

# Diplomacy and Diplomatic Protocol

~ Lect. Ph.D **Oana Iucu** (University of Bucharest)

**Abstract:** *The present study aims to observe relationships and determining factors between diplomacy and diplomatic protocol as outlined by historical and contextual analyses. The approach is very dynamic, provided that concepts are able to show their richness, antiquity and polyvalence at the level of connotations, semantics, grammatical and social syntax. The fact that this information is up to date determines an attitude of appreciation and a state of positive contamination.*

**Keywords:** Diplomacy, diplomatic protocol, diplomatic ceremonial, etiquette, courtesy, diplomatic law.

## 1. Diplomacy – Overview

From an etymological point of view, the word *diplomacy* comes from the Greek word “diploo”, meaning “to double”. Greeks used to hand two documents to messengers: a recommendation letter for the proxenos called *symbolia* and written instructions, folded into two, called *diploma*. The current meaning of the word diplomacy was introduced later; accordingly, in the Homeric era Greeks called their messengers *keryx anghelos* and later, in the classical era, they called them *presbeis*.

Roman messengers were called *nunti* or *oratores*. The representative of the Pope in the Byzantine Empire was called *apocrisiar*.

For a long time, the term was used in official papers referring to international relations, contracted on the basis of mandates granted by monarchs. Only later, in the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, a new idea was beginning to catch contour, according to which diplomacy was the activity that mediated the representation of states’ foreign interests. Therefore we can

identify several definitions given to diplomacy, corresponding to different historical stages:

- ▶ “the science of foreign relations based on diplomas or written papers granted by sovereigns” – De Flassan, *Histoire generale et raisonnee de la diplomatie francaise vu de la politique de la France*, Paris et Strasbourg, 1811;
- ▶ “dealing with affairs between states through peaceful means” – Sir Ernst Satow, *A guide to diplomatic practice*, London, 1859;
- ▶ “the science of rapports and mutual interests of states or the art to reconcile peoples’ interests” – Charles de Martens, *Le guide diplomatique*, Leipzig, 1866;
- ▶ “applied nations law”
- ▶ “dealing with the foreign affairs of an international law subject through peaceful means, mainly through negotiation” – Paul Pradiere – Fodere, *Cours de droit diplomatique*, Paris, 1899;
- ▶ “the official activity of state representatives in foreign affairs and mainly of diplomats run through treaties, mailing and other peaceful means to reach goals and accomplish tasks of foreign policy to defend the rights and interests of the respective state abroad. This is the most important means of conducting the foreign policy of states” – Mic dictionar diplomatic roman, Bucuresti, 1967;
- ▶ “activity specific to state institutions specialized in foreign affairs” – Ludvik Dembinski, *The modern law of diplomacy*, Boston, 1988 ;

- ▶ “a science and an art... as an art its main goal is to carry out international negotiations, including the ability to coordinate and run political negotiations, supported by full understanding” – P. Fauchille, *Traite de droit international public*, Paris, 1926.

Diplomacy is the ensemble of juridical papers which diplomatic law relates to adopting, dissolving or modifying juridical rapports. Most of juridical papers are mutually developed, while the possibility for a unilateral act to cause bilateral effects is not excluded as in the case of ending diplomatic relations.

However the rapports between states cannot develop in good circumstances, furthermore they cannot be profitable unless they occur in a certain mutually accepted organizational form based on respect from partners, full rights equality, acknowledgement of the fact that each state entity belongs to the international community and that its attitude, action or lack of action affects the entire community.

## 2. Diplomatic protocol

According to the described context protocol, courtesy, good manners and etiquette represent crucial tools. They create the atmosphere needed in the activities of diplomatic missions, in the collaboration between sovereign partners. The protocol and the ceremonial contribute not only to the proper foreign manifestation of a state but especially to the quality of its relations to different foreign states. Regarding this issue academic Mircea Malita states that protocol and ceremonial “can be considered true barometers that

indicate the state of relations between countries". European diplomat T.F. Sullivan had the following point of view on the subject: "In the absence of protocol communication between states would be much more difficult, international relations would encounter many obstacles, there would be less harmony and more friction, even more wars". Diplomatic protocol and ceremonial offer the framework favorable for establishing and developing correct relationships between states through rules unanimously accepted by the international community.

The emergence of the above mentioned type of protocol and ceremonial is rooted in the transition from the practice of sending messengers/temporary diplomatic missions with punctual tasks (like expressing the will of two ruling families from two different states to develop closer relations or even negotiating an agreement) towards establishing permanent diplomatic representations with ambassadors having their residence in the capital of the country in which they are accredited (Manciur, Emilian, *Protocol institutional*, Editura SNSPA, Bucuresti, 2003).

The first residential embassy, the way we understand it nowadays, was accredited in 1450 by the duke of Milan in the Florentine Republic. During the years that followed this example inspired other Italian and European states. The chiefs of these representations were initially called "resident orators", while the term ambassador – coming from Celtic and meaning servant – came into use later, in the middle XVI<sup>th</sup> century (Harold Nicholson, *Arta diplomatica*, Editura politica, Bucuresti, 1966).

Starting with the XVII<sup>th</sup> century the institution of diplomatic representation was

developing into a more accurate one, therefore it began to grant a certain diplomatic hierarchy. The diplomatic protocol and ceremonial followed the principle of equality between states. Thus, at the Vienna Congress in 1815 the European powers adopted a "Ruling" that established a priority order for chiefs of diplomatic missions according to the date they presented their accreditation letters and years later, in 1818, the great powers decided through a protocol signed in Aix-la-Chapelle that signing treaties should be realized in the alphabetical order of contracting countries (Harold Nicholson, *Arta diplomatica*, Editura politica, Bucuresti, 1966).

Nowadays the activity of diplomatic and consular missions is sustained according to "The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations" (April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1961) and to "The Vienna Convention on Consular Relations" (April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1963) as well as to worldwide norms of courtesy which are widely applied in spite of the fact that they have no juridical character, recognizing their merit in creating and maintaining an atmosphere favorable to developing relationships between states (Manciur, Emilian, *Protocol institutional*, Editura SNSPA, Bucuresti, 2003).

### 2.1. Protocol – General description

The term "protocol" consists of two words coming from ancient Greek: *protos* meaning "first" and *kollao* meaning "to attach", i.e. "something attached first". The term initially referred to the first sheet of paper stuck on a papyrus roll containing written information on its origins. In the VI<sup>th</sup> century the word referred to the first page of an official document which authenticated its origins. It later defined the original text

of a public notary paper, the register containing all these texts and the catalogue of models used to write administrative texts. Eventually, in early XVII<sup>th</sup> century protocol referred to “a formulary used in mailing according to rank” (Louis Dussault, *Protocolul, instrument de comunicare*, Editura Galaxia, Bucuresti, 1996).

This evolution explains the meaning used nowadays regarding norms of use in official activities, especially in ceremonies, rigorously established relations between public personalities, protocolar order, the use of symbols for countries and nations.

The term protocol has various meanings, among which the following:

- an ensemble of ceremonial rules and practices applied to official festivities in diplomatic relations;
- an office in an institution with the main task of officially organizing the protocol and ceremonial activities, celebrations and other similar actions (for instance the Protocol Service of the Foreign Affairs Ministry);
- a diplomatic document which includes agreements and decisions made during an international reunions;
- in the business world this concept refers to a convention or an agreement reached as a result of negotiations between business partners.

## 2.2. Protocol – Historical evolution of the term and semantic connections

When used as a synonym of the word “document”, the term “protocol” has two meanings. It can be used to refer to a treaty, to a convention or to the report of a conference.

These only apply to the basic meaning of the word. Thus, we can make the following statements: “Romania and Bulgaria signed an agreement protocol regarding the circulation on the Danube” or “The Ministry of Education and Research signed a protocol with the representatives of the didactic personnel regarding the... salaries’ growth”. The term can also refer to a form used in didactic papers’ writing in which case it is a printed paper made of questions or incomplete phrases and blank spaces filled in by the person who writes the document. The two meanings hint at the grammatical dimension: “protocol” used as a noun.

When used as an adjective, “protocolar” refers to formal customs as recommended by the protocol. We will use the term as follows: a protocolar visit. In equal measure we may say that a person is “protocolar” when very keen on the formality of social relationships; the meaning in this case is somewhat derogatory. An important protocolar provision refers to outfits mandatory to certain events, to the duration or positioning of those who attend a certain event. As a consequence, a garden party requires comfortable but at the same time elegant garments while the Opera Ball requires a smoking or a night gown respectively.

The term protocol also refers to the organization, service or office in charge with problems regarding the preparation and progress of official activities: “the Protocol Service in the Foreign Affairs Ministry”. In medicine protocol describes the stages of a surgical intervention. In publishing, the word refers to conventional signs used in proof reading. In informatics it is applied to the means of interconnecting the systems. In psychology it

refers to conducting a test, interpreting it or to the elements of a therapeutic intervention.

We also use the expression "love protocol" to describe behaviors dominating affective relationships between people or even between animals. Protocol can be defined in a wide sense as the totality of conduit rules which ought to be respected in society (Louis Dussault, *Protocolul, instrument de comunicare*, Editura Galaxia, Bucuresti, 1996).

### 2.3. Protocol and etiquette

A paper on this subject suggests that protocol includes the following:

- the relation between sovereign countries, stately organized, whether the mentioned sovereignty is foreign or domestic, domestic only or limited to goals pursued by the respective state;
- norms adopted in the relations to these countries and generally in the field of foreign affairs;
- the hierarchical rapports established between institutions and within institutions, rapports between decision making factors and their relationships to subordinates.

Other authors restrain the meaning of protocol to "imperative prescriptions that decide the place corresponding to each official character and the respective behavior" (Serres, Jean, *Le protocole et les usages*, Editura Presses Universitaires de France, Colectia „Que sais-je?", Paris, 1963).

The term etiquette refers to "the formalism of individual relations no matter if the rapport is a hierarchical one or not (Dussault, Louis – *Protocolul, instrument de comunicare*, Editura Galaxia, Bucuresti, 1996). Etiquette

is part of the larger domain of social behavior. This behavior often represents "an outer ceremonial which can make someone glimmer but not shine" since the true brilliance of a human being comes from the inside and not from the outside (Vasile Izdraila - *Bunacuvinta si comportamentul civilizatat*, Editura Facla, Timisoara, 1988).

Sometimes an exaggerated etiquette can have the opposite result, can defy any standard hence good taste and common sense (Serres, Jean, *Le protocole et les usages*, Editura Presses Universitaires de France, Colectia „Que sais-je?", Paris, 1963).

It is a protocol rule for the president of the state to moderate a meeting and not to be interrupted while he addresses the audience. Likewise, when it comes to monarchs, waiting until you are spoken to is a question of etiquette. The first example refers to exercising power; the other refers to a certain type of behavior that ought to be respected when meeting someone who requires a protocolar treatment.

The combination of these terms is so powerful that the norms established for one can also be applied to another except for the fact that protocol has restrictive effects. Not applying them may result in negative consequences that impinge on the entire community while not applying etiquette rules has an impact on the respective persons only. The difference between the two terms is that protocol is applied to inter-institutional relations while etiquette to individual rapports.

Another aspect leading to the confusion between terms is related to the etymology of etiquette. In the beginning of the XV<sup>th</sup> century it referred to activities in progress at the court of a sovereign which were written on

paper labels – nowadays we would use the word notebook. The term shifted from the meaning “happening at the court” to “how things happen at the court”. Etiquette at the court of Charles the Fifth remained famous throughout history for its rigidity and multitude of rules.

The etymology of the word *etiquette* *ab originem* was based on an interdiction imposed in the Versailles Park by the chief gardener at the court of Louis XIV<sup>th</sup> who ordered that inscriptions be planted asking for no trespassing on his newly planted lawns. But as the nobles kept ignoring the message, the gardener succeeded in receiving a royal decree which made these “*etiquettes*” mandatory. Since then the word entered the current use as referring to a behavior according to norms.

### 2.3.1. Etiquette and its extensions – social, cultural, regional

► A crucial role in the development of European society is *Spanish etiquette*. Its most prosperous epoch is related to Charles the Fifth (1500-1558). Spanish etiquette like many other types of etiquette originates in the religious ceremonial. During Charles the Fifth's reign all visible elements, hierarchies and formalities encountered at the Spanish court had the role to prove the mightiness and richness of the king. In Spanish etiquette soberness was the dominant feature which is why black and heavy velvet as well as black jewelry had their unique role. Journeys required special ceremonies. The sometimes rigid provisions of this etiquette lead to tragicomic situations. One of Spain's queens almost lost her life when she fell from a horse and her foot got stuck in the iron while the

animal kept running. Although she was in a desperate situation no one dared to rescue her because touching a queen was considered a crime of lese majesty, and the ones found guilty received the death punishment. Finally two nobles helped her and then fled the court.

► *French etiquette* is related to the Burgund ceremonial rather than to the Spanish one. Its most prosperous epoch started with the decay of the Spanish etiquette. The French ceremonial appeared at the court of Louis XIV<sup>th</sup>, the Sun King, but was not limited to the royal court only. The 1789 Revolution troubled the entire French society and people's behavior. It was a time full of contradictions in which many rules of conduit were abandoned and new ones adopted. The revolution was smothered and spectacular ceremonies returned. But there still was a rupture caused in part by the crowning of Napoleon, the new emperor: “When in the most solemn moment Pope Pius VII<sup>th</sup> lifted the crown over his head and wanted to place it on the emperor's head – just as one of his predecessors had done it a thousand years earlier, seated on Saint Peter's chair when crowning Charles the Great – at that precise moment Napoleon abruptly nabbed the crown and placed it on his head himself”.

► *English etiquette* played a crucial role in the development of European etiquette, incorporating all the features of Spanish and French etiquette, but maintaining its own distinct personality. English etiquette can be considered as more rigid and more direct than the Spanish and French ones. When European bourgeoisie started its ascension this type of etiquette imposed in the public consciousness the term “gentleman”. Nowadays English etiquette is considered the most polite form

of communication in diplomatic life and in business, not only in Great Britain but also in all the countries which are influenced by the Anglo-Saxon culture and civilization. In spite of the influence from other types of etiquette, the English one preserved its unique character and specific features which are still valid (there is an English placement, an English breakfast and so on).

► *Russian etiquette* – Russia represents a special chapter in the history of European etiquette. The Slav culture was decisively influenced by the Byzantine Empire. In time, the Orthodox Church became a decisional factor in state business as well as in private business. On the other hand, during Peter the Great's reign Russian etiquette was strongly influenced by the French one.

► *American etiquette* – The development of rules and social contact forms in America differ from the similar process in Europe. For an entire society, the ideal figure was that of the businessman. In the Middle Ages that figure belonged to clerks, in the classical period in France to the courtier and in the British colonial empire to the trader and to the adventurer. The American way of life puts a great emphasis on prestige, safety and success as observed in the typical American behavior.

American protocol borrowed many elements practiced at the French and Spanish courts, especially regarding hierarchies, clothing and ceremonial. The American middle class adopted behavioral rules established by these etiquettes.

### Concluding remarks

The present study aimed to observe relationships and determining factors between diplomacy and diplomatic protocol as outlined by historical and contextual analyses. The approach was very dynamic, given that concepts were able to show their richness, antiquity and polyvalence at the level of connotations, semantics, grammatical and social syntax. The fact that this information is up to date may determine an attitude of appreciation and a state of positive contamination useful in multicultural circumstances and in complex activities taking place in international backgrounds. An important contribution made by this study, a successful one we hope, was the assertion that in this field no detail, gesture, state, feeling, emotion or attitude can be considered as vetust or outdated. The only functional factor and criterion is constituted by the opportunity element.

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