

DIPLOMACY

Introduction

In a broad sense, diplomacy is the entire process through which states conduct their foreign relations. It is the means for allies to cooperate and for adversaries to resolve conflicts without force. States communicate, bargain, influence one another, and adjust their differences through diplomacy. It is interesting to note that serious confrontations between the great powers since 1815 have ended in force only about 10 per cent of the time. The routine business of international affairs is conducted through the peaceful instrument of diplomacy. In a more narrow sense, diplomacy is the implementation of foreign policy, as distinct from the process of policy formation. Diplomats may influence policy, but their main task is to negotiate with the representatives of other countries. Ambassadors, ministers, and envoys are official spokespersons for their country abroad and the instruments through which states maintain regular direct contact. Although messages are rapidly transmitted from one state to another today, personal, face-to face encounters can put a stamp of privacy and authenticity on diplomatic exchanges. Formal diplomacy is a regularized system of official communication between states: the exchange of ambassadors, the maintenance of embassies in foreign capitals, the dispatch of messages through officially accredited emissaries, participation in conferences and other direct negotiations.

Importance

The importance of diplomacy arises from the fact that most foreign policies are stated very generally, without spelling out measures for implementation.

A good diplomat must adapt such policy mandates to the circumstances of the moment. Moreover, there are numerous occasions when the demands of a particular situation might justify an exception to policy, and for this a state often relies on the wisdom of its diplomatic officers in the field. Few governments pursue a perfectly consistent policy that is articulated with a single voice. It falls to the diplomats to reconcile the competing voices and to give coherence, emphasis, and interpretation to their state's foreign policy.

Diplomacy has two faces. It is the vehicle through which a state asserts itself and represents its concerns to the world; it is also one of the principal means for conciliating competing national interests. In other words, diplomacy aims to further a state's particular goals whilst preserving international order. It is the tool that states use to get their way without arousing the animosity of other states. Diplomats must constantly balance the need to protect their state's interests and to avoid conflict with other states.

Functions

There are three main functions of diplomacy – intelligence gathering, image management, and policy implementation. An embassy gathers information on the thinking of the local political leadership, the state of the local economy, the nature of the political opposition – all of it critical for predicting internal problems and anticipating changes in foreign policy. Diplomatic representatives are the 'eyes and ears' of their government; their cables and reports form part of the raw material from which foreign policy is developed. Diplomacy also aims at creating a favourable image of the state.

Modern communication makes it possible to shape perceptions and attitudes around the globe.

States today have vast public relations apparatuses whose purpose is to place their actions and policies in a favorable light. Foreign embassies supply local news media with official interpretations and try to avoid negative publicity or explain it away. Finally, diplomats administer the overseas programmes of the state. They negotiate military basing rights, facilitate foreign investment and trade, supervise the distribution of economic aid, and provide information and technical assistance.

Diplomacy Have Less Power

Some scholars argue that over time, there has been a marked decline in the importance of formal ambassadors. In the days when travel and communications were primitive, ambassadors had a great deal of authority and discretion in the implementation of foreign policy. They might be stationed abroad for many years without receiving new

instructions or returning home. Today overseas envoys receive large numbers of cables and instructions on a daily basis. Heads of state communicate directly with one another by telephone. Top policymakers often negotiate directly with each other (summit diplomacy) or they send special envoys (shuttle diplomacy). Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State under Presidents Nixon and Ford, raised shuttle diplomacy to a high art in the 1970s. As a result, the ambassador has become less important in the realm of 'high politics' – particularly in areas of military security – than in the past.

Scope

On the other hand, the growth of interdependence among states, and the expansion of the old Eurocentric state system into a global international society, has brought in its wake the emergence of an increasingly multilateral style of diplomacy. Multilateral management is essential for many issues that involve cooperative arrangements among governments. This is the case in such areas as nuclear proliferation, arms control, trade regulation, and the suppression of terrorism. The United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations convene periodic conferences to deal with problems of food, population growth, the environment, and other issues of global concern. Since most of the less developed countries make the greater part of their diplomatic contacts at the United Nations, many issues of modern diplomacy are addressed in this multilateral forum.