Comparative Analysis between Reform Strategies of Ministries of Foreign Affairs

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In the past two decades, most ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs) have carried out reforms, in order to react to the paradigm shift in international affairs at the end of the Cold War and what we call globalized diplomacy. China is a case in point, engaged in steady, unannounced incremental reform since 1993, mostly based on careful examination of the experience of others. Canada has done much the same. A few have opted for the opposite, big-ticket reform, often based on a major internal study, for example, Germany and the United Kingdom. Sometimes reform is feedback from serving officials. Others have looked closely at counterparts. Australia and Canada have carried out global benchmarking reform. Germany, India, Ireland, UAE, United Kingdom relied on business consultants, not because reform needs are unknown, but because change is more suitable when recommended from outside. This topic will focus on foreign ministries using different formulae to cope with reform in order to face new global challenges. The method used for the realization of this topic is that of the analysis and case studies.

Keywords: challenges, foreign ministries, reform, foreign affairs, diplomacy.

1. Introduction

Nowadays modern diplomacy works in ways that were not envisaged by the framers of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, the bedrock of interstate diplomacy. The modern foreign ministry, and its diplomatic service, has to accommodate itself to the changed circumstances. With many new actors involved in international affairs, policy coherence is a major challenge.

In discussing the development of diplomacy, an overview of the period will help to give some perspective in which to consider the major changes that have taken place. The views are a ‘snapshot’ of diplomacy at any one point. The purpose is to provide a benchmark and highlight aspects that have been noted as part of the development of diplomacy. The argument is not about ‘old’ and ‘new’ diplomacy, but rather, to see diplomacy in an evolutionary sense²⁸. Diplomacy was coloured by Harold Nicolson in 1961²⁹ especially by the impact of the Cold War. It emphasised the intrusion of ideological conflict into diplomacy and the effect on explanation, and the transformation from the small international élite in old-style diplomacy to a new or ‘democratic’ conception of international relations requiring public explanation and ‘open’ diplomacy, despite its growing complexity.

²⁸ David Davenport, ‘The new diplomacy’, Policy Review, vol. 116, December 02, www.policyreview.org/ Dec02; Sian Riordan, *The New Diplomacy* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 2003); and Andrew Cottey and Anthony Forster, *Reshaping Defence Diplomacy* (Oxford University Press, London, 2004).

²⁹ Harold Nicolson, *Diplomacy*, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, London, 1963), pp. 244– 62. 8Nicolson, *Diplomacy*, pp. 245– 6.

Hamilton and Langhorne, writing in the mid-1990s, in the post-Soviet and Yugoslav contexts, highlight that ‘established diplomatic procedures have, as in earlier periods of political upheaval and transition, been exploited for distinctly undiplomatic ends’³⁰. El Baradi analyses diplomacy over clandestine nuclear programmes in ‘the age of deception’³¹.

The emergence of a more unstable and fluid international system and types of transactions were central for Daryl Copeland in his paper called ‘Guerrilla Diplomacy: Rethinking International Relations’. Other developments influencing diplomacy include the implications of informal e-diplomacy and the recognition of the forms of economic diplomacy.³²

2. The changing nature of diplomacy

Diplomacy is the subject of constant change, rather than major shifts constituting a new form, that’s way, people are concerned with discussing the main changes which have taken place in diplomacy since 1960s.

The continued *expansion of the international community*³³ after 1945 has been one of the major factors shaping a number of features of modern diplomacy. The diplomatic community of some forty-odd states which fashioned the new post-war international institutions (UN, International Monetary Fund, G-7) had tripled less than a quarter of a century later. Apart from this global structures, the continued development of regional multilateral diplomacy further distinguishes diplomacy from the 1960s onwards. Most regional groupings are economically based. As an illustration of economically based institutions, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is an interesting example of a regional institution which has remained essentially concerned in its diplomacy with economic issues rather than expand into defence during the Cold War period.

A third phase of expansion occurred after 1989 with the break-up of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. The expansion in membership has affected diplomatic styles and methods.

Another important effect of expanded membership has been on the entry into force of conventions. For example, the entry into force of the 1982 law of the sea convention was triggered by smaller members states such as Honduras, St Vincent, and Guyana in November 1993, without ratification or accession at that time by the major powers.

In terms of other players, the growth of post-war multilateral regulatory diplomacy has led to the involvement in external relations of a wider range of ministries, such as industry, aviation, environment, shipping, customs, health, education and sport. Linked to this development is the *widening content of diplomacy*³⁴, particularly through the internationalising of issues relating to terrorism, immigration, political refugees and other population issues, leading to international coordination by interior, justice and intelligence ministries.

The landscape of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) has changed considerably since 2000. Prior to this NGOs had increased in number and type since they became a feature of diplomacy, from the 1970s, associated with the growth of multilateral diplomacy on law of the sea, environment and development. Their principal functions in diplomacy have been advocacy, economic interest protection and promotion, industry-linked special lobby interests, commentary and information.

Diplomatic methods and proceses have undergone more profound changes in the past decade than in any other period of diplomatic relations since 1945. First, a striking feature of the

³⁰ Keith Hamilton and Richard Langhorne, *The Practice of Diplomacy* (Routledge, London, 1995), p. 224.

³¹ Mohamed El Baradi, *The Age of Deception* (Bloomsbury, London, 2011).

³² Nikos Christodoulides (Consul General Republic of Cyprus), ‘The internet and diplomacy’, Jan Melissen et al., ‘Economic diplomacy’, *Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, vol. 5, nos. 1– 2, 2011.

³³ Ronald Peter Barston, *Modern Diplomacy*, Fifth Edition (Routledge, New York, 2019), eBook Kindle Edition, Kindle Location 845.

³⁴ Ronald Peter Barston, *Modern Diplomacy*, Second Edition (Longman, Edinburgh, 1997), p.4

diplomatic process is the continued *fusion of domestic and foreign policy*.³⁵ Special sets of factors are found in regions in which there is substantial population cross-movement or non-observance of borders in integrative organisations (such as the EU). The main effect of the increasing fusion of domestic and foreign policy is to alter the nature of diplomatic activity, bringing it into some policy areas and issues considered as ‘domestic’.

The procedures of diplomacy have undergone several important changes, particularly in terms of the effects of the *demise or decline of traditional blocs*.³⁶ The break-up of the Soviet Union has meant the end of special voting and other provision for the socialist ‘bloc’ in multilateral conferences, and led to new disputes over new categories of countries. Finally the agenda of diplomacy in terms of the *volume of bilateral and multilateral meetings*³⁷, and the range of issue areas continue to undergo considerable expansion during a period of uncertainty over the role and functions of established international institutions, alliances and other arrangements.

The institutional separation of major issues of *political-security governance* from trade, economic and security diplomacy has remained a continued feature of post-Cold War global governance. The handling of trade and development questions in separate international fora remains a major limitation of the structure of contemporary international collective institutions. The diplomatic process post-Cold War is also distinguished by *the absence of primary power high-level summitry*³⁸. Rather, consultation and management of issues outside the Security Council is mainly through ad hoc bilateral exchanges between the primary powers and others.

3. States foreign policy orientation

A variety of reform efforts – in **Germany**, pursuant to the comprehensive ‘Review’ analysis undertaken in 2014 – endeavour to exchange information between the foreign ministries of the EU member states with regard to the need for reform and the reforms currently under way. The fact that even **China** is dealing with questions of modern diplomacy highlights the significance of the emerging changes in the nature of diplomacy.³⁹

The expansion of the state community has brought with it a greater richness and variety in diplomatic styles, particularly at head of state level. This trend has been reinforced by the instability of governments, especially in **Africa**.⁴⁰ One effect of this, at the level of diplomatic officials, has been an increase in the number of military personnel holding diplomatic appointments.

In **United States** diplomatic style, the presidential special envoy has been used in a number of ways, as illustrated by General Marshall’s mission to China, and is a distinctive feature of American style. The special envoy becomes the additional ‘eyes and ears’ of the president, acting as a fact-finder or trouble-shooter. Other features of US style include the high use of memoranda of understanding and other informal instruments, endorsement by collective resolution and a preference for broad, package-type solutions in negotiations, the basis of which is not always conceptually clear. Take into consideration the US notion of an ‘umbrella’ approach to the resumption of strategic arms control talks in 1984-1985. US operating style would appear to be undergoing change towards multilateral institutional diplomacy.

Of the other developments which have affected diplomatic styles, frequent changes of regime through a coup d’etat or re-establishment of civilian or mixed regimes.⁴¹ An immediate

³⁵ Ronald Peter Barston, *Modern Diplomacy*, Fifth Edition (Routledge, New York, 2019), eBook Kindle Edition, Kindle Location 852-857.

³⁶ Ronald Peter Barston, *Modern Diplomacy*, Second Edition (Longman, Edinburgh, 1997), p.7

³⁷ Idem, p.8

³⁸ Ronald Peter Barston, *Modern Diplomacy*, Fifth Edition (Routledge, New York, 2019), eBook Kindle Edition, Kindle Location 857-862.

³⁹ <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/new-realities-in-foreign-affairs-diplomacy-in-the-21st-century/> accesat la data de 10.07.2019

⁴⁰ P.J. Boyce, *Foreign Affairs for New States* (University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1977) pp. 5-15.

⁴¹ Deon Geldenhuys, *The Diplomacy of Isolation: South African Foreign Policymaking* (Macmillan, Johannesburg, 1984) pp. 17-19.

effect, in the case of **Libya**, was on the staffing and styling of Libyan embassies, which subsequently became retitled 'People's Bureaux'. In the case of **Iran**, the public presentational aspects of Iranian policy changed dramatically after the fall of the Shah, especially in terms of language, the use of revolutionary communicates and frequent insistence on the use of reservations in international conferences dealing with the Palestine problem. A further change associated with the Iranian regime is the dualist nature of Iranian foreign policy, comprising government-to-people diplomacy as well as traditional government-to-government diplomacy.

The diplomatic style and methods of the **Russian Federation** are distinguished by three features: increasing volume and importance of bilateral negotiations; decline in multilateral conference role; reconstruction of the Federation's treaty network. The loss of its global diplomatic-economic-military alliance grouping, which followed the break-up of the former Soviet Union and dissolution of the Warsaw Pact severely weakened the Russian Federation's capacity to act internationally. Changes in the style of conducting foreign policy reflect a fundamental shift in orientation towards local and regional perspectives. Efforts to build up the CIS have involved the Russian Federation in extensive visits to individual member states to negotiate bilateral agreements and summits of the CIS. Extensive bilateralism which is one of the main changes in Russian Federation diplomatic methods has been largely brought about by the need to reconstruct the former Soviet treaty network and the end of the Warsaw Pact alliance system.⁴²

At first sight, foreign ministries tend to have certain common organizational characteristics insofar as they generally contain a mix of functional, geographic, protocol, legal and administrative divisions. Foreign ministries have undergone major reorganisation over the past decade. Reorganisations have addressed a variety of issues such as improving central coordination; the balance between geographic and functional departments; achieving a more proactive structure; the best way to handle economic matters, including trade and various questions to do with reviving presence and effectiveness.

Apart from the question of size, with divisions or departments covering greater geographic areas the smaller the actor, differences in organisational structure occur partly because of particular foreign policy interests. For instance, **Cyprus** foreign ministry devotes a separate department to the Cyprus problem.

Functional rather than geographic departments may be set up within foreign ministries for several reasons, including: the importance attached to a particular international grouping such as the EU, African Union (AU), Asia Pacific; the importance of bilateral trade relations; special emphasis placed on cultural diplomacy, as in **Japan, Austria, Canada, France, Mexico, United States**; or as a response to policy issues, such as international energy questions that span several departments.

Among the functional departments, for example in the US Department of State, are those dealing with energy, human rights, international narcotics matters, economic and business affairs, oceans and international environmental and scientific affairs. Such departments enable a foreign ministry to monitor and follow the work of other agencies, and if necessary to take the lead.

Finding the right mix between departments within foreign ministries, and improving coordination between agencies, has proved consistently difficult, with different models moving in and out of fashion. The reorganisation of the **Finnish** foreign ministry, for example, took several years to complete. At ministerial level, foreign trade was combined with international development, rather than, as previously, European affairs. The changes reflect continual increased focus by the foreign ministry on export promotion through Team Finland and Business Council projects. On development, narrow targeted operational priorities included supports for UN2030 Sustainable Development Implementation (women's reproductive health, sustainable jobs within the African region) and specific climate change projects. The appointment of a

⁴² Michael Kaser, *Comecon* (Oxford University Press, London, 1967); Kurt Weisskoff, *Progress of the COMECON Integration Programme* (NATO, Directorate of Economic Affairs, Brussels, 1977).

separate minister for Nordic cooperation reflected the growing concern over weakening European security (immigration, terrorism, Russian threat) and corresponding revised operational priorities of strengthening the stability of the Baltic Sea region, closer foreign policy coordination with Sweden, Arctic policies and trans-Atlantic cooperation.⁴³

As part of the review of overall structures, the **Italian** foreign ministry, moved over to a directorates system, similar to that of the **United Kingdom** and other **European powers**.⁴⁴ The United Kingdom has also improved coordination at central government level through moving over to a national security council system. Efforts to improve the coordination and direction of foreign policy in developing countries have in the main involved building up agencies under the direct control of or attached institutionally to the head of government or state.

A final element of reorganisation concerns the increased role of foreign ministries regarding diasporas. Whilst this aspect of diplomacy has been important traditionally for large diaspora-linked states, e.g. United States, a wider range of foreign ministries are now engaged in diaspora activity (e.g. Greece, Ghana, Mali even Romania). For example, the reflection of the vast number of **Romanians** who have emigrated from the country in different waves over the previous decades, starting with 1990, lead to create structure of ministry level, directions being not enough to manage the fifth largest diaspora in the world, according to a report of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).⁴⁵ **Canada**, held its first official meeting with Haitian diaspora in 2004. Diaspora, nevertheless, remain an uncertain terrain.

In the strategic economic field, **China** has integrated large media and event diplomacy (such as fora at international institutions) and London-based consultancies into its diplomatic approach. The example provides a good illustration of Chinese diplomatic style, with its preference for agency-interests deals, rather than conventional intergovernmental diplomacy.

4. Conclusion

In the period under discussion diplomacy has changed substantially. The developments discussed in this article which have affected methods, content and style can be reviewed around the next themes: the widening content of diplomacy; the decentralisation of the international system; the quest for new diplomatic methods and developments regarding diplomacy and international norms.

The states foreign policy have been influenced particularly by the growth in the nature and volume of international business. As more departments and agencies have become increasingly involved so this has created problems of national coordination and institutional rivalry over the responsibility of the non-traditional areas of policy, that are now considered part of foreign policy.

The contested and unstable international system post-2000 has also meant that the political functions of foreign ministries have assumed greater significance.

In general, the differences that exist in the central arrangements for conducting foreign policy in various states have been influenced by the expansion in the content of foreign policy, the loosening of central control and the increasingly technical nature of much of external policy. In advanced industrial states especially, the development of an increasingly complex foreign policy agenda, including such varied issues as energy, resources, telecommunications, trans-frontier land pollution, as well as the more conventional or traditional political issues, has had several implications for central foreign policy organisation. The extension of the agenda finds its expression in the international role of ministries that have traditionally been considered as essentially 'domestic'.

⁴³ Ronald Peter Barston, *Modern Diplomacy*, Fifth Edition (Routledge, New York, 2019), eBook Kindle Edition, Kindle Location 1042-1050.

⁴⁴ Idem

⁴⁵ <https://www.romania-insider.com/oecd-romanian-diaspora-july-2019>, accesat la data de 11.07.2019.

States potentially have a wide range of diplomatic methods which together constitute diplomatic craft.

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