



## Full Length Review Article

### PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY IN MAKING OF FOREIGN POLICY

**\*Durbek Sayfullaev**

Senior Research Assistant, Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Sciences, Uzbekistan

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#### ABSTRACT

The twentieth century has witnessed significant transformations in making of foreign policy. Actors and institutions involved in foreign affairs have increased in number and scope as democratic ideas have triumphed in most parts of the world. In particular, direct involvement of national parliaments in the external affairs of states has increased considerably. The purpose of the present paper is to examine the recent trends on the concept of 'parliamentary diplomacy' and its' potential role in shaping and controlling foreign policy. The paper will conclude with the recommendations for Central Asian countries to promote parliamentary diplomacy in resolving complex regional issues.

#### INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century has witnessed significant transformations in making of foreign policy. The international system that developed after World War II has generated a strong need for more cooperative, transparent and multidimensional foreign policy. Actors and institutions involved in foreign affairs have increased in number and scope as democratic ideas have triumphed in most parts of the world (Beetham, 2006). Democracy has become a universal value as it was recognized by the United Nations World Summit in 2005. New actors of foreign policy-making have emerged to respond to the demands of an increasingly integrated world with a growing economic interdependence and complex global issues. As Thym (2009: 315) pointed out, in light of the growing global complexities, the new pluralism of actors have emerged to challenge the traditional assumption of uniform foreign affairs conducted by the executive government. Indeed, in many democracies it has become very difficult to sustain the traditional assumption that foreign policy is incompatible with democratic decision-making (Batora, 2010: 1). Thus, unlike previous ones, contemporary political leaders

not only have to deal with domestic pressures triggered by media and public opinion, but they are also expected to act within certain democratic arrangements while promoting policies and pursuing complex diplomacy (Kerr and Wiseman, 2013; Krotz and Maher, 2011). Throughout a long time, making of foreign policy has been exclusive competence of the executive government. Foreign policy exercised by the executive is said to be more or less monopolistic in nature, and based on the culture of centralism which stems from the point that expertise, urgency and secrecy are the necessary prerequisites of external affairs of a state (Malamud and Stavridis, 2011). Thus, given the peculiar nature of the field, foreign policy bureaucrats have paid little, if any, attention to the public opinion in foreign policy decision-making. Conventional rationale was that the foreign policy more often than not requires urgent and secretive decisions which may not emerge from long drawn out and partisan public debates (Ibid). Nevertheless, the fact that some policy areas require more secretive and urgent decision-making than others does not mean that there can be no accountability mechanisms or open debate at all. While current international affairs have a direct impact on citizens' lives, public acceptance and trust have become a prominent prerequisite of foreign policy in any democratic regime. With the development of democratic norms and institutions, public involvement in internal and external affairs of the country has increased considerably. The

*\*Corresponding author: Durbek Sayfullaev,  
Senior Research Assistant, Tashkent State Institute of Oriental  
Sciences, Uzbekistan.*

main mechanism of people's involvement in government affairs has been through the elected representative bodies, namely, the parliaments. As Laursen (2002) has argued, democratic doctrine requires direct involvement of parliaments in foreign affairs in their capacity of direct representatives of the general public. Greater involvement of legislature in external affairs is also partly a result of a so called 'globalization'. Simply stated, internalization of external issues and externalization of some internal issues put higher pressure than before on parliaments to resolve previously unforeseen complex problems. At the same time, as global issues have become more complex and require multifaceted approach to resolve, we can no longer expect the Executive to take the sole lead and responsibility for all external policies of the state.

Today, national parliaments have significantly extended their area of policy conduct as parliamentary democracy has spread worldwide with the growing number of electoral democracies (Emerson, 2003; Freedom, 2003). It is nowhere as evident as in the field of foreign policy, issues of which have frequently been subject of parliamentary debate and scrutiny during the parliamentary sessions. Increasing role of parliaments in international relations has prompted the emergence of a new classification of diplomacy – 'parliamentary diplomacy'. In a traditional sense, diplomacy is defined as a conduct and method of a state to promote its interests externally, primarily in the form of negotiation and through officials based in the capital or deployed abroad (Berridge and James 2003: 70). However, the scope and content of the term 'diplomacy' has significantly widened over the time. Now, it consists of additional set of objectives which a state wants to attain in its relationships with other states (Hamilton 2010: 2). While the main objective of traditional diplomacy has been to advance state's security and defense interests, contemporary understanding of diplomacy has moved beyond these two objectives. Diplomacy now focuses also on attaining economic, development and trade objectives, just to name a few (Rana 2011).

Additionally, diplomacy is a process of communication and representation aimed at facilitating interactions between different entities and individuals, not exclusively states (Kerr and Wiseman 2013: 4). There are range of classifications of diplomacy has been offered, for example, commercial diplomacy, economic diplomacy, business diplomacy, open diplomacy, coercive diplomacy, preventive diplomacy, bomber diplomacy, para-diplomacy and parliamentary diplomacy. Parliamentary diplomacy is a form of diplomacy that not is widely studied and, thus, yet to be given a precise definition. Because, this concept is mostly used by politicians and little attention has been given by the academic community. The main reason why the concept has not gained necessary attention from scholarship is, using Götz (2005: 276) remarkable phrases, "its failure to picture the conventional units of IR theory as simple and unitary, as desired by supposedly 'realist' or 'institutionalist' approaches". In the initial stage of the development of the concept of 'parliamentary diplomacy' in international relations and international law, it was described as multilateral negotiations characterized by institutionalization, rules of procedure, public debate and the vote on draft resolutions

(Rusk, 1955: 121–2). However, lately, the scope and content of the concept have widened considerably. According to Noulas (2011), parliamentary diplomacy is based on "the activities carried out by parliaments in international relations, both within the limits of institutional competence and as a central factor of internal political scene."

Parliamentary diplomacy is widely recognized to promote dialogue, mutual understanding and confidence-building in international efforts to address a range of global challenges and issues. The value of parliamentary diplomacy in promoting global peace and development is also recognized and advocated by the international organizations such as United Nations. United Nations General Assembly Resolutions 65/123 and 65/283 are the cases in point that issued to serve as an important catalyst for strengthening the contribution of parliamentary diplomacy to national reconciliation, mediation and conflict prevention. Parliamentary diplomacy is said to offers more room for transparency and cooperation. It has become essential for countries to increase the role of parliaments in foreign policy decision-making to monitor governmental external activities so as to make it more accountable, transparent and public-friendly. However, the role of the parliament in the system of a country's foreign policy varies depending mainly on the political system. In one-party or authoritarian systems foreign policy activity of the representative body is more of arbitrary, less influenced by internal reactions. Whereas in democratic societies, legislative branch enjoys colossal power in shaping and directing country's external affairs due to the internal public pressure, the need for transparency, and the influence of the media (Noulas, 2011).

In democratic societies foreign policy is viewed as just 'one more' public policy. Having achieved higher levels of knowledge, access to information and participation, modern democracies possess the means to exercise democratic (mainly parliamentary) control in most public policy spheres. Thus, democratic control is also needed for foreign policy as part of the general public policy of the state (Malamud and Stavridis, 2011). Indeed, if democratic control is not to be limited to the domestic realm, then it should influence external affairs of the state. As is stated earlier, the gap between domestic and external problems are diminishing as global issues have become influencing people's lives, be it terrorism, pandemics, climate change, international financial or economic issues (Ibid). Today, Central Asian countries face number of common regional challenges such as terrorism, extremism, environmental issues, drug-trafficking and, of course, the Afghan factor. Complexity of the regional issues requires nontraditional ways and means to tackle them. To this end, it is very important to strengthen the parliamentary 'vector' of foreign policy, to enhance the international activities of parliamentarians.

In recent years, there is a clear tendency to strengthen the role of the parliamentary diplomacy through international and regional inter-parliamentary institutions. For example, there are number of inter-parliamentary associations such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the CIS Inter-parliamentary Assembly, CSTO Parliamentary Assembly, inter-parliamentary structures of the OSCE, the Council of Europe

and NATO, that assists in promoting greater involvement of national parliaments to resolve regional challenges. Indeed, discussions of the bilateral and regional issues with the participation of national parliaments will facilitate mutual understanding and give an opportunity to find common answers to the problems at stake. Because, an open and constructive dialogue ensured through the multilateral mechanisms can be the basis for lasting peace and security in the region.

Nonetheless, perhaps the inter-parliamentary cooperation alone may not be sufficient to tackle all the issues. Parliaments should employ all the available mechanism in order to effectively involve in resolving regional issues. Thus, it is to propose that the parliamentary involvement in external activities should have four dimensions: 1) through the ratification of international treaties and enactment of laws relating to the sovereignty, defense and security; 2) through the parliamentary oversight mechanisms such as hearings, petitions, preliminary, censure and etc.; 3) through the fiscal arrangements, i.e. approval of annual budget for foreign activities; and 4) through the bilateral and multilateral diplomatic negotiations. It is important to point out that the further development of these dimensions would eventually lead to the strengthening of diplomatic power of national parliaments in Central Asia in dealing with most of the regional and global challenges, as well as in improving the efficiency, capability, coherence of foreign policy of the states.

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