

Diplomacy and Globalization

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Safety of global Communications – Principal Mission of Modern Diplomacy

The perception of diplomacy as a profession – traditionally conducted on behalf of a sovereign state in contacts with other such governments and their diplomats - and the perception of public diplomacy as a concept of communication among states and governments has a long history. At times, they are deemed to be mutually exclusive or public diplomacy to be even harmful to the profession and art of confidentially conducted diplomacy. Is that perception still valid? Or do we have to revise it, and if so, in what sense?

Diplomacy as a concept to help solving international problems by way of meaningful and professionally conducted negotiations is certainly still valid – if not even more valid than in the past. Such diplomacy constitutes an extremely prestigious mission for the sake of the international community, not simply for governments, but for the public in general affected in so many ways by the conduct of international affairs.

Global structures are based on functioning international communications and these communications – including all modes of trade and traffic - are based on internationally worked out treaties and agreements that have to be fair to every one, not simply to the most powerful ones among equals. This international safety net has to be adjusted as time passes by, as changes emerge in real life and new technologies come into the picture.

It is safe to say that diplomacy has assumed a new meaning and dimension under the conditions of a shrinking world and in the age of multiple communications available to governments, enterprise, science, media and last but not least to the human being and the civil society or civic society of which the citizens are an integral part, a notion you cannot find in any encyclopaedia of the last century.

The Role of *Public Diplomacy*

Related to international affairs we note the existence of a great number of internationally active *non-governmental organizations* in support of civic causes of many a kinds mostly related to social and humanitarian initiatives of civil societies in democratically organized states, for instance on issues of human rights i.e. torture in state prison or camps of detention or in defence of neglected or deprived people worldwide, such as Roma and Sindi in various parts of Europe or child labour in Asia and Africa. Authoritarian regimes have a liking for the establishment of *non-governmental organisations of their choice* for the pursuit of a virtual picture of the independent civil society “under their control” – a contradiction in itself.

Today we do in fact enlarge the notion of *classical diplomacy* by the notion of *public diplomacy*, a term used initially by US President Woodrow Wilson during World War I to reject secret diplomacy for dealing with the issue of peace making near the end of the Great War and insisting on publicly conducted negotiations, a notion of importance for the conduct of international affairs in the United States where the acting President needs public support for his foreign policy whereas classical powers in Europe at the time conducted these executive affairs, meaning to say inter-governmental negotiations rather behind closed doors although the talks affected the interests not only of the states involved but also the citizens of all countries concerned indeed very much. The talks had to deal with the crucial issue of war and peace in Europe and beyond. The Versailles Peace Treaty of 1919 certainly was not the product of *public diplomacy* in spite of all the efforts of Woodrow Wilson, but the product of secret negotiations among the victorious countries. They handed the text of the peace treaty to the opponent for signature, and nothing but the signature. It was not even a negotiation.

Today the notion of *public diplomacy* stands primarily for the notion of an active involvement of civil or civic society in the public debate of international issues of all kinds - in the media, notably the electronic media, in parliament on issues of the day or on fundamental strategic issues of war and peace and on issues of a global nature notably on environment, sustainable development in order to overcome poverty and on mass migration.

The Role of Civil Society in *Public Diplomacy* in the past and at present

We should however not perceive of such developments called *Public Diplomacy* as being a novelty altogether on the international stage of our times.

There have been important and impressive initiatives of a humanitarian and social if not political nature during the 19th century in the area of *Public Diplomacy* for the better of mankind, among others

- the *International Red Cross* Movement in support of care for the wounded soldiers on the battle fields and the care for prisoners of war – a movement of a civic nature that lead to the conclusion of several important international treaties on the law of the war and the conclusion of so called Geneva Conventions of the Red Cross Organisations, treaties of utmost importance for the human being in war notwithstanding the fact that these treaties and conventions were violated on innumerable occasions. But we note as well the beneficial activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross and of many national Red Cross organizations in many situations of war and incidents of use of military force.

These activities would not have been possible without the initiatives taken by outstanding personalities on their own grounds, in this case the Swiss Philanthropist Henri Dunant, who suggested - in the light of experience gained on the battlefield of Solferino (1859) - the establishment of the International Red Cross.

- Important forerunners of civic societies activities on the national and the international stage we recognize in the course of the 19th century also with the *campaign against slavery* which lead to international agreements and of course national legislature to inhibit slavery for ever. Time and again such slavery has re-emerged on the stage and civil society is called for to raise these issues by way of *Public Diplomacy*.
- It was from civil society in the 19th century that the initiatives for social movements were seeking to bring about international solidarity in order to build up international pressure for social reforms – revolutionary or reformist ones (*Socialist International*) – with all the consequence for the world.
- It was civil society that advanced and succeeded in this endeavour to bring about the renaissance of the Greek Olympic Games at the end of the 19th century. Again it was the initiative of an individual – Pierre de Coubertin - who eventually brought about the conference in 1894 at the Sorbonne in Paris, which lead to the initiation of the

Modern Olympic Games, a movement of world wide significance – in particular under modern global framework conditions and for the solidarity within the family of all nations

Officially *Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs)* are an integral part of the United Nations structures. They can be registered officially as observers with several UN bodies such as the Human Rights Commission or the Specialized UN Organizations (FAO, WHO, UNESCO, etc.). That means they receive the documentation on the issues under consideration and are allowed to submit recommendations or deliver statements. There are hundreds if not thousands of NGOs registered with UN bodies.

Of world wide renown are a number of globally operating NGOs such as *Amnesty International*, *Human Rights Watch*, *Medical Doctors without frontiers*, *Reporters without frontiers*, *Transparency International* (fighting corruption). They are truly products of civil society and operate under the framework conditions of *Public Diplomacy*.

In the end you may raise the question: what on earth is left to *Classical Diplomacy* in this world of global NGO networks on human rights issues, on environment and sustainable development, on corruption and poverty? Plenty you can say – for good reasons!

You could say, and indeed, many people share this opinion, that diplomatic missions of our times are reduced to the handling of official relations with the government of the host country, for instance regarding consultations and if needed negotiations on pending international issues such as non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or on the privileges to be granted mutually to state supported cultural or commercial institutes. Of course, diplomatic missions, and particular consular departments and consulates are deeply involved in the issuance or rejection of visas, an issue of ongoing concerns for civil society all over the world.

The Ambassador, his family as well as staff members and their family enjoy diplomatic immunity and the premises of Embassies and of the Ambassador's residence cannot be entered by the police or any other law enforcing agency of the host country without the permission of the Ambassador or his Deputy. Therefore, the premises of an Embassy offer also office space to representatives of a great number of governmental institutions, including from secret intelligence agencies, a fact that could turn out to be embarrassing for the Embassy under certain conditions.

Also of course, Embassies are supposed to report on significant domestic developments such as elections, formation of government or their dismissal and on the positions of the host government regarding current bilateral, multilateral and global issues. In their public utterances Embassies and notably the Ambassador are supposed to present and explain their government's views – such as on international issues e.g. the Iraq War or the crisis in the Near East.

In a way, they are also attentive observers of the academic and public political debate on issues of national and international concern, but usually abstain from taking part actively in these debates. However, they are in a position to invite from their own country intellectuals, analysts, academicians and - up to a degree - politicians of various political orientations for topical conferences and workshops. The Chief of Mission has at hand a number of options to attract public interest of his host country in his own country, and this aspect is by no means the least among the Ambassador's specific tasks, and a task of his staff members. Should he speak on TV programs? Yes – provided he is fluent in the language of the country in question, and provided he is talented enough to speak in a convincing manner. Such public appearances are not necessarily something the diplomat in question had been exposed to during earlier stages of his career, but this kind of activity gains in significance as time passes by, and it should be done masterly - in the interest of his country and the relations with the host country. Related thereto is the need for the diplomatic mission to establish country wide networks for the political discourse, for the presentation of his own country's specifics to interested audiences, for instance friendship societies, colleges or to editing staffs of newspapers, magazines, at universities and research institutes. He has to seek the support from talented members of his staff and of course from visitors enjoying already a prestige in the country or being known to a number of people or institutes.

The Significance of the *Ambassador's Report* and of his Personal Network in the Host Country

Decades ago, the drafting of a report to the home government required great skills and experience. It took quite some time and the handwritten report was received at home with utmost interest and attention. In the absence of internationally functioning newspaper distribution and telegraphic transmissions the reporting from the Ambassador to his

government, may be to the Emperor in person constituted the major source of information and orientation about the views and intentions of the host government, the mood in the country and the ruling classes and about the state of finances and economics. The report drafted by the ambassador after for instance an audience with the ruling Czar in St. Petersburg would be read by the Kaiser and the Foreign Minister or the Prime Minister who also served as the Foreign Minister as was the case in Germany. The report would have immediate impact on the decision making process as well as on the shaping of the opinion at the Imperial Court in Berlin on Russia in this case. The Ambassador's principal task *sur place* was the confidential exchange with key figures at the Russian Court and Government for that matter. The small circle of persons that needed to be included into the Ambassador's confidential personal network came from the host country's political elite. It was a limited number of trusted persons.

At the time, it took some time to deliver the handwritten messages from St. Petersburg to Berlin or for that matter from Paris and London to the capital city. Sometimes special messengers were to be dispatched.

Also today, the Ambassador's report on a pending important issue will have its impact – but it is available instantaneously, and usually not only available for the eyes of the Chancellor or of the Foreign Minister. It does not constitute the only source of information, orientation and assessment of the situation in question. A larger group of persons well informed about the Ambassador's host country and serving in particular functions within government and parliament formulate their own opinion on the issue at stake. Thus, the Ambassador's report is but one input in the decision making process or for the opinion shaping process.

At all times the diplomatic intercourse between governments was paralleled by the reports and assessments from secret intelligence channels – and in particular cases such as in Prussia - by independent and separate reporting of the Military Attaché to the Imperial Court, a source of grievance and concern at all times during Otto von Bismarck's active years in international diplomacy. Today the Military Attaché's reports have to be shown to the Ambassador before they are dispatched, and he may decide to comment on them.

In the past as well as today - however today at a much larger degree – political interest groups within and outside government and parliament and, of course the media, the forth state

institution, independent from the others - as people say - take positions of their own on pending issues – on their own or offer the media as a platform for the public presentation of views by publicly known figures and professionals from various fields.

Here again we register modern forms of “public diplomacy”. In general this may be good, but at times, if demagogues are at work, such “public diplomacy” can have devastating effects. There is no lack of evidence for this observation. In such cases, civil society plays an important, an indispensable role as a countervailing force of in depth knowledge, reason, reasonability, soberness and rich experience. That is the great hour for courage from within civil society and may be public diplomacy at its best.

Reflections on Diplomatic Relation in concrete terms - a case study: India and Germany

Diplomatic Intercourse Germany–India and Public Diplomacy in our Times

Under the framework conditions of national and regional economies interlinked on a global scale, expanding links and interaction of cultural identities and ongoing debates on shared and not shared values of civilizations, the tasks of diplomatic missions such as Embassies in Germany and India have entered a new age. Maybe, this has not been registered by everyone engaged in this diplomatic domain. In the so called information age embassies cannot remain black spots but have to be responsive to the requirements of open societies. One way or the other they take part in the ongoing public debate on international issues of the host country – let it be international crisis management, international terrorism, humanitarian assistance in cases of natural catastrophes or the “war of civilizations”. Embassies - in a way involved daily in the official diplomatic intercourse with the Foreign Office of the host country - have to have a face of their own in the public - on television debates, in conferences organized by the scientific and academic world and in the print media. They have to have an interest to enlarge their presence in the host country on a wide spectrum of issues of common interest as generated in their home country and within the host country. At home they should not only be listened to by official structures such as the foreign office and on official occasions in parliamentary committees, but also by the academic community.

Together with representatives of other German official and semi-official institutions in the host country such as bilateral Chambers of Commerce, Cultural Institutes, Germany based schools, branches of German Academic and Scientific institutions in Germany and of course with the inclusion of journalists accredited to the host country, they should review the effectiveness of these institutions and the nature of the demands that should be met. For instance, they might come to the conclusion that – although English is the common language of communication – there is a growing demand in India for German language classes all over the place. Public finance can no longer be secured to spread the network of the classical German Cultural Centres in India (Max Mueller Bhawans). So there is the need to activate the interest of German and of Indian non state based Foundations, but also the need to develop a concept for small centres for qualified language training – to be paid for by the student - and for access to the plentiful internet based information programs on Germany and for that matter also on the European civilization in all its dimension. The Indian public is well versed in the use of internet-based networks. The Indo-German Chamber of Commerce has already expanded its impressive network of main branches (Mumbai, New Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata and Bangalore) by way of small representative offices in dozens of Indian cities.

In a word: Embassies should not be petrified symbols of the past and points of contact for the official diplomatic intercourse with the official India but also centres of public discourse with the host country at large. The issue of visa supply constitutes a hot potato in the relations of India with all European countries. I well thought through policy and application is needed. Usually visa matters are relegated to lower ranks of the Embassy staffs. That should be a practice of the past!

The German Asia Society's quarterly magazine "Asien" underwent an intellectual face lifting and departed from the established practice of offering its pages almost exclusively to essays presented by young scholars. In July 2006 – addressing the issue of "Asia in the 21st century" the magazine published among others also the analyses of acting German Ambassadors in key Asian countries. One day, the editors may discover that high ranking diplomatic officers who specialized after retirement in some of their former professional occupations could offer relevant and interesting views digesting experience gained over decades with insight gathered by way of continued area studies. Other countries have discovered – to their advantage - such gems already much earlier.

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