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The Role of Intercultural Communication in Diplomatic Negotiations

Filofteia Repez¹, Polixenia Olar², Nicolae-Florin Prunău³

Abstract: Intercultural communication in international relations and diplomacy can be considered as an important condition for cooperation in any field (political, economic, cultural, etc.). Establishing and maintaining contacts, both bilaterally and multilaterally, is not possible without such communication. In diplomatic negotiations, the intercultural competence of specialists, namely the training of practical skills and abilities that ensure the ethnocultural perception of the individual's development, his ability to correctly interpret the specific manifestations of verbal and nonverbal behavior in different ethnocultures, has a major role. Based on these considerations, the article proposes two scientific objectives: the presentation of the role of intercultural communication in diplomatic negotiations and some aspects of intercultural communication in the diplomatic negotiations of the European Union.

Keywords: intercultural communication; European Union; negotiations; diplomacy; role

“(…) 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 end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity”. President John F. Kennedy (*Commencement Address at American University*)

1. About Intercultural Communication in Diplomatic Negotiations

Intercultural communication has become an interesting topic for practitioners from various fields (scientific cooperation, academic research, business, management, education, health, culture, politics, diplomacy), who have realized how important this type of communication is for their work. Moreover, intercultural communication has become a discipline, which is in permanent development, but *“many of the general and particular themes and subjects, being far from being clarified or systematized”* (Spînu,

¹ PhD., Professor, Department of Political Sciences and International Relations, Faculty of Communication and International Relations, Danubius International University, Romania, Address: Blvd. Galați, nr. 2, Galați, Romania, Corresponding author: filofteiarepez@univ-danubius.ro.

² PhD., Associate Professor, Department of Strategic, Public and Intercultural Communication, Faculty of Security and Defense, National Defense University “Carol I”, Romania, Address: Șos. Panduri, nr. 68-72, sector.5, Bucharest, Romania, E-mail: lisiolar@yahoo.com.

³ PhD., Assistant Professor, PhD, Department of Political Sciences and International Relations, Faculty of Communication and International Relations, Danubius International University, Romania, Address: Blvd. Galați, nr. 2, Galați, Romania, E-mail: florin.prunau@univ-danubius.ro.



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2018, p. 124). In diplomatic negotiations, intercultural communication is a significant element in terms of success or failure.

We live in a globalized world, where interaction with individuals from other cultures is inevitable, so in diplomatic negotiations, negotiators must also possess, along with innate qualities (character, intelligence, sense of humor, pleasant presence, patience, self-control, ability to listen), qualities acquired through education, training and self-discipline (knowledge and understanding of the history and culture of different societies, knowledge of several foreign languages and understanding negotiations). Diplomatic negotiations are discussions between professionals, but who, in the end, are people who come from different cultures and societies, and this interaction leaves its mark on every negotiation (Cercel, 2019, p. 149).

Diplomatic negotiations are not an isolated process, but take place in a certain environmental and social context - *“living in a globalized world, interaction with individuals from other cultures is inevitable, so people (negotiators, diplomats, mediators, peacemakers) who learn how to work across cultural divisions are needed, because negotiating cultures has become an essential skill”* (Rîpeanu, 2019, p. 57).

According to Professor Dietrich Kappeler, basic concepts have different meanings in different cultures; this means that in international relations and diplomatic negotiations the examination of a concept is always culturally biased, consequently an interpretation according to one culture tends to criticize different interpretations according to other cultures as well. Whenever states belonging to one culture have a dominant position in a multilateral forum, they try to impose their point of view on other states belonging to other cultures; the latter will then criticize the views of the dominant culture in the forums where they are the majority. That is why it is very important that diplomats and politicians give special importance and accept cultural differences (Kappeler, 2004, p. 79).

Each people has its own customs and traditions, its own culture, its political and state organization, its history; all these exert influence on the way of organizing diplomatic negotiations. The cultural differences of the states require that in such negotiations, the negotiators know the cultural factors of the states under negotiation in order to effectively adapt to the realities of cultural dynamics and models in the field. In the relationship with another partner who comes from another culture, the negotiator must show his own personality and, at the same time, accept and respect the way of behavior of the other party; knowing the characteristics regarding the negotiation style specific to a certain culture is strictly necessary before starting the negotiation process, in order to avoid blocking them as a result of the shock produced by the surprise of an unexpected attitude (Rotaru, 2018, p. 172).

For Aman Garcha, the different cultures of states affect how individuals will behave in diplomatic negotiations; the cultural differences to be considered may prove to be as important as those identified in certain contrasting sets of values that determine the hierarchy of negotiation objectives themselves, or as mundane as behavioral mannerisms or non-verbal cues that block subtly trust and safety; in addition, gestures and other non-verbal behaviors can contribute to psychological discomfort that can make communication more difficult. Continuing the argument, Aman Garcha believes that the art in diplomatic negotiations includes the ability to anticipate the decision-making process of the other side and influence it. To illustrate, he brings to attention issues from three countries – France, Japan and Mexico. In France, negotiation is already an established art, with a long tradition in international diplomatic relations; French negotiators show a sense of self-assurance when presenting the logic of their position, the negotiation setting becoming more of a forum for debate, with flexibility and accommodation just for the sake of agreement. The Japanese, in diplomatic negotiations, show patience,

harmony being very important, and they want social relations to be fluid and characterized by consensus. Mexican negotiators, in diplomatic negotiations with the US, feel engulfed by the shadow cast of their northern neighbor and are forced to negotiate based on US norms, but when negotiating with other nations, the sense of formal social occasion and protocol is stronger (Garcha, 2007, p. 4)

Wilfried Bolewski, ambassador by profession, believes that the way of thinking, speaking and behaving is deeply rooted in the individual's particular culture and therefore also influences his behavior during diplomatic negotiations; for effective and successful diplomacy at all levels, it is vital to consider the influences of national and regional cultures (Bolewski, 2008, p. 4).

A minimum intercultural training requires that in diplomatic negotiations, the negotiator knows, at least, what not to do or say, in order not to offend the party(ies). A relevant example is the effects of intercultural communication in the negotiation between the US and Japan for the conclusion of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951, concluded that the success of the talks was largely due to the adaptation of both delegations to the specificities of the two cultures.

Underlining the importance and relevance of including intercultural competence in the professional training programs of future diplomats, Mona A. Khalil presents the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), developed by the American researcher Milton J. Bennett, a model that consists of six stages or levels of transcultural sensitivity that help define a person's level of intercultural competence, namely: denying cultural differences, defending, minimizing, accepting, adapting and integration; such programs should include at least three components: regional studies, patterns and norms of behavior, and axiological orientations (that is, the foundations of any national culture, consisting of values, beliefs, convictions, prejudices, fears, dreams, stereotypes, feelings and generalizations that are predominant in a society) (Khalil, 2021, p. 19).

Intercultural communication is part of the major areas of competence required for the skill and knowledge profile of the diplomatic negotiator, along with adaptation skills, attitude of modesty and respect, understanding of the concept of culture, knowledge of the host country and culture, organizational skills, personal commitment and professional, building relationships, self-knowledge (Slavik, 2004, p. 1669).

The importance of intercultural communication for diplomatic negotiations is a hotly debated topic. The examples are many; we will highlight: the project called "Cross-Cultural Diplomacy Compared", whose main objective was to understand how European and South Asian diplomatic actors in the early modern era interacted, created diplomatic relations and mediated cultural differences; the scientific conference with the theme "Romanian-American negotiations in education, science, culture and art", which aimed at intercultural and international communication and openness in the context of Romanian-American relations.

2. Aspects regarding Intercultural Communication in the Diplomatic Negotiations of the European Union

From the point of view of international law, the European Union is an international organization like NATO, OSCE, Council of Europe; it is an international regional organization, which was created as such by the Treaty on the European Union, signed in Maastricht in 1992 and entered into force in 1993.

The European Union maintains diplomatic relations with almost all countries in the world and carries out a series of actions with strategic partners, key international actors and emerging powers and developing states. Around the world, the European Union works to prevent and resolve conflicts, support

democracies, promote human rights and sustainable development, combat climate change and contribute to a rules-based world order.

Since 2011, the European External Action Service is the diplomatic service of the European Union, which implements the European Union's common foreign and security policy in order to promote peace, prosperity, security and the interests of Europeans around the world. The European External Action Service is led by the head of European diplomacy, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and is made up of experts transferred from the Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the diplomatic services of the Member States – in Brussels, and a network of EU “embassies” (delegations) - outside the EU. The activity of the European External Action Service is complex; among its activities in 2023 we mention: continuing efforts to build and strengthen partnerships around the world, from Latin America and the Caribbean to Asia and the Indo-Pacific, the Middle East and North Africa, while strengthening relations transatlantic with the USA and Canada; the emphasis on strengthening the resilience and revitalizing the European path of the partners in the Western Balkans; contributing to the advancement of multilateralism by promoting more efficient, inclusive and participatory processes within the UN; contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals Summit (*Annual Activity Report European External Action Service*, 2023, p. 6).

The strategic document “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe a Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy” identified cultural diplomacy as a new area for common external action, culture being an important component and an enabling factor, and intercultural competence as having a main role. Under these conditions, intercultural communication has an important role in the activity of the European External Action Service and especially in diplomatic negotiations.

Addressing the topic of intercultural communication in the diplomatic negotiations of the European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, Andrea Parra-Leylaverigne brings to attention characteristic models of intercultural negotiation. According to the author, the negotiation profiles of the diplomats of the previously mentioned parties can be proposed by referring to the cultural origins of their ministerial instructions and their ability to transform them into content for a fruitful diplomatic dialogue - in the case of the European Union, the diplomatic corps is made up of teams of experts trained to renounce their national loyalties and work only from a European and then Europeanist perspective; on the other hand Latin American diplomatic negotiators represent the national interests of the countries of origin, speak on behalf of their governments, and their perception filter is built on the foreign policy priorities of each country. After comparing the negotiation methods and styles of diplomats from the European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the author concludes that: diplomatic negotiations are shaped by perceptual filters specific to each national and bureaucratic culture; the intercultural negotiation mission of diplomats is divided into two phases (intra-governmental negotiation and intercultural-interregional negotiation); the diplomats of the two sides, based on a detailed understanding of contemporary challenges and how other actors in the international system approach these new problems, constantly practice the art of intercultural mediation (Parra-Leylaverigne, 2019, p. 78).

In order to emphasize the important role of intercultural communication in diplomacy, the international scientific conferences of 2003 and 2004 (with the themes “Intercultural Communication and Diplomacy” and “Organizational and Professional Cultures and Diplomacy”) addressed various topics, such as intercultural communication in diplomacy, negotiation and conflict resolution, professional and organizational cultures, training of diplomats (the papers presented were collected in the volume

Intercultural Communication and Diplomacy, edited by Hannak Slavik, DiploFoundation, 2004, available on the website https://issuu.com/diplo/docs/intercultural_communication_and_dip).

Engaging in intercultural dialogue in a respectful and trust-building way, at all levels, from government to citizen, regardless of political frictions, is a prerequisite for European Union diplomatic negotiations, for the creation of regional and international alliances and the advancement towards common goals (Kokinova, 2021, p. 45).

3. Conclusions

In our ever-changing world, the influence of intercultural communication in diplomatic negotiations is substantial. Recognizing cultural differences, learning about the specifics of other cultures, developing mechanisms for understanding representatives of religious traditions and representatives of different cultures are, according to many specialists, a priority for the success of diplomatic negotiations.

Within the European Union, willingness and openness to other cultures are intercultural attitudes necessary for negotiators in diplomacy.

We conclude that the role of intercultural communication in diplomatic negotiations is decisive, this type of communication being at the heart of the negotiation process and explaining the success or failure of this process.

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