

Diplomatic missions abroad

*Diplomacy is seen as a means by which states try to secure their foreign policy goals and objectives in the wider international system in order to advance and fulfil their national developmental agendas, mainly through negotiation.*¹

In foreign policy circles, there are some who believe that for certain nations the ministry of foreign affairs, diplomatic missions abroad and their personnel are an inefficient luxury which can and should be reduced or limited. In other words, they are considered a luxury that only rich countries can afford. Obviously many others believe the contrary, i.e. that these structures are essential to promote national interests and to build good international relations. In my experience such issues have occupied — and continue to occupy — the minds of diplomats for quite some time. It seems a worthwhile topic to explore in the context of the diplomacy of small states.

Reflecting on the essence of small states, the criteria of definition and the relation they entertain with their environment generally brings valuable understanding into today's international relations and states' behavior in general. This is mainly due to the high sensibility of small states to certain basic characteristics governing the international system. According to the information provided by Diplo, small states conduct their diplomacy to pursue their foreign policy objectives, and to manage their participation in the global community of nations. Diplomatic means can transform the smallness (size and population) into an asset in the process of promoting national and international interests. In diplomacy in general and economic diplomacy in particular, knowledge and skills are very important and can lend a country considerable influence.

When practiced by small states, diplomacy is a subset of the basic themes and methods of diplomacy in general; and that small states, however defined, are necessary and active partners in the global community of nations.²

In a Comparative Analysis made by Laurent Goetschel about Power and Prosperity of small states,³ while trying to use the right criteria in defining a state as small, he refers to Jackues Rousseau or Charles de Montesquieu, who qualify a state as “small” in the context

¹(CROSS-MIKE, Solange (2004: 3): "Caribbean Diplomacy: Research on Diplomacy of Small States"; Draft Paper]

² As an alumni of Diplo, I would like to underline the value of the information and knowledge received during the Course. It has helped me to have a clear idea of how small states can use their “negative” size for some positive developments in international arena. And these theories work out in every time and in most of the situations.

For more, see <http://www.diplomacy.edu/courses/smallstates>

³ The below file contains a useful analysis and a comparative work on relevance between power of small states and their foreign policy.

[File://Power](#) and Identity Small states and the Common foreign and.htm

of policy and international system, as a state which is perceived as no danger to neighboring states. But, as the author itself poses, with democracy well-established in large and small states, what significance does the concept of small states in the context of international system retain?

Or, to go further with proper question: Can small states have only envoys instead of MFA and diplomats living abroad to carry on the foreign policy in an international system?

Thinking that small-state concept has always been a relative term and the qualification of a state as small only makes sense in relations with large ones, I believe that significance of smaller depends on the notion of power and the nature of international system.

So, the concept of small states is not based only on territorial extension, but on the importance of power also, qualitative and quantitative criteria.

In his book “Power and prosperity”, Mancur Olson analyses the logic of Power and its implications on international politics and international system. He, insightfully argues that “when an individual has much more power than another, he may be better able to serve his interests by threatening to use-or by using- force than by voluntary means, he may be able to obtain for free what would otherwise be costly”.⁴

If we refer to the theories of International Relations and their explanations, we see that the balance of power is the ordering mechanism in the international system. In other words, the national interest is shaped by the states’ power relative to other states. That is to say, foreign policy is dictated by the logic of international system and the distribution of power among states.⁵ It is assumed that, in implementing foreign policies, leaders are relatively unhindered by their domestic political systems.

The power-political map constructs international relations as a continuous struggle for power by states. States ultimate ends are not discussed; rather, states are assumed to seek to maintain their power, to extend their power, or to demonstrate their power (in the pursuit to maintain or extending it). Only power, it is assumed, can restrain power. Hence, the only mechanism which provides some modicum of order in international relations is the balance of power. The only effective way to manage the balance of power is through a developed and sophisticated diplomacy. Diplomacy is an arena of concern only for decision-makers and is presented as a virtually autonomous sphere of action. Public opinion and domestic constrains on foreign policy are virtually ignored in most of the cases.

But, small states, I believe, should pay much more attention to building foreign policy, considering again the fact that they are always seen, by big ones, as “fragile creatures in

⁴ Olson, Mancur.2000, “*The dark side of the Force*”, *POWER AND PROSPERITY*, published by Basic Books, p. 60-65

⁵ Wood, Ngaire. 1996. *Explaining International Relations Since 1945*,

the rough sea of international system”⁶ in order for them to manage themselves in the field of high politics and to “survive” in an international system, despite their territorial extension.

As a conclusion, I can say that despite the high expenses needed to keep the diplomatic missions overseas and the MFA at home, I believe that these missions, their functions and officials are necessary for the “small states”. Of course, expenses are considerable, but:

-It is very important to reside in a country with which you have relations or you intend to establish and consolidate them, based on reciprocal interest

-If you are interested in the above, you should know the environment, the society, the culture, the people, and these can be only through living in that country, living with those people, understanding their mentality, working with them, cooperating with them.

-If you want/wish to advance the national interest of your country towards another one, either a neighboring or not, you have to carefully work in this context. I mean, you should know the interest of the people, the tradition, the preferences, the resources. In this case I refer to the investments, and for this you have to stay in that country and work to know and prepare the ground.

-Only by using “smartly” diplomatic means, small states can play a significant role in international arena.⁷

-In trying to identify clear objectives of small powers in international/ global politics, development of the international community is undoubtedly very important. This means, the context where the small states develop their own interest.

-If one (small state) needs to promote its own state in relation to another state or in international arena, it has to have its standard structures abroad. This means a continuous work and needs to be done from the proper countries you are interested in, not from home.

Nonetheless the above, I agree to say that the envoys can play an important role in building international relations and in advancing the national interests of small states

⁶ The question of definition, the criteria and the concepts related to them are very well analyzed in the paper of Laurent Goetschel, a Final Report which is found in [file:///A:/Power and Identity Small states and the Common foreign, file:///C:/Users/Zemaida/Downloads/200009_Goetschel%20\(5\).pdf](file:///A:/Power and Identity Small states and the Common foreign, file:///C:/Users/Zemaida/Downloads/200009_Goetschel%20(5).pdf)

⁷ An example might be the small state of Qatar, which has challenged the perception that small states cannot be active players in the global system. While many small states have played it safe by keeping a low profile in the international arena, Qatar has used public diplomacy strategies to successfully make a noticeable impact in world affairs. For more, see http://www.academia.edu/3278129/Strong_Small_State_Diplomacy_A_Case_Study_of_How_Qatar_Used_Power_Well

abroad, as well as the other non-diplomatic actors. But, in order to perform properly, in order to carefully work within an international system where superpowers and large states have almost “natural power”, in order to promote the own country, despite the territorial extension, I would conclude to say that diplomatic missions abroad have a very important and irreplaceable role to play, especially when referring to small states.

References

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CROSS-MIKE, Solange (2004: 3): "Caribbean Diplomacy: Research on Diplomacy of Small States"; Draft Paper]

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