

Diplomacy

Articles Series: In The Heart Of The Matter

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Introduction

I have always thought highly of diplomats. I think their mission in the world is a noble one. Diplomacy is by definition an activity connected to governments, but using a bit of creative thinking we can extrapolate and infer about diplomatic people personality's traits and use them in other areas and fields. Diplomacy's origins date back to Ancient Greece, known to be the birthplace of Democracy. Athens is known for its roots in philosophy, thought schools and humanity matters since antiquity. The first democracy of the world is known to have been implemented in Athens around three centuries before the birth of Christ. It is only logical that with such rich cultural past, Europe is known in the world for being a continent with genuine political occupations and tradition. Diplomacy's objective is to maintain peace. Or, in case, this is not viable, to ensure that there is no aggravation of conflicts or disagreements. Ideologically, a diplomat is a negotiator. A diplomat's objective is defined as to negotiate with other nations ensuring that both his / her nation's interests are respected but also to find a common ground and accommodate the other nation's interests. Therefore, and if we consider diplomacy's definition, we could expect diplomats to be peace makers. Peace makers are by nature understanding people. It cannot be any other way. A peace maker is and should be someone that tries to maintain peace and strives for peace in every way possible. To do that, a peace maker diplomat usually dominates the art of negotiation that allows them to reach agreements between both sides.

Types of Diplomacy

There're different types of diplomacy, I will define each one here, and further continue to my own discussion about each one.

a. Pacification

Pacification is a type of diplomacy that has as objective the agreement for peace or the non-aggravation of the existent conflicts between nations. In this type of diplomacy, diplomats are expected to own a peace-making personality and to negotiate agreements between both nations or to devalue disagreements in a way that ends the disagreement between both sides. The purpose of this type of diplomacy is achieving peace, but if that is not possible then at least diminishing the distance between both nations or decrease the probability of disagreements.

b. Economic diplomacy

Economic diplomacy is a type of diplomacy where diplomats seek to arrange economic agreements between different countries, nations. They seek to protect both sides interests ensuring that they negotiate in the best way possible the terms of the negotiations.

c. Public diplomacy

Public diplomacy is a type of diplomacy that has as major objective the exchange of a cultural relationship and cultural values between both sides and nations. This can happen in many ways: education, news, cultural events. This creates cultural, economic and social bonds between both nations and is a way of preserving peace and understanding through generations. When people feel connected or understood by others, war is very unlikely to strike.

d. Digital diplomacy

With the expansion of the internet and the high usage of smart phones and social networks, diplomacy has developed with it as well. Digital diplomacy is a type of diplomacy carried on by politicians who choose to use it, but also by newspapers, blogs, articles, authors, actors, or any other professionals with a similar interest. Many negotiations, explanations and agreements can be reached with the help of social media. Diplomats, as well as Head of States, can use social media, and digital mediums to both conduct diplomacy with other politicians but also to let their public know about their progress and projects. Some politicians use social media passionately, sharing their doings with people they represent and with other representatives that follow their work, ideas, performances, achievements, agreements, disagreements, bumps on their road. It is a legit way to conduct diplomacy that matches today's lifestyle. People want to know. People want to know and fast about what's happening. People want to know at the time it happens. Digital diplomacy can be very beneficial if used right. It is expected that it will continue to be of great importance in the upcoming years, with internet access spread around the world and people's usage of smart phones and apps.

Digital diplomacy is also carried on by newspapers and digital magazines that are responsible for sharing the news about what's happening at any time.

Having full awareness that there's different types of diplomacy, one can expect different results from them. However, there's threats to ideological diplomacy and to diplomacy's expectations. It is convenient to point these out so that we can all better understand that if not done right diplomacy can obtain a worldwide negative connotation and reputation that will consequently

harm relationships between states, the profession itself and jeopardize important agreements that could lead and maintain peace in the long term.

Threats to Diplomacy

Even though diplomacy's intention is a good one, there's many threats to it. These represent, not only a bad reputation for diplomacy itself, but also the jeopardy of a lot of results that would be a consequence of diplomacy itself. I will discuss some of the threats I see below.

Pacification

Pacification is diplomacy in its best shape. Negotiation and knowledge about other cultures is crucial for its proper functioning. Some of its threats may be:

The override of a culture over the other

When dealing with nations and people of a different cultural background, it is important to respect and accept that same cultural background. It is a threat to the goodwill of diplomacy if some diplomats try to override the other side's culture and impose their own culture, manners or ways of doing things. In Southern Europe it is ok to arrive 15 min after the scheduled time for a meeting, while in northern Europe that is not acceptable. Failure in the knowingness of these subtle cultural differences are many times responsible for annoyances and at times repressed thoughts and misunderstandings. These are important aspects that can create a great connection between both parts or a reckless bond destined to fail. Diplomats should be sensitive to cultural differences and should respect them. A threat to diplomacy would be when one side of the equation, so to speak, judges, misunderstands and criticizes the other side's culture, cultural

behaviors and preferences. Overriding someone's culture is a dangerous route. People resent it through generations. A culture is something people identify with, independently of race or ethnicity, and it is likely that people tend to take personally any joke or critique to it. Even if both sides have good intention in the meeting, if one side fails to respect the other side's culture and goals, it may lead to feelings of disrespect and in severe cases to hostility. Pacifists should be particularly aware of these subtle cultural differences, because in the case of a disagreement between two nations, cultural disrespect or indifference to another's opinion or views will aggravate the disagreement and perhaps even escalate it. When diplomats are given the task of pacifying two nations in ideological conflicts and when there's a possibility for a war, they should be very careful not to provoke the other side in anything. People are emotional beings, even though we enjoy denying it. We feel in our bodies and minds disrespect and we know these emotions may lead to accumulated anger, if not dealt with properly, and at times hate.

When two nations are in an imminent war situation, it is convenient to remember that a profound disagreement is in place. To fix that disagreement one would have to step back in time and place and infer to how that disagreement has started and what is about. Definitions or lack of them are many times responsible for disagreements. Also, and at times, not addressing disagreements on time creates resentments that will perpetuate the adversity and consequent adversity to solve them.

Not accommodating both sides interests

Another threat to pacification is the danger of not accommodating both sides interests. A diplomat, by definition, is meant to defend both sides. If one is to respect both sides interests one could reach a desirable agreement. When two nations or countries are in the mist of an almost war-like scenario, emotions and repressed emotions of both sides are exalted and need to be handled with care. Failing to address both sides interests will have one of them feeling neglected or taken advantage of. The feeling of being taken advantage of is one of the most negative feelings in human's psyche. It is responsible by many internalized feelings of inadequacy and being left out and the worst of them of being used by the other side. Not many people know how to deal with this emotion. Most people repress it and ignore it, and many times act on it. Anger and sadness are some of the emotions that can descend from this feeling, and when not healed it may turn into hate.

Hate is an emotional state we are not in society taught to deal with, much less to heal. In society hate is far more accepted than kindness. It is often that a kind person gets bullied by others exactly for being kind. Many people think being kind is not normal, and feel a person who exhibits kindness makes them look bad, by comparison, to others. On another hand a hateful person is many times seen as having a strong personality, being very determined and a go getter. Diplomats could be the ones that can dismantle this false belief and help representatives understand that being peaceful and kind is not a sign of weakness. However, it is convenient to see and know that many times, disagreements come from past, which means many grudges people are holding on to have started in the past and triggering them can escalate the negative feelings further more.

Peace may well descend from considering both sides interests in a possible negotiation and thrive and strive for them.

Using a diplomacy's cap to perform other activities

I've read in several newspapers that some people exercising the profession of diplomat embark in espionage and illegal activities. I find this to be harmful to the good name of the true diplomats. Diplomats are very important in the world. They hold a noble task, and those who are meant to carry it on should respect that same task.

It is important to motivate and inspire people who want to become diplomats to stick to their functions and not use diplomacy as a cap for other underlying activities that can betray feelings of good faith in those who are being spied on. It is a serious threat to good diplomacy and to what it means.

Economic diplomacy

A threat to economic diplomacy is the economical overriding of economic giants over other states and / or countries that depend on them. This has been a trend in the twentieth century and belongs to a knowledge about finances that no longer applies to reality. Times have changed. Nowadays, and with so many possibilities the internet brings, it is obsolete to think of economy like before. Economy giants will continue to be economy giants regardless of subjugating smaller economies. Their reach is far greater already, they probably have commerce and business going on in many smaller economies already, so it is counter progress to inhibit the smaller economies from evolving and developing. If a smaller economy thrives and succeeds that will mean success

to the greater economy as well, since the smaller economy will continue and want to continue to do business with whatever economical giant they do business with. Their success does not represent more competition to the economical giant but probably more support. Seldom a small economy represent competition to a large economy as many times they look up to that large economy and try to learn from it. Some economy giants tend to think that overriding smaller economies is a big win but in the long run it is proven that that's not the way to go about it. It is important that economy diplomats hold the best of interests for both economy giants and small economies in their negotiations.

Public diplomacy

The biggest threat to public diplomacy is cultural genocide. Expanding, promoting, sharing and encouraging the knowledge about another culture in a specific region, state or country should not override the existing culture or making it seem less or lower. In anthropological terms, every culture is precious and for the diversity of the world, different cultures are a way of reminding us that people see things differently and they are all in their right to do it.

Cultural genocide represents a loss for humanity. Diversity is a good thing to all, it stimulates our brains and creativity, it brings us a somewhat adventurous feeling about life, it is good for our personalities to know about different cultures, to get the knowledge that our own way is not the only way. Public diplomats could be the ones that ensure that all cultures in the equation are respected. Bullying accompanied with superiority behaviors and attitudes are to be avoided. Disrespect toward other people's traditions and habits may represent an economical loss, as some international investors may cease investing in places that are being bullied or made fun of.

Public diplomacy holds a high standard of cooperation among both sides, states or nations. Because diplomats represent their own nation, respect and understanding should start with them. When diplomats omit this responsibility and enforce cultural overriding they are threatening their very mission in this world.

Digital diplomacy

Digital diplomacy is beneficial if used right. Some diplomats use digital diplomacy very wisely and can in fact diminish misunderstandings and disagreements through communication.

However digital diplomacy can be used negatively by people who do not manage as well verbal communication. Because social media uses words more than other mediums, verbal communication is the way digital diplomats get to express their thoughts, accomplishments, goals and ways to go about them. However, written verbal communication interpretation is very susceptible to the interpretation of those reading it, which means that wisdom in how to say what we want to say and when to say it is very important to ensure that it is well received and well understood instead of creating or instigating misunderstandings. The issue is that written verbal communication on social media is very likely to be interpreted in several different ways depending at times on the mood of those receiving it, therefore it is very imperative that it is used wisely and in a way that contributes for understanding instead of aggravating conflicts or inflicting emotional unrest on the other side. So, it may be difficult to diplomats or ministers and presidents that are somewhat introverted or do not know how to express themselves efficiently on a social media medium. Those who are good at writing will probably benefit more of this type

of diplomacy than those who are not so good with the written word. Digital diplomats can take this into their awareness and help both sides minimizing whatever may create misunderstanding.

Written communication is very susceptible to people's own upbringing and conditioning. Written words are not perceived equally by everybody and depend on one's fears and hopes. We perceive as positive the words that bring us hope somehow very differently than we perceive words that speaks to our fears. The words may be harmless, but we are perceiving them from our own emotions and that's why the same written message generates different emotions, feelings, thoughts and consequently reactions on different people. Diplomats must be aware of this and pay close attention to written posts and the words used so that they can create peace and maintain it instead of turmoil.

Applications in real life

I have chosen to write about this subject not only because I admire its definition, but because I think it has great applications in our daily life. It is true I don't see a globalized effort many times in the world to extent diplomacy the most possible, and it is true we can all understand why. It is not easy to choose peace all the time. Within ourselves. It is not easy to always be diplomatic and exercise diplomacy to the benefit of all. Most times than not, diplomacy is hard because we feel, we emote and other people many times make us feel negative emotions of being wrong, wronged or less than them. Beliefs are very powerful in human's minds. Us, humans, go to the end of the world because of beliefs. We fail to realize at times that beliefs are beliefs, thoughts that exist in our minds and that we passionately believe to be true, but they should not be more important than life. Than another person's life. We put beliefs in front of everything even people

and life itself. So, it is very understandable that as we have invested so much emotion and thought into our beliefs that when someone tells us they are not the only way possible, we feel threatened in the way that our beliefs are being exposed as not true. Do you know how strong is the emotion of being told you have believed in something that is not true? It is painful. So painful many people react in a violent manner to it. They deny it. They fight it. They get angry. All of these happen cause we are not trained or educated to process our own emotions. If you, dear reader, can understand this, you will get to understand that leaders of a nation act many times the same way. Being peaceful is very difficult. I admire Mr. Kofi Annan because he was so peaceful, he was the embodiment of peace and diplomacy. I know for myself it is very difficult at times to remain peaceful. The first reaction is to fight back, yell back, throw a temper tantrum. It is much easier to act this way at times than to listen to others and what they are saying and try to understand them. However, when we do, we feel so good. When we understand others, we feel so good. I recommend it.

Even if we are not official diplomats we can bring good lessons from courageous and prestigious diplomats and apply them in life. Here are some examples.

Dialogue

Good dialogues can lead to further understanding and peace among individuals. Whether you run a business, you are in school, or at your work place, a good dialogue can solve misunderstandings and create long lasting bonds. However we must respect the other person's choice and if they are not willing to have a dialogue we must respect their decision and not force it. If they accept then there is an opened door to understanding, we must not close it with our

words or attitudes. In a true dialogue both sides are willing to listen. We must speak but also listen, really listen to the other person and what they are trying to say. If we pay attention to what the other person is saying, we get to understand what they truly want to tell us. Then we know how best improve our bonds and connection and reach peace.

Avoiding provoking

Many times, we provoke others not knowing that we are even doing it. The words we say, how we say them and the way we write them can make others feel inappropriate or less positive feelings. When we know about the so-called weak points or weaknesses of others, if peace is what we are striving for, then avoiding provoking them or poking them in their emotional fragile points. That's what enemies do or people who do not want goodness for us, and if peace and understanding is what we are striving for then it would be beneficial to not provoke them at all. It is true at times we may hurt other people's feelings unknowingly but never do it on purpose.

Be Honest

Being honest with the other person when a disagreement is between you two is crucial to a better understanding. The truth is when we are trying to hide our feelings or thoughts about something usually the other person knows and feels it, and there's a resistance to trust the other person because of it. It's a good option to express your feelings and emotions from a frank perspective and try to make the other person understand them.

If the other side feels they can trust you, the road to better times is available to walk on.

Act right

Acting right is very difficult, I admire dearly those who consistently act right. It is a feeling. A deep knowingness. Something deep. I cannot enumerate a set of rules or a list of items to follow through to act right. As far as I know it is an expertise each one of us can develop and evolve upon. In spite of being difficult to explain, and not quantifiable, we can infer that we know when we are acting right. We get this sense that we are acting right. I think that's perhaps how we do it. By being ourselves and being sincere with ourselves and bring that to others.

Conclusion

I believe diplomacy is very beautiful. I think peace is the result of good diplomacy and perhaps any conflict or war is the result of a failure in diplomacy or perhaps lack of communication. Of course, people may start conflicts for other reasons rather than disagreement such as unfairness, unloyalty, betrayal, injustice,... but these escalate to disagreement and wherever there is a disagreement there is also room for a future agreement. It simply depends on how invested we are in reaching it. I truly feel and believe that when we have the greatest noble intent of understanding others, there is a way to truly understand them.

I also believe and choose to believe that is the main purpose of diplomacy. I want to believe it is. My idol, Mr. Kofi Annan was a peaceful man, when I watch his interviews I see he embodied the peace maker personality perfectly. He was very careful about the words he would say and very keen to understand other people and what they were trying to say. I remember Mr. Kofi Annan as being one of a kind, someone who truly thrived for peace. He will always be my idol.

I will be happy to discuss with you many ideas, I just ask to be respected in copyright matters please. vanessaace@protonmail.com

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