

HISTORY AND THE EVOLUTION OF DIPLOMACY

Ahmedov Azimjon

Teacher of andijan state institute of foreign languages

Xolmirzayeva Omina

Student of andijan state institute of foreign languages

Annotation: In this article, the content of the history and the evolution of diplomacy put forward in the game, such as humanity, missions and other detailed information is given.

Key words: human society, sanction, history, origin, evolution

Introduction

Diplomacy as practiced by foreign services and foreign ministries has seemed in recent years to be in decline. Governments in the post-collectivist age have wielded few economizing axes more deeply than in respect of the management of their overseas representation. The urge to save increasingly hard won tax revenue was backed up by the sense that foreign services needed modernizing – which tended also to mean minimizing. This notion had been present before the real force of the anti-collectivist gale had developed.

History of diplomacy

The earliest diplomats were a response to a felt need for mechanism to convey messages between societies safely and reliably. It is instructive to note that right from the beginning, diplomacy, even in its crudest forms, evolved in response to political needs reciprocally felt. It has continued and is continuing thus until today and we shall shortly look at some outstanding and complex examples of the process in action. Once diplomacy actually existed and was conceded to be irreplaceably useful, a reverse factor also became possible. The nature and functioning of the diplomatic machine at any particular historical moment could of itself shape the way in which principals – whoever they might be – conducted their exchanges. Thus it has occasionally occurred that functions which had developed within diplomacy came to create a particular international activity simply because they existed. In the period just before 1914, when most foreign services were not equipped to handle commercial matters, the British Board of Trade – the then Ministry of Commerce – asked the Foreign Office to provide information about arms manufacture in Imperial Russia. The Ambassador, Sir George Buchanan, replied to this enquiry that he had not been sent as His Majesty's Ambassador to the Russian Court to do arithmetical computations for the Board of Trade.

The view in late medieval Europe that the first diplomats were angels, or messengers from heaven to earth, is perhaps fanciful, but some elements of diplomacy predate recorded history. Early societies had some attributes of states, and the first international law arose from intertribal relations. Tribes negotiated marriages and regulations on trade and hunting. Messengers and envoys were accredited, sacred, and inviolable; they usually carried some emblem, such as a message stick, and were received with elaborate ceremonies. Women often were used as envoys because of their perceived mysterious sanctity and their use of “sexual wiles”; it is believed that women regularly were entrusted with the vitally important task of negotiating peace in primitive cultures. Information regarding the diplomacy of early peoples is based on sparse evidence. There are traces of Egyptian diplomacy dating to the 14th century BCE, but none has been found in western Africa before the 9th century CE. The inscriptions on the walls of abandoned Mayan cities indicate that exchanges of envoys were frequent, though almost nothing is known of the substance or style of Mayan and other pre-Columbian Central American diplomacy. In South America the dispatch of envoys by the expanding Inca empire appears to have been a prelude to conquest rather than an exercise in bargaining between sovereigns. The greatest knowledge of early diplomacy comes from the Middle East, the Mediterranean, China, and India. Records of treaties between Mesopotamian city-states date from about 2850 BCE. Thereafter, Akkadian (Babylonian) became the first diplomatic language, serving as the international tongue of the Middle East until it was replaced by Aramaic. A diplomatic correspondence from the 14th century BCE existed between the Egyptian court and a Hittite king on cuneiform tablets in Akkadian—the language of neither. The oldest treaties of which full texts survive, from about 1280 BCE, were between Ramses II of Egypt and Hittite leaders. There is significant evidence of Assyrian diplomacy in the 7th century and, chiefly in the Bible, of the relations of Jewish tribes with each other and other peoples. When the Western Empire disintegrated in the 5th century CE, most of its diplomatic traditions disappeared. However, even as monarchs negotiated directly with nearby rulers or at a distance through envoys from the 5th through the 9th century, the papacy continued to use *legati*. Both forms of diplomacy intensified in the next three centuries. Moreover, the eastern half of the Roman Empire continued for nearly 1,000 years as the Byzantine Empire. Its court at Constantinople, to which the papacy sent envoys from the mid-5th century, had a department of foreign affairs and a bureau to deal with foreign envoys. Aiming to awe and intimidate foreign envoys, Byzantium’s rulers marked the arrival of diplomats with spectacular ceremonies calculated to suggest greater power than the empire actually possessed.

Evolution of diplomacy

The growth of very complete – perhaps too complete – systems for the giving and checking of full powers was a reflection of the increasing significance of diplomatic activity and the greater risk of serious harm flowing from embassies being disavowed. The habit of issuing minute instructions, and the consequential almost hysterical desire on the part of others to know what they contained in advance of negotiations, was evoked both by the emergence of greater central control of diplomatic activity and by the greater potential damage a careless or over confident ambassador could cause. In addition, both of these again reflected a rising level of diplomatic traffic.

The evolution of foreign ministries followed from the desire of rulers and their ministers to maintain a continuous flow of diplomatic business in which cross relationships between diplomatic partners, between internal sources of political influence and between differing issues could be carefully followed and controlled. To do this successfully and to have instantly available knowledge of current obligations and commitments required an institutional memory obtainable only through a properly managed single foreign ministry archive. These kinds of development occasionally engendered reluctance from contemporary traditionalists. None, however, encountered the fierce opposition and disapproval from the principals themselves that accompanied the emergence of the resident ambassador. There could be no doubt that this was an inescapable response to particular circumstances otherwise, it could not have triumphed over the objections of the proprietors of the system itself. The origin of the problem lay in a change of emphasis in the purpose of diplomacy. Internal circumstances in northern Italy in the renaissance period had produced a highly competitive group of small city states, each directly bordering others, none able to triumph over the others either directly or in alliance groups. The most significant – Venice – was not concerned with territorial power so much as trading expansion. External circumstances for the time being provided no threat of intervention. The attempt to gain a sudden and final advantage by means of a great diplomatic coup became an obsessive preoccupation. It might be achieved by constructing the so far elusive winning combination of states; but it might also be achieved by altering the balance of power by subverting the regimes of neighboring states. Neither Popes nor secular rulers would necessarily refuse to stoop even to poison in this regard, but more usually sought to operate by creating or supporting opposition groups in the hope of due reward when they had clawed their way to power. It was not a pretty picture nor did its apologists suggest otherwise

Conclusion

History suggests that this transition always happens in the end, but offers no guidance as to how it will be done on this occasion or how long it will take or if violence will be involved in the process, which it generally has been. It is only possible to

conclude that, in the contemporary world, this is certainly the most significant space to watch

References

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