

Bio-Diplomacy An Answer to Today's Global Crisis

Paper submitted by

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Defining bio-diplomacy

The great issues of our day – poverty, hunger, disease, environmental pollution, a declining resource base, the rapid loss of species and habitats – are global problems. They are all related, and they do not respect national boundaries. Addressing them will require an unprecedented level of international cooperation. *Bio-diplomacy*, a concept pioneered by the Biopolitics International Organisation (B.I.O.), can be defined as the art of preserving and promoting life in all its forms through international cooperation among nations. Bio-diplomacy adds the dimension of *bios*, or life, to traditional diplomacy. It is based on the idea of our interdependence with all forms of life on our planet and promotes biodiversity as the true wealth and richness of humanity. Its central objective is to save life in all its varied and precious forms. If we are to solve the great problems of our world, nations must redirect their efforts away from conflict toward environmental restoration and the eradication of poverty, hunger and disease.

Defence for life is a corollary of bio-diplomacy. It refers to the conversion of military establishments into weapons of peace. B.I.O. believes that the greatest challenge for the 21st century will be the permanent reconfiguration of defence infrastructure into programmes for the defence of the planet. The nations of the world must stop investing in instruments of destruction and begin investing in instruments of peace for the protection of our common environment. Competition for ways to destroy, should be replaced with cooperation for ways to save. Time is of the essence, and this new vision is urgently needed.

Bio-policy and bio-diplomacy to meet global security challenges

Human actions are interfering with global processes in ways that have resulted in a serious crisis in values. Environmental deterioration is threatening the very continuation of life on our planet, adding urgency to the need for coherent long-term international strategy and co-operation. The emerging process of globalisation profoundly illustrates the necessity for rigorous inquiry into the opportunities and challenges ahead. A range of problems are confronting humanity and are affecting the development of national states, economic markets and local communities throughout the world. Increasingly, with information and communication technologies empowering individuals everywhere, humanity's future rests with new models of thought, action, communication and participation. A new millennium vision in policy – *bio-policy* is needed to guarantee the continuity of bios on our planet and lead society to a harmonious future.

Bio-diplomacy is aimed at pursuing the goals of bio-policy through diplomatic channels. The focus of bio-diplomacy is on the interdependence of all forms of life on earth, and it calls upon diplomats and people involved in the conduct of international relations to engage in a collective endeavour in defence of the environment. Joint efforts to protect the environment can act as a bridge between nations and peoples. The traditional role of diplomats of representing their nation's interests in other countries is enlarged, and the diplomat serves as a channel for environmental concerns to be conveyed to his country's leaders and ministries.

Bio-diplomacy has a role to play in preserving the natural environment and the great wealth of bios because present threats are international problems, and the required solutions involve the development of both educational programmes and international action programmes.

Diplomats of all ranks and nations should appreciate the great importance of this task and make the best possible use of the levers of power at their disposal. Following the envisaged laws of Biopolitics and putting them into practice in a coordinated fashion at the international, national, regional, and local levels will provide for increased cooperation of people across all the borders that separate them, be they physical, economic, ideological or psychological.

Environmental threats are international problems. Trees, the source of oxygen on our planet, can be considered the "lungs" of the body of bios. When a person's lungs are damaged, suffering occurs in the entire body. Similarly, the widespread destruction of trees and forests that we are seeing today has drastic implications for the health of our entire planet. The required solutions entail the development of bold plans of action for international co-operation. Nations must "declare war" on environmental destruction and abuse. Foreign policy should shift from a fragmented, competitive framework to a vision of unity and interdependence.

Bio-diplomacy espouses the belief that cultural differentiation constitutes the wealth of the body of humanity. Humanity is an integral part of the overall body of bios, and DNA, the genetic code for every living organism, is the link that connects all forms of life. Bio-diplomacy provides an opportunity for the aspirations of sovereign states and civil society to converge in pursuit of long-term environmental objectives and actions. At the same time, bio-diplomacy actively supports efforts to maintain biological and cultural diversity and seeks to improve human relations to attain the goal of world peace by replacing international competition with a universal, intercultural perspective.

The Biopolitics International Organisation has not only pioneered the concept of bio-diplomacy; it has also played a direct role in putting the concept into action. Since 1985, B.I.O. has participated in hundreds of conferences, symposia, and meetings in over 50 countries to promote the principles of bio-policy and the protection and preservation of the human and natural environments. Many of these events have been attended by ambassadors and other members of the diplomatic corps, political leaders, and representatives of academia.

In such events, all the ingredients are in place to convert ideas into concrete actions. The conference conveys the ideas for actions needed, the scientists and scholars of the nation involved develop the concept further into a specific programme of action, and the political leaders promote the concept through the nation's political system in order to produce the legislation or policy needed to put the concept into action. Noteworthy among B.I.O.'s accomplishments in bio-diplomacy have been the following:

- The establishment of the annual Youth Olympiad in Saint Petersburg, in which young people compete for prizes in environmental pursuits.
- A series of Hellenic-Turkish conferences, bringing together diplomatic, academic and civic leaders from the two nations to discuss common environmental problems and ways to address them.
- The establishment of a division of B.I.O. in Portugal to promote the goals and projects of B.I.O. Affiliated with the University of Oporto, it is housed at the University's Department of Bioethics.

Defence for life

National defence is a major priority among most nations of the world. A substantial portion of national budgets is committed to the maintenance of armed forces and the acquisition of weapons, such as highly sophisticated fighter aircraft, warships, submarines and missiles. Globally, about 10% of central government budgets are devoted to defence. In 2004, the nations of the world committed a total of \$950 billion dollars to defence spending. Developing countries spend about 15% of their funds on defence while developed countries spend 9%. When aggregated by region, the highest rate of defence spending was 21.4% for the Middle East, while Central America had the lowest rate, 4.2%. Such large military expenditures can

actually harm a country, because the monies could be applied to the betterment of the people and their environment.

War represents the ultimate failure of diplomacy. Whereas the purpose of bio-diplomacy is to protect life in all its forms, the purpose of war is to destroy life and human cultures. At the same time, war also destroys many of the other forms of life that it encounters. The environment, as a common point of reference, can bring all peoples of the world together, in a state of harmony and the absence of war. Defence for life must become a priority in every facet of our lives. The conversion of war regimes to programmes for the preservation of the environment would guarantee a better future. Such a programme would not have negative economic effects, but rather, it would stimulate the global economy and provide jobs, since existing defence industries would be re-tooled into defence-for-life industries. Existing defence manpower and equipment can be adapted for peaceful tasks such as reforestation, water resource clean up, soil erosion recovery, protection of the ozone layer and de-contamination of areas affected by nuclear radiation. These problems represent real threats to the continuation of life on our planet, and no human resource should be spared in the effort to contain them.

Paradoxically, the military has great potential for doing good. It offers a disciplined and trained source of manpower, readily available equipment such as trucks, bulldozers, ships and aircraft, communications and transportation capabilities, trained medical staff and logistics such as tents, food and blankets. It has engineering capabilities to build or repair roads, bridges and other public works. This resource has been used to respond to natural disasters, such as floods, hurricanes and earthquakes. However, the military can also work on civil projects, such as roads, hospitals and schools. It can provide humanitarian assistance in areas ravaged by poverty and disease. Finally, the military can work on projects of environmental restoration, such as reforestation, erosion control, and habitat protection.

The peaceful potential of the military was dramatically demonstrated by the response to the massive Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004. Naval vessels from a number of nations, including Australia, Japan and the USA, rushed quickly to the scene and provided helicopters to ferry food and medicine to remote areas of Indonesia and Sri Lanka that were isolated as a result of the devastation. In this way, emergency aid reached those in greatest need at a time when access by land was impossible. Beyond the immediate need for emergency relief are the longer term needs of reconstruction and rehabilitation. Here too, the military is equipped to play a vital role.

Another example of the military's capability to respond to a natural disaster was Hurricane Mitch, which devastated Central America in October 1998. Winds of up to 180 miles per hour and eight days of rain left thousands dead, many thousands homeless, and roads, bridges, buildings and agricultural fields destroyed. Military units from the USA and UK responded almost immediately, providing helicopters for search and rescue and emergency relief, and engineers for reconstruction of roads, provision of safe drinking water, medical care and other tasks. The military coordinated its efforts with those of governmental and private aid groups such as CARE and USAID. However, these efforts were in response to immediate needs. Experts have calculated that decades will be required to fully rebuild the shattered economies of these countries.

While the international community responded generously and quickly to the Indian Ocean tsunami and Hurricane Mitch disasters, problems also came to light, in terms of coordination among the plethora of military and civilian organisations involved and in logistics, i.e. getting the right type of aid to the areas where it is most needed. These problems suggest an urgent need for additional planning and preparation at the national and international levels for coordination of assistance in the event of a natural disaster. Military groups must coordinate their efforts closely with civilian aid agencies and governmental agencies. Multinational organisations such as the United Nations, NATO, the African Union and the Organisation of American States can provide a valuable role in planning for international emergency relief.

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