

THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN THE DIPLOMATIC AREA

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Abstract : *As, unfortunately, the situation is showing, the enhancement and proliferation of the military confrontations as well as the increasing risk that most of the conflicts be it manifest or latent could become dramatic realities, brings up front on the political and diplomatic activity agenda the idea of a recovered and reinvigorated communication based on mutual trust and communion will to reach peace especially through communication and negotiation. Hence, an immediately condition that the modern diplomacy should apply is shifting the focus on the improvement of the communication lines, taking the benefit of the new communication technologies and especially of the human factor capability (mainly the diplomat and the negotiator), to support with ability an efficient communication through which, the objectives of fulfilling the national interest could be achieved.*

Keywords : *communication; diplomatic communication; international*

The role and importance of communication in diplomacy are extremely topical and important subjects, that have not been talked during the time in dedicated analysis nor through specific debates. We do not intend to minimize or to deny through this observation the valuable acquisitions, the consistent and viable approaches that this branch of science have benefit and it still does. On the contrary, we consider that re-reading them in a new key, taking into account the current geo political conditions might have a beneficial impact for the Romanian diplomacy, for its affirmation as an active catalyser factor in the dialogue and the brainstorming taking place on European and international political scene. That is why we are hoping that this article it will be read also as an invitation to dialogue, to a confrontation of assumptions and arguments and we will be very happy if it could generate new points of view or most favourable ways of approach of the theme.

Following the above mentioned we should start our discussion from the conditions created in the last two and half centuries determined by the end of the bipolar era that have generated events determining a reshaping of the

political and diplomatic scene at European and global level: the enlargement of the European Union and NATO, the USSR dismemberment and the rising of the emergent states. On the other side, Romania's complex security situation generated by the security challenges in its immediate neighbourhood based on the accumulation of multiple tensions at international level as well as the ingravescence of the issues that the European Union is facing, requires urgent, practical answers, that would overcome the strictly theoretical component, pertaining to approaches to doctrine.

All this as well as other intricated processes like the globalisation and the acces of vast masses of people to the internet are entitled to raise a legitimate question: which is the most adequate, desirable solution – the diplomatic way or the military confrontation?

Therefore, we can clearly observ that the subject of dipomatic communication comes back in actuality in order to determine „if?„ and especially „to what extent“, the diplomatic communication has an impact on this twisted reality in wich conflict focalpoints are increasing, and the geostrategic games are generating recalibration and drawing new possible spheres of interest.

The concept of “diplomatic communication”

Specialty literature makes reference to a plethora of definitions for the concept of “communication in diplomatic activity” (which is also referred to as diplomatic communication or international communication), but it is my opinion that one of the most evocative and intriguing of them is the term coined by Mathias Albert, Oliver Kessler and Stephen Steller. By concluding that “today communication is an integrating and probably integrated element worldwide,” the three claim that “it is shocking to see that the well-known concept of communication designates blank spaces in some of the most recent theories of international relations.”¹

Far from being a bitter paradox, this observation can arguably be interpreted as a catalyzing and motivating message to witch we should respond with theoretical dimension demarches with a certain pragmatic purpose. In that respect I believe it is worth mentioning that Romanian literature in this field has also featured a series of original, accurate and relevant approaches, of which I would refer here to the definition given to the concept of international

¹ Constantin Hlihor, Elena Hlihor “Communication in International Conflicts (The 20th and early 21st centuries),” comunicare.ro Publishers, Bucharest, 2010, pp. 59-66

communication by Constantin Hlihor and Elena Hlihor: “The process whereby conventional and unconventional government players, representatives of political, economic, financial or cultural organizations and institutions or members of the public sphere and media share information of mutual interest, exchange information about their pursued interests and behaviors in various contexts, in order to maintain balance, stability, peace and cooperation in all fields, but also in order to uphold a certain projected image among the international public opinion.”

This definition intends to account for a series of factors having a direct or indirect impact on the phenomenon and process of communication in the field of diplomacy, so as having either positive or negative influence on the intents and purposes pursued herein. I have first referred to the premise that the global context is a dual phenomenon, which means that is an environment shaped and reshaped by means of language and discourse by its own players. Seen as such, J. Burton’s argument is perfectly sound: “It’s the communication, and not the power, that structures the contemporary world.”

Another decisive factor in the new paradigm of communicational flow in the diplomatic sphere is the process of globalization, which in turn has determined an increase in the interdependence of states, organizations, regional or global entities. Accordingly, diplomatic communication faces three major situations upon which it needs to adjust to current realities. The first such situation is that modern communication technologies have allowed states, governments and other institutions to give up their traditional technologies and communication channels. In turn, the new communication technologies have prompted the emergence of a large array of professions, which are well integrated in the system of the institutions, including the diplomatic ones. **At this information dates we should also add another poignant phenomenon at international level and in the sphere of human activities, namely the World Wide Web.**

Worth mentioning however is that all these transformations, although deep and meaningful, have not brought any major changes to the classic communication paradigm, so that the following elements are still operational: the transmitter, the receiver, the information per se, the communication channel and the process of sending the information from the transmitter to the receiver. An important aspect at this time is that, considering the flows of globalized information, we cannot speak of a unique or monolithic character of the communication process. The observation is all the more valid when we talk about diplomatic types of communication.

In this particular case the main actor is the state, be it a regional or international entity. This entity can have its own, individual interests, it’s predominant or less desirable partners with whom it engages in dialogue and

communication. As regards the list of existing communication standards and procedures currently recommended by the EU, these do not require their unconditional implementation.

Consequently, in the case of diplomatic communication, national customs and procedures that transmitter see as most efficient in their relationships with the receivers such as national, regional or international factors or the public opinion will prevail.

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Levels of international communication

A defining aspect that must be taken under advisement when examining international communication is linked to the levels of this specific category of communication. Here is a brief description:

1) International communication referring to exchanges of information between the population of two countries, and its scope includes all information in the field of culture and civilization values.

2) Communication between two states or governments or between the state and the public opinion of another country. In this case, the main players are diplomatic offices and media channels, which convey the messages through which states express their foreign policy objectives, and therefore plan on promoting and upholding their interests. These communicative flows are aimed at raising the awareness of governments, diplomatic institutions but as well of the public opinion regarding these interests. If the stated objective cannot be achieved, all communicative undertakings will focus on reaching a neutrality or non-combat attitude on behalf of the receiver of the messages.

3) Communication by classic or modern communication channels. In this particular case, the transmitter addresses a virtually unlimited number of receivers. Elements contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the transmitter are the following: national interest (of the transmitter and receiver), the media culture and editorial policy of the communication channel.

At the level of entities receiving the message there is also a series of elements determining the reception and interpretation/decoding of the messages. In that respect, it is worth mentioning the differences operated by Constantin Hlihor and Elena Hlihor between the following:

1) Dominant encoding/decoding of the message, by means of which the transmitter and receiver agree on the meaning and significance of certain topics of international interest, on the assessment and solutions provided, as well as on the suggestions made.

2) Negotiated encoding/decoding, by means of which the transmitter and the receiver agree upon and accept only certain parts of the message and dismiss others.

3) Positive encoding/decoding, by means of which the receiver rules out most of the assessments, evaluations and solutions provided by the transmitter.

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Types of communication at international level

Based on the aforementioned hypothesis and classifications, I believe we can continue our analysis with a more detailed discussion of the types of communication at international level, and above all diplomatic communication. Therefore, there is a series of certain patterns that we can use to make the following distinctions:

1) Official/unofficial or formal/informal communication, depending on the communication channel used by the transmitter.

2) Communication between governments, ministries or public diplomacy, depending on the players taking part in the communication process.

3) Verbal/non-verbal, written or symbolic communication, depending on the language or code systems used to convey the message.

Far from being simple distinctions of formal nature or strictly theoretical classifications or useful definition of terms, such classifications are necessary first and foremost in order to ensure the optimal coherence and desired purpose of the messages used by diplomatic entities to achieve their objectives and define their status. When we refer strictly to the specific problems of diplomatic communication, Voltaire's dictum remains fully valid: "Gentlemen if you wish to converse with me, define your terms!"

The actual state of this saying is confirmed, as we believe, by the extremely confused situation, by the various conflict – braked out or latent – by the various issues that the political and diplomatic milieu could not succeed always, in the past 25 years, to give them a realistic and efficient shape.

Furthermore for Romania, a country placed by default in a space where two worlds converge and face – the geostrategic space of NATO and EU, respectively European Union and Russia's one, but also the so called Eurasian area – the idea of rethinking the diplomatic communication strategies and tactics is putted forward clearly and categorically. Taking a step behind from the sceneries that are predicting the obsolete character or even the uselessness of the diplomatic demarche we believe that we have enough solid arguments to consider that on the contrary, we do have chances for a new course of

negotiation and diplomatic communication in order that the *Idea of using The force* will be step by step replaced with the *Force of the Idea*.

This is the idea from which we have started our considerations and we strongly believe that once the discussions will start, there are solid chances that it will prove the viability and effectiveness both in theory and diplomatic praxis.