

# Diplomatic Processes and Cultural Variations: The Relevance of Culture in Diplomacy

by Wilfried Bolewski

*Let us not be blind to our differences—but let us also direct attention to our common interests and to the means by which those differences can be resolved. And if we cannot now end our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity.*

*John F. Kennedy, American University, June 10, 1963.*

**T**he relationship between diplomacy and culture has been somewhat neglected in recent academic and practical studies,<sup>1</sup> even though competence and understanding during intercultural exchanges unites societies and facilitates further intercultural interactions. Current public discussions concentrate exclusively on the existence of cultural commonalities and universal values all cultures share.<sup>2</sup> However, determining likenesses among cultures should be secondary to the awareness of cultural differences as the logical starting point for the evaluation of intercultural commonalities. Intercultural sensitivity within groups paves the way for the acceptance and tolerance of other cultures and allows members to be open to values which are universal among all groups, such as law and justice, which globalized society should then build upon together.

Facing the challenges of an increasingly complex world, the question of interdependency between diplomatic processes and cultural variations becomes relevant: is there a shared professional culture in diplomacy apart from national ones, and if so, does it influence diplomacy? To what extent can research into national cultures help diplomacy and governments to understand international interactions?

## DEFINITION OF “CULTURE”<sup>3</sup>

### *General definition*

Before analyzing the interdependency between culture and diplomacy, it is necessary to state what the word culture implies. According to Hofstede, culture is

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defined as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one category of people (i.e. social group) from another.”<sup>4</sup> In contrast to personality, culture is not individual but collective. Furthermore, mental programming suggests that information has been internalized by an individual, leaving him unable to judge outside of his program’s purview. Hofstede applies the same definition of culture to professional cultures, such as the diplomatic one.<sup>5</sup>

Another approach to defining culture is to state its key aspects. First, culture is a quality of society, not the individual; second, it is acquired through the process of individual acculturation or socialization; and third, each culture is a unique set of characteristics dictating behaviour in every aspect of an individual’s life.<sup>6</sup> Culture is the social identity individuals start to develop when they become aware of belonging to a social group:<sup>7</sup> national cultures as well as political, economic, social, and historical elements form a national identity.

According to these classifications, culture can be compared to a program; it contains information about the society in which individuals find themselves. It provides information about social roles, the structure of relationships, etiquette and how everyday life should be arranged.<sup>8</sup> Culture is a guideline for social interaction, but it is only valid in the social context in which this program is internalized among its members; therefore, it is necessary to understand the other members of the global society and their program.<sup>9</sup>

Diplomacy deals with culturally diverse groups by means of interactions and negotiations. The negotiation style of each participant is formed by one’s own cultural “program.” As different cultural groups communicate differently, the culture of a negotiation party influences its negotiation style. Therefore, the probability of mistakes and misunderstandings increases when the interaction is cross-national.<sup>10</sup>

While sovereignty and equality are the rational backbones of international relations, culture is its distinctive emotional differential; the hidden dimension which projects as much impact as political or economic power on decision-making.

### *Approach to categorizing cultures*

In order to cope with cultural differences and to train cultural awareness and intercultural competence, it is useful to distinguish between different cultures. Hofstede<sup>11</sup> categorizes cultures into four dimensions, differentiating 1.between collectivistic and individualistic societies; 2.masculine and feminine societies and distinguishing the level of authority between the two genders;<sup>12</sup> 3.uncertainty avoidance (i.e. boldness versus cautiousness); and 4.long—or—short-term orientation (in their social contact). The ground-breaking ethnologist Edward T. Hall<sup>13</sup> distinguishes between cultures of high or low context. In high context societies, people have close connections over a long period of time, decisions and activities are focused on relationships, and communication is more unspoken and less verbally explicit. In low context societies, by contrast, people usually have more connections of shorter duration or for a specific reason, individuals are rule and task-orientated, and information is communicated explicitly. Whereas low context

cultures pursue an individualistic negotiation style, high context cultures focus on building a relationship.<sup>14</sup> In other words, low context negotiators are interested in the outcome of negotiations—they want to find solutions to a problem. High context negotiators are more interested in attending to relationships by means of negotiations.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, the overall structure of every negotiation is regulated by protocol along with a specific type of negotiation style, such as: circular, linear, functional, task-centred or personal.<sup>16</sup> Further developing Hofstede's definition of culture, it is possible to classify cultures in the following categories: multi-active, linear-active, and reactive cultural groups. Multi-active groups are characterized by a high level of flexibility and are generally disinterested in schedules and punctuality. Reality is more important to them than appointments, and they are willing to invest time in human transactions.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, linear-active groups address tasks on an individual basis, while concentrating on a fixed schedule. They stick to plans and facts, and separate social from professional aspects. In contrast to multi-active and linear-active groups, reactive cultures listen and try to see the whole picture before they become active.

#### *Regional and national cultures in the diplomatic process*

In order to handle concrete intercultural negotiation situations, it is useful to classify cultures not only according to dimensions or groups, but also according to regions. Each region of the globe has its own cultural peculiarities, whether it is Asia, the Arab world, or Latin America.<sup>18</sup> On the basis that the cultural background matters for diplomacy, cultural specificities have to be taken into account. The way of thinking, speaking, and behaving is deeply rooted in an individual's particular culture, and hence also influences his conduct during diplomatic affairs.<sup>19</sup> For effective and successful diplomacy at all levels, the influences of regional and national cultures should also be taken into consideration.

#### *a) The Americas*<sup>20</sup>

##### *aa) United States of America*<sup>21</sup>

The preponderance of American power in international relations and American history are inherent in the self-image of the nation and its representatives, and correspondingly influence its culture. It not only provides Americans with a sense of pride, but also gives them a distinct impetus to act with self-assurance. American society is dominated by a pervasive emphasis on achievement, which is perpetuated by historical events such as the pioneers conquering the vast prairie or astronauts landing on the moon. The American culture is characterized by a strong optimistic tendency: it is possible to solve nearly every problem through active effort, and hard work leads to happy endings.<sup>22</sup>

American negotiators are characterized by their “can-do” approach. There exists a strong belief that the environment can be manipulated for someone's own purposes. The approach's main features are to set an objective, to develop a plan, and then to act to change the environment in accordance with that plan. As a result, not

much space exists for cultivating personal ties.<sup>23</sup> Against the background of a low context culture, American negotiators typically establish their positions clearly from the onset. They are interested in quickly discussing details and proceeding on an offer and counter-offer basis.<sup>24</sup>

The volatility of life that prevailed in the early days of the U.S. is reflected in its low-context society. People have more connections of a shorter duration and for a specific reason than longstanding relationships. Therefore, important transactions are based on contracts rather than ties of sentiment, so that all obligations have to be spelled out and ambiguities resolved.<sup>25</sup>

American society is also a linear-active one. The historical experience of the days of land grab and gold rush, when time was essential for future success, is still present in the American mindset. Schedules and deadlines seem to loom over everything (“Time is money”). Changing schedules or appointments or deviating from the agenda is difficult to accept. Americans prefer dealing with one thing and one person at a time rather than handling several tasks simultaneously.<sup>26</sup>

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The worldwide prominence of the English language is further shaping the American culture. There are 375 million native speakers and an estimated 1.1 billion people who speak English as a second language; no other language seems to be as pervasive.<sup>27</sup> It is widely used as the dominant language in international organizations and forums. Hence, being a native-speaker creates an inevitable advantage and strengthens one’s self-confidence at the negotiating table. Moreover, native speakers are also able to express nuances in a way foreigners are rarely able to.

American diplomats appear to be direct both with their preference for straight talking and in their approach in general,<sup>28</sup> but this can be frustrating for a negotiating partner that may not have an understanding of this culture-based-behaviour. For example, in the negotiations over reforms in Japan’s financial markets in 1984, the abrupt manner of some U.S. diplomats affronted their Japanese counterparts. They complained for instance that Treasury Secretary Donald Regan behaved more as a businessman making a deal on Wall Street, as opposed to a diplomat engaged in a delicate negotiation with a foreign government.<sup>29</sup>

*bb) Latin America: example of Mexico*<sup>30</sup>

Mexico provides a good example of a high context and multi-active society. Managing affiliations with other people is of high importance; therefore, human relationships have to be established.<sup>31</sup> In addition, life in Mexico is not organized around a clock, which means that punctuality is not a top priority for Mexicans. In Mexico’s hierarchical society, it is widely accepted that persons in a position of power

make others wait.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, in the Latin tradition, Mexicans address problems in broad general principles.<sup>33</sup>

In a typical negotiation with Mexican diplomats, it is usual to start with friendly small talk and to approach the substance only when time seems appropriate. They do not follow agendas rigidly and prefer to discuss any point when it seems to be the most opportune time.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, the issues can then be discussed at length, and as conversation is regarded as an art, they seek the approval or conversion of their counterpart. Therefore, passion and eloquence are central to their style of discourse, and feelings are more important than facts. Coming to an end of the negotiation process, symbols of success are important. For a Mexican diplomat any public sign of surrender would mean a serious threat to any arrangement. In the 1982 debt talks with the US, Mexican diplomats preferred, for example, a substantively inferior agreement rather than the appearance of a greater Mexican concession.<sup>35</sup>

*b) Europe: United in diversity?*

Diversity within Europe is too broad and historically deep-rooted to speak of one regional culture. Different cultural backgrounds prevail in Europe, from Spain to Estonia, Finland<sup>36</sup> to Greece, Germany, France<sup>37</sup> or Great Britain, affecting not only intra-regional relations, but intra-regional diplomacies as well.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, for over fifty years, European states with different cultures have worked together in the context of the European Union (EU). Do these individual national cultures influence the diplomatic process within the EU, and if yes, how and to what extent? Furthermore, will national cultural differences be reflected in future EU diplomacy, or will their influence will be minimized due to the ongoing process of socialization and an emerging “European esprit de corps?”<sup>39</sup> Two observations are relevant to this question. First, cultural peculiarities and differences belong to a *domaine réservé* within the European context. Originally, this term referred to specific issues “that cannot be submitted to discussion and interference from the other member states”<sup>40</sup> within the EU, such as security issues or special interstate relationships. Similarly, cultural influences on the diplomatic process are not reflected upon or openly discussed within the EU-context, but rather taken for granted by all participants.

Second, due to the continuity of positive social interaction and information exchanges between the partners, a practical process of bureaucratic socialization<sup>41</sup> and cross-national collegial solidarity is setting in, overlapping the cultural nuances.<sup>42</sup> As a result of the continuous interaction and the prolonged experience of cooperation (including co-ordinated *démarches*—policy initiatives—and common reporting abroad), the national representatives are subject to a mutual understanding, which forms part of a certain Community code that could develop into an “esprit de corps.”<sup>43</sup> These culturally determined norms of behaviour are: the culture of mutual respect, tolerance, and compromise, as well as other informal rules and facilitations of communication such as “Euro-speak” (the mixed use of different working languages, especially French and English).

On the other hand, there still remains the danger of the illusion of cultural

familiarity among EU partners.<sup>44</sup> The influence of cultural differences in the behaviour of multinational teams can best be exemplified along the North-South divide of European countries. At least two patterns stand out which adversely influence the multinational team performance: working style and methods of criticism.<sup>45</sup>

The EU is in need of a coherent diplomatic service for a common EU foreign policy, precisely the reason why the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe envisaged the establishment of a European External Action Service (EEAS). It would have an estimated staff between 600 and 7,000 employees from varying departments of the Council Secretariat, the Commission, and the national diplomatic services of the EU member states, creating a diverse environment of cultural and professional backgrounds.<sup>46</sup> While the EEAS would have to rely on national foreign ministries and diplomatic services to recruit its employees, it remains an open question whether (and how) the original cultural peculiarities would be reflected in European diplomacy within the EEAS.

#### *Common culture of diplomacy?*

To determine whether a global culture of diplomacy exists, diplomacy as a term must be defined. The aim of diplomacy is twofold: to protect and guide the individual interests of states and to promote global norms and values characterizing the growing sense of a community of states and international unity. Modern diplomacy is a rule-governed activity involving communication, negotiation, and representation between states, international organizations and trans-national participants. These rules help to avoid or settle conflicts.<sup>47</sup> In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, diplomacy is ubiquitous and increasing in practice; non-state actors are more willing to engage in diplomatic methods and practice a distinct type of diplomacy.

The definitions of culture and diplomacy raise the question of the existence of a common culture of diplomacy shared by all participants involved in the interactive process of diplomacy; beyond the diversity of state-based diplomatic cultures, is there a common culture of diplomacy? Indeed, a range of similarities can be found in the diplomatic profession. These behavioural similarities create an *esprit de corps*.<sup>48</sup> Diplomats reap the benefits of a similar professional education and diplomatic training, sharing the same social rules such as restraint, politeness, tolerance, patience, empathy, and mutual confidence.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, they have similar professional experiences. They are accustomed to the same procedures, follow the same rules, and display the same behaviours that suggest the reality of a common diplomatic culture.<sup>50</sup> This diplomatic culture could be defined as “the accumulated communicative and representational norms, rules, and institutions devised to improve relations and avoid war between interacting and mutually recognizing political entities.”<sup>51</sup>

Despite these similarities, some original cultural differences remain, which make it difficult to speak of a common culture of diplomacy. Individuals are formed by their cultural backgrounds which can never be truly neglected because they are

unable to erase what Hofstede termed the “programming of the mind.” The social identity achieved by a long lasting socialization process cannot be abandoned by means of professional training, no matter how intense this training might be.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, abandoning national culture would also cause problems because diplomats would not be able identify with their own cultural background, making it almost impossible to fulfil their job as “servants of national interests.”<sup>53</sup>

Finally, a serious factor affecting diplomatic traditions is the emergence of a diverse set of actors partaking in activities traditionally reserved solely for representatives of states.<sup>54</sup> As a result, the culture among diplomatic participants becomes more open; diversity is more common. However, not all of the new actors in diplomacy are experienced in dealing with foreigners and intercultural situations.<sup>55</sup> Their acculturation stays in many cases only task-related and is rarely adapted outside the negotiator’s professional environment. Similar to career diplomats, they never lose their own programming of the mind as their internalized culture. Therefore, even under the presumption that a common culture among diplomats exists based on a universally accepted protocol, it does conclusively prove the existence of a unique common diplomatic culture.

### **THE COMPONENTS OF DIPLOMACY:**

#### *Participants:*

As discussed previously, diplomats are not the only actors involved in the diplomatic process. Due to globalization, many non-traditional actors such as NGOs, trans-national organizations and even individuals can be seen practicing diplomacy, which has become an expanding art and the “engine room of international relations.”<sup>56</sup> However, governments will continue to remain the principal participants in the practice of diplomacy. The ministry of foreign affairs has had the primary responsibility for coordinating diplomatic interactions for a long period of time, and this is unlikely to change fundamentally.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, globalization requires governments to operate in a context different than before because governmental diplomacy has to fulfil an additional function, which is to integrate other participants of diplomacy in its own decision-making processes.<sup>58</sup> To meet these challenges, governments have been focusing on new strategies, such as involving ministries and non-state actors and institutions, providing greater transparency, and acting collectively as often as possible.<sup>59</sup>

From 2005 to 2006, 20,928 NGOs were operating in the international community, 2,476 of which have consultation status at ECOSOC.<sup>60</sup> With the rise of these non-state organizations and new social movements, the diplomatic function is being exercised by a wider circle of citizens. As active participants of civil society they have become symbolic and complementary diplomatic actors, bringing in a diplomatic culture of their own which is more relaxed, direct, and audacious.<sup>61</sup> A new diplomatic practice is emerging and the diplomatic discourse is becoming popularized, detached from the state. The symbolic relationship between the state

and societal actors carries the potential for creative statecraft and valuable diplomatic practices. The NGOs as part of the international civil society can deploy their populist and indirect rule towards the privatization of public authority and responsibility and become a partial surrogate of the state.<sup>62</sup>

The number of International Organizations (IOs) has risen in 2005–2006 to 1,963.<sup>63</sup> They can be seen as autonomous political actors, practicing a form of diplomacy divergent from the traditional practice. As a result, they have created a distinct cultural and diplomatic identity formed not only by organizational practices, but also by the culture of the country or region in which organizations are based. They are involved in a diplomatic network that goes beyond the national interests and concerns and represents common interests of IOs.<sup>64</sup>

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Apart from representatives of NGOs and IOs as institutional participants, experts as individual actors play an increasingly important role in diplomacy by working out international agreements. They bring their cultural particularities to diplomatic interactions and represent their own professional culture,<sup>65</sup> which may include special habits, basic beliefs, norms and customs that distinguish those experts from other participants in diplomatic interactions.<sup>66</sup>

*Processes/Practices*

*a) Compromise*

All participants in a diplomatic process must be willing to compromise; if not, diplomatic efforts are destined to fail. The willingness to find an acceptable compromise by all actors involved will guarantee consensuses on a possible solution, because it is self-defeating to make the desired result of negotiations their precondition. For that purpose, participants should be aware of their individual liabilities and assets while recognizing the customary authority of international consensus. The result of negotiations must always be to identify common interests and work out acceptable solutions for a wide scope of common concerns.<sup>67</sup>

*b) Language*

Language is more than just a means of communication; language<sup>68</sup> is a tool for empowerment. Since communication and culture are acquired simultaneously,<sup>69</sup> language can be considered the key to a culture. Every language deeply rooted in a particular culture conveys a unique representation of the world. Good argumentative points and diplomatic techniques are useless without the ability to communicate them. As there are strong differences in verbal and nonverbal communication across cultures and subcultures,<sup>70</sup> language can also be an obstacle to a successful



diplomatic process because of possible cross-cultural misinterpretations. As such, language skills are one of the most important tools for diplomats. The only possibility to communicate and negotiate without proper (foreign) language skills is third party interpretation. However, involving an interpreter can lead to a loss of behavioural nuances and confidence,<sup>71</sup> and can therefore be considered as a secondary option.

Edward T. Hall differentiates the methods of communication between high and low context cultures. High context communication implies the transfer of frequent unspoken messages within communication; communication occurs through allusion, making the context of what is said as important as the content.<sup>72</sup> Conversely, low context communication contains the exchange of all intended information through speaking; hardly anything is implied apart from what is explicitly spoken.

Even if the negotiating partners use the same language, it can be difficult or even impossible to communicate the meaning and relevance of a certain word. Some words have a completely different meaning depending on the origin of the culture in which they are used; hence, it may be insufficient to simply translate them from one language to another. This different use of language can cause misunderstandings, leading to a communication gap: for example the various interpretations of the phrase “human rights.”<sup>73</sup> The difficulty the international community has faced to unilaterally define the phrase demonstrates the complexity in finding a consensus in diplomatic interactions without the presence of shared values and ideas backing fundamental terms that are the focus of these interactions. Especially in diplomatic negotiations, the knowledge of such linguistic and cultural nuances and differences helps to avoid the communication gap.

## **OTHER FACTORS DETERMINING THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS**

### *Nature of the decision*

One of the most important determinants of the negotiation process is the nature of the decision to be taken.<sup>74</sup> The nature of the decision influences the type of the negotiation, which can vary between the traditional bilateral or multilateral diplomacy, parliamentary diplomacy, summit diplomacy, or conference diplomacy by means of ad hoc meetings.<sup>75</sup> Sensitive topics might especially necessitate secret instead of open diplomacy and thereby influence the atmosphere of the negotiation. Furthermore, there is interdependency between the importance of the decision to be taken and the public interest in it.

### *Behaviour of the actors*

Diplomats are servants of the state, thus their behaviour depends on the instructions they receive from foreign policy makers at home, but conditions during negotiations also affect the actions of diplomats. The number of negotiating parties and individual participants involved in the negotiation process is a factor that influences behaviour. In the case of multilateral negotiations, the number of parties

increases the number of possible coalition partners and makes the negotiation strategically more complex. A high number of participants decreases the secrecy of the negotiation<sup>76</sup> and has a strong influence on the amount of talking time per participant, because the greater number of participants involved the more parties each participant has to deal with in an inversely proportional amount of time.<sup>77</sup>

### *Time and place*

Traditional diplomatic practice dictates tight schedules and deadlines, and time management becomes important; nevertheless, negotiation can unexpectedly continue longer than expected. In this case, time might evoke stress and becomes a very relevant factor in negotiations.

Even though time is an important factor in diplomacy, the perceptions of time and the importance of punctuality<sup>78</sup> vary among different cultures and can be an obstacle in negotiations. Edward T. Hall subdivides cultures into mono- and polychronic cultures. Monochronic individuals do one thing at one time, take time commitments such as deadlines and schedules seriously, stick to plans and concentrate on their job, and are usually low-context. Conversely, polychronic individuals complete many tasks at once, consider time commitments an objective to be achieved only if possible, and are usually high context. They change plans often and are highly distractible.

The setting in which diplomatic interaction takes place is another factor that should not be underestimated; the location has to be chosen deliberately to avoid diplomatic blunders. As far as location is concerned, it is important that there is, on the one hand, enough space for all participants to work freely, but not too much space so that a familiar atmosphere can develop and informal meetings among the participants are possible.<sup>79</sup>

## **INTERDEPENDENCY BETWEEN DIPLOMACY AND CULTURE?**

Having examined the cultural differences among diplomatic participants and their impact on the outcome of diplomatic interactions, interdependency between diplomacy and culture can hardly be denied. Negotiation styles are strongly influenced by the cultural background of the negotiation parties, as well as the perception of time, and the setting of priorities within interactions.

Competition exists between national and professional culture in international interactions because of the different negotiation styles.<sup>80</sup> Diplomats can only be successful if they can cope with the simultaneous challenge of living in or with foreign cultures and representing the interests of their national governments. Moreover, intercultural competence is essential to understanding participants with other cultural backgrounds. Once this cultural awareness exists, it influences the culture of diplomacy in such a way that diplomats at least try to respond to the cultural particularities of their foreign counterparts. It leads to a better relationship among the participants in diplomatic interactions and is the appropriate instrument to pave the way for diplomatic success. Therefore, effective and competent

communication is imperative for successful diplomatic interactions. Diplomacy aims for the protection and guidance of interests on the one hand and the avoidance of conflicts on the other hand; the manner in which diplomacy is conducted influences the negotiation culture because of the need for successful solutions. Due to the need for challenging intercultural differences, a professional or “third” culture of diplomacy emerges. The question is if this impact also works vice-versa; to say if culture also influences diplomacy.

As every participant involved in diplomatic negotiations has his or her own “programming of the mind,” which cannot be abandoned, a cultural impact on diplomacy is inevitable. Culture does not only influence negotiation style, time perception, and the significance of relationships, it also has an impact on social roles and etiquette. As all these aspects play some role within diplomatic interactions, they are in principle capable of influencing diplomacy. In practice, diplomacy is as much about cultural relations as it is about political relations. It is culture, even more than politics that provides structuring principles in the understanding of diplomatic practices and processes.<sup>81</sup> With reference to the new interest in the cultural dimension of international relations, the diplomatic historian David Reynolds formulates: “The diplomatic twitch must take full account of the cultural turn.”<sup>82</sup>

### **CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINING:**

Having examined the high impact of cultural variations on diplomatic processes, it has to be determined how diplomats and other actors involved in diplomatic processes can successfully be prepared to meet the challenges of the interdependency between diplomacy and culture. Without the awareness of cultural differences, diplomats might tend to look only for similarities rather than first acknowledging the differences. Once they are in a different cultural area, their perception of culture might become selective; filtering out what is inconsistent with their own culture.<sup>83</sup> The need for such preparedness is especially relevant in the context of globalization.<sup>84</sup>

The best way to evoke cultural awareness and guarantee the required intercultural competence is international training. Only in this way can diplomats cultivate cultural intelligence and learn how to communicate cross-culturally.<sup>85</sup> Such an intercultural training should include theoretical, practical, and personal component.<sup>86</sup> Transfer of cultural theories could be the starting point for this learning process, connected with analysis of cultural similarities and differences. To be efficient, intercultural training should be initiated at an early stage of the diplomatic education and be followed by knowledge, skills, and practice.<sup>87</sup>

Since there are more participants in diplomacy than the employees of foreign offices, it is insufficient to offer intercultural training only within the classical diplomatic education, but also to various government officials and non-governmental participants as well such, as representatives from TNCs, NGOs, and the media. In the future, the need for competent intercultural preparation will increase proportionally with the amount of participants involved in diplomatic

interactions. Though international training can only lay the foundation for successful diplomatic interactions, it is the basis on which diplomats can develop their intercultural skills. Cultural sensitivity thus is the highway that leads to diplomatic success; it can make or break any international career.

## CONCLUSIONS

In view of diplomatic cultural relativism and the quest for intercultural accords, only when each of the disparate cultural systems in our world is fully recognized in its intrinsic substance will it be possible to understand the various patterns of globalized relations. Thus, cross-cultural preparation is crucial and to proceed with such a preparation, it is useful to proceed with the following guidelines.<sup>88</sup>

a.) Confidence, respect and empathy facilitate honest interactions possible between individuals and most especially diplomats.

b.) Cultural awareness is the starting point for intercultural competence because culture is a lens through which one observes and judges the world. In order to open one's mind to cultural differences, one must be aware of the existence of this lens.

c.) Every culture, as an expression of identity demands equal respect and tolerance. Awareness of intercultural differences allows diplomats to consider each culture equally and to be cognizant of one's own cultural background. Culture is an expression of identity and must be treated respectfully and sensitively. As far as cultural particularities are concerned, there is no right or wrong; the "correct" culture does not exist. Lacking tolerance and sensibility are a destructive recipe for effective diplomacy. They are signs of a lack of cultural respect and contrary to the principles of diplomacy. Moreover, awareness of various cultural fundamentals, such as religion, philosophy, and ideology, which form a cultural identity, must be taken into account. It is important to realize that some issues can evoke strong emotional reactions, and are therefore a threat to successful diplomacy. The more emotionally responsive a cultural identity is, the more rigid members become when their beliefs are not respected.

d.) It is crucial for diplomats to be mindful of the various perceptions that fellow negotiators may have of not only themselves and their national identity, but of other participants as well. Cognizance on these issues is indispensable in understanding the behaviour of negotiating parties.

e.) Nonverbal communication is equally as important as verbal exchanges during diplomatic proceedings. They require particular attention because they are unspoken, and therefore, interpreted according to an individual's cultural knowledge of non-verbal exchanges.

f.) Diplomats should always keep in mind that not all parties have similar interests when entering negotiations. Hidden agendas and unanticipated priorities can influence diplomatic interactions more than the official ones; these concealed interests can influence a negotiation more than the actual purpose of the gathering. Understanding these gaps requires not only a profound knowledge about current issues facing a party's domestic environment, but also underlying cultural motives for

why they may be pursued.

g.) It is imperative that the claims of all participants be taken seriously. Moreover, underestimating any party can lead to unexpected and unwanted revelations during proceedings.

h.) Flexibility is crucial during proceedings because unexpected occurrences are a likely possibility. Diplomats must be flexible enough to react with the required degree of alertness, respect, and professionalism to limit any further impediments to successful diplomacy. Nevertheless, flexibility may not be the appropriate instrument to deal with intransigent negotiating parties.

i.) Lastly, the best way to evoke cultural awareness is to experience cultural differences in practice and to acknowledge cultural pluralism. Even intercultural training, as good as it might be, cannot fully replace personal experiences. Cultural variations should not be viewed as a threat to a specific culture, but instead as the possibility to broaden one's mind.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Some hopeful ideas can be found in, Richard L. Armitage and Joseph Nye, S., *A Smarter, more Secure America* (Washington DC: CSIS, 2007.) Available at:

[http://www.csis.org/component/option,com\\_csis\\_pubs/task/view/id,4156/type,1/](http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis_pubs/task/view/id,4156/type,1/) (accessed March 2, 2008): 49 "...improving the effectiveness of U.S. government public diplomacy efforts in the field will require a higher degree of cultural understanding and awareness on the part of American officials."

<sup>2</sup> Otfried Höffe, "Globalisierung? Ja bitte!, Warum universale Werte nicht nur westliche Werte sind," *Welt Online*, July 21, 2007. Available at:

[http://www.welt.de/welt\\_print/article1043426/Globalisierung\\_Ja\\_bitte.html](http://www.welt.de/welt_print/article1043426/Globalisierung_Ja_bitte.html) (accessed February 4, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> For a U.S. military perspective see, Jennifer V. Chandler, "Why Culture Matters: An Empirically-Based Pre-Deployment Training Program" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Geert Hofstede, "Diplomats as Cultural Bridge-Builders," *Intercultural Communication and Diplomacy*, ed. Hannah Slavik (Malta, Geneva: DiploFoundation 2004), 26.

<sup>5</sup> Hofstede, "Diplomats as Cultural Bridge-Builders," 26.

<sup>6</sup> Raymond Cohen, *Negotiating Across Cultures, International Communication in an Interdependent World* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace 2004), 11.

<sup>7</sup> William B. Gudykunst, "Cultural Variability in Ethno linguistic Identity," in *Language, Communication and Culture*, ed. Stella Ting-Toomey and Felipe Korzenny (Newbury Park: Sage 1989), 223.

<sup>8</sup> Cohen, *Negotiating Across Cultures*, 12.

<sup>9</sup> Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1976), 213,214

<sup>10</sup> Russell B. Sunshine, *Negotiating for International Development: A Practitioner's Handbook* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1990), 27-29.

<sup>11</sup> Hofstede, "Diplomats as Cultural Bridge-Builders," 31.

<sup>12</sup> Erika Svedberg, "Feminist Theory and International Negotiations," *International Studies Perspectives* 3, no.2 (2002): 153-173.

<sup>13</sup> Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture*, 39, 53, 105-113; Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall, *Understanding Cultural Differences: Germans, French, and Americans* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press 1983); Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall, *Hidden Differences, Studies in International Communication: How to Communicate with the Germans* (Hamburg: Stern 1987).

<sup>14</sup> Cohen, *Negotiating Across Cultures*, 36.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>16</sup> Alena Korshuk, "On Intercultural Training of Diplomats," in *Intercultural Communication and Diplomacy*, ed. Hannah Slavik (Malta: Diplo Foundation, 2004), 408.

<sup>17</sup> Richard D Lewis, *When Cultures Collide: Leading Across Cultures*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2006), 30.

<sup>18</sup> For a comprehensive overview about national and cultural peculiarities and their influence on the intercultural communication and negotiation process: Richard D. Lewis, *Finland, Cultural Lone Wolf*, 179-563.

- <sup>19</sup> Paul Sharp, "Talking to Americans: Problems of Language and Diplomacy," in *Language and Diplomacy*, ed. Hannah Slavik and Jovan Kurbalija (Malta: Diplo Projects 2001), 93-106.
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- <sup>23</sup> Cohen, *Negotiating Across Cultures*, 37.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-84.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 190-191.
- <sup>26</sup> Lewis, *Finland*, 179-180.
- <sup>27</sup> Wilfried Bolewski, *Diplomacy and International Law in Globalized Relations* (Berlin, Heidelberg, New York: Springer 2007), 79.
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- <sup>34</sup> Lewis, *When Cultures Collide*, 535-537.
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- <sup>36</sup> See for further information: Lewis, *Finland: Cultural Lone Wolf*.
- <sup>37</sup> For further information, see: Gilles Asselin and Ruth Mastron, *Au Contraire! Figuring out the French* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 2001).
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- <sup>41</sup> Glarbo Kenneth, "Wide-Awake Diplomacy: Reconstructing the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union," *Journal of European Public Policy* 6, no. 4 (1999): 646; Reuben Wong, "The Europeanization of Foreign Policy," in *International Relations and the European Union*, ed. C. Hill and M. Smith (Oxford: University Press, 2005), 138.
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<sup>81</sup> Donna Lee and David Hudson, "The Old and New Significance of Political Economy in Diplomacy, *Review of International Studies* 30 no. 3 (2004), 356; see Adda B. Bozemann, *Politics and Culture in International History: From the Ancient Near East to the Opening of the Modern Age*, 2nd<sup>ed.</sup> (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1994)

<sup>82</sup> David Reynolds, "International History: the Cultural Turn and the Diplomatic Twitch, *Cultural and Social History* 3, no. 1 (January 2006): 91

<sup>83</sup> Sunshine, *Negotiating for International Development*, 26.

<sup>84</sup> Former U.S. Ambassador Henry E. Catto, Jr., talking about "Diplomacy in 2015," suggested: "Finally, the Foreign Service will need more than ever the guidance and help of that corps of unsung and knowledgeable heroes, national employees, who can educate our diplomats on host-country mores and oddities. Every country has its peculiarities... and it takes a native of the country to interpret them to the visitor." (Henry E. Catto Jr., "The End of Diplomacy?" in *Net Diplomacy I: Beyond Foreign Ministers*, ed. Fulton, Barry (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace), 2002. Available at: <http://www.usip.org/virtualdiplomacy/publications/reports/14.html> (accessed March 3, 2008).

<sup>85</sup> Hannah Slavik, *Intercultural Communication and Diplomacy*, 20.

<sup>86</sup> Korshuk, "On Intercultural Training of Diplomats,"410.

<sup>87</sup> Hofstede and Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 359.

<sup>88</sup> Glen Fisher, *Mindsets*, 75; Cohen, *Negotiating Across Cultures*, 225-226; Sunshine, *Negotiating for International Development*, 77; Lewis, *When Cultures Collide*, 174; James K. Sebenius, "Caveats for Cross-Border Negotiations," in: *Negotiation Journal* (April 2002): 121: stereotyping, over-attribution, skewed perceptions and information processing, global negotiating culture.