

Viewpoint

Architecturing A New Global Peace Diplomacy: Of Souls & Civilizations

by Dna. Maria St. Catherine De Grâce Sharpe

The events of September 11, and their global diplomatic, political and military aftermath, have heightened the imperative for a paradigm shift in global diplomacy. What is needed in this third millennium is a *force majeure* paradigmatic shift in the secular philosophy, nature and practice of diplomacy—the management of international human relations—as we have never contemplated and practiced it heretofore. Thus, what is needed foremost is a new philosophy of diplomacy and diplomatic affairs practice that reflects a deeper global political consciousness of the mystical in the context of civilizations clashing on the fault lines of religion and spiritual values. Theology has always been the last of the humanities to find a respectful posture of engagement on the continuum of political interface where the social sciences are concerned—especially in the field of secular diplomatic practice and secular diplomatic affairs studies. A renewed focus on the long dormant subject of irenology, the study of peace from a theological or ecclesiastical perspective, however, is one of the means by which secular diplomatic practitioners, government (embassy), non-governmental, and non-aligned diplomats can bring a much needed paradigm shift to the focus and practice of the overly secular professional diplomatic arts and sciences.

With the proliferation of peace studies associations, institutes, universities and organizations, irenology, derived from the Greek word for peace, *eirini*, is experiencing renewed attention in the professional domains of academia and peace diplomacy. The United Nations in its establishment of the University of Peace in Costa Rica has made irenology the explicit purpose of the University. The International Agreement for the establishment of the United Nations University of Peace in Costa Rica, erected under Resolution 31/111 of 14 December 1979, and Resolution 35/55 of 5 December 1980 by the General Assembly, is one of the few UN documents establishing a peace organization that explicitly commits itself to irenology. Article 17 of the Agreement, which addresses “University Programmes and Degrees” specifically states, “Irenology, which shall comprise the study of peace, education for peace and human

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rights, shall be the main concern of the University. The studies carried out at the University shall focus on the topic of international peace. Completion of a programme of studies, including irenology as a compulsory subject, shall be required for obtaining any degree granted by the University.”

This emerging focus on irenology in the present theo-political environment of the clashing of Western values with Islamic ideals needs to be further enhanced and developed in the context of the present evolutionary transformation of secular diplomatic practice. The secular diplomatic arts and sciences and the diplomatic profession must not be a stagnate field which is only propelled to new horizons by the engines of information technology and the multidimensional catalyst of secular globalization. The philosophical essence of secular diplomacy must also experience a commensurate paradigm shift to the realm of spiritual truth. This paradigm shift must be fuelled by the “peace intelligence” of spiritual truths acquired from increased contemplation of spiritual values and their merit to peacebuilding. The ecclesial diplomatic tradition of the Holy See’s pontifical diplomacy (the word “pontifical” originating from the Latin term “pontifex” meaning to build bridges) and the emerging field of Islamic diplomacy are able to serve as noteworthy guideposts for the further development of the specialization of theo-irenological diplomacy.

While the ecclesial diplomacy of the Holy See has been a sustaining presence in the world since the fourth century and has been the subject of a graduate course titled, “Holy See Diplomacy” at the Catholic University of America for many years, the subject of the diplomacy of Islam is a much newer intellectual, theo-political and diplomatic phenomenon. This increasing professional focus on the diplomacy of Islam is evidenced by the emergence of related books and graduate courses on the subject. A book published by Oxford University Press in 2001, titled, *Diplomacy and Diplomatic Practice in the Early Islamic Era* by Yasin Istanbuli details Islam’s long tradition of diplomacy, stemming in part from its early history when the Arab Peninsula separated the Persian and Byzantine Empires. In his book Istanbuli discusses diplomacy as practiced by the Prophet and other rulers in the early period of Islam.

Another interesting development with respect to study of Islamic Diplomacy has been the offering of a course on “Diplomacy in Islam” by Dr. Riad Nourallah of the Diplomatic Academy of London (DAL), located at the University of Westminster, London. Dr. Nourallah’s course, which was first offered over three years ago, examines both the continuity and the variety of Islamic political and diplomatic experience from the age of the Prophet and the early Caliphs to modern times, and how Muslim institutions have coped with periods of expansion, retreat and revival. According to the DAL’s website the course also explores “the tensions as well as common ground and amicable relations between Islam and Christian Europe down the ages.”

While both Catholic ecclesial and Islamic diplomacy have miles to go before their respective professional fields are on a par of advanced refinement with secular diplomatic and international affairs studies, it is time that a theo-irenological

perspective was included in diplomatic and international human relations programs, institutes and graduate training programs. In 2001-2002 Boston University inaugurated a dual master's degree program in Religion and International Relations, which is the centerpiece of the university's Institute on Religion and World Affairs (IRWA). The IRWA was established in September 2000 with a major grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts. The M.A. in Religion and International Relations is jointly sponsored by the Departments of Religion and International Relations, with core course offerings from the faculty of both departments, as well as from the School of Theology faculty and from visiting senior scholars. Now if only diplomatic training institutes and academies in both Western and Islamic countries would emulate such initiatives, theo-irenological diplomacy might have a chance of longevity and sustaining impact. States and diplomats first however must outgrow their aversion to religion and all things spiritual, which are having increasing substantial impact on the triad of diplomacy, intelligence and national security/defense.

The development of theo-irenological diplomacy may take as guides for its 21st century evolution and structural bearings the ecclesial and theological traditions of Catholic Ecclesial and Islamic Diplomacy, but it is not be restricted to these religious traditions. Indeed, fundamental Christian and Judaic traditions also have much to offer the professional development of theo-irenical or theo-irenological diplomacy. The recent establishment of the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy in Washington DC is an example of the emergence of other faith-based diplomatic initiatives for the cause of peace. These initiatives are responding to the signs of the times demanding a new paradigmatic shift from the secular philosophy of diplomatic study and practice to the sacred. Secular diplomacy is not alone able to successfully engage the guerrilla-like theo-political, theo-socio-cultural and theo-militant issues of our time. A faith-based diplomacy dedicated to the high moral excellence of peace, whether founded on Catholic ecclesial doctrine, Islamic values or Judaic principles, contributes much to the nurturing, on the international plane, of a deeper mystical experience of international *human* relations for the cause of peace.

Since man is by nature a spiritual being it should only be expected that the global engagement of humanity should not be void of the spiritual values which underlie the *raison d'être* of diplomacy as the management of international human relations. A professional paradigmatic shift from secular to theo-irenological diplomacy will enable the sovereign states and diplomats of the 21st century to move from a stagnate, secular diplomacy to an evolutionary diplomacy imbued with a spiritual "consciousness of humanity." States would do well to integrate such theo-irenological courses into their diplomatic training curricula or suffer the consequences of diplomats who are spiritually inept in an increasing theo-political and theo-militant global environment. The same could be applied to the training of military and intelligence officers. This new spiritually imbued global diplomacy will not only architect a new interdisciplinary peace intelligence dynamic, but will also help to architect and make real the kind of just sustainable peace diplomacy works so hard to achieve for the sake of eternal truth, the sovereignty of souls and the cause of enduring civilizations.