

Scientist as a Diplomat: Science Influences the Solution to International Conflicts and Problems

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A widely spread view of science diplomacy as an international cooperation aimed at the resolution of common problems employing scientists and the results of their studies does not permit to make an exact and comprehensive assessment of the role of science for present-day diplomacy.

In line with a well-known misbelieve, the people of science are not of this world, impractical and have difficulties in understanding the real life. The illusive comprehension of science as an “ivory tower” is spread in our country. Probably, this is the reason why it is sometimes impossible to find common ground between clerks and scientists.

Simultaneously, it is a hard fact that in the majority of developed Western and Eastern countries the academic community is interlaced and aligned with the political and business circles. A scientist’s (of any specialization) career trajectory “university – state service – corporation – university again” with any sequence of these stages is not treated as something extraordinary. This movement along the career ladder expands the horizons of a particular person and helps society to increase the adequacy of its elite. Over the past decades in Russia there have been more and more scientists in power, i.e. the country returns to the norm, gradually moving away from the Soviet deviation, when among the representatives of the authorities a good education was a rarity, and those who had it were treated as “servants”.

The “corporate” quality of scientists is that they are ideologically uninfected. The people of science by the virtue of their trade are not occupied with a necessity to simplify things. Even when a matured scientist goes to work in the sphere of public administration or in the media, he will keep his strong immunity to ideologies for a long time, using them, but not falling under their influence.

Such independence is vitally important for the current stage of history when the ideologies themselves

have degraded to the format characterized by a popular word “post-truth” and practically have lost connection with the real world. In the world of post-truth emotions replace facts and fakes replace news, setting a stage for the construction of alternative reality and political discourse.

Although, in the contemporary times regardless of the outbreak of post-modernism there are examples of building bridges of memory over ideologies and policies. Among those is the joint commission, which has been operational for twenty years studying the newest history of Russian-German relations, co-chaired by Academician A.O. Chubaryan. It became possible for the Russian and German historians to issue joint monographs on sensitive issues of the past as well as a joint manual for the history teachers. Similar experience was used in the work with Polish and Japanese scientists.

Cooperation between scientists has an indirect, reference, influence on the political decisions making. Conversations on academic “grounds”, joint publications (which often involve hundreds of co-authors from dozens of countries, especially when working on natural science themes) help to better understand the positions of foreign colleagues on various issues and, accordingly, contribute to the understanding of the positions of Russian scientists abroad. Subsequently such understanding is directly or indirectly



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translated to those circles where the official position is shaped.

The working level of science diplomacy, when there is a direct exchange of views, is the participation of scientists as the official experts. The range of problems having an international dimension, for the resolution of which expert consultations are conducted, is extremely broad – from natural disasters and epidemics to ethical limitations in gene engineering. Quite often, the complexity of such problems requires simultaneous involvement of a wide range of scientists of various backgrounds for conducting interdisciplinary expertise.

The contribution of scientists and technical experts to the diplomatic settlement of such an acute global problem as the arms race, including justification of the ban and the development of measures of the international control over the modern types of the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) – nuclear, chemical and biological, is invaluable. Recommendations and methodology, proposed by them, laid the foundations for the elaboration of appropriate international legal instruments, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1968), Agreement of the Missile Technology Control Regime (1987), Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and their Destruction (1975), Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and their Destruction (1997), etc.

It is worth reminding of the extraordinary contribution to the achievement of the above-mentioned agreements of the Soviet and Russian scientists, who used to be employed in the development of certain types of WMD, in particular, such well-known physicists as academicians E.P. Velikhov, B.V. Bunkin, and A.M. Prokhorov. Their efforts (though not immediately) helped to persuade the world academic community that it was necessary to re-

duce the strategic defence capabilities. The Soviet scientists prepared the Declaration, which helped their American colleagues to launch a campaign against the US-developed Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), which threatened the world with an exhaustive arms race. Thanks to the efforts of our country's scientists, the US equipment was installed at the Semipalatinsk testing ground, which experimentally proved the possibility to control nuclear explosions anywhere in the world. Later on similar experimentations on the control over underground explosions were carried out at the test site in the state of Nevada.

The recent examples of involving scientists in the development of diplomatic mechanisms are given by the Arctic agenda. The achievement of practically all present-day agreements on the Arctic was facilitated by their profound scientific elaboration, including under the auspices of the International Arctic Science Committee, which comprises representatives of 23 states having national programs of the Arctic studies. In the autumn of 2016, the Arctic Council organized an inter-ministerial meeting on the Arctic science. The implementation of the agreement, which was prepared at the meeting (signed by the ministers of foreign affairs on 11 May 2017), and the adopted programs of further scientific cooperation will greatly contribute to the interaction between scientists of the eight Arctic states and participation of the third countries. In other words, science will provide support to diplomacy, and diplomacy will support science.

For many years the academic aspects of the Arctic agenda as well as a number of other areas have been supervised by Vice-President of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) N.P. Laverov, who used to occupy high-ranking government positions in the Soviet time. He was well-known by the international community and diplomats as the expert who had provided a scientific justification of the decommissioning of the radiation hazardous natural and man-made objects, in other words, nuclear test sites. Nikolai Pavlovich used to be a member of the supervisory board of the International Luxembourg Forum on Preventing Nuclear Catastrophe.

The “Big Science” term as the main synonym for fundamental research is now frequently replaced by the ideologeme of “megascience”. The interdisciplinary synergy of the latter is expressed in unique large-scale research projects, carried out, as a rule, with international cooperation. Examples of such projects organization in the EU, Russia and in other world's regions testify the accelerated practice of strategic unions of an interstate character, shaped during the construction and use of unique and expensive research installations like the ITER thermonuclear reactor in French Cada-

rache, the European X-ray free-electron laser (European XFEL) in Hamburg, the IGNITOR project (jointly with Italy) for the development of a Tokamak power plant, and a number of similar Russian projects. The investment participation of Russia in six European research and technical megaprojects is planned, and Germany participates financially in two Russian projects. Among the projects at the level of megascience are super-powerful telescopes, nuclear research icebreakers, space stations.

In the area of international relations, there is an increasing importance of the problem of regulating the regimes of the use of the World Ocean resources, i.e. biological – in its waters, mineral – on the ocean floor, water – as transport linkages. In June 2017, in New York the first global UN conference on the rational use of the oceans and seas resources took place. Within the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, there are ongoing negotiations on the use of marine bioresources and the rules for the development of mineral resources in international waters. The focus of their participants attention is on the perspectives in the transformation of separate systems for the state of the World Ocean monitoring into a global system. In the latest report of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) the present-day economy of the use of the World Ocean resources is estimated at the level of 1.5 trillion dollars. It is noted that scientific and technological progress will play a decisive role both in solving many environmental problems related to the state of the oceans and in further exploitation of oceans resources.

Examples of the scientists participation in the development of important international agreements are the activities carried out within the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Program, in particular the Science and Technology Group established within its framework. The international community is represented in it by the International Council for Science, established in 1931 as a non-governmental organization and encompassing national scientific organizations (RAS from Russia) and over 30 international scientific unions, by the International Social Science Council, set up in 1952 under the aegis of UNESCO as an academic organization, and by the World Federation of Engineering Organizations. The “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, adopted by the UN in 2015, calls on the Science and Technology Group to inform governments, policy makers and the general public which of the 17 sustainable development goals are achievable in terms of the world’s knowledge, scientific and technical capabilities.

The history of diplomacy provides many examples when scientists take a direct part in the political pro-

cess. It is well illustrated by the Pugwash movement and the Russian – US Dartmouth dialogue.

Unofficial contacts between scientists in the framework of the Pugwash Conferences brought the end to the war in Vietnam. In 1972, participants of the Soviet Pugwash Committee managed to persuade Chairman of the Council of Ministers A.N. Kosygin in the expediency of the ABM Treaty, which in fact forbade the defence against a nuclear strike. In the first half of the 1990s, Chairman of the Russian Pugwash Committee Academician V.I. Goldanskiy put forward the idea of the so-called nuclear fingerprints, i.e. the creation of a catalogue for the isotopic composition of nuclear materials, so that in a contingency situation it would be possible to trace the source of the leak. The idea was co-opted by the IAEA, and such a catalogue is being created.

It also happens that mediation of scientists sometimes stops wars. A relatively recent example is the Inter-Tajik settlement of the mid-1990s. There is a Group on Regional Conflicts within the Russian-(Soviet-)American Dartmouth meetings, which has been operational since 1960. After 1991, the Group focused its efforts on interaction with the warring factions of the civil war, which broke out in Tajikistan. The methodology of a sustained dialogue, developed by the Russian and US co-chairs, was used for that reason.

Participants of the Inter-Tajik dialogue agreed (as the Dartmouth Conferences participants did) that certain members of the Group would inform the key figures in the government and the opposition on the development of the dialogue, not specifying the views of the concrete participants. As in the case of the Dartmouth Conferences, the parties of the conflict – the government and the opposition – accepted the existence of the dialogue, not taking part in it and not bearing responsibility for its work. The organizational and substantial support of these negotiations was provided by the

lead Russian and American experts on the region, including Academician V.V. Naumkin, a well-known scholar of Islam, the research supervisor of the RAS Institute of Oriental Studies. The process of the political settlement in Syria, initiated by Russia, is unfolding in a similar algorithm.

The process of institutionalization of the world scientific community allows the international non-governmental scientific organizations to come out as new actors of the world politics. First of all, this is the InterAcademy Council, created in 2000 and unified national academies of sciences of nearly twenty countries in order to provide scientific expertise in the interests of the UN, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and other international organizations. This is also the Group of Earth Observations with participation of representatives from more than one hundred countries for the purpose of collecting and processing information on the state of the environment. This is as well the “The Future of the Earth” association aimed at carrying out research on biodiversity conservation, the biogenesis, as well as analysis and modeling of the terrestrial system.

Such activity of the scientific non-governmental organizations and separate groups of scientists, for sure, does not downgrade the expert role of traditional scientific organizations – academies of sciences, research centres and scientific institutes, including the university-based ones. In Russia, for example, research institutes assigned to the Department of Global Problems and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences serve as “think tanks” on a variety of issues of the international agenda.

A special place in the current system of science diplomacy is taken by research foundations specialized on financing different research projects, including the ones useful for the purposes of international policy. The initiative on the study of the science diplomacy phenomenon and its popularization belongs to the oldest of them – the UK Royal Society of London (RS). In Russia, the most active player is the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR), mainly due to its wide international connections. The RS and the RFBR have been developing partnership relations for more than ten years. In May 2017, jointly with the Moscow State Institute of International Relations they co-organized a Russian – British discussion on the study of national and world experience in the area of science diplomacy.

In conclusion, it must be stressed that the scientific community is capable and must demonstrate the convincing results of its studies, which may form the basis of the political decisions. For this reason the international contacts of scientists are of a high importance, as well as their interaction with those who take decisions and implement them at the international arena.