



## ***Warlord Public Diplomacy***

By Shakeel Ahmad Ramay

Public diplomacy is the art of engaging people to create a positive image, which can help strengthen relationships between and among countries. It is one of the oldest ways to interact among countries. Over the course of history, three major forms of public diplomacy emerged to achieve the prescribed objectives of countries. First, impress people with your development, present yourself as a grander breed, execute plans to show the superiority of your values, and try to infuse your values with distinguished and prestigious qualities. Second, present yourself as a partner, create an environment for mutual learning from each other's cultures and values, show respect to values and cultures, use your development status to create opportunities for others, and, most importantly, create avenues to share your prosperity. Third, show empathy, treat others the way you want to be treated, and create a sense of belonging with each other.

The first form of public diplomacy, which is based on the Western philosophy of diplomacy, is quite prevalent. The Western philosophy of diplomacy is built on the principle that “there are no permanent enemies or friends, only permanent interests.” It depicts the mindset of warlords, who want to get all and make people submit to their will (warlord diplomacy). Western countries began applying this mindset at the end of the colonization era. Western countries adopted it as the main tool to create influence and keep its hegemony intact. It was the mainstay of diplomacy during the Cold War era, disguised as sweet words and ideas like inclusiveness, diversity, Western values, human rights, freedom of speech, etc.

However, the end of the Cold War changed the dynamics. The powerful West introduced a new type of public diplomacy, the warlord public diplomacy. The story started with the theory of the End of History. The West declared its system as the finest system and presented the liberal order as a new normal. The fall of the USSR further strengthened their belief, and the Western



countries declared their dominance and started to erect a new world order and system.

Meanwhile, another theory emerged, the Clash of Civilization. This theory presented Western civilization as the ultimate winner and portrayed Western values as universal values. Thus, the liberal system was promoted as the universal system that must be adopted. The West asked everyone to follow the West and bow down in front of Western hegemony, etc. The Western hegemony initiated the imposing of their values and systems by force. They launched programs to introduce Western-style liberal democracy and values. It led to a series of conflicts and disturbances.

Muslim countries become the prime target of the Clash of Civilization theory. They realized there was still a danger of clash among different cultures, and Islam is the most prominent religion and culture. This mentality led to a war on terror, as the West identified Islamic culture as the rival culture. They targeted the Muslim countries, which were allies of the West during the Cold War era, as rivals and showed no mercy. They invaded Muslim countries in the name of a war on terror, one after the other. They also created economic hurdles for many Muslim countries like Pakistan.

Simultaneously, they began the process of weaponizing public diplomacy. A comprehensive and systematic approach was applied to weaponize public diplomacy. They continued using public diplomacy's soft face to promote Western values and democracy and launched programs and campaigns like the National Endowment for Democracy, etc. They also lured media and think tanks to become partners and portray Western values and democracy as any way forward.

However, if any country refuses to accept the dominance of Western values, democracy, ideology, and liberal system, then the country is



penalized through multiple tools. First, the country has to face malicious campaigns. They deploy media and think tanks to portray a bad image of the country. They do not hesitate to declare the country uncivilized. Second, economic sanctions are used to weaken the country and the grip of the government. Western economic and financial institutions are encouraged to punish the country. FATF is deployed to curb investment and economic opportunities in the worst-case scenario, such as in Pakistan.

Third, they encourage people to revolt against the government and State. They encourage color revolutions like many Arab and other countries had to face in the recent past. They support the rioters in the name of freedom of speech, democracy, the right to protest, etc., and present them as heroes of humanity. They use the opportunity to interfere in the internal matters of countries. They applied the same methodology in the case of Hong Kong, where the burning of property and assets (public and private), was dubbed a beautiful scene.

Unfortunately, many countries fell victim to color revolutions, and Western countries celebrated them as a great success. The media ran nonstop campaigns to highlight the virtues of the colored revolution, and Western leaders showered praise on the leaders of the colored revolution. They conveniently forgot people's suffering and did not help countries rebuild.

However, they do not allow such freedom of speech or protest, rather a genuine right of protest or freedom of speech, back in their own countries. This is apparent from the Julian Assange episode. In addition, many journalists have been detained or prosecuted in Western countries during the last decade. The right to protest was exposed during the Black Lives Matter movement and how the protestors were treated.



Fourth, if all the tools fail to achieve the objectives or tame the country, then violence is used to achieve the objectives. For that purpose, they invoke the responsibility to protect and destroy countries. Libya is the most prominent example on this front. A prosperous country has been destroyed in the name of responsibility to protect.

However, they are completely silent on genocide in Gaza; rather, they support the genocide and declare it the right of Israel. They are providing all sorts of weapons, money, food, and other resources.

In a nutshell, public diplomacy has been replaced by “Warlord Public Diplomacy.” The most powerful countries are doing everything to maintain their influence rather than hegemony. Like local warlords, they do not hesitate to use violence to achieve their objectives and control countries.

The hegemony of Western institutions, media, think tanks, and West-supported think tanks in the Global South is helping the West to make warlord public diplomacy a new normal. This trend is dangerous, creating sharp division among countries and leading to more conflicts and wars. The current situation indicates that the world cannot afford conflicts anymore. The West has to realize that the world is already facing numerous challenges, including economic slowdown, financial crises, pandemics, cyber, and, on top of everything, the existential threat of climate change.

Thus, there is a need to come out of a superiority complex, self-righteousness, and narrow economic interest mindset. The world should concentrate on finding a win-win formula. The first step to achieve this objective would be to redefine the philosophy of diplomacy and get rid of the “my interest is prime” mindset. The second step would be to promote relationship and empathy-based diplomacy. It will help bring back true public diplomacy and state



diplomacy. In this way, the world will be able to find a formula for the cooperative co-existence for humanity.