**Diplomacy in the Modern World**

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Since the beginning of time, diplomacy has existed (in various forms) as long as civilisation has. Even in the past era of armed conflicts, disputes were resolved between nations or individuals via negotiations, not force.

Today’s world is a kaleidoscope of challenges and opportunities, including climate and energy crisis, the emergence of violent non-state actors, trade and financial management matters, alliance maintenance, globalisation, women empowerment and so on. Policies need to be as multidimensional as the challenges we face today. First of all, let’s discuss diplomacy and its significance. It is a practice to resolve a certain dispute or achieve a specific agenda. The foremost aim of diplomacy is to avoid violence and war at any cost. Without diplomacy, there would be no international organisations and no resolution of world affairs. Certain countries only exist in harmony because of diplomacy. Otherwise, there would be a constant state of war.

The history of diplomacy dates back to the ancient era when a diplomat was originally planned as a response to the need of safely conveying messages between diverse societies. The earliest diplomats usually belonged to the reigning family and were sent to negotiate specific matters with the other state. It is significant to note that even in its crudest form, diplomacy evolved to accomplish political objectives, reciprocally felt by the states.

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The origin of modern diplomacy traces back to the Early Renaissance in Northern Italy, where numerous modern traditions of diplomacy were initiated. Milan was the first city to send a representative to France in 1455. Later, this practice spread to other European countries. The major modern diplomatic achievement was the set of treaties entitled “Peace of Westphalia” in 1648, which ended the Thirty Years War.

In this age, the objectives of diplomacy are not limited to achieving the mere absence of violence and war. The concept of peace has transformed. Numerous challenges demand a multifaceted approach. To be successful in today’s international system, diplomacy is an essential tool. Now, peace-keeping, peace-making and peace-building encompass a wider diplomatic practice. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, diplomacy was primarily a state phenomenon. Therefore, the writers used to omit non-state actors while defining diplomacy. But the conventional notion of diplomacy has transformed with the emergence of “new faces,” incorporating religious institutions, civil societies, non-governmental organisations, multinational corporations and international organisations.

Diplomacy does not involve only negotiations, but also image building/management, formal meetings and information-gathering. It is just like an art and craft. Today, it takes knowledge and experience just like it required a thousand years ago. The present era is quite demanding with a complex international political system. Many factors are influencing modern diplomacy today, including the revolution in telecommunications. Despite all the inventions and changes in the international environment, past diplomacy is of great value. It is essential to maintain a link between traditional and modern innovations. The history of diplomacy teaches us that personal factors also play a vital role while conducting negotiations. A renowned British diplomat and author, Ernest Sato, defined diplomacy as an application of tact and intellect to conduct significant foreign policy matters. A modern diplomat should be careful, well-informed, knowledgeable, calm, discreet and practical with an enormous sense of responsibility.

To use diplomacy as an efficient tool of global good governance, stereotypes of military confrontation and ideology must be separated. Today, the task of diplomacy should not be to search for a balance of power but a balance of mutual interest. According to the cold war diplomacy stereotypes, diplomats of different states were considered opponents; each trying to get his interest at the expense of others. Certainly, the primary goal of the diplomatic mission is to achieve and protect the national interest of one’s state. Nonetheless, we all strive for a common cause today, which is to attain good governance at the national as well as international level. We all want a world free of poverty and violence, which is safe and secure, where justice prevails. The need of the hour is to devise such diplomatic policies where mutual interest must be accomplished without sacrificing either’s national interest.

Diplomacy needs to fully utilise the opportunities offered by technological innovations. Besides, flexibility, which has always been the trademark of effective diplomacy, also gives hope that diplomacy would help create a better world and deal with the new challenges of the twenty-first century. We live in a world that is interdependent and interlinked. Thus, humans need to navigate a shared set of challenges, comprising of climate change, nuclear proliferation, globalisation, transnational terrorism and much more. Effective and skilful implementation of diplomacy remains the key to tackle these mutual challenges. The world should be made peaceful and conducive for the growth of the individual as well as the state.

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