

# INSUFFICIENT TRANSPARENCY - A MAJOR SHORTCOMING OF CONTEMPORARY DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATION

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## Abstract

The 21st century diplomacy undergoes a significant transformation process, mainly characterised by the loss of the state's monopoly because of the participation of the non-statal actors in the diplomatic process and the expansion of the use of digital communication in the formal relations between states. Diplomatic communication should, among other features, be transparent and efficient. Transparency in diplomatic communication was once again brought to public attention at the end of World War I by the former American president Woodrow Wilson. As democracy was implemented in more and more states, and the means of communication, especially the digital ones, reached a very high technological level, transparency in diplomatic communication improved, on the background of the citizens' pressure on national and international decision-makers, in order to increase openness to public opinion. The WikiLeaks disclosures led to significant, both positive and negative, effects, in the content and practice of diplomacy. One of the most important ones refers to the transparency of diplomatic communication, which represents a requirement for the credibility and legitimacy of the actions of political decision-makers and of diplomacies in the relations with other states and with their own citizens. The request of initiators and of the collaborators of WikiLeaks to apply complete transparency in diplomatic communication was and is still perceived with care and also even rejected by a large number of decision makers and of diplomats. Despite all these reservations, transparency is still applied in many of the activities belonging to public diplomacy, but there are still some shortcomings.

**Keywords:** *diplomatic communication, public diplomacy, secret diplomacy, traditional diplomacy, transparency in diplomatic communication.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

A literature review presents the opinions of different well-known experts in the field of diplomacy and of diplomatic communication. These opinions confuse both the ordinary readers and the people who have other preoccupations than the study of diplomacy. In this context, the

main goal of the present article is to synthesize the relevant opinions and to formulate some conclusions that could contribute to the clarification of some controversial aspects and to the diminishing of the confusions generated by the existing controversies. The second goal of the article is to formulate a reasoned answer to the following question: "Is it possible to apply complete transparency in diplomatic communication?"

In order to fulfil the above-mentioned goals we used the compared analysis method for texts referring to diplomacy, diplomatic communication and transparency in diplomatic communication. Also, the logical deduction was the method which completed the comparative analysis.

The article is structured into four parts. The first part deals with the conceptual aspects referring to diplomacy and its most important components which refer to the theme of the article: traditional diplomacy, secret diplomacy, public diplomacy and digital diplomacy. The second part is dedicated to diplomatic communication and the third one refers to transparency in diplomatic communication. Finally, a reasoned viewpoint is presented when it comes to the possibility of using complete transparency in diplomatic communication.

## 2. THE CONCEPT OF DIPLOMACY AND ITS MAIN ELEMENTS

In order to understand diplomacy, one should know its connections with the foreign policy, international relations, political sciences, anthropology, sociology, ethics, psychology, computer science, communication technology,

strategy, security, defense, communication, arts, sports etc.

For some of us diplomacy represents a less familiar notion and field. For most of the well-known authors in the field of diplomacy it represents a concept which developed in time both from a content point of view and from the way in which it is practiced. Approaching the topic of defining and of the content of diplomacy, Costas Constantinou notes that someone who wants to know what diplomacy means might get numerous answers (Constantinou et al., 2016).

Other authors also believe that diplomacy is understood differently by different people. For example, for some authors, diplomacy means communication, whereas for others it is synonymous with the international relations. Another category of authors places the equal sign between diplomacy and negotiation. In order to prove the previous statements, I shall present some opinions referring to the definition of diplomacy:

- Oxford Dictionary: "the management of relations between countries, especially by each country's representatives abroad." (Crowther, 1995);
- "The statist perspective: defines diplomacy as a set of processes and structures, bilateral and multilateral, relating to communication, negotiation and information sharing between sovereign states." (Hocking et al., 2012);
- "Globalist perspectives: emphasize the diminished significance of the state and the patterns of intergovernmental relations surrounding it." (Hocking et al., 2012, p. 18)
- Kissinger Henry, quoted by Emrich Rudine and Shulze David wrote that "the art of diplomacy is not to outsmart the other side, but to convince them of either common interests or disadvantages." (Emrich & Shulze, 2017);
- Gordon Smith, quoted by Saddiki said that diplomacy is "the art of advancing national interest through the sustained exchange of information among government, nation and other groups." (Saddiki, 2006);
- Jan Melissen believe that diplomacy is "the mechanism of representation, communication and negotiation through which states and

other international actors conduct their business." (Melissen, 2005);

- Paul Sharp thinks that diplomacy consists of "the way in which relations between groups [including state as well as non-state actors] that regard themselves as separate ought to be conducted if the principle of living in groups is to be retained as good, and if unnecessary and unwanted conflict is to have a chance of being avoided." (Lohmann, 2017);
- Satow, quoted by Bjola and Murray wrote that diplomacy is "the conduct of business between states by peaceful means." (Bjola & Murray, 2016).

Studying the works of various well-known authors, Hasan Saliu notices that there are confusions between diplomacy, international relations and soft powers (Saliu, 2020). These differences of opinions represent a sequel of the level of knowledge and interest of those respective authors in the study of diplomacy since it evolved very much in the last century and especially in the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At present, diplomacy represents a concept which has numerous components such as: diplomacies on fields of activity (politics, economy, culture, science, sports, ecology, security, defense and strategy), the diplomacies of the legal national and international entities (states, governmental and nongovernmental organisations etc. – the diplomacy of Africa, South-East Asia, Middle East etc.); traditional diplomacy, secrete diplomacy, public diplomacy, digital diplomacy, the new diplomacy (Constantinou et al., 2016).

The complexity of diplomacy derives both from the aspects of theoretical order (diplomats have to have vast knowledge in different fields – politics, economy, finance, ecology, strategy, culture, law, security, defense etc.), from those of procedural order (knowing and applying the Vienna Convention regarding diplomatic relations, the UN Charter, the international conventions and treaties to which the entity it represents is a party, the norms and procedures of international law, etc.) as well as action (collection, processing and transmission of data of interest from the space in which they carry out their activity to the entity they represent, etc.)

The behaviour of diplomats and of political leaders, especially in the international environment is permanently monitored. Following this fact some insufficient knowledge of the regulations mentioned or divert from it in interpersonal relations and in the official ones might generate tensions (diplomatic incidents) not only on a personal level but also at an interstate level.

The vastness of the fields of human activity in which states must protect and promote their interests, the democratization of international relations and the extraordinary development of communication technologies are the main causes that allowed the participation of non-state actors in the diplomatic process (non-governmental organizations, economic companies, organized human groups and/ or individuals). This phenomenon of losing the monopoly of diplomacy by states because non-state actors are active in this field, constitutes an important challenge for states because non-state actors promote their own ideas and interests that do not always coincide with those of the states they come from (Kleiner, 2008)

### *Secret diplomacy*

This component of diplomacy is also called traditional (Bjola and Murray, 2016, pp. 21-22) because it was used right from its beginning under the empire of confidentiality. Just like the concept of diplomacy and its secret component is the source of some debates in the global politics and journalism. The supporters of this type of diplomacy state that it is necessary for the security and the survival of states. The opponents of secret diplomacy state that this manner of practicing diplomacy is illegal, immoral and counterproductive because it does not protect the states and the nations, but it puts them in danger by "provoking others into dangerous, reciprocal actions and ultimately bogging international relations in the dark ages." (Bjola and Murray, 2016, p. 22)

Paul Sharp states that "secret diplomacy is difficult to define" because it assumes numerous types of secrets (those that are transmitted between diplomats, those that are hidden from the dialogue partners, those that are known from dialogue partners, those that are known about

partners and allies, strategic secrets, operational secrets, official secrets etc.), numerous types of communication channels and the so-called clandestine or silent diplomacy, practiced by the secret services (Bjola & Murray, 2016). Kurizaki and Whang agree with Paul Sharp when it comes to defining and knowing secret diplomacy because it "by definition is unobservable." (Kurizaki & Whang, 2016). In order to complete the image of secret diplomacy one must include the national laws and the international conventions which protect diplomats and "limit the access to public documents," (Duquet & Wouters, 2015) and also the "back channel diplomacy - official negotiations conducted in secret among the parties to a dispute or even between a party and a third party intervenor, which complement front channels, and are potentially at variance with declared policies" (Wanis-St. John, 2001). In other words, secret diplomacy takes place behind closed doors, meaning "diplomacy carried on by the government without the knowledge or consent of the people." (Parfait Momengoh, 2013)

### *Public diplomacy*

There are many definitions for public diplomacy because this component of diplomacy developed very much, especially in the last decades when the democratization of the states, the relations among them and the development of digital communications allowed a greater public access to the diplomatic process and the introduction of digitalization in the diplomatic communication.

The encyclopaedia definition of public diplomacy is comprehensive as it appears from the one mentioned by Nip and Sun: "efforts of an international actor to understand, inform, and influence foreign audiences in support of desired policy goals." (Nip & Sun, 2022) This definition contains some ambiguities such as: what are the means used to influence the external public and to fulfil the states' goals? What are the differences between the goals and the means used by the international actors during times of peace, in comparison to those during times of crisis and war? The authors of the article offer ideas such as that the goals and the means of political diplomacy depend on the decisions of the



political leaders and on the possibilities of the states and they argue their opinion with the way in which China uses its communication and influencing capabilities in relationship to the West following the tensions in the US and with other states on the topic of the disputes which refer to the South China Sea.

Referring to the definition of public diplomacy, Jan Melissen notes that "It is tempting to see public diplomacy as old wine in new bottles ... Image cultivation, propaganda and activities that we would now label as public diplomacy are nearly as old as diplomacy itself" (Melissen, 2005, p. 3). On the other side, Nicholas Cull highlights the fact that the new public diplomacy during which "in place of old concepts of propaganda Public Diplomacy makes increasing use of concepts on one hand explicitly derived from marketing – especially place and nation branding – and on the other hand concepts growing from network communication theory." (Cull, 2009)

Despite the differences of opinions and some confusion that some well-known authors make, there are some common elements between the opinions of some of "the most cited authors of public diplomacy such as Melissen, Gilboa, Cull etc." (Saliu, 2020). Based on these common aspects, Hasan Saliu defines public diplomacy as "the communication means of state and non-state actors of a country with foreign publics with the purpose of informing and influencing them in order to reach expected benefits" (Saliu, 2020).

Taking into account the object of public diplomacy to influence foreign audiences, some authors considered that this component of diplomacy represents a form of propaganda. For instance Lorenzo Medici wrote that "both cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy can be defined as propaganda when this term is used in the neutral rather than negative meaning" (Medici, 2019). Gilboa quoted by Mehnaz Gul wrote that "public diplomacy has been used as euphemism for propaganda or international public relations" (Mehnaz, 2015). Some authors such as Huijgh, Ellen urge that "public diplomacy overseas must also not be employed to serve domestic propaganda goals (convince citizens of a false international image of global admiration for their country), which according to Nicholas Cull was the case within the Brezhnev-era USSR and

currently is within contemporary Chinese and the United States' public diplomacy" (Huijgh, 2016).

Defining public democracy through propaganda represents a viewpoint that cannot be accepted because the distinction between public diplomacy and propaganda is one of the essence: diplomacy has the role to inform and influence, whereas propaganda has the role of misinforming and manipulating through the distortion of reality.

### *Digital diplomacy*

Similar to other components of diplomacy, digital diplomacy is defined in numerous ways. Therefore, the specialised literature uses different terms for digital diplomacy such as: "'e-diplomacy,' 'cyber diplomacy,' 'virtual diplomacy,' 'real-time diplomacy,' 'networked diplomacy' or 'social diplomacy'" (Constantinou et al., 2016). Holms, for example, considers that this type of diplomacy represents "a strategy to manage change through digital tools and virtual collaborations" (Zamanli, 2022). Other definitions also highlight the role of the new communication technologies in diplomacy: "the use of the Web, ICTs and social media tools to engage in diplomatic activities and carry out foreign policy objectives" (Constantinou et al, 2016).

Digital diplomacy is regarded by some authors as part of the public diplomacy and that is why they named it "public diplomacy 2.0" or "an extended form of public diplomacy" (Zamanli, 2022). A similar opinion belongs to Vionei Rashica: "Digital Diplomacy is a form of new public diplomacy, which uses the internet, new information and communication technologies (ICT) and social media as means for strengthening diplomatic relations" (Rashica, 2018). Digital diplomacy evolved and, at present, according to some diplomats such as the former foreign Swedish minister Carl Bildt, it should be integrated in an international effort meant to achieve diplomacy 3.0 as "multilateral digital diplomacy" (Constantinou et al.).

## **3. DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATION**

Communication has always been associated with diplomacy and sometimes confused with it. That is why Jönsson & Hall perceive

communication as an essential aspect of diplomacy and consider that its role is similar to the one that blood has for the human body because “whenever communication ceases, the body of international politics, the process of diplomacy, is dead, and the result is violent conflict or atrophy” (Jönsson & Hall, 2003).

Diplomatic communication can be achieved both open and in secret, a situation in which the secret communication shall be coded so that the messages broadcasted in this manner are not understood by anyone else then the addressee.

In order to eliminate possible confusions from the dialogue of diplomacy professional, their communication takes place in accordance with the norms and protocols established at a national and international level.

Opposed to interpersonal communication, diplomatic communication has various dimensions: oral (verbal); written; non-verbal; signals; the collecting, processing and broadcasting of information and rituals.

Taking into account the purpose of this article I shall briefly present the oral communication, the nonverbal communication, the signs and rituals.

### *Oral communication*

Oral communication usually takes place between dialogue partners who represent states and communities with different official languages. In these conditions, communication can be achieved in an international language known by both partners or using translators. In the case of using translators, it is important that they not only know the language of communication with all its subtleties, but also have the skills to respect the diplomatic norms and protocols. This is something that some authors regard as “diplomatic jargon” and the context in which the activity takes place is important so that the translator should not have “any room for deviant interpretations” (Bassole, 2018). This idea is important because “diverse people are often speaking of different things while uttering the same words” (Bassole, 2018).

The oral communication, with or without a translator, should eliminate or at least solve some possible unwanted situations generated by the ambiguities that may appear because of the

use and/or inadequate understanding of some words or phrases or because of the discordance between oral, nonverbal and paraverbal communication. In the case of the use of translators “professional translation is always a must in diplomatic relationships. If the translation is not accurate enough this may cause misunderstandings and lead to hazardous consequences” (Bravo, 2022).

Oral communication can take place under the form of a direct dialogue (face-to-face), with or without translators or during some conferences of summits.

**The diplomatic language** has a huge significance in communication as “it is not always straight and direct, rather it is often twisted to serve hidden vested interests,” (Bassole, 2018) therefore generating ambiguities and even threats, a situation which highlights the power relations between those who dialog and the entities that they represent (Pehar, 2005).

The diplomatic language is crucial in an efficient and correct diplomatic communication. In practice, it is used to establish a *lingua franca*, meaning a joint communication language. Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century this *lingua franca* was the Latin and then it was replaced by French. At present, English is the most widely spoken language in global diplomatic communication (Kleiner, 2008; Mehtiyev, 2010).

The diplomatic language is regarded by many authors as an influencing and manipulation force, a strategic means through which diplomats highlight the power relationships between the international law entities that they represent (Bassole, 2018).

### *Signs and signals*

**Signs** represent “words, smells or objects, and all these elements become signs if we invest them with meanings” (Graur, 2001).

**Signals**, in the diplomatic communication, represent everything that diplomats say and do. Here we refer to the nonverbal and paraverbal communication, silence and inactivity. Also, we have to take into account the fact that “the signals sent by the body in human communication belong to five registers: distance, voice, posture, mimic and gestures” (Graur, 2001).

As it is known, diplomats are continuously monitored, and that is why they can send signals without wanting to (Jönsson & Hall, 2003). As Isabella Lazzarini pointed out “diplomats also moved, acted, and reacted while negotiating, and their bodies had many resources to convey or conceal meaning and messages” (Lazzarini, 2015). Therefore, diplomats have to always be alert and pay attention to their behaviour in every situation so that they avoid the appearance of some misunderstandings or false interpretations on behalf of the allies, partners and/or adversaries.

#### *Nonverbal communication*

This type of communication is very important and includes “everything from personal gestures to the manipulation of military forces” (Jönsson & Hall, 2003). Addressing the subject of body language, Evelina Graur states that “although confusing and uncertain, body language always has communicative value ... our body is constantly sending messages... it can be a tool to help the verbal language - as when during speech we resort to gestures to punctuate certain ideas - or one that totally undermines the authority of the word” (Graur, 2001).

A handshake or sitting at the negotiation table has an important meaning. The higher the level of representation is, in the sense of the person’s position in the hierarchy of the entity he represents, and the notoriety that this person at the national and international level has, the higher the interest and intentions of the parties for that respective activity.

#### *Rituals*

This type of communication represents an important part of diplomatic communication. Kertzer, cited by Jönsson & Hall, thinks that rituals are unconceivable because in diplomacy rituals mean that “saying is doing and doing is saying” (Jönsson & Hall, 2003).

Rothenbuhler studied the problem of rituals and wrote a book on this topic. In it he claims that rituals “as condensed symbols are also richly ambiguous, flexible and adaptable to different social uses, they are especially useful for diplomatic signalling” (Rothenbuhler, 1998). Jönsson & Hall complete the image about rituals

as being the stereotype sequences of some very well-known events and applied by diplomats in various situations (Jönsson & Hall, 2003).

## **4. TRANSPARENCY IN DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATION**

Most authors take into account transparency in diplomatic communication following the year 1918 when the former American President Woodrow Wilson held a famous speech, in which he proposed the end of World War I and the conclusion of a just peace in 14 points for the winners and the losers. On January 8, 1918, Wilson optimistically stated: “open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view.” (Bjola, 2014).

A few months before Wilson, in October 1917, Leon Troțki, newly appointed commissar of Bolshevik Russia spoke out against the use of secret communication and diplomacy behind closed doors saying that “secret diplomacy is a necessary tool for a propertied minority which is compelled to deceive the majority in order to subject it to its interests” (Archibugi & Chiarugi, 2011).

The idea of transparency in communication has been largely debated in the last decades, especially following Julian Assange’s initiative of publishing some secret telegrams belonging to the USA State Department, on November 28, 2010, on the WikiLeaks website. In reality, transparency in diplomatic communication has existed starting from the Antiquity. In the Greek state-cities “diplomacy by conference and, by implication, confidential negotiation, were largely unknown in the relations of the Greek city-states, where envoys reported to public assemblies and argued in public” (Jönsson & Hall, 2003). At that time, famous speakers such as Pericles and Demosthenes were often sent on diplomatic missions. Jan Melissen also claimed that “in ancient times, prestige-conscious princes and their representatives never completely ignored the potential and pitfalls of public opinion in foreign lands” (Melissen, 2005).

According to many authors, transparency in diplomatic communication is part of public



diplomacy. Other authors consider that transparency represents the democratic expression of upholding citizen's right to information and a proof of credibility and responsibility. Eytan Gilboa proposes an assessment of the level of transparency in diplomatic communication on two levels: epistemological (the relationship with the media and with other communication tools) and the use of the digital communication environment (Gilboa, 2001).

There is also Grant-Keohane's model through which authors propose the assessment of transparency according to the credibility which results from participation and delegation (Grant & Keohane, 2005).

Jan Libich developed a transparency assessment module for the central bank's monetary policy, which applied to international organisations leads to answers to the following 5 questions: 1) what does the organisation aim to achieve (the goal); 2) information about the organisation that it uses in order to make decisions; 3) data about the decision-making process and the decisions taken; 4) how the organisational policies are financed and 5) information about the credibility of the organisation (how and if the organisation fulfilled its goals) (Yordanova, n.d.).

In order to assess the credibility of international organisations there are 7 possible mechanisms: hierarchical credibility (the result of the assessment made to the organizations by their upper echelons), supervised credibility (the result of the assessment made to the organisations by the authorities of the member states); legal credibility (the way in which laws are applied by the justice system); market credibility (an assessment made by investors and consumers); financial credibility (creditworthiness and solvability); the credibility of equals (reciprocal assessments made by the actors on the "global scene"); public credibility and reputation (the public image of the organisation or of the state) (Yordanova, n.d.).

Assessing various international governmental organisations with the help of the previously presented model, Yordanova comes to the conclusion that the UN is one of the most transparent organisations, whereas NATO is one of the opaquest (Yordanova, n.d.).

Serious steps have been taken in the field of improving transparency in digital communication, both at the level of the states and that of governmental and nongovernmental organisations. Among these initiatives one should mention the normative acts of the states, such as America's Freedom of Information Act (2006), The European Convention of Human Rights, The Charter (of the EU) of Fundamental Rights, American Convention on Human Rights, The Convention on Access to Official Documents (of the EU, from 2008) all of them based on The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Duquet and Wouters). There are also some particular initiatives in this field, such as The Freedom of Information Archive Database – "a collection of over 3 million documents about state diplomacy" referring to the 1620-2013 period. The documents are declassified and refer especially to the diplomatic activity of the USA, UK and Brazil and they can be consulted by anyone, according to the initiators of the database (Connely et al., 2021).

Analysing the communication of the EU decision-making factors with its citizens, Juliet Lodge reaches the conclusion that it is a faulty one, at least when it comes to the field of individual security, because the measures taken for individual protection are seen as disproportionate and citizens do not trust that they can truly protect them because they perceive the "e-security and e-governance measures" as being risky and these vulnerabilities will allow the theft of personal data (Lodge, 2006). The author also gets to the conclusion that the activity of running the European Union in the field of diplomatic communication is insufficiently transparent because it mainly takes place through information and less or even not at all through the participation of the citizens to the decision-making processes in the diplomatic field (Lodge, 2006).

Although at the global level there are increasing requirements for a greater openness of decision-makers towards the citizens, respect for the right to information and democratic credibility, one can notice that "the diplomatic services of a considerable number of States still operate in a culture of secretiveness" (Duquet and Wouters). This situation is the result of the suspicions and mistrust that manifest between states, but also of national and international regulations that limit

citizens' access to official documents, especially to those in the fields of security and defense (Duquet and Wouters, 2015).

The improvement of transparency in the diplomatic community is undisputable, but the level reached by it is not enough because the use of secret diplomacy has to be argued and explained and the activity of those who use it has to be controlled. There are regulations and mechanisms with this purpose but there are also opinions who state that the activity of the secret services and of those who use secret diplomacy is controlled in a formal manner.

There are numerous for and against arguments when it comes to the transparency of diplomatic communication but, at least for now, despite all the progress recorded, there are still some deficiencies.

## 5. IS COMPLETE TRANSPARENCY POSSIBLE IN DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATION?

Complete transparency in diplomatic communication existed in certain historical periods and in certain human communities, not just in the contemporary period.

The objective of the American President Woodrow Wilson to persuade the world's states to apply "open diplomacy" proved mainly impracticable although the Paris peace conference led to a certain openness of the decision-makers and of diplomats towards the international public opinion (Kissinger, 1994). Most likely mankind was not ready for a conceptual and procedural change of such proportion.

The concept of complete transparency was brought again to the public through the disclosures made by the WikiLeaks website which "between July and November of 2010, made available thousands of documents from a trove of half a million confidential U.S. military and diplomatic papers" (Zajacz, 2013). The initiative of the WikiLeaks founder, Julian Assange, shocked both the decision-makers and the ordinary citizens from various states of the world. The actions of those who read the materials published by WikiLeaks were various: disapproval, dissatisfaction and direct threats

- on behalf of various officials - and huge frustration followed by the desire to change on behalf of numerous ordinary people and experts from the political and diplomatic fields.

Many studies and books were published (Garnett & Phillips, 2019: "from the 28<sup>th</sup> of November 2010 and until the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2018, 263 academic papers and books were produced (including a few other items) that matched the terms: Wikileaks, Manning, US Cables, Cablegate") and numerous articles on the action topics of the WikiLeaks organisation. Interviews were conducted with the founder of the WikiLeaks website, some top politicians and diplomats on the subject of the effects of the disclosures and the ways forward in diplomatic communication. Debates on the topic of total transparency in diplomatic communication are ongoing and their end is still hard to predict.

I selected some of the most pertinent arguments, for and against total transparency, from the existing literature. Total transparency has to be implemented because:

- "Too often, government officials hide documents simply to save themselves from embarrassment." (Hindman & Thomas, 2014)
- "there is a good side to any net increase in the openness and honesty of communication and politics ... corruption deserves to be exposed..." (Medcalf, 2011);
- "transparency is the foundation of renewal of political system in contemporary democracies. It levels the neutrality of administration, promotes control systems and creates barriers to corruption." (Manfredi Sanchez et al., 2017);
- "secrecy is a potent cause for continued distrust, fear and hate; Secret diplomacy is vulnerable to precarious transgressions between legitimate diplomatic conduct and covert action ... [it] goes against fundamental norms and principles of democratic rule ... [and] has become impractical due to developments in communication technology and the growing demand for public accountability ..."; (Bjola, 2014).
- "power and confidentiality corrupt the unconscious." (Domscheit-Berg, 2011)
- the documents referring to the secret diplomacy are available to the public only 20 or 30 years later or they are never declassified



and published, and this fact generates a lack of trust in the leaders of the states (Parfait Momengoh, 2013);

- the public has to be informed about the activity of the leaders and if the diplomatic activity takes place secretly there is no possibility of knowing the successes and the non-fulfilments, respectively of being able to learn and use the lessons of history (Constantinou et al., 2016);
- "If wars can be started by lies, they can be stopped by truths." (Christina la Cour);
- the secret diplomacy represents an authentic Pandora box because it "inspires both revenge and fear. Its actions may look beneficial and even innocent in the short term but at the same time they may have far-reaching consequences, often negative, in the long run." (Bjola & Murray, 2016);

#### *Arguments against total transparency:*

- "There will always be a need for some secret diplomacy ... and some sensitive cables and other communications should be kept secret for many years" (Medcalf, 2011);
- "WikiLeaks actions of publishing secret cables without a critical eye toward whether any of them carry the potential to endanger entire nations or specific people. This is irresponsible"; (Hindman & Thomas, 2014)
- "secret diplomacy may serve to unlock peace negotiations ... may prove beneficial for normalising relationships with former adversaries ... may prevent dangerous escalations [of tensions between states] ... may help increase the diplomatic stature of small states."; (Bjola, 2014)
- "in the political field, and in some matters, confidentiality will always be necessary to guarantee the own capacity of interlocution and action of the diplomat." (Manfredi Sanchez et al., 2017);
- diplomats want "to discuss serious matters, preferably 'behind closed doors.'" (Bjola, & Manor, 2015)
- "WikiLeaks continually attempted to remain largely secret, while advocating for global transparency." (Murray, 2016)
- the gathering of information is not always possible under the conditions of transparency and that is why some people, ambassadors

were considered to be spies; (Jönsson & Hall, 2002);

- "secret diplomacy will endure, simple because of the mutually reinforcing interplay between estranged states, diplomacy and the secrecy dilemma." (Bjola & Murray, 2016);
- "secret negotiations allow leaders to circumvent long bureaucratic processes and to avoid pressure from domestic and international groups. Secret diplomacy enables leaders to manage audiences' expectations until they are convinced of the adversary's sincerity and willingness to cooperate." (Yarhi-Milo, 2013)

The so-far mentioned for and against arguments to total transparency in diplomatic communication are convincing enough to conclude that, at least for now, it is not possible to implement it. Attaining total transparency in diplomatic communication will, most likely, be achieved gradually and in a time span of at least a few decades. One of the most important requirements when it comes to fulfilling this goal consists of a stable global peace and among states there should no longer be any animosities, tensions or issues. The current geopolitical, geoeconomic or geostrategic state of the world makes me believe that global peace is not likely to occur in the following decades.

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## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The full implementation of the concept of transparency in diplomatic communication, followed by the renouncement of the secret diplomacy represents a goal concordant with the principles of democracy and with citizens' right to correct information.

Although transparency in diplomatic communication undergoes, at present, an improvement process, there are still some deficiencies caused by the resistance to change manifested by some decision-makers and diplomats, and also of the risks highlighted by the WikiLeaks initiative and by the disclosures made by Bradley Manning, Edward Snowden and other who, we as citizens, have not yet heard about.

I consider that the slow and sinuous development of the world towards complete democratization

and the implementation of global peace will smooth the pace towards the implementation of the „open diplomacy” concept in the relations among states and groups of states. In order to fulfil these requirements citizens and states have to let go of fear and find sufficient arguments in order to fully trust their dialog partners.

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## PEACE AND WAR IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY – THE OPINIONS OF A DIPLOMAT

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### Abstract

The purpose of this article is to share some of my opinions from the perspective of a diplomat, of a practitioner, who has worked for four decades in the Romanian, European and multilateral diplomacy. Each of these areas of diplomatic practices have particular specificities, perceptions and representations when it comes to the developments of the bilateral and international relations which highlight some significant aspects for the present work. Distilled in the background of experience, they simply and essentially mean: the recognition of the value of diplomacy as an active and loyal commitment to defending the national interests, the spirit of international cooperation, in favour of dialogue, negotiation, the search for possible reciprocal accommodations, moderate concessions and reciprocal benefit. I am certain that there are multiple opportunities for people to benefit from the information and assessments that are communicated by well-known sources. I wish to further this understanding with my reflections and to encourage people to take part in debates, which are encouraged by the academic environment of the city of Iasi and of Apollonia University.

**Keywords:** *diplomacy, war, peace.*

As a diplomat I worked in European and Asian countries. As ambassador and head of department in European structure, in Brussels, or as a diplomatic envoy in missions in Asian capitals, I took part in negotiations and in signings of political agreements in a friendly spirit between the European Union and states such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Singapore, Vietnam, India or Pakistan. It is precisely this diverse and intense experience that I lived and my entire forty years of diplomatic career which make me believe in the affirmation chances of the value of diplomacy at an international level.

I do by no means ignore the fact that we are currently sailing on the disturbed waters of the geopolitical turbulences, at a moment of worrying

convergence of multiple crises. Up to 2020 we were almost tempted to celebrate interconnectivity as a beneficial connection of states through the multiple effects of globalisation and of the comparative advantages. The COVID 19 pandemic turned everything upside down. The classical illnesses of the relationships among states have reappeared: nationalism, xenophobia and intolerance.

The war in Ukraine dramatically accelerated and altered mutations in the international scenery. The international community struggles for a new equilibrium, the geopolitical power axes are adrift, many people are scared by the perspective of shifting from a unipolar to a multipolar world.

Progressively, we witness the reconfiguration of the block policies. The US and the EU reached new levels of cooperation, NATO was reinvigorated. The emergent markets, People's Republic of China, The Russian Federation, India, the Arab, African and Latin-American countries prefer to navigate in the area of a new alignment, practicing prudent or neutral positionings.

The tendencies that we witness frighten us: there is a lower appetite for cooperation and compromise within the international organizations; the unilateralism of the powerful states weakens the dispute solving multilateral mechanisms; the value divergence retakes its ideological disguise and comes up with new political disputes; consequently, sensitive present-day subjects require time, mediation and long negotiations in the search for consensus and cooperation, regardless if we speak of human rights, the regulation of biotechnologies, of the digital space, the problems of the alien space or the polar regions.