

NEW DIRECTIONS OF MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY

The Changing Roles of State and Nonstate Actors in Diplomatic Practice

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Introduction

Multilateral diplomacy is not new in itself. Its contemporary scale, however, is and so is its significance. Any quick glance at the dialogues taking place on the global stage will show that the actors are now a large cast of very varied characters all exercising some kind of power and influence. The variety comes from two main sources: First, some of the characters are property owners—they have a territorial existence—but others are not and derive their significance from what they stand for and not where they sit. Another way of putting this is to say that some of the actors are states, or the governments of states, and some of them are not. Those that are not may be global organizations made up of a combination of states but having

an independent role to play; others are transnational and represent ideas or causes; still others are equally transnational and provide humanitarian aid or other social relief. The second source of variety stems from the wide disparities of physical size and scope of activity, which apply to both kinds of actor. Entities which can be called states range from the smallest provider of the United States, and nonstate actors range from the smallest provider of humanitarian aid to the global reach and power of the human rights defender, Amnesty International—to give just one example. This situation is bound to raise the significance of exchanges between these parties, and one of the commonest forms—though not the only one—of such exchanges is multilateral diplomacy.

Evolution

What has happened to bring about the contemporary change in the quantity and importance of multilateral diplomacy? Essentially three changes have taken and are taking place. First, states are acquiring a different and sometimes lesser scope of action. Second, associations of states are affected by the changing role of their progenitors, and some have begun to move into a more unilateral global role, though remaining multilateral in their construction. Third, the tendency for weak states to collapse into uncontrollable internal conflict has brought a new importance to private organizations offering humanitarian, human rights, and developmental relief. Each of these three changes has been affecting and increasing the conduct of multilateral diplomacy.

In discussing this further, let us ask whether there is any benefit in considering past examples. Associations of bankers the trading interests of the Hanseatic League do provide early examples in Europe of a kind of multilateral system. They, too, shared the stage with rulers and religious centers of power; but they did not share the ease of communication nor receive that significant inheritance from a previously predominant set of methods that characterizes the modern experience, nor did they survive the emergence of the sovereign state. So though they are intrinsically interesting and do give some indication of what can happen when there is a plurality of type among diplomatic actors, they do not represent the origin of the current arrangements. For that, the period of nation-state primacy was crucial.

From the seventeenth century onward, the state became the primary and then the only diplomatic actor in Europe, with the exception of the (persistently declining) Roman Catholic church. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the modes of behavior of the states system were extended over the rest of the world. The establishment of empires shrank the globe,

and the expansion of the United States contributed to the effect. Where this did not happen—in China, Japan, Siam, and Abyssinia—the European norms were nonetheless successfully insisted upon. Where there was reluctance to join in, as in the Ottoman Empire, the requirements of reciprocity enforced compliance. The result was the steady development of an extraordinarily effective system of interstate diplomacy, with a mechanism of almost watchlike complexity, which was designed to serve the needs of a community of sovereign states.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the needs of sovereign states began to include the making of transnational arrangements. The cause was the increase of governmental scope and power in the aftermath of the industrial revolution. Developed societies expected to be able to control all sorts of human activities which had formerly been unregulated or just had not existed, and it soon became apparent that, for example, the control of disease required more than national legislation, since disease does not know about frontiers or sovereignty. Diplomacy had thus to accustom itself to the idea and practice that the defense of national sovereignty might in some cases be best achieved if its limitations were actually negotiated with other states. The form that this idea took, at least to begin with, was the emergence of regulating bodies, established by international treaty, administered by international civil servants, who were usually diplomats "borrowed" for the purpose and given powers and methods to resolve disputes. The International Sugar Convention of 1902 gave rise to a ruling body which was given the power actually to punish member states for any transgressions of the treaty. The making and maintaining of such entities involved multilateral diplomacy, and both the nature of states and their international primacy were necessary preconditions for the emergence of multilateral activity. (Pigman 1997)

The age of the dominant state system gave rise in the early twentieth century to a massive collapse of international security, which caused the 1903–1905 war in Asia and the 1914–1918 war in Europe. The shocking slaughter of the conflict brought a determination to end war after 1918, and this led to the establishment of the League of Nations—a multilateral organization created by prior and extensive multilateral diplomacy. It was an association of states and dealt only with states, but it nonetheless produced a sharp growth in the techniques of multilateral diplomacy, both in its dealing with member states and in the activities of its members before, during, and after meetings. In one sense these techniques were familiar from the functioning of the international administrative bodies set up in the preceding seventy-five years, but their overtly high political role at Geneva gave them a more significant place in the diplomatic armory than before. Other contemporary problems had similar and additional effects. Efforts at

disarmament, attempts to resolve both the political and practical problems surrounding reparations payments or nonpayments, the related issues over the repayment of US wartime loans, and the need to combat the Great Depression after 1931—all extended both the resort to and the scope of multilateral diplomacy. Through all these events, the parties to multilateral negotiations were more-or-less universally states.

Nor did this change with the onset of the 1939–1945 war. The conduct of the war, like that of its predecessor and the wars against Napoleon of 1792–1814, involved a high degree of multilateral negotiation and planning, more on the Allied than the German or Japanese sides in the twentieth-century examples. The range of topics and activities grew more complex: intelligence, funding the war, and justifying the war to publics that had now become, often tragically, full parties to the conflict all required attention as much as the strategy and tactics of actual fighting. In all this, the Red Cross remained the only party which was neither a state nor an association of states, having a separate, treaty-given, position in world politics. Much the same followed after the war. Setting up the United Nations was certainly intended to bring a more powerful multilateral institution into play, which would be host to many subsets for specific purposes, but its position as a creature of states was clearly spelled out, and it was plainly not antiparallel in 1945 that the end of the global primacy of states was approaching. No provision was made for such a momentous change, and it is easy to see why not. The postwar period and the onset of the Cold War produced both military and nonmilitary multilateral bodies such as NATO, South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), briefly, the Warsaw Pact, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance or Comecon, the OECD, the Western European Union (WEU), the Coal and Steel Community, the EEC, ASEAN, and the OAS, just to name a few. These, too, were associations of states. As they came and went—Africa saw many failed attempts to set up multilateral bodies—and the Cold War ran its course, other developments were quietly occurring which were to change the picture dramatically. (Hamilton and Langhorne 1995)

Contemporary Change

The chief propellant of change was a revolution in the technology of communications, and the consequences were so important for multilateral diplomacy that it is worth charting them carefully. *Globalization* has been the consequence of this revolution and is the latest stage in a long accumulation of technological advance which has given human beings the ability to conduct their affairs across the world without reference to

nationality, government authority, time of day, or physical environment. These activities may be commercial, political, financial, religious, cultural, social, or technological advances in global communications have made globalization possible, and the fact of globalization itself is to be seen in the contemporary surge in human activities conducted globally. The effects of these activities on the whole range of humanity's expectations, systems, and structures have been and are a heady mixture: They have come and keep coming at different paces in different places; sometimes they create entirely new significant activities, sometimes they share them with older systems and structures; sometimes they induce adaptation, and sometimes they erode and destroy. They represent both opportunities and threats (Langhorne 2000).

For multilateral diplomacy the chief significance of this revolution lies in its external consequences. The relative position of states is weakened and some states collapse. A general condition that weakens states will weaken their associations also, unless those associations take on a new role, independent, or more independent, of their progenitors, as single actors on the global stage. This evolution can already be seen in the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO which now look less like multilateral institutions than they once did as they respond to public pressures derived from anxiety about the management and distributive fairness of the global economy. These public pressures are instructive in themselves, for they originate in the perception, sometimes instinctive rather than worked out, that states and their governments are no longer able to control global economic and financial movements satisfactorily, either separately or in combination. The global political environment induced by this situation has begun to see alternatives to the state emerge in some areas of activity, and these alternatives are generally multilateral both in their internal arrangements and in their external relationships. The reason is either changing roles among pre-existing multilateral entities or the development of entirely new roles. As will now be seen, states have to respond differently to their interlocutors, new ways of handling multilaterality develop in both old and new multilateral entities, and the very nature of contemporary problems leads to a rising significance for multilateral responses.

2.79 Multilateral Economic Institutions (MEIs) and Diplomacy

After World War II the governments of the victorious powers established what was to have been a trio of MEIs to manage and administer key aspects of what had become an increasingly global economy, whose mismanagement in the 1930s was held to have been partly responsible for the rise

of fascism. In the case of the so-called Bretton Woods twins, the International Monetary Fund was to handle monetary relations, and the World Bank Group, comprising a family of MEIs, was to encourage development. The intended International Trade Organization would have supervised international trade. The latter did not emerge until the GATT became the World Trade Organization in the mid-1990s. These three institutions together have dominated the field of nonstate economic entity (NSEE) activity, involve the largest number of member governments, and are engaged in the lion's share of NSEE-government diplomacy. Power within them has been weighted in favor of the largest stakeholders.

Other, more specialized institutions were also created. Regional development banks such as the Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, paralleled the focus of the World Bank for their respective regions, but with power distributed more substantially to the recipient governments. Functionally specialized economic agencies of the United Nations, such as the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the UN Development Program (UNDP), and the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), concentrated on particular, usually development-related, economic objectives. These agencies developed their own politics, institutional character and sense of mission, mechanisms of decisionmaking, and diplomatic channels. They operated more on the principle of members' voting equally, contrasting with the Bretton Woods method of weighted voting power according to capital contribution, and as a result, they had a wider constituency. Another type of NSEE is represented by the OECD, which is knowledge-generating and consultative, though it might have developed more direct functions had its proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment been agreed on. The World Economic Forum (WEF), particularly since it broadened its invitation list following public protests that it helped to perpetuate global economic unfairness, has become a good example of the knowledge-generating, consultative NSEE but, in this case, entirely nongovernmental in its procedures and funding. The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) was founded in 1919 and is a further important example. It promotes free flows of trade and capital, and it has taken up issues as different as war debts and reparations and curbing protectionism. The ICC provides a range of services to members, including panels of experts on areas such as intellectual property rights, taxation, and competition law, and in 1923 the ICC established the International Court of Arbitration to help member businesses resolve commercial disputes. In the 1980s the ICC introduced mechanisms to combat international commercial crime, and in the 1990s it produced standards of practice for sustainable development that have been widely endorsed.

These institutions require regularized working relationships with member country governments. The professional staffs of the MEIs in particular were often drawn from the foreign services of member states or else from finance ministries or other appropriate agencies. But NSEEs from the outset took seriously the need to construct their own professional, and hence diplomatic, identities by such measures as establishing rigid nationality quota systems for employment and setting higher employment standards than member governments in areas such as linguistic ability. In doing so they created a cosmopolitan cadre that came to differentiate itself and its objectives from the staffs of the governments from which many of its members originated.

Although NSEEs are fundamentally different from nation-states in their character, organization, and purpose, the evolving complexities of intergovernmental diplomacy affect NSEE representation to governments equally. Most NSEEs have small, relatively centralized professional staffs that tend to represent themselves as and where the need arises. In many organizations, the great majority of the professional staffs function as diplomats, either formally or informally, at least in the information-gathering and communications tasks. In terms of the institutional organization of representation, among the diverse range of NSEEs the MEIs are the most likely to represent themselves to governments through permanent or ongoing missions. MEI missions to and in client countries—developing countries—are the most similar to permanent diplomatic legations of governments. Annual general meetings of the World Bank, the IMF, and regional development banks, WTO ministerial conferences, WEF Davos Summits and the ICC World Council—these are analogous to intergovernmental summits.

The emergence of communications networks built around Internet communications has made it much easier for all sorts of other nonstate entities, ranging from global firms to NGOs, to interact with NSEEs directly, bypassing the state institutions that would previously have represented civil society interests at NSEEs. Intensive lobbying, publicity campaigns, and protest activities have forced MEIs to reconsider policies and change actual diplomatic procedures—for example, the location and timing of meetings, and security. The protests against the WTO at its 1999 Seattle conference not only forced delays and changes in the proposed multilateral trade round but also brought about changes in the way that the WTO and other NSEEs publicize themselves and their activities. The WEF has reacted similarly.

MEI representation to governments has also changed as particular MEIs have been reformed. In the case of the GATT/WTO, diplomacy between nation-states over international trade issues was institutionalized in a particular way by the political process that led to its creation and early devel-

opment, particularly because the ad hoc GATT secretariat was perceived as weak relative to nation-state governments. However, the GATT-led process of trade liberalization helped to trigger a structural change in the global economy and thus changed the perceived identities and interests of GATT member governments, particularly in the form of a shift among major developing countries toward more protrade liberalization positions. This structural change in turn led to a transformation of the institution and its processes through the creation of the WTO, with its strengthened secretariat and its one-country-one-vote with supernajorities decisionmaking mechanism, which brought about a real redistribution of political power (Pigman 2003).

Contemporary Conflicts and Multilateral Diplomacy

A changing relationship between states and nonstate actors does not stop at economic issues and institutions. The factors contributing to a weakening of state authority discussed earlier can in some cases become structurally destructive. Those states which evolved over time have been altered by what has happened and, in some of their former roles, reduced in function. But for those states which have much shorter histories and arose as deliberate creations, only because no other form of organization for human society was conceivable, have suffered much more and in several important cases have collapsed entirely. It is in the consequences of these collapses that the most significant developments in multilateral diplomacy have occurred. The resulting violence has been particularly uncontrolled and cruel, thus engaging the world's attention via CNN and like disseminating media, and it is internal conflict which has become characteristic. So much is this the case that it has become commonplace to observe that traditional interstate conflict has been largely supplanted by communal warfare—in Africa, the Caucasus, the Balkans, and South and Southeast Asia. Dealing with these outbreaks has not been easy either for states, local or distant, or for international organizations because their traditional stances and in some cases their charters do not envisage this type of conflict. Into the breach have stepped private organizations whose justification for intervention lies in their mission to relieve humanitarian disasters, encourage economic development, or defend human rights, not to keep international order or preserve or restore peace. All of these missions are trampled on when civil strife develops. This kind of activity, however, is new for such organizations because their missions cannot be accomplished as an aid to an existing public administration and government, which was the familiar pattern, because both are likely to have collapsed. This means either providing alternative

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governance themselves or constantly negotiating with others to achieve at least enough of it to carry on. Inevitably, because of the different functions that private organizations exist to perform, there has to be a multilateral approach among them, and the commonly found surrounding political chaos—the remains of collapsed governments, would-be governments, warlords, neighbors, international organizations, former colonial proprietors are all likely contributors—means that the entities with which private organizations must deal are themselves multilateral to the highest degree. Here is where the formerly stable concept that multilaterality occurs among states or bodies set up by them has evolved into something much more complicated, reflecting the complexities of the global political and economic situation itself.

Given the complications, it is no surprise to find that recent humanitarian crises from Rwanda onward have yielded flurries of multilateral diplomacy on-site, in other countries, and at the UN. During the Rwanda crisis, for example, the private organizations involved removed themselves at one point to a conference in Amsterdam and excluded the UN from participation. At other times, the UN, in addition to responding structurally by organizing private organizations, has constantly had to initiate multilateral activities, particularly at the instigation of special representatives of the Secretary-General. But it should be remembered that not all the actions of private organizations are multilateral even if most must be. Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) and the Red Cross have both found themselves having to deal in the most bilateral way with groups that have murdered and/or kidnapped their staff.

It is probable that the most striking increase in both quantity and type of multilateral diplomacy by nonstate actors occurs in humanitarian and human rights disasters, but it is by no means the only area of expansion. The considerable history of global "summits" on social and environmental issues is a case in point. The tag is an extraordinary tribute to the importance attached to them, since nothing less like a summit, at least as they became known after World War II, can be imagined than these vast multilateral assemblages of governments, private organizations, and sometimes even individual participants. They have largely ceased in recent years, partly because of the sheer difficulty of handling them, but more because the lack of any administrative power behind them has meant that governments have been seen to be responsible for implementing their conclusions, such as they might be, and have not done so, either for national reasons, or out of practical impossibility. This problem is undoubtedly going to persist, as it does in the area of global economic management, because of the insufficient development of effective representative capacity by nonstate-actors, so that their diplomatic activity regularly falls short of their intrinsic importance

and their ability to monitor decisions or to implement policy change is either slight or nonexistent. There are exceptions in the environmental field, where global environmental organizations have taken on the task of monitoring the decisions arising out of the Rio and Kyoto conferences (Langhorne 2000).

Thus, there is a situation in which there has to be multilateral diplomacy, but its results can be frustratingly evanescent, which may lead to an increase in the already significant amount of public protest on the streets, particularly associated with global social and economic governance. Despite the highly traditional format, if not motivation, of the war in Iraq, it is the interface within and between multilateral entities and the global community of states which is providing the most forceful evolution in contemporary diplomacy, and the results will be of profound importance for institutions of every type as well as individual human beings.

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MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY AND THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE AFTERMATH OF 9/11

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Prior to the events of September 11, 2001, many American academics, journalists, and policymakers argued with remarkable certainty that globalization pointed to a future in which multilateral cooperation would temper the dominant state-centered model of international relations. September 11 and the other events of the past few years, however, have shown that globalization is not a neat process of increasing international interdependence. In fact, these events, particularly for those living in the United States, have exposed many of the problems exacerbated by globalization: increasing international economic inequality, backlashes against "cultural imperialism," the decreasing ability of states to monitor the transfer of large amounts of capital, and, of course, the proliferation of weapons capable of inflicting tremendous harm on civilian populations and physical infrastructures. Increasingly, groups dissatisfied with, or most adversely affected by, the "new international order" are voicing their opposition outside official institutions, often in response to the domination of those institutions by local elites or by a handful of powerful nations. Although