

Science and Art of the Diplomatic Protocol

-- Alina Bugar

Alina Bugar

Founder, Art of Protocol

alinabugar@gmail.com

www.artofprotocol.com

www.facebook.com/Art-of-Protocol-771515066245956/

There are many instruments which make a complex and delicate mechanism of foreign policy work successfully and effectively and the diplomatic protocol is one of the most important among them. In fact, it is the core of everything related to diplomacy. Any diplomatic activity is simply impossible to imagine without diplomatic traditions and rules.

Protocol is a set of the established traditions and rules, a form of each foreign policy action of a state and its official representatives. Diplomatic ceremonial, in turn, means a strict adherence to established procedures. There has never been any public institution in the world, which existed without hierarchy and no civilization has ever existed without ceremonies.

There has been a need of order since the very emergence of society. In the modern world ceremony based on traditions and national features has become universal. Diplomatic protocol is so important worldwide for its ability to create a friendly atmosphere in relations between the governments and their official representatives.

Protocol codifies the ceremonial rules, puts them into practice and controls their implementation at the same time. According to the definition written by John Wood and Jean Serres in the book Diplomatic Ceremonial and Protocol, etymologically, the word "*protocol*" in the Byzantine diplomacy used to mean the first part of the ceremonial speech document with the list of all participants.

The concept of the state protocol exists in the practice of each country. For example, in the Provision on the State Protocol and Ceremonial of Ukraine (August 22, 2002 Presidential Decree) the protocol is defined as "a set of requirements for a general procedure for all formal occasions with the participation of the President of Ukraine, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, the Prime Minister of Ukraine, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and other senior officials of Ukraine on the basis of generally accepted international rules, regulations and traditions and national traditions of Ukraine".

To understand the real meaning, role and roots of the protocol, it is important to look back at history.

Protocol as a symbolic category

Historical events and realities have led to the necessity to introduce the ethics, which are able to transform chaos into order, hostility into normal communication.

How can one state demonstrate its respect to the other one and treat it as an equal partner? How should it appeal to other countries' representatives so that it does not damage its prestige or show disrespect towards its own dignity? These questions would have surely been on the agenda if the

protocol and ceremonial traditions were not improved throughout the centuries of international relations and diplomatic practice. The protocol not only had to demonstrate the mutual respect, it also had to be a political instrument – a form of demonstration of power and greatness of a state to its rivals. Since the ancient times, the human experience has been accumulating rules which could contribute and strengthen communication between people. With the emergence of the states and development of the contacts between them, the norms of protocol began to develop as well.

Lack of commonly established norms in Western European protocol in the heyday of monarchies led to serious conflicts, because most countries demonstrated their weak knowledge of the diplomatic ceremonial. A bloody dispute about the place in a cortege at the meeting with the Swedish ambassador in London, 1661, which happened between the servants of the Spanish Ambassador Vattevill and servants of the French Ambassador d'Estaing, is well-known in the history of diplomacy. The King of France Louis XIV ordered the Spanish ambassador punished and made other ambassadors of Spain give way to the French ambassadors in future. Otherwise, he threatened to declare war [1, p. 53]. That was when Louis XIV introduced his first set of rules of etiquette. By doing so, he became the founder of the ceremonial, making France one of the first civilized countries.

At first glance, the dispute between two servants and ambassadors is incomparable with the threat of war between the states. However, in considering the issue more deeply, it becomes clear that France claimed its leadership among other European countries.

Symbolism is one of the attributes of the protocol. Since the ancient times there have been many disputes between ambassadors about the places close to the king. Even then it was clear that the one who sits to the right hand of the monarch, receives more favour from the king.

The Congress of Vienna of 1815 finally stopped the disputes and misunderstandings of the protocol issues. Regulations of the Congress determined a protocol precedence of the diplomatic representatives. In 1818 the Aachen Protocol amended Vienna Regulations by establishing the diplomatic ranks. Politicians and diplomats realized that activity in politics is impossible without the rules, because politics becomes chaotic without them.

The next conference was held in order to legalize all other aspects of the protocol and turn them into the international law. As a result, in 1961 the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations was agreed upon. Since that time, all countries of the world (even those who abstain from joining the Vienna Convention), adhere to the standards written in this document. All Protocol Offices take this Convention into account. In cases of recognition of new states, establishment of diplomatic relations, appointment of heads of diplomatic missions, diplomatic visits, conversations, negotiations, meetings of official delegations, assemblies, international conferences and meetings, signing of international treaties etc., the rules of protocol should be strictly followed.

Traditions and rules as a necessity for a civilized society

The rules of diplomatic protocol are universal, based on the principle of reciprocity and on the principle of international respect, which means respect for everything that symbolizes and

represents the country. The principle of mutual respect and courtesy led to the emergence and development of the diplomatic protocol in the international communication.

Protocol is not just an international code of politeness, it is quite often a huge political instrument. There are numerous examples of the "ceremonial demonstrations" in the history of diplomacy. For example, the Turkish Sultan did not want to recognize the division of Poland between Russia, Austria and Prussia. Therefore, during receptions when representatives of the diplomatic corps had to greet the Sultan, the Polish representative, though present, refused to do so. The chamberlain had to tell the Sultan that "the Ambassador went for a walk and is late because of the snow." This statement was made independent of the season [2, p. 38-39].

In addition to deliberate protocol demonstrations, protocol confusions also happen. Usually they are caused by an inadequate preparation for the event or simply by mistake. Such situations occurred in the modern history of protocol and in the past centuries as well. Confusions made by the highest government officials are especially undesirable, since they represent the entire state.

The protocol is an international set of rules since its basic principles are universally recognized. However, one of the most important characteristics of the protocol is its ability to take national features of the countries into account. The leaders of the country may welcome guests in the secret language of diplomacy. For example, in India there is a tradition to wear a wreath on the guest's neck where different flowers signify different attitudes of the country towards the guest. In Sri Lanka there is a tradition to strew rose petals. In Ukraine guests should be welcomed with bread and salt in order to demonstrate a friendly attitude towards them.

According to rules of the diplomatic protocol the behavior of the diplomats in the host country as well as their clothes at all official events are strictly determined. Moreover, it is better to say that the appearance of a diplomat does not belong to him or her. The color and style of the suit, the height of the heels etc. matter when we talk about the rules of the diplomatic protocol.

In the case of the jewelry diplomacy of Madeleine Albright, a simple pin can also be an instrument of diplomacy: she always wears her famous pins for all events emphasizing her attitude towards particular things. Albright wore a pin in the form of an eagle while visiting a foreign country with an aim to demonstrate power; in the form of butterflies or flowers when she needed to show her sympathy; turtles and crabs – to emphasize the need of faster negotiations. At the meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, the Secretary of State wore a pin in a form of large American banner. The habit of wearing symbolic brooches was developed by Mrs. Albright at the time of her work as the U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN. One of the Iraqi newspapers has published an article where Madeleine Albright was called "an unparalleled serpent" right after she wore a brooch in the form of a snake at the UN Security Council.

Although the practice of protocol requires a strict adherence to established diplomatic standards, it is quite flexible due to the dynamics of contemporary international relations. The protocol does not serve to provide unwieldy formalities; its aim is to make the international communication easier, make it universal and refined.

Sometimes deviation from the rules is even needed to show a special attitude towards the foreign state's representative or a particular event. The visit of John and Jacqueline Kennedy to the Vatican illustrates this case. It is well-known that protocol traditions of the Vatican are among the most conservative. Right before this visit Pope John XXIII asked his advisers how he should address the wife of the President. He had a choice: "Mrs. Wife of the President", "Mrs." or "Mrs. Kennedy". However, when the receptionist opened the door, the Pope greeted her warmly saying: "Oh, Jacqueline!"[2, p. 14].

Protocol, as well as international relations in general, is a two-way street. For example, high representatives of a foreign state will be met in the same way as they met their guests in their own countries. If the departure of a guest's aircraft was delayed for some reason, you can expect that the departure of the aircraft with the representatives of your country on board will be also delayed for the same period of time.

Nevertheless, diplomats should act in accordance to the protocol, even in the midst of conflict situations: "If you don't agree to our conditions today, we will have to take action." This should be stated politely, with a smile, of course. As Jules Cambon noted in his book Diplomat, the protocol does not know nations-winners and nations-losers. Even for two warring nations a mutual respect is a must, no matter what the balance of power.

Protocol specialist – a profession with a high mission

A specialist in the sphere of protocol (or a protocol officer) is not just a profession, it is a mission. His or her job requires ingenuity and creativity along with in-depth knowledge of this sphere. A protocol professional should be able to find the fastest way of solving difficult problems, check every single detail for several times and be able to write diplomatic documents, know the philosophy of power and never be superficial in his or her judgments and knowledge.

Only those specialists who are devoted to their profession can truly become experts. It is crucial for this profession to keep self-confidence, to avoid acute situations and when faced with challenges, to solve them easily. These abilities are vital for a person who has the rank of diplomat or any other honorable title in the sphere of diplomatic protocol. A true politician, diplomat, or professional in the sphere of diplomatic protocol knows that political actions should be done wisely, intelligently, elegantly, appropriately and pragmatically.

A protocol specialist is a profession of great responsibility. According to Henry Catto - a diplomat, and the Chief of protocol of the White House (1974 to 1976), "To manage protocol department is similar to manage a sapper team. As long as everything goes well, no one notices your work, but when just a single mistake is made, there is an explosion". Therefore, protocol is not trifle: each gesture, movement and word are important and each action is determinant.

Thus, adherence to the rules of protocol in the international communication is a must. Neglecting these rules can lead to serious conflicts and tension between the states or even cause losses for country's prestige. Diplomatic protocol is not just a set of rules and traditions; it is also an ability to use them. This is a delicate political instrument of diplomacy, which is subordinate to the objectives of the state's foreign policy. It reflects political relations between two countries, and its proper, or

inappropriate use affects these relations. That is why the knowledge and proper use of the rules of protocol are indicators of diplomatic skills and professional approach to foreign policy of a state.

References

1. Alekseev I. Art of diplomacy: not to win, but to prevail – Moscow: Dashkov & Co, 2010. – 284 p.
2. John Wood, Jean Serres. Diplomatic ceremonial and protocol – Ed. 2. – M.: International Relations, 2011. – 416 p.