

Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution

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Diplomacy stands for institutionalized practices by which nations conduct their relations with one another. Originally, the English term 'diplomacies' referred to the care and evaluation of official papers or archives, many of which were treaties. In the 18th century, diplomatic documents increasingly meant those pertaining to international relations, and the term diplomatic corps was used to signify the body of ambassadors, envoys and officials attached to foreign missions. In 1796, the British philosopher Edmund Burke castigated the French for their 'double diplomacy' during the Napoleonic Wars. Since then, the term diplomacy has been associated with international politics and foreign policy aimed at furthering national interest.

The aim of this paper is to bring out the rising importance of diplomacy along with the gradual emergence of modern nation state. It seeks to trace diplomacy as a developmental fallout of the process, moving from simple to complex societies. It maybe viewed as an evolutionary process leading to modernization of international politics.

The Process

Let us begin by looking at the importance and relevance of diplomacy in modern politico-administrative world order. The growing irrelevance of conventional warfare has made it important. In today's world, conflict does not involve show of strength, valour and power-based military tactics. Among modern nations, conflict is more a clash of interests— primarily economic— than territorial expansion. Following seem to be the reasons for it.

Growth of industrialization is the prime cause. Conflict in modern times is not a simplistic conventional warfare. It has become a multifaceted and multidimensional clash of interest. It can be better understood with the help of Hebert Spencer's evolutionary model of society's progress from unstable homogeneity to stable heterogeneity. Some corollaries follow from this perspective:

- (a) Ever increasing structural and functional heterogeneity and complexity;
- (b) Ascending of mind over physical power;
- (c) The growing supremacy of science

The growth from simple to complex implies and the overgrowing complexity of structure and function also explain the power of observation over imagination and supremacy of man's mental power and capacities over physical power. It is this expansion of man's mental power that accounts for the growth of science. Subsequently, science led to the advent of a complex phase in man's physical and mental development called the Industrial Age.

Industrialism and scientific temper changed the ideological priorities of human society in general, which brought about a tremendous change in man's social and political conduct. These trends gave rise to:

(a) Emphasis on rights, individual and collective. It led to the development of humanitarian perspective where, above everything, human existence and life is of paramount importance.

(b) Industrial growth, capitalism and ever increasing world population, in turn, gave birth to concepts of development through primacy of economic factor.

As a result, evolutionary development from military to industrial led to the undermining of conventional warfare, which was quite a contrast to the concepts of development, of economic self-sufficiency. Along with the growing industrial urbanism, the fallout of World War-II on the politico-diplomatic world order is also important. An understanding of the legacies of World War-II is very important for us to appreciate the growth of diplomacy as a means of conflict-resolution. The most immediate legacy of World War-II was the material damage and human suffering that it inflicted.

Besides this immediate and obvious effect, some undercurrents developed during World War-II as a result of the involvement of the whole world, which changed the tide of World's politico-economic scenario. The fallout of which manifested itself in the following manner:

(a) Creation of a new international organization dedicated to promoting peace, co-operation and human rights was the first step. In 1945, nations determined to maintain the hard won peace of the 'total war' founded the UN. This development had a very decisive impact on international disputes, integrity of a nation state by finding solutions to problems that exceeded the boundaries and means of nation-states.

(b) Another important dimension, which assumed importance and came up as a fallout of World War-II, is the concern for the economic factor. As has been pointed out by Herbert F. Ziegler: "Total war also affected the economies of the world". At the end of the war, the US accounted for almost half of all the goods and services produced in the world economy. The war had laid to waste every major industrial region in the world except for those of North America. Consequently,

(i) The economic concerns of nation states seem to have suddenly shot into prominence after the World War-II. This is evident from the UN Security Council's stand of enforcing its decisions through imposition of economic sanctions on countries that threaten peace.

(ii) The prominence of economic factor is also evident from the causes of cold war and decolonisation, which succeeded the World War-II.

(iii) As is mentioned by Ziegler, cold war was not simply a great power rivalry. At its heart was a conflict between different social economic and political systems. The resultant equations between pro US and Pro USSR forces influenced the foreign policies, political institutions and economic systems of societies in almost every corner of the world.

(iv) The decolonisation process, which went on side by side, was also a result of the growing importance of nation states and their shattered economies. The continued imperial rule became a sort of financial burden because the prolonged war had seriously sapped the economic strength of the imperial societies. As a result decolonisation like the cold war gave rise to great changes in global politics.

(v) World War-II catalysed advances in science and technology and stimulated the idea of planned research and development. The postwar military strategy and politics was shaped more by scientific and technological developments.

(c)The World War-II led to a spurt of technological advance for defence of nation states. Economic and scientific development had a double-pronged effect on societies. It increased the importance of diplomacy as a crucial consequence.

(i) On one side, capitalism led to the development for humanitarian concerns and selfish motives;

(ii) On the other, for the safety of the system whose complexity went on increasing day by day, economic prosperity led to the development of intricate systems of defence. These transformed the conventional show of strength and valour through its use to defence by scare mongering tactics of show of military power.

(iii) It led to development of destructive technology which on one hand increases multiplicity of interests within and outside nations and on the other gives phillip to military technology which is primarily destructive. The main aspect of destructive military technology is spying technology where every military secret is an open secret.

In such a situation of multiplicity of interest, ever-expanding research related to defence of nation-states and economic globalization we have reached a stage where we do not want a war.

Since, we cannot afford conventional warfare, we want to avoid war. The only way to achieve this is through effective and coercive diplomacy.

(d) In the modern times there seems to be an overlapping of economic, political and security issues. The economic aspects come first. The sustenance complexities generated by ever-increasing population puts a binding on nation states to adhere to the economic agenda. On the other side multiplicity and clash of interest demand security for the economy, which in turn shapes the inter-and-intra-nation-state-politics.

(e) The ever-increasing complexity implies a very high degree of inter-dependence among varying parts of a system, be it social or otherwise. Interdependence demands caution because activity of one is definitely going to affect the other. Therefore, modern systems and nation states do not have any scope for hasty and harsh decisions. Multiplicity of interest gives birth to frequent clashes which, in turn, cannot be dealt with strongly. The obvious way out is diplomacy, i.e., the war of words, war of managing, manoeuvring international relations.

The Case of India and Pakistan

Technology has brought about a hierarchy at the international level too. It has led to the emergence of developed, underdeveloped and super-powers amongst nations. Super-powers do not possibly want wars because that will be contrary to their being super-powers who can control and direct the functioning of developed and underdeveloped nation-states. The obvious answer in such a situation is diplomacy. This is evident from the lingering conflict-relations between India and Pakistan. In the situation as it is and has been, diplomacy appears to be the only way out. But there are factors that do not allow diplomacy to succeed.

Says Anil Padmanabhan (*India Today*, June 17 2002), “Both India and US are fully aware that another series of terrorist strikes in Kashmir can put paid to all the diplomatic gains and reset the stage for a military conflict that neither India nor Pakistan really can afford”.

If we analyse the key players in the diplomatic developments between India and Pakistan we will see that it is the interest of all the involved actors which brings about coercive diplomacy into play. China has passively aligned itself with Pakistan and is an important coordinate of the Pakistani military strategy and diplomacy because it has an impression that its links with Pakistan give it a leverage over India. It plays a spoiler's role. It is not in its interest to see bilateral Indo-Pakistan talks succeed. Continued militancy in Kashmir also suits China because it keeps India off balance.

The US interests in the region flow from strategic considerations like sustaining its hegemonic role in the region and also because of convergence in American and Indian thinking at the moment that Musharraf is not serious about weeding out Al-Qaida or checking terrorism in Kashmir. America is now helping to manage the Indo-Pak confrontation by staying engaged, by

urging both sides to avoid war and publicly recognizing the Indian case against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism and also partially by strengthening Indian military capacity through supply of modern equipment.

The US diplomatic stance has two objectives vis-à-vis Pakistan— (1) maintaining a credible regime that can do its bidding in the region and safeguard its interests, and (2) avoiding anarchy within Pakistan so that the military and nuclear command and control structure remain intact. The British sympathies are with the Pakistan but to maintain its special relationship with the US, it has demonstrated its resolve to fight international terrorism and the British position over Kashmir has been more pro-India at the moment.

But, in the long run, the US engagement in the region is expected to lead to paradoxical consequences. The US will continue to strengthen the economy of Pakistani state and strengthen the Pakistani military regime and at the same time it will put pressure on it to avoid war with India. This, as India views it, is likely to weaken democracy and civil society within Pakistan, augmenting Pakistan's military capabilities and maintaining just the kind of institutions that can be reused to flare anti-India sentiment.

There are chances that oft-repeated strategy of coercive diplomacy vis-à-vis Pakistan might not work in the future and it is rather likely to turn India into a crying wolf in the eyes of the world which seeks to scare Pakistan every now and then for no reason. Notwithstanding this, diplomacy (if not the coercive version of it) remains the only effective instrument in the existing circumstances to tackle the problem without taking recourse to any military solution, which may snowball into a nuclear war.

Conclusion

This paper has tried to outline the growing importance of diplomacy for conflict resolution by viewing it as a developmental fall out of the legacies of World War-II and gradual unfolding of the politico-administrative world order from simple to growing complexity. The World War-II had a decisive impact on the World economy. Newly formed nation-states found it difficult to sustain their galloping populations and emphasised on the economic factor. International relations and politics started being shaped by the primacy of the economic factor in mind. To sustain and further economic interests diplomacy became imperative because a change from military to industrial society also demanded a change in tactics. Military society is primarily based on the idea of conquest and industrial society on defence and deterrence. So, diplomacy basically signifies defensive tactics needed for sustenance.

Diplomacy seeks to avoid military interventions. Conflict is suppressed and subdued and the system lives on. The intricacies involved in the global, politico-economic system act as hindrance in the process of total resolution of conflict amongst nations. Through diplomatically enforced coercion conflicts can be managed and controlled even if it cannot be resolved. The role

of Russian President Putin at Almaty Conference highlights the coercive role of diplomacy where it curbs and curtails conflict.

However, diplomacy is the most powerful means in the hands of nation-states because tactics of conventional warfare do not go with complexity of modern societies. And if diplomacy is war by other means it is the most welcome of all strategies to promote, safeguard and secure national interest. India and Pakistan (and especially Pakistan) must draw their lessons in diplomacy from such basic understanding that it is through diplomacy rather than through attempted proxy-conventional warfare that national interests can be advanced in the long run.

Readings and References

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