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Has Globalization changed the Nature of Diplomacy?

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Ladies and Gentlemen, this evening I have been asked the question if globalisation has changed the nature of diplomacy. This question is naturally preceded by a series of other questions, namely what is meant by globalisation, when did it start and what is diplomacy? Each of those separate questions could merit a stand-alone talk.

But I want to do three things this evening. First, to speak of globalisation and its effects. Second, to speak of diplomacy. Third, to answer the question, and to say something of the contemporary challenges faced by diplomacy. Overall, I will show that in an increasingly globalised and interconnected world, diplomacy becomes more, not less, relevant and necessary.

There is a growing chorus of opinion which questions the utility of diplomats in the modern era. Some ask if it is necessary in this age of instant communication to have a traditional global diplomatic corps. They ask if they are worth the financial expense, if they are simply keeping the lights on or flying the flag. Some claim there is no distinct diplomatic cadre of staff anymore and the diplomatic service is interchangeable with the domestic civil service. Many critics of diplomacy would argue that journalists or NGOs could provide the same information and analysis faster and better than the rather more cumbersome diplomatic machine. All good questions which often stem from developments in globalization. But knowledge and understanding don't necessarily follow on from simple inter-dependence or connectedness. To examine if diplomacy has changed, even to the point where its utility or existence is under scrutiny, we must ask about what is driving that change. Globalization.

Globalisation

What is meant by globalisation? For David Held and his co-authors it is 'widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life'. But getting an agreed definition is much easier than getting agreement on a start date or its effects.

For some globalisation emerged at the end of the Cold War with the breaking down of borders and the opening up of systems to greater inter-dependence, fuelled by the twin forces of technology and economic liberalisation. However, this post-Cold War era is more likely to be just that – an era or the latest phase of globalisation. For globalisation as a process is as old as the first movements of humanity.

This latest phase of globalisation is no doubt a burst fuelled by technology, but all is relative and the pace of change caused by other developments in human history, will also have ushered in eras which are likely to have had equally strong effects on earlier generations of humanity.

Nayan Chanda of Yale University points out that globalisation is simply a new word to describe an old process. Chanda says that globalisation is not a new phenomenon, but a process of interconnectedness which owes much to four groups: traders, preachers, adventurers and warriors. Each of course had different motives.

Harvard Professor Dani Rodrik, in his book, *The Globalisation Paradox*, describes the current phase of globalisation as hyperglobalisation, fuelled by an unprecedented burst in technological change. The many drivers of change are showing a world that is altering faster than at any time in its history. For example, as cited by Chanda, in 1453 it took 40 days for the pope to hear about the fall of Constantinople, but in 2001, the Twin Towers fell live on our screens.

Niall Ferguson's work – 'The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power', write of one of those earlier phases of globalisation – the British phase. He cites the globalisation effect of the British Empire in the nineteenth century. He writes, 'The British Empire controlled over a quarter of the world's land mass, the seas and oceans and the world economy'. At the time the British revolutionized global communication with steamships, railroads, and the telegraph. The empire established a free trading system built on a banking and legal framework which continues to underpin today's global infrastructure'.

But why did some believe globalisation was something which just appeared in the last generation? In 1989 a powerful global ideological barrier collapsed – European communism - and that gave renewed hope in the West for shared ideological perspectives on the economy and the political system. Some may have rather naively felt that the world was on a trajectory to a sort of economic and ideological uniformity. In the *Borderless World* published in 1990, Kenichi Ohmae wrote 'the global economy is becoming so powerful that it has swallowed most consumers and corporations, made traditional national borders almost disappear, and pushed bureaucrats, politicians and the military towards the status of declining industries'.

While it was true that most of Europe was reunited, the hopes were somewhat misplaced as old divisions which had been displaced by the Cold War, resurfaced.

While the world did make strides towards economic interdependence, that did not translate into an interdependent political space and there was no parallel development of a global ethic or consciousness. An economic space did not become a political space as had happened in the growth of earlier units of production when the industrial revolution helped to form modern states into cohesive units.

This brings us then to ask about the effects of globalisation. Again, there is no consensus on this. Views differ from Amartya Sen who sees globalisation as enriching the world scientifically and culturally and benefiting many people economically as well'. To Joseph Stiglitz and George Soros who sees it as a perpetuating inequality through a form of trickle down economics and trade which is unregulated. Benedict XVI, while not rejecting globalisation outright, did see the need for a more forceful implementation of common rules and standards.

Politically too the effects of globalisation are questioned. Some say we are living through dramatic shifts in power from West to East and North to South. Though it is not as dramatic as perhaps some have predicted. It is also shifting from Cold War bi-polar order, through the uni-polar American order, and on to what might be a more unstable, multi-polar order.

With growth in technological development there is also a significant blurring of boundaries and borders, and the state has ceded some powers to multi-lateral entities, though not as much as was initially thought. That has also come with a downward trend within societies as power has moved downwards to individuals and civil society. Some twenty years ago Alan Millward wrote about how the EU was the rescue of the nation state because it was able to tackle problems which were too big for any one state to tackle on their own. A sort of functional logic driving EU integration. Today many of those same problems such as uncontrolled migration, terrorism, financial control, environment, proliferation and crime are often beyond the scope of even the biggest states or blocks to tackle on their own. But yet we are seeing a retreat from moves towards greater multilateralism and the respective international institutions. They are not about to disappear and the powers will ebb and flow between the multilateral agencies and the states for some time to come. But the investment into multilateralism which followed the Cold War has not been sustained. The state has managed to persevere and been more resilient than many had expected.

In the wake of the Cold War, many thought that trans-national challenges would further erode the state and significantly increase the power of the multi-lateral agencies. While the ECB now enjoys considerable power across the Eurozone and in the world, the financial crisis in 2008 reminded the world of the need for state regulation of the economy and the international economic order. I should cite here that it was an academic at this university – John Eatwell - who published 'Global Finance at Risk: the Case for International Regulation, in 2000. It proved to be a prophetic piece. At the time he warned against the weakened national financial

regulation and the absence of a proper regional or global regulatory framework. He pointed out that financial markets were not self-regulating and warned of derivative related collapses. He was highlighting the need for a global form of economic authority. Incidentally something Benedict XVI took up in his 2008 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* when he called for a world political authority to oversee a return to ethics in the global economy.

Following the 2008 financial crisis it was the state that had to rescue the banking system. Banks were re-nationalised and brought back under tighter national controls. The neo-liberal Washington Consensus policies pushed by the IFIs no longer held sway. Faith in sound finances, hard money, free trade and limited government came under renewed scrutiny. Attempts at Doha to find a new WTO Deal failed. On the political front too the old fashioned state showed signs of resurgence with bi-lateral territorial disputes between China and a host of neighbours, and Russia's recent expansion of its interests in to its neighbours' territory. There have also been national push-backs on that other platform of globalisation – the internet – with some states imposing national censorship and restrictions.

Of course this does not point to the end of globalisation – as said previously it has been occurring since humanity first moved. Nor are such brakes on globalisation new in history. There have been other such reversals or pauses. One just has to think of the de-globalisation – a phrase coined by the Philippine economist Walden Bello - in the Dark Ages, the seventeenth century and the interwar period.

Globalisation for our purposes this evening is a growing inter-connectedness, and we are living through an era of significant globalisation, but it is neither unique or unprecedented.

Diplomacy

That brings us neatly on to our next topic to be pinned down this evening. Diplomacy. What do we mean by it? Like globalization, diplomacy is as old as humanity.

From the first human relations diplomacy has existed, because fundamentally it is about relationships. For Machiavelli diplomacy was a tool of deception to grant more power to the state. I'm not sure that definition would fall within what the late Robin Cook had in mind when he spoke of an ethical foreign policy and the diplomatic means to achieve that policy.

Sir Harold Nicolson said, 'diplomacy is neither the invention nor the pastime of some particular political system, but is an essential element in any reasonable relation between man and man and between nation and nation'. Its form and manner today would differ quite dramatically from its earliest forms. But diplomacy is the art of building, and dare I say, using a relationship for a particular end. It can be used by

individuals, groups or states. This evening our focus is more on the state to state diplomacy.

Diplomacy according to Nicholson is ‘the need to be informed of the ambitions, weaknesses and resources of those with whom one hopes to deal’. G. R. Berridge sees diplomacy as ‘a political activity that enables actors to pursue their objectives and defend their interests through negotiations, with no use of force, propaganda or law. It consists of communication between entities designed to achieve agreements (tacit or explicit, formal or informal). Such communication and its achievements can be facilitated by gathering information, clarifying intentions, and engendering goodwill.

The earliest signs of formal diplomacy could be found in ancient China or in the Greek City States, but again like globalization the exact beginning is disputed. For the sake of this text let’s assume that we use the European starting point of the modern diplomatic system, and that would point in the case of England to 1479 when the Crown established its first resident ambassador in Rome. Some other European monarchies preceded this date, but only by a matter of decades. Up to that point, and for the most part, diplomacy was practiced, but not by resident diplomats, but rather by emissaries on specific diplomatic missions. The exception often cited is the presence of the Papal envoy at the imperial court in Constantinople.

Before exploring if globalization has changed the nature of diplomacy, we should remind ourselves of the basic functions as set out in various texts and Vienna Conventions.

Diplomats are asked:

- to represent the sending state to the host authorities
- to protect the interests of the sending state and defend the national interest
- to negotiate on behalf of the sending state
- to gather information on the host state and report
- to promote better relations between the sending and receiving state
- to provide a platform for consular activities

Globalisation and Diplomacy?

So has globalisation changed the nature of diplomacy? The simple answer has to be yes because diplomacy is never static and from what we know of globalisation neither is it. But has globalisation really changed the fundamental nature of diplomacy? Perhaps it would be more appropriate to say it has changed the methodology rather than the nature, because diplomacy continues to be about building, maintaining and using relations.

Globalisation and diplomacy have been interacting and thus altering from the first time emissaries were exchanged. Neither is a recent development. But while globalisation may not have overhauled the nature of diplomacy, it has certainly altered significantly something on which diplomacy ultimately rests – the sending authority, whether that is the crown or the state, diplomacy requires sovereignty to function.

The form of popular sovereignty on which western democracy now rests has altered significantly since the Middle Ages when we first saw the emergence of modern residential diplomacy. But this new nature of sovereignty which is emerging may not be that new, it may simply be reverting to a form more familiar to the past with competing claims on sovereignty through state, empire or church. In a world, especially a European world, which predated the Nation-State, diplomacy would have operated in a much more ‘global’ environment under various forms of rule from City States, to empires. So globalisation might have the effect of eroding national sovereignty or restoring a balance to it, for as previous periods of globalisation strengthened the state at the expense of other competing entities, now it could be re-balancing that prominence. Thus sovereignty, like identity may no longer come through an exclusive national prism.

What is increasingly true today is that states no longer have a monopoly on sovereignty whether that is in the area of communication or the economy. They mostly retain a monopoly on the use of force, but in other areas the pace of globalisation has weakened national sovereignty significantly. This has had an effect on diplomacy in a variety of ways.

First, the diplomatic space is no longer exclusively shared by national foreign ministries, though some have been slow to adjust to that reality. Today rather, one will find the media, think-tanks, universities, NGOs, faith groups, civil society bodies, all engaged in the traditional diplomatic space. But they are often engaged for very different ends from state diplomatic agents.

Second, there has been a blurring of the domestic/foreign frontiers. Foreign policy implications can have significant domestic effects. Equally, foreign policy is often now shared across a variety of domestic government actors because their specific remit always has an international dimension. That has seen a fusion of old distinctions between domestic civil servants and diplomats, something which is not always without risks because the skill sets, perspectives, and objectives are often quite distinct.

Third, how will contemporary diplomacy deal with failed states or states which have fallen into the grip of radical religious elements? Even in the Cold War, diplomatic relations were possible, even if they were frosty or harsh. For proper diplomatic relations to function it requires at least two partners who think, and for the most part

act rationally and in a normally predictable manner. Such an arrangement proved difficult when dealing with Afghanistan pre 2001 and is now impossible when considering IS. Diplomacy doesn't work in the IS environment and yet IS is a by-product of the globalisation process.

Fourth, and perhaps most dramatically, is communication. This contemporary phase of globalization has ushered in an unprecedented era of technological change which has led to a revolution in communication. The speed with which we know things about far flung parts of the world is now radically different. Gone are the days when the diplomatic bag arrived with correspondence and a two week window for a considered reply. Diplomacy is now part of the 'quick and the instant' for good and for ill. But there is no getting away from the fact that instant communication is telling the sending state in real time what is happening. At first glance, that gathering part of the diplomat's task would appear to be weakening. Or would it?

Diplomats and diplomatic culture should be cautious about investing too much faith in the transformative effect of the latest technological gadget. Technology can change the methods, but it is unlikely to replace the primary endeavour – getting to know the 'other' which entails building a relationship and cultivating that for national interests. Equally, while social media is taking off and can be transformative through providing us with quick and instant information, it does not always (indeed rarely) give meaning. Many can point to social media being a force for good in the Arab Spring, but they rarely point to the cases where it can lead to a frenzied mob attacking minorities because of unfounded rumours being invented and circulated.

Developments in technology and communication have also seen recent breaches of national security around wiki-leaks or the NSA data dump could point to a significant departure from diplomatic practice, but only possible because of technological change.

It is true that there are significant changes underway in diplomacy, but not to the point that diplomacy is no longer needed. If one reduces diplomacy to the simple provision of information then one might think diplomacy has had its day. That raises a number of risks.

- that diplomacy is not invested in and a global network is dismantled
- that it is not seen as a particular skill and is confused with domestic bureaucracies
- a belief takes hold, often informed by domestic trends that it is all about a networked world and soft power
- that a culture of transparency is imposed which imagines the world as we would like it to be and not as it is – diplomacy would struggle to do its job with instant transparency – some diplomatic challenges are 'slow-burns'
- multi-lateral diplomacy is valued over bi-lateral. It is more visible and it is what ministers see and where they meet each other. At first glance it seems

more productive, but the building blocks are often found in the bi-lateral relationship.

- That diplomacy, especially in the West becomes confused with having relations with the like minded or one's friends. To have real value, diplomacy should be about keeping lines open with those who are not, are unlikely to be our friends. This is perhaps the primary value added in contemporary society.
- A diplomacy that has lost the foreign/domestic distinction in terms of staffing, objectives, etc risks misreading external situations. It also risks being event driven rather than strategic. There is risk and tension between short-termism and what is in the long-term strategic interest.
- Getting the boundaries wrong between traditional diplomacy and for example NGOs can result in the former becoming a state campaigning organisation. This then raises issues about the criterion by which you select campaigns. Are they based on popularity, values or interests?

If we believe that diplomacy has been fundamentally changed by developments in globalisation then we might be more relaxed by some of the concerns cited above. We might not see the value of a diplomatic network or of diplomats. Or we might see them simply as 'events and visits offices' organising the latest VIP visit to region X or Y to pursue commercial interests.

But the nature of old-fashioned diplomacy remains somewhat intact. The challenge in particular for the West is to refrain from assuming that all others are following us on a western trajectory and that they are simply at various stages on that uninterrupted continuum. Recent developments in Russia have shattered that illusion and perhaps future events in East Asia or the Middle East might further reinforce that point. Old fashion state-craft is alive and well.

So bearing all this in mind, that globalization is present, that it interacts with diplomacy and always has, and that we are living through a phase where the methods of diplomacy are changing, but not the nature as much, what is the role for diplomacy today?

Society today appears confused by what is going on around it. In Europe we see turmoil to the East, the South and within. We see challenges which transcend borders whether through environmental change or terrorism. The human desire is to draw all these various uncertainties into a meta-narrative which somehow explains what is going on. Perhaps this is us seeking order in what is simply disorder. When it comes to what is happening in much of the Middle East and North Africa, some might think that what we need is a version of George Kennan's Long Telegram when in the late 40s he drew together quite disparate events into the Cold War narrative. Such a framework provided solace to many over subsequent decades because it was then something which required a response. It answered a question 'What is happening'

and called for a remedy. But it simply connected events into a schema where perhaps none really existed or other alternatives explanations were ignored.

So it could be today that efforts will be made to connect events in our increasingly anarchic world into some meta narrative focused on collapsing sovereignties, mutations of identity, inflated ambitions of religious or political groups who we perceive as having a homogeneity that they really don't. There simply may be no narrative. It might simply be chaos and so we have to be cautious about explanation which attempts to fill in the blanks and demand remedies to answers which might be flawed. This is where diplomacy has a unique role to play by reminding us of the historical context and expanding the horizon.

Today we're looking at a world which some might say is in crisis. With Ebola in West Africa. ISIS, which few of us heard of last year destroying cultures and civilizations which existed for thousands of years. Nearer to home Ukraine is in turmoil and thousands of people are dying on our shores as they try to reach Europe.

Tension too is rising in East Asia with maritime disputes increasingly coming to the fore and the growing risk of an incident tipping the region into conflict. In much of the Middle East, the Arab Spring has turned into a winter. Environmental changes point to a growing problem for our planet with shortages of food, water and ever more frequent natural disasters. And all the time, multi-lateral institutions are coming under greater pressure from resurgent nationalisms in many of our countries and regions. The United Nations seems weaker than it once was.

Closer to home the European Union is not perceived as it used to be by previous generations who had lived through the horrors of the Second World War. It is no longer seen as existing to promote peace and to make war impossible. Today there is a growing tide of euro skepticism, and to the point that in the UK, one of the main parties has promised an 'in/out' referendum by 2017. Coupled with this pressure on multi-lateralism we are also see existing states and regions coming under growing internal pressure as the consensus or cohesiveness which held societies together comes under strain. Across the Middle East borders and boundaries seem to be disappearing and new forms of identity are emerging or re-emerging. In the UK we seem to be entering a phase of internal questioning about who we are and our level of international ambition, and a questioning of our traditional alliances.

What does this now mean for diplomats practicing the art of diplomacy and foreign policy in an ever changed environment?

In the midst of this speeded up world, and despite the growing number of inventions which will affect our lives and professions, there will remain fundamental questions for each human being to ask of themselves and society. The context in which those questions will be asked might change (it usually does), but not the question of the purpose of the human existence and its hopes and wants.

For diplomats, in this ever more connected world, the challenge will be to find meaning amidst the fast growing flow of information. Diplomats will have to retain a filter through which developments are sifted to ensure accuracy and resilience. They will have to avoid the tendency to become part of the quick and the instant. Twitter has its place, but it does not provide meaning.

Diplomats face a risk in this new and more interdependent world, that they are ever more attuned to their own sending state and don't really get under the skin of the host state. They are in effect 'never quite present'. That could lead to the more familiar (which usually means one's own system) being one's own norm and the other being perceived through that prism.

There are risks for diplomats in this more quick and instant world. It could give rise to superficiality and a lack of expertise. The diplomat, under pressure of time might not have a thorough enough grasp of the detail of the area they are dealing with. Perhaps they ignore essential detail in the desire to distill complexity. They might not get the context right and may ignore the particular history of the region. Worse they may come with a fixed view of what might work at home or might have worked elsewhere and try to shoe-horn in the policy remedies in an entirely inappropriate context.

The challenges for diplomacy in what must at times seem like a world which is slowly slipping into anarchy, is how to integrate and source deeper knowledge into the formulation of policy so that it is accurate, informed and appropriate. This will ensure that the approach is sufficiently stress tested and that it is getting the right sequential balance between accuracy and advocacy. Foreign Policy, to be effective, should advocate a course of action, but if the advocacy is based on wrong or incomplete analysis then it is not authoritative or accurate.

The challenge for the western diplomat in particular, is to see the flaws in their own system and therefore encounter other cultures and systems with a degree of humility and openness. That openness could leave open the way for fruitful dialogue and unconventional thinking and approaches.

Ladies and gentlemen, diplomacy is certainly changed by globalisation – it always has been and always will be, but more its methods than its underlying nature. A world which is ever more connected is likely to need more diplomacy and not less. Globalisation may have ushered in new methods of diplomacy and given faster access to raw feed, but it has not yet given faster access to meaning and for as long as that is the case there is even more need for diplomacy and diplomats to set the wider contemporary context and grammar. But in seeking out that meaning diplomats must be alive to all risks, of which globalisation is just one. Thank you.