



Th. Jefferson
MONTICELLO

“Diplomacy & Education: Discovering & Teaching Reality”
an Arthur Ross Discussion of American Diplomacy
June 13, 2011

.....

Conference Summary

The principal objective of this conference was to explore fully the connection between education and diplomacy from the theories envisaged by Thomas Jefferson to the practical challenges of teaching diplomatic practice in the contemporary world. Just as education in Jeffersonian thought was universal, so is diplomacy. With the 21st Century national security challenges the U.S. is facing today, it is imperative for Americans to understand the importance of diplomacy; the reality of how it works as well as the goals of policy. Diplomatic practice differs from traditional diplomatic history and the conference explored why understanding these differences are essential to teaching realistic thinking about the potential and the limits to the pursuit of vital national interests. Conference participants also discussed how current and future U.S. diplomats are being prepared, educated and trained for their careers. What follows is merely a summary.

Opening Remarks

Dr. Ruhi Ramazani opened the conference by discussing President Thomas Jefferson’s views on education and diplomacy. President Jefferson’s ideas were so far ahead of his time that their relevance should continue to be explored today. The relationship between these two ideas is important to understanding current issues such as the 2011 Arab Spring. Education of all American citizens was important to Jefferson. Institutions of higher learning, he said, should aim “to develop the reasoning faculties of our youth, enlarge their minds, cultivate their morals and instill in them the precepts of virtue and order.” They should “...aim to form statesmen, legislators and judges on whom prosperity and happiness depend.” Dr. Ramazani believes Jefferson would be appalled at the state of education today including the lack of understanding of the fact that cultural factors are utterly inseparable from foreign policy. He agreed with Jefferson’s belief that liberal education was necessary for freedom and democracy.

Dr. Ramazani underscored that people must be prepared for democracy; otherwise, regime change will not work. President Jefferson believed the best way to promote democracy globally was to create a great American example at home. Liberal education must be the centerpiece of economic development as well as political stability. It will also advance social cohesion. Dr.

Ramazani suggests a comprehensive education plan for the Middle East and North Africa – something akin to a Marshall Plan education program in the Middle East.

Panel 1: Teaching Diplomatic History

Speakers: Ambassador Ryan Crocker, Professor Frank Cogliano, Professor James Sofka

Ambassador Ryan Crocker (then Dean at Texas A&M Bush School of Government & Public Service and now U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan) started the discussion by referencing Thomas Jefferson's engagement and intervention in Tripoli in 1805. He described it as an economy of force operation and the first American victory at arms abroad, which led to the end of the Barbary Pirates' reign. That moment in history has lessons for today – engagement/intervention by force of arms by Europeans in the Middle East and North Africa has colored middle easterners' views of the West (most Americans are ignorant of the history). Since the late 18th century most Middle East countries have been occupied by at least one Western power. A lack of understanding of how middle easterners have viewed actions of the West is rampant. Intervention in Lebanon in 1958 is an interesting case. It was a year of instability – Iraq's king was overthrown, Jordan was teetering, and Lebanon appeared threatened by communism. Lebanon turned out to be a purely local issue and was not of strategic interest to the US whatsoever. Contrast that with U.S. decisions made in 1981-82 (support of Israeli engagement there). We got the PLO out and Hezbollah came in – that should not be considered a strategic win. A lack of understanding of history and local cultural proclivities confused our response and continues to do so elsewhere. Crocker drew from his own background to illustrate how the problem has reoccurred. He noted that the necessary study of the history of diplomacy is still a rarity in universities and non-existent at the high school level.

Ambassador Crocker closed his comments noting three important points:

- Be careful what you get into. Think through a proposed intervention. He references the U.S. intervention in Lebanon to remove the PLO.
- Be careful what you propose to get out of – disengagement can have consequences much like engagement (evident in 1989 pull out from Afghanistan).
- Agrees with Dr. Ramazani's opening statement point about the state of education in the U.S. today

Professor Frank Cogliano, who is a Professor of American History at the University of Edinburgh, shared that many U.K. students are deeply skeptical of U.S. actions abroad. They feel there is a general lack of understanding on the part of the U.S. when considering their foreign policy. They view U.S. diplomatic history differently. Academics outside of the US also view diplomatic historians differently. They tend to cast them as international historians.

Professor James Sofka addressed two basic conceptions:

- The study of international relations and political science was built in the architecture of the Cold War (realists, idealists, liberals), which fails to recognize that foreign policy began well before 1945. The way Jefferson understood politics was a product of the

18th century, not as a forefather of concepts of intervention coupled with moral purpose or expansive national interest that have dominated more recent discussions.

- Jefferson, Hamilton and their colleagues were heavily aware of European power politics of their time. Understanding the role of the enlightenment in power politics and its approach to diplomacy of that time is crucial to teaching diplomatic history. Jefferson was borrowing strategies from European leaders that he thought could work for the US but many people don't interpret his actions the same way they interpreted the actions of European leaders. They consider him an idealist whose actions were directly linked to republicanism when in reality (1793 report on commerce) he was a shrewd politician. Jefferson promoted enlightenment in such a way that it dovetailed with foreign policy at the time.

Panel 2: Teaching Diplomatic Practice

Speakers: Ambassador Anthony "Tony" C.E. Quinton and Ambassador Teresita Schaffer

Ambassador Tony Quinton stated his belief that teaching diplomatic practice is important in overcoming ignorance in the world today of young Americans seeking education in international relations. He said there is a general lack of understanding of what diplomats do and overcoming the view that diplomacy is disdainful and that diplomats are cut off from the real world is an important one to discuss in the classroom. He believes students should gain an understanding of how the U.S. is represented at our embassies in countries around the world including the extensive presence of representatives of various cabinet departments and agencies, not just diplomats, at US embassies). Traditional state to state engagement needs to be broadened to explore diplomacy with non-state actors (violent and non-violent). Quinton said teaching analytical skills about decision making – has students prepare scenarios, write cables, role play and so on.

Ambassador Teresita Schaffer, who served as Director of the Foreign Affairs Institute that trains American's diplomats, began her comments by suggesting four important themes in teaching diplomatic practice, particularly to diplomats themselves:

- apprenticeship
- training
- education
- games

Apprenticeship – This is the way most Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) learn their craft. Ambassador Schaffer sees it as a powerful way of perpetuating institutional skills and values. Almost all FSOs have learned some of their skills via this method. The art of delivering demarches, note taking, memo writing, and the like is acquired through apprenticeship. Mentoring and apprenticeship are here to stay but training and education play a vital role.

Training – The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) spends much less time on new recruits and much more time training old hands. Our European counterparts and other developed countries train

diplomats closer in style to legal training – usually a full year of training when they start.

Education – many European countries have a prescribed course of study for entrance into their diplomatic service. The U.S. recruits from all backgrounds and not enough educational opportunity is given to FSOs once in the service.

Games – These are used as skill building devices or mechanisms of exploring policy options. One advantage of games is that they can work across cultures.

Luncheon Keynote: Diplomacy – Tying Together Theory & Practice

Speaker: Ambassador Chester Crocker, Georgetown University