CONSULAR AND DIASPORA DIPLOMACY

In recent years, consular and diaspora diplomacy have both emerged as important areas in diplomatic studies; governments are becoming more citizen-centric.

Consular diplomacy has gained prominence in many foreign ministries, a dramatic turnaround from its earlier status as a routine activity. This is directly connected with the enhanced role of publics in foreign affairs. Consular diplomacy deals with two sets of people. The first is one's own citizens, who need travel documents to go overseas, and protection and help while they travel abroad: extradition, emergency assistance, and repatriation. The second group includes foreign citizens who need visas, illegal migrants, and overseas workers.

Migration produces diasporas. Globally, some 215 million people are migrants (i.e. the first generation of those that have gone to foreign countries). Subsequent generations sometimes merge into the local population, but often retain their connections with the home states, over many generations. Today diasporas are active in international affairs. The interconnected areas of providing citizens with consular services, and working with the diaspora, are now priorities in international affairs.

By the end of this course, participants should be able to:

- Describe the international law basis of consular diplomacy and the elements of consular diplomacy in practice, including the use of honorary consuls
- Explain and provide examples of how consular diplomacy connects to related subjects, including outreach to a diaspora, migration, labour affairs, services to own citizens working abroad, and emergency management in delivering consular services
- Effectively organise and plan work at a consular post in a mission abroad, including building relationships with diasporas
- Explain the importance of diasporas in world and national affairs, and their potential as non-official agents of diplomacy
- Plan and operationalize a diaspora policy for their own countries and handle outreach to the diaspora in political, economic and public affairs activities

Excerpt from course materials

In 1964 in China…I saw this [the value of consular diplomacy as a key public service for citizens] clearly. At the time, India-China relations were very low...; other than officials, no one travelled between the countries and a handful of Indian students had also left. Among three or four old residents who had clung on, an Indian businessman was serving a six-year prison sentence in Shanghai on a bogus charge. Every six months or so someone from the embassy in Beijing made the 18-hour train journey to meet him, taking some Indian foodstuff and a handful of magazines. His pitiable isolation in that grim prison, and his tearful gratitude at meeting a compatriot, brought home the human dimension of what could be called a routine consular function; that left an indelible memory.
Course outline

1. **Consular diplomacy**: The basics and the operation of consulates: relationship with other segments of diplomacy; increased prominence; the home and foreign dimension of consular diplomacy; link with diaspora diplomacy; different offices that perform related functions. The working of consulates; their role in sub-state diplomacy; mobile posts and virtual outposts; application of technology; role following severance of diplomatic relations.

2. **The Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (VCCR), and honorary consuls**: key provisions and relevance of the VCCR; strengths and limitations; consular functions, facilities, privileges and immunities; consular agreements and other bilateral instruments; honorary consuls and their role; bilateral consular agreements and regional approaches; VCCR and other international instruments.

3. **Protection of citizens, and visas**: the two primary functions of consular diplomacy: the necessity, role and formulation of visa policy; reciprocity and other issues; visa power, visa diplomacy; protection of citizens; nature of citizen services and limitations; labour protection and welfare; disaster relief, piracy, terrorism, repatriation, deportation; responding to new situations.

4. **Migration and diplomacy**: the economics and social circumstances of migration; demographic compulsions; the handling of undocumented aliens, the political, social and other dimensions; world trends; migration as issue in global dialogue and future trends.

5. **Diaspora diplomacy**: the importance of diasporas; home role of diasporas; political, economic and other impact in relationship building; evolution over generation change; best practices; hazards of this form of diplomacy.

6. **Diasporas and public diplomacy**: relevance for public diplomacy in win-win mode; helping country of origin to project interests in countries of adoption; role in the original home state; ‘reverse diplomacy’ used by country of adoption aimed at homeland.

7. **Diasporas and home states**: emerging importance of diasporas; different concepts of diaspora; need for diaspora policies and contours of such policies; organisational structures in states; evolution and implementation of policies; country practices and variations; diaspora organisations; exploring feasibility of a template for diaspora policies.

8. **Diasporas and economic diplomacy**: economic diplomacy, the heart of diplomacy; various facets of economic diplomacy; diaspora, trade and investment promotion; diaspora and development; diaspora and knowledge transfer; diaspora and remittances; diaspora organisations; linking diaspora with home and host countries.

**Methodology**

This course is conducted entirely online over a period of ten weeks. Reading materials and tools for online interaction are provided through an online classroom. Each week, participants read the provided lecture text, adding questions, comments and references in the form of hypertext entries. Lecturers and other participants read and respond to these entries, creating interaction based on the lecture text. During the week, participants complete additional online activities (for example, further discussion via blogs or forums, quizzes, group tasks, simulations or short assignments). At the end of the week, participants and lecturers meet online in a chat room to discuss the week’s topic. To complete the course successfully, participants must write several essay assignments. Courses are based on a collaborative approach to learning, involving a high level of interaction.