



FROM FORMAL TO INFORMAL: THE PATH OF MULTICULTURALISM IN A DIPLOMATIC ERA

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ABSTRACT

This research presents the 21st Century challenges from the point of view of multiculturalism. Due to demographic growth, nations had to deal with cultural differences that migration brought up.

It goes without saying that multiculturalism appeared before our era, only the official term being relatively recent. With the important conquests made by great powers of the world, cultural exchange took place as consequence of migration. Diplomacy, in this multicultural context, has been, and will continue to be, a fundamental tool of understanding. Consequently, people gained abilities to share knowledge, facilitating acceptance, which led to the consolidation of multiculturalism.

What exactly happened was a transition from a non-homogenous mixture to a uniform culture, a long-term action which would not be here if there had not been tolerant solutions. We propose a multilateral perspective, highlighting the connection between diplomacy and multiculturalism through indicators as fundamental rights of humans, political tensions and values of communities.

Keywords: multiculturalism, diplomacy, international communication, diversity, tolerance.

1. Multiculturalism and International Relations

Lesson number 2022: the year when the time stopped. Or better said, we stopped. And we had to face the consequences of a hustle we had never been ready for: the lack of understanding other cultures, which, in other words, means a diplomatic failure. To put up a more complete image and give a context to the idea, we are referring to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which is, by definition, one major example of why multiculturalism remains a pillar needed if we want to be a civilization, not only a shared territory. This particular case highlights the importance of understanding why different countries need to share their values in a proper form, which does not affect the well-being of people (Eagan, 2023).

Subsequently, a big question which comes up is related to what multiculturalism actually is, and how this phenomenon changes the development of a society. Multiculturalism is the quality or condition of a society in which different ethnic and cultural groups have equal status and access to power, but which maintains its own identity, characteristics and more (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2023). This subject has been intensively debated, because it is a fairly new term which has arisen due to the intensification of migration. Throughout the centuries, people have been longing for a better quality of life and in order to achieve this, they have moved from one place to another in search of opportunities.

The most obvious extent to which migration has transformed society is through the demographic shifts it produces (Human Migration, 2023). The movements of people across borders of different states have brought about an increase of diversity with them. In this way, diversity has become a vital characteristic of the world. This is owing to the cultural exchange that highlights that any trade between societies can lead to a vivid fusion.

The question of whether migration or multiculturalism came first seems to be a philosophical conundrum, which has maintained the attention of specialists (Song, 2020). How can we establish for sure if this process was about formal relationships among nations or the natural need of people to explore better life possibilities? We assume that, in a prior form, multiculturalism was understood from the point of view of trades and commercial actors. People were engaging in these types of business to achieve a higher level of stability. After some significant trades, they realized that the exchange of experiences could spread to many other fields of activity, not only to economic ones, but also to

cultural domains. After that, the fascination for foreign civilizations increased, and people wanted to experience exactly what it feels like to get in touch with a completely unique way of living (Song, 2020). Can we say that after the beginning of a multicultural trade, migration has expanded? It might be a valid theory, but we will never be able to build a certain explanation for this complex conundrum. Probably the only deed we had to describe is the way these distinct civilizations figured out how to communicate.

The most relevant example of how multiculturalism appeared is the case of The Roman Empire (Roman Empire, 2018). Having an impressive ascension, this power of Antiquity gained influence and quickly became a force. It was also one of the largest and influential empires in history, which dominated many regions from several continents. The Roman Empire changed the face of humanity due to its significant impact on ancient societies. It was known for its conquests and expansion, which resulted in the movement of people and cultures across vast territories. Furthermore, The Roman Empire supported cultural exchange in order to turn civilization into a great power of the world (Roman Empire, 2018). In the example that we put forward it is stated that migration, seen as a normal result of expansion, had the main impact on the emergence of multiculturalism in the empire. Once it extended, people from various regions came to Rome, bringing with them their own traditions and costumes. This movement contributed to the creation of communities within the empire, being in fact the beginning of a multicultural society (History Guild, 2021). It can be considered that the migration between the borders of The Roman Empire laid the foundation for what multiculturalism really is and how this process takes part in a constantly changing world. Possibly, this role of ancient history can give further pieces of information about how this process has always been part of the multidimensionality of society. It is clear that the presence of different groups of people changed the way leaders think about the prosperity of their nation. As we continue to grapple with the challenges and opportunities of multiculturalism, we need to understand the importance of understanding this deep process which has occurred in the last decades.

While multiculturalism is often viewed as a positive force that celebrates diversity and promotes inclusivity (Eagan, 2023), it is important to recognize that it is not a one-size-fits-all solution. In practice, the implementation of multicultural policies can vary greatly depending on the country and its unique cultural and political context. Moreover, promoting tolerance and understanding among diverse groups is not always an easy task, and there may be challenges and obstacles to

overcome in order to achieve a truly multicultural society. This concept has been around for a long time and this is why it can mean different things to different people. In general, many people understand that multiculturalism is quite common, because in every country, there are communities of foreign individuals. However, is it enough to simply call a society multicultural, or should there be a stronger connection between people? Multiculturalism is deeply linked to migration (Green & Staerklé, 2013), but its true complexity is not often fully understood. What is rarely brought up in discussion is how these families feel inside the borders of their new countries. Have they been assimilated into the society, such that we can call that country multicultural, or have they only been formally accepted?

When we describe multiculturalism, it is normal to be convinced that this concept is the ideal outcome of assimilation. Presented as a complex process that involves tolerance and acceptance from both sides (Verkuyten, 2018), multiculturalism becomes one of the greatest strengths of societies. With complete openness, anyone can learn about the values and traditions of others, provided they leave behind their cognitive biases. Without a doubt, multiculturalism promotes the uniqueness and specificity of each culture, elements that it tries to value in the world, without creating discrimination. Multilateral exchange is identified between the native population and the assimilated one, both seeking to bring something specific for their beliefs and way of living (European Center for Populism Studies, n.d.). The next question which arises is how do they manage to understand each other.

A helpful hand comes from state actors which develop certain ways of communication for maintaining a proper international dialogue between nations, which helps people to better understand each other. Even though the art of communication is relatively old, improvements are always being made, as never before in history. International communication is also crucial in addressing the challenges and conflicts that arise from differences in multicultural societies. Effective communication can break down stereotypes and promote empathy, which are essential for building a more interconnected community.

2. Diplomacy and Its Effect on Multiculturalism

An interconnected community can have many solid forms of support throughout history, such as the act of diplomacy, which is the best canal by which states have maintained a proper

understanding, long before gaining the multicultural side (Cultural Diplomacy & Multiculturalism, n.d.). In fact, we can say that one of the bases that allowed multiculturalism to exist is diplomatic activity because we cannot talk about a society with diverse cultures, races and ethnicities without talking firstly about an agreement between nations that allows these people to coexist.

For example, the vital role of this process can be understood in high-risk situations, when the plight of individual human-beings becomes tied up with intercultural relations. When, for instance, “nurses from Great Britain face an illegal murder charge and possible public execution in Saudi Arabia under a legal condition which appears not to conform to international standards of law” (Brown, 2000, pp. 200-205). In terms of culture, there is no space for understanding the multiculturalism because the Arabian World, or, to be more precisely, the Islam, considers it cultural imperialism and, in some cases, they respond with violence in the name of Fatwa, the saint war, justifying their actions by saying that they have to do such massacres in the name of Allah. So how are these contrasting reactions to be understood and reconciled, assuming reconciliation is possible, or even desirable? The answer is through diplomacy, which sustains a negotiation that keeps the world safe by using soft power methods to ensure international peace. And the Islamists are only an example in this matter, because if we look closer in the history of international politics, the world would have had many more battlefields without diplomacy. Take, for example, the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 or the Peace of Westphalia of 1648. Or more recently, the Geneva I Conference and the Geneva II Conference, which have sought to bring an end to the Syrian civil war. These were important milestones events that led to a possibility for societies to flourish and develop in time some mutual respect interstate relationships, so that they can consider themselves, later, multicultural (Brown, 2000).

Now, after gaining a better understanding of what diplomacy does, we can define it properly. Therefore, it is a subject which includes managing international relations by “understanding the differences around us and finding the commonalities that exist within them”, as Ambassador Diana Janse said during her TED Talk on the topic of the new face of diplomacy. Diplomats, the people behind this enormous machine, make sure that they understand the national interests and affairs of the country they represent, the geostrategic and cultural objectives of their territory, so that they could establish both formal and informal trust relationships with the influential nations surrounding their own country in order to “give and gain” (TEDxTbilisi, 2012).

3. The Roots of Diplomacy and Its Rules

Even though this word does not have a history as ancient as multiculturalism, one would be surprised to find out that our ancestors interfered strongly with the roots of diplomacy. How so? Well, ancient civilizations are known to be a good source of inspiration for our generation in what concerns the activity of international negotiation. For instance, we redirect our minds to Egypt, an ancient civilization where archives were found regarding this subject, some of them dating back to the 13th century BC. Furthermore, the idea of “permanent diplomatic mission” was even found to date back to the Renaissance somewhere around the 15th century (Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2008). An interesting relation between multiculturalism and diplomacy in the Renaissance Era is that this cultural phenomenon meant more traveling between nations, more correlations between philosophers and increased interaction between cultures, along with the rediscovery of ancient Roman texts. In other words, it is exactly the socially-applied effect of diplomacy and multiculturalism intertwined.

Moving forward to the 17th century, we discovered that “the country which managed to form permanent delegations in the surrounding countries is Switzerland” (Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2008). Back then, the diplomats were called honorary consuls and international relations were not their only activity. It was actually a thing done voluntarily, in parallel with the professional aspect, but the interesting effect on the society is that it made Switzerland a multicultural supportive nation.

What is more, an interesting type of diplomacy, related to the idea of embracing the others, multilateral diplomacy, started “to gain support after the First World War”, and even more after the Second World War (Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2008). That is why the second part of the last century came with a huge amount of sovereign states on the globe, especially because of the amplification of decolonization, a phenomenon that came with the complexity of relations between states (Reeves, 2004).

We can also add that, diplomacy has its own rules so that we can talk about an international agreement between states. Hence, to come for a mutual understanding, the people who are charged for representing the views of the nations, no matter their race or ethnicity, have to follow some logic and neutral principles, so that mistakes or misunderstandings get reduced. So, the ten principles

for diplomatic operations are: “national interest, credibility, clarity, comprehensiveness, understanding, perceptiveness, circumspection and confidence-building” (Stanzel, 2019).

4. 21st Century Challenges from a Diplomatic and Multicultural Point of View

Nowadays, diplomacy has many objectives to achieve, including an efficient management of international conflicts. Despite all the efforts made, sometimes diplomatic communication fails to yield results, leaving room for the emergence of military power. A close example to us would be the conflict in Ukraine, where, in spite of doing sacrifices, peace was not possible. There have been instances of interethnic tensions and conflicts, in the country, especially in the eastern regions. The Russian-speaking population has felt marginalized by the Ukrainian government's promotion of Ukrainian language and culture, and this has contributed to separatist actions (Tamilina, 2022). Additionally, there have been reports of discrimination and harassment against other minorities. The main purpose of diplomacy is to find balance between these communities by identifying methods of how multiculturalism can be promoted and also peace can be maintained on the international stage.

Throughout history, leaders of the countries have had multiple negotiation sessions, but without any real changes in how their relations have evolved. One main reason for disputes is the promotion of cultural interest of minorities. Neither side will accept a different point of view that would violate certain national principles. In this case, it is absolutely obvious that multiculturalism was not and would never be completely understood by people living there. This relates to a well-known case, where, with the support of diplomacy, Ukraine could have taken actions to reduce the high level of intolerance to multiculturalism. Investing in cultural preservation can develop the people's wish to get in touch with new traditions and multiple exchanges. Assuming that “Russians and Ukrainians are fairly similar, due to their common roots, we tend to think that in their case it would be much easier to deal with little differences, which might occur” (Tamilina, 2022). Totally opposite is the truth because, while a part of the population defends specific values, another one would want the primacy of their ethnic group. According to the European Values Studies, these two societies do not meet similarities in the way they see a well functional community. Some indicators of the

study reveal how people understand the power distance or democracy (European Values Study, 2022). For sure, Ukrainians appreciate these concepts and try to apply them in the leadership of their state. While Ukraine has a pro Europe vision, Russia seems to be against any new changes in its conservative society. Some vital features of a country such as Ukraine are freedom, high moral standards and tolerance. Russia's invasion is a war against democratic and liberal forms of governance, against everything that means zero pressure when people want to express themselves. They have failed to understand that diversity is not an impediment, but on the contrary, an advantage. This is the exact reason why diplomacy faces one of its biggest challenges, maintaining balance at an international level. Finding a way to promote diversity must be a process which includes many real actions based on dialogue and soft power methods. Overall, it can be said that the challenge of promoting and creating a multicultural nation, especially in Ukraine, remains a tremendous work in progress, with ongoing efforts (European Values Study, 2022).

It is not excluded that in the near future, the world will face increasingly more challenges that require management. The 21st century has been full of unpredictable events that diplomacy is struggling to solve. In consequence, harmony between nations is no longer something that comes naturally, but more a desirable objective for which society has to work intensively (European Values Study, 2022).

5. How Does the Diplomatic Act Contribute to the Existence of the Multicultural Phenomenon?

Gaining a more accurate perspective in what concerns the evolution of diplomacy in the footsteps of multiculturalism, we can easier understand the importance of the dependence between these two concepts. Diplomacy shows up best when the idea of having different cultures in the same nation makes a real fuss among the civilization, making multiculturalism hard to survive. It has the main purpose of sustaining a conciliatory policy and formal relations (Hofius, 2022). On the other hand, in the last few centuries, the multicultural behavior showed up as a result of a well-done diplomatic act that allowed not only a bearable existence of different people on the same territory, but an actual understanding of human rights and a spirit of fraternity (Reeves, 2004). And we are talking

here not only about the formal bilateral and multilateral meetings between heads of nations, but also about the real help that states provide for each other in odd times. An example that could easily sustain this argument is the aid that Ukraine has been given by other nations, in terms of military weapons, food supplies or medical assistance. We take Poland and Great Britain for example in the military concerns, while France and Germany were the ones investing in the sanitary field. We include here the humanitarian aid that has been given, which supports not only the physical health of the ones affected, but also mental stability, because it is certain an aspect worth mentioning (Reeves, 2004).

What is even more of a proof in this case is the actual relation that got created between human beings, beyond the media. We take into consideration here the case where hundreds of children were met at the borders of neighboring countries with sweets, pieces of clothes and toys. Being more specific, we reminisce the example of a Romanian grandfather who was seen offering Romanian money to the Ukrainian infants and teenagers, so that they could feel like they are welcomed. What is the most heart-warming aspect about this scene is that behind the press, which brought up into the light this episode to highlight the idea that money is not a problem, is that there, in that exact time and space, an emotional bond has been created among people. They might not speak the same language, but it has never been needed, because humanity does not stand in words, but in acts (Reeves, 2004). And Romania, as many other supportive countries, has surely made its footprint as a multicultural society from that moment on, because diplomacy between it and Ukraine has grown into an actual fondness for each other.

Furthermore, a question that stands out the most in our society, especially in this dynamic context is “How can we fully acknowledge different perspectives, sometimes at opposite ends so that societies can become authentic multicultural civilizations and encapsulate human rights at the core of their leadership?”. Since 1945, people have tried to answer this question by launching a cultural platform known as UNESCO (UNESCO, 2022). This organization has been set up on the idea of the necessity of exchange of perspectives, for the purposes of mutual understanding and a more accurate knowledge of each other's lives as articulated in its Constitution. Through its programs and actions, this organization makes cultural diplomacy possible, by opening the dialogue in what concerns complex and sensitive aspects of culture, heritage, humans and their rights. Its importance reveals itself after long periods of discrimination of any kind (race ethnic or gender discrimination), because this concept of cultural diplomacy sustained by UNESCO means not only

multiculturalism, but also safety from negative biases (UNESCO, 2022). And after understanding this, leaders from all around the world acted by implementing a more intercultural management of governance, a conclusive example being Senegal. It is one of the countries where the foreign policy strategy includes a dialogue focused on the premises that soft power methods are more efficient than hard power ones, and thus, the idea of peace among the cultures existent in the country is highly referred to, intercultural communication being the vital pillar to do so (UNESCO, 2022).

Conclusions

After so many investigations upon the subject, we can conclude with the idea of multiculturalism being not only intertwined with diplomacy and international relations, but also dependent on them for shaping the face of society. It is in our core memory as a society to be connected to one another and after the previous arguments, we see how that requires mutual understanding.

Moreover, in a century full of unpredictability, acceptance seems to be the key for solving many problems. Differences between us are not as big as we tend to see, and they are even advantages if we want to understand each other. For sure, diplomacy has done many efforts to promote diversity among different nations. As this process did before, it will continue to sustain an interconnected world, where people understand properly the value of multiculturalism.

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