trade agreements (Hay, 2000).

The Directorate General for Multilateral Economic and Financial Co-operation of the Italian MFA offers an interesting example of multilateral economic diplomacy conducted through multistakeholder partnerships with domestic and international stakeholders. The department plays an essential role in navigating Italian participation in international trade and financial negotiations (Italy, 2004).

New Zealand’s long-standing commitment to disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation is an important foreign policy goal. In an effort to engage the public in this goal, the Disarmament Division of the foreign ministry

co-operates with universities and arms control specialised NGOs. NGOs join diplomatic recruits in disarmament seminars. As part of the co-operation, universities invite government officials from the Division to appear as guest lecturers. NGO expertise is recognised as their representatives are periodically included in government delegations to international and regional disarmament talks (New Zealand, 2002).

The Public Diplomacy Strategy Board in the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, consisting of senior ministerial officials, media people, and external non-civil servants, relies on non-state partners in defining the conduct of public diplomacy. Shaping a favourable British image abroad is a collective endeavour of a multitude of domestic stakeholders. Civil society, academia, the business sector, diaspora communities, and ethnic minority groups, as well as others, are considered network centres of which professional diplomats make valuable use in outreach activities with foreign publics. The Partnership and Network Development Unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has been tasked to draw on their experience and working practices (Great Britain, 2005).

In similar fashion, the Department of Information of Thailand's MFA liaisons with national mass media outlets in interpreting significant cultural and public diplomacy initiatives (Thailand, 2005).

The list of examples would be incomplete were we to forget the consistent efforts by some foreign offices to employ the experience of non-state actors in humanitarian relief and development assistance programmes. The Danish MFA implements its bilateral development assistance programs through a network of non-official professional organisations based on multistakeholder partnership mechanisms (Denmark, 2005). As well, Japan's educational assistance to developing nations is executed by a NGO network specialised in educational services – financed by the Japanese MFA (Japan, 2003). A Finnish MFA-NGO Liaison Union has attracted NGOs with special expertise to implement development projects in poverty reduction (Finland, 2003).

Of course, some national diplomatic systems do not view multistakeholder MFA-NGO partnerships with much enthusiasm. Such is the case, in particular, with France's *Quay d'Orsay*, which treats civil society organisations as groups defending specific political parties or foreign interests. Despite that, the French NGO Liaison Mission briefs NGOs on French external policy objectives and aids their participation in intergovernmental diplomatic events (Doucin, 2002).

Conclusions

The traditional perception of diplomacy as exclusively run by states is irreversibly changing. Modern diplomacy has to adapt to new realities of highly interdependent and globalised international relations where non-official actors provide considerable input in intergovernmental negotiation and establishment of international norms and regimes. States preserve the ultimate prerogative of principal architects of the diplomatic process and decision making. However, numerous examples amply demonstrate the growing role of non-state actors as policy shapers, not mere disseminators of expertise and information. This is due to the employment by the diplomatic community of a multistakeholder model as a complementary instrument in the UN system and other intergovernmental organisations. Through analysis of the procedural and institutional arrangements in the functioning of international bodies, the author has tried to measure the extent to which diplomats accept non-official networks and entities as equal partners in the diplomatic negotiation process. On the domestic front, societies demand greater public accountability of governments in the process of national foreign policy making. The paper analyses this trend through the organisational units in MFAs responsible for relationships with domestic stakeholders. Domestic multistakeholder practices allow for better representation of an array of societal interests in the formulation of national foreign policy values and priorities.

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