

**THE ROLE OF  
PTIS IN REGIONAL  
COOPERATION  
AND  
PARLIAMENTARY  
DIPLOMACY**

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## Role of Academic Institutions in Strengthening Parliaments: The Case of Parliamentary Diplomacy Training

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### 1.0 Introduction

Academic institutions have a fundamental role to play in the development of human capital as they are responsible for education in society. Through their academic programmes, universities the world over boast of producing outstanding researchers, thought leaders as well as social and economic actors who construct readily usable policy-oriented knowledge for the present and the future.

Education is both an end and a process. As an end, education creates an improved and empowered person. As a process, education involves the continuous acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes. It is through the provision of these three elements of education that academic institutions can help to strengthen the institution of parliament.

In democratic states, the institution of parliament is one of the key arms of the state and national government. The supremacy of parliament is exercised through the mandates of legislation, representation, oversight and public participation.<sup>3</sup> In all countries, the expected role of parliament is to ensure that they represent the interests of the people they represent. Effectively functioning parliaments contribute to shaping policies and laws that impact on the needs of the citizens, thus creating an environment that encourages and supports sustainable development for all. If parliamentarians are able to play their role effectively, then parliament remains central in complementing the role of other organs of the government system of any country.

Members of parliaments should therefore have sufficient knowledge on political and socio-economic issues pertaining to their countries, regions and the world. This should facilitate their enrichment of debate at regional and international platforms and conferences and in advancing their countries' national interests at such fora.

In this context, it is imperative for well-functioning parliaments to establish close collaborative engagements with academic institutions. This linkage is often midwived by parliamentary training institutes, through which various types of training, including parliamentary diplomacy, can be implemented. Such is the partnership between the Kenyan Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training and the University of Nairobi's Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies. One of the most common approaches for such collaboration is by signing a memorandum of understanding through which academic programmes on subjects

<sup>3</sup> Hudson, A. 2007: *Parliamentary Strengthening in Developing Countries*. Overseas Development Institute, DFID

such as leadership, governance, political science, international relations and parliamentary diplomacy are offered to members of parliament or other personnel working with the institution of parliament.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Collaboration Between Academic Institutions and Parliamentary Training Institutes

There is no single definition of parliamentary institutes. In some discourses they have been defined as premier institutions which are created by an Act of parliament to provide research, legislative capacity building and public outreach programmes to members of national and state legislatures.<sup>5</sup> There are three distinct types of parliamentary training institutes, namely external institutes, internal institutes and mixed institutes. External institutes refer to parliamentary institutes that are independent and work externally from the parliament. Internal institutes, on the other hand, are those that work under the administration and bureaucracy of parliament, while mixed institutes are a blend of internal and external institutes.<sup>6</sup> Parliamentary training institutes have been considered as centres of excellence which should be well equipped to develop and deliver to parliamentarians and related personnel the knowledge and skills necessary to make and implement policies that should have a positive impact in the lives of the citizens they represent.

In the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the role of parliamentary training institutes (PTIs) in fostering regional cooperation and promoting parliamentary diplomacy has been gaining prominence. To effectively perform this role, PTIs need to collaborate with academic institutions that not only are producers of evidence-based knowledge but also have experience in imparting that knowledge as well as necessary skills and attitudes.

Academic institutions are the foundations of pedagogy, in which they are experts in the profession and science of teaching. Ordinarily, it is one thing to have knowledge and it is quite another to have the ability to impart that knowledge to someone else. Here the emphasis is on the how to do it of whatever subject matter one is interested in. Given their expertise in teaching and training, academic institutions are able to apply the five principles of good pedagogy in their collaboration with PTIs. These are motivation, exposition, direction of activity, criticism and inviting imitations.

In the training of parliamentary diplomacy motivation is important as it requires the trainer to develop good relations with the learner; his or her world view, interests and experience. Parliamentary diplomacy training exposition skills requires ability at public performance combined with good subject knowledge, good preparation and often, good supporting props.<sup>7</sup> This is closely related with direction of activity in a learning environment. This includes learning activity design, learning activity delivery and learning activity selection and sequencing.

<sup>4</sup> Miller, R., Pelizzo, R., and Stapenhurst, R. 2004. *Parliamentary Libraries, Institutes and Offices: The Sources of Parliamentary Information*. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank.

<sup>5</sup> Goraya, KA. 2012: *Developing a Parliamentary Institute: Case Study of the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services*. Parliamentary Affairs.10:1093.

<sup>6</sup> Miller, R., Pelizzo, R., and Stapenhurst, R. 2004. *Parliamentary Libraries, Institutes and Offices: The Sources of Parliamentary Information*. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/ The World Bank.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

These are skills possessed by university trainers who are well equipped to frame the learning to be achieved in a way that makes sense to the student. For instance the Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies (IDIS) has over four decades of knowledge and experience in diplomacy training and hence knows what works and what does not work. The capacity to mix classroom training with simulation of diplomatic events and field study excursions enables academics not only to impart knowledge but also to develop negotiation skills, demeanor and attitudes necessary for diplomatic engagement. And without doubt these are some of the verifiable benefits that can accrue to the institution of parliament collaborating with academic institutions.

Academic institutions also help parliaments in strengthening their own parliamentary training institutes and other centres of learning. Furthermore, through collaboration with the University of Nairobi (UoN), the Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training is able to leverage on the reputation and clout of this academic institution. In the Africa region, the UoN is the academic institution of choice, as manifested in its capacity to attract and admit to the academy 80 per cent of the best students, leaving only 20 per cent to be shared by the remaining 50 or so institutions of higher learning in Kenya. The UoN is not only ISO certified, its curriculum has won a high degree of approval by the quality controller- the Commission for University Education.

According to the Webometrics World University ranking released in January 2018, the UoN was ranked as the seventh best institution of higher learning on the continent, with South African institutions taking the first five positions, followed in the sixth position by the University of Cairo<sup>8</sup>. It is this competence in designing a globally acceptable curriculum that justifies the collaboration of our sister institutions. In this way parliamentary training institutes can design a standard curriculum that can be used by parliaments in a certain region.<sup>9</sup> This is a way of deepening and creating a multiplier effect of knowledge that is widely acceptable in a certain demographic or other protocols such as free movement of goods and people across certain borders.

One of the functions of diplomacy is image building. Diplomats not only pursue national interests but also defend their countries' image. They do this by acting appropriately in different situations in which they may find themselves. It is actually in personal conduct where application of tact and intelligence is most required. This is an area where our African parliaments need to be strengthened to forestall the kind of shocking unparliamentary and primitive behaviour, full of intolerance and aggression, so often witnessed in our august house in Kenya. This behavior has the effect of destroying parliaments' image in the public's eyes. Therefore, parliament is in dire need of training in diplomacy, including use of language, public speaking skills and etiquette.

<sup>8</sup> Daily Nation, Nairobi, February 1, 2018, p. 48

<sup>9</sup> The Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training, 2012: *The Symposium for Peer Review the Curriculum of the CPST*. CPST, Nairobi.

The Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies is well poised to build parliamentary capacity in this area and more. Parliamentary diplomacy will equip Kenya's parliamentarians with negotiation and mediation skills as well as the attitudes necessary for harmonious conduct of parliamentary business. In essence, parliament needs diplomatic skills to avoid paralysis during debates and parliamentary diplomacy provides the entry point for the acquisition of these skills and attitudes. This form of diplomacy takes a pragmatic approach, engaging in long-term dialogue by building trust and understanding.<sup>10</sup>

By virtue of the nature of their work, parliamentarians rarely train their minds on affairs beyond the domestic environment of decision-making, legislation, representation, oversight and public participation. Because their key mandate is the responsibility of representing the people who elected them, many tend to have a limited world view and their knowledge of external affairs is often sketchy and distorted. But in the wake of 21<sup>st</sup> century globalization, where domestic and foreign affairs are intertwined, domestic policies attract global dimensions.<sup>11</sup> Emerging global issues and threats, such as terrorism, climate change, financial crisis, diseases and pandemics affect national, regional and global interests, and hence call for collective strategies and solutions.

As a result, negotiations around a wide spectrum of global issues require skills and knowledge of the issues themselves and the right packaging of global diplomacy capacities, through the skillful utilization of the strength of numbers factor regionally: shared heritage, historical connections, cultural and social norms and geographical proximity. This is the only way that modern-day parliamentarians can meaningfully serve their constituents. Parliamentary diplomacy can thus facilitate in building this reservoir of strength. It is important, through training, to broaden the view of parliamentarians to enable them to identify a number of factors, such as favourable external environment, political stability, intra-state relations, common issues of interest and good will from nations that can foster regional cooperation.<sup>12</sup>

Globalization has opened new spheres of global borrowing and sharing, which should be an asset in developing parliamentary systems. This means that different countries have similar features when it comes to their legislative processes. In Africa, the role of parliaments in regional cooperation has been overlooked in the past few decades, with the executive taking a lead role while parliament is confined to legislative matters.<sup>13</sup> Training in parliamentary diplomacy would equip parliament with the knowledge and skills to influence the efforts to achieve political stability both at the intra and inter-state relations level.<sup>14</sup>

The question of governance is important in the business of Parliament. It cannot be overemphasized that the quality of governance in any country is the key determinant and

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Malamud, A and Stavridis, S (2011), *Parliaments and Parliamentarians as International Actors*, Farnham, Ashgate Publishing Limited.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Noulas, G (2011), *The role of Parliamentary Diplomacy in Foreign Policy*, *Foreign Policy Journal*, Michigan, Cross Village.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

driver of national development, security and promotion of citizens' rights. As a key state institution on matters of governance, with a unique oversight role, parliaments must be well equipped in this regard. In fact, the idea behind the establishment of parliamentary training institutes was primarily to address the challenge of weak parliaments. These institutes were meant to try and find solutions to the problems experienced by dysfunctional parliaments.<sup>15</sup> It is at academic institutions that experts on governance issues are found. IDIS at the UoN is, for example, well-equipped to train parliamentarians on the nexus between national and regional governance issues, with those of global governance. Through collaborations, academic institutions will build the capacity of parliaments with a view to ensuring a balanced relationship with the other arms of government.

### 3. Parliamentary Training Institutes and Parliamentary Diplomacy

Parliamentary diplomacy is a relatively new form that has developed over this first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a result of the growing role of national parliaments in international and foreign affairs.<sup>16</sup> International diplomatic duties play a crucial role in fostering relations between national parliaments and this has emerged as another way through which relations between states are enhanced. Parliaments engage in diplomacy through three main ways: by influencing foreign policy through parliaments, establishing parliaments as representative bodies of regional and international organizations and conducting diplomatic relations with various states as well as non-state actors.<sup>17</sup> It is, for example, important that parliamentarians are equipped with relevant knowledge and negotiating skills if they are to ably advance national interests at crucial global arenas such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), where issues of global health have made it necessary for policy makers to understand that they can apply global health diplomacy in negotiating scenarios.

Parliamentarians attend international parliamentary conferences and workshops either as guests or officials in the host's national parliaments. This form of exposure expands parliamentarians' horizons on myriads of issues. This meeting of parliamentary focus groups at the regional levels encourages regional cooperation and is an important step in building like-minded individuals who have a wider global context on issues. The role of parliament as a diplomatic actor is gaining prominence both in practice and in academic discourse. The diplomatic duties of this institution makes the parliament a part of a country's political institutions that shape its international prospects. This emergent role of parliament requires parliamentarians to realise their significance in the international diplomatic affairs and strategies of their countries, and hence the need to come up with ways to achieve parliamentary diplomacy.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Session, B. 2011. *The Rationale and Background Conducive to the Establishment of the Parliamentary Institute and the Strategic Development of the Parliamentary Institute of Inter-Parliamentary Union.*

<sup>16</sup> Noulas, G (2011), The role of Parliamentary Diplomacy in Foreign Policy, *Foreign Policy Journal*, Michigan, Cross Village.

<sup>17</sup> Hamilton, K. and Langhorne, R. (1995), *The Practice of Diplomacy Its evolution, theory and administration*, UK, US: Routledge.

<sup>18</sup> Malamud, A and Stavridis, S (2011), *Parliaments and Parliamentarians as International Actors*, Farnham, Ashgate Publishing Limited.

At international level the practice of parliamentary diplomacy occurs through bilateral cooperation agreements between parliaments, bilateral friendship arrangements, parliamentary delegations, inter-parliamentary organizations and meetings between diplomatic officials and parliamentarians, among other facets. At regional level parliamentary diplomacy may be conducted through forums such as Pan-African Parliaments in Africa and for countries in Europe through the Intra-European Union parliamentary diplomacy. The establishment of the Pan-African Parliament underpinned the importance of parliaments in regional cooperation for member states in the promotion of Pan-African economic, cultural and political integration. The protocol in articles 3, 11 and 18 envisages a greater role for regional parliaments. The European Parliament is a great example of how parliamentary diplomacy can be achieved through involvement in international issues of democracy, good governance, peace and development. Foreign policy involves a lot of reciprocity processes where one state will implement the policies of another state that is more friendly or responsive to their own policies. This is a diplomatic practice that is in line with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of 1963.

#### **4. Emerging Context in the Conduct of Parliamentary Diplomacy**

The environment in which parliamentary diplomacy is conducted is rapidly changing. States today are faced with competing interests that make it difficult for the executive to execute its foreign policy duties effectively. This being the case, parliaments are at times required to legislate on issues they have little knowledge about. In Kenya, the International Criminal Court (ICC) case that involved high-profile Kenyans was a big challenge to the lawmakers. Most of them had never read the Rome Statute in which the authority of the court is domiciled. Consequently, even as many parliamentarians castigated the ICC and called for Kenya to withdraw its membership, their arguments displayed ignorance or very limited knowledge of international law and diplomatic practice on this matter. Inclusion of a course in international law in parliamentary diplomacy training would thus address this challenge.

##### **4.1 Preparing Parliament for Power Transitions**

Academic institutions can assist parliamentary training institutes design customized programmes for different parliaments in consideration of the dynamics of change that attend every parliament during transition, pre- and post- elections.<sup>19</sup> Such trainings are conducted through workshops, seminars, conferences and debate and dialogue forums. The curriculum for such training should embrace a wide spectrum of issues, including skills in gender mainstreaming, enhanced public participation, increased oversight, transparency and good governance.

<sup>19</sup> Bynander, F. And Hart, P. (2006), "When Power Changes Hands: The Political Psychology of Leadership Succession in Democracies" in *Political Psychology*, Vol. 27, No. 5, pp. 707-730.

For the purpose of achieving inclusive and diverse representation, participants in the trainings are drawn from various *parliamentary committees such as finance, public accounts, local government, gender and children affairs and special committees. At times representatives are also drawn from the ministry of foreign affairs, NGOs and parliamentary centers.*

#### **4.2. Developing Curricula**

Factoring in regional dynamics, a country's context and other political, economic and social issues, academic institutions can assist the parliamentary institutes to design a standard curriculum that can be used by parliaments in a certain region.<sup>20</sup> This is a way of deepening issues of common good such as adopting the use of a common language that is widely acceptable in a certain demographic or other protocols such as free movement of goods and people across certain borders.

#### **4.3. Building Collaboration with Other Research Centers**

Parliament has been active in building relationships with other arms of the government such as the executive. To this end, parliamentary training institutes strive to expand their collaboration with other key stakeholders ranging from key ministries, departments, civil society groups, research institutions and diplomatic missions.<sup>21</sup> The research centres can support the processes and strategies of different parliamentary committees that work on various issues such as biodiversity, technology transfer or people-to-people diplomacy. To this end parliaments must make a deliberate effort to build linkages and strategies that will enhance debates beyond the borders. In such efforts use of media is critical in sharing information on matters to do with governance, accountability and public participation, which are the building blocks for regional cooperation. Here too, diplomacy training institutes and academic institutions are well placed to provide first-class knowledge on media diplomacy.

#### **4.4. Support Parliament in Building Democratic Processes**

Parliamentary training centers handle each national parliament as a unique entity and they strive to provide support within a context that acknowledges and respects the cultural, political and historical uniqueness of each partner state in their training programmes. The programmes are customized to meet the needs of the different beneficiaries and their people, state or region that they represent. The process is carried out in an inclusive way that encourages participation.<sup>22</sup> Members of parliament and parliamentary support staff are taken through training workshops aimed at equipping them with the skills needed to enhance the effectiveness of parliaments in pushing for more accountable, transparent, participatory and

<sup>20</sup> The Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training, 2012: *The Symposium for Peer Review the Curriculum of CPST*. CPST, Nairobi.

<sup>21</sup> Noulas, G (2011), The role of Parliamentary Diplomacy in Foreign Policy, *Foreign Policy Journal*, Michigan Cross Village

<sup>22</sup> International Foundation for Electoral Systems Parliamentary Toolkit 2005: *Global Best Practices: A model Annual State of the Parliament Report*. A Strategic Monitoring and Reporting Tool for Promoting Democracy in Parliaments Worldwide.



democratic space. In such situations regional cooperation is fostered through networking among parliamentarians from different countries and sharing of common interests.<sup>23</sup> Here too, knowledge of networking diplomacy at regional and global levels is necessary.

#### 4.5. Supporting Peace Processes

Parliamentary training institutes have had an impact in conflict resolution and peace processes in countries such as Myanmar, Uganda, and Zambia. This positive impact was achieved through training workshops led by academic experts on peace and governance. Participants were drawn from different political parties, religious and community leaders, and representatives from civil society, who were all stakeholders in peace processes. The workshop may also be attended by key experts in the field of security and peace who can share their international experiences and best practices. Equally important is the mediatory role of scholars with knowledge of international conflict prevention, management and resolution. Parliamentarians therein acquire diplomatic conflict resolution skills such as how to dialogue, negotiate and mediate in conflict situations.

In essence most parliamentary training institutes need to work closely with academic institutions to develop various training curricula on programmes that foster peace both at the local and international realms. Parliamentarians and their support staff have been beneficiaries of this training, especially during electioneering periods in different states when the peace situation tends to be more volatile. Parliamentary training institutes, working closely with academic institutions, could thus continually build the capacity of policymakers to contribute in regional stabilisation and peaceful existence. This can be done by developing training modules for crisis response aimed at addressing longer-term regional security threats.

#### 4.6. Providing Quality, Evidence-Based and Independent Research

Parliamentary training institutes should adopt an independent and non-partisan approach in providing support to parliamentarians and their support staff. In an ideal environment, political parties and other government offices should not interfere with the functions and processes of parliamentary training institutes. In countries such as Pakistan, where these institutes are independent, self-funded and autonomous, they are able to conduct objective and quality research.<sup>24</sup> Even in countries whose parliamentary training institutes are semi-autonomous like Kenya, parliamentary training institutes should aim at providing quality, objective and independent research to enhance the role of the legislature in its oversight and legislation.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Kappeler, D. (1999), "Knowledge Management and Diplomatic Training: New Approaches for Training Institutions" in Kubalija, K., ed., *Knowledge and Diplomacy*, Malta: Diplo Projects, University of Malta.

<sup>24</sup> Goraya, K.A. 2012: *Developing a Parliamentary Institute: Case Study of the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services*. Parliamentary Affairs. 10:1093.

<sup>25</sup> Mwambua, C. M. 2012: *Personal Communication*. The Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training, Nairobi.

To enhance their effectiveness in discharging their duties, academic institutions can provide parliamentary training institutes with well-equipped research infrastructure to enable them to conduct quality research whose findings can then be used to improve the overall performance of parliaments in their various roles.

#### **4.7. Sharing Experiences from the International Environment**

Parliamentary training institutes should keep abreast of the happenings on the international political scene and critically analyse the effects of such events on national parliaments. Some countries in the developing world have been characterized by poor governance and weak structures of government.<sup>26</sup> This has led to ineffectiveness in service delivery. Most of these countries also lack parliamentary training institutes. Thus there is a need to establish such institutes, which can facilitate in addressing the challenges and finding solutions to governance problems. There is no one-size-fits-all strategy for parliamentary institutes in carrying out their functions. Academic institutions can help the institutes to customize their programmes to respond to specific needs in the context of each and every country and region.<sup>27</sup>

Parliamentary diplomacy provides the starting point of dialogue on issues of importance such as development and governance, which encourage bilateral and multilateral relations. This form of diplomacy takes a pragmatic approach, engaging in long-term dialogue by building trust and understanding.<sup>28</sup>

#### **4.8. Promotion of National Interests at Local and Regional Parliaments**

A key aspect in any foreign affairs engagement is the protection and promotion of national and regional interests. Consequently, parliamentary training institutes provide a guideline to parliamentarians and their support staff on how to conduct themselves when representing their states and what to do to ensure that the interests of their countries are well represented. Most states anchor their foreign policies in the constitutional provision that requires all international treaties and conventions to be ratified by that state to be domesticated.<sup>29</sup>

This common constitutional requirement provides most states with a baseline and a common ground for consensus, thus providing an important entry point for parliamentary diplomacy. At the regional level, regional economic blocs hold more bargaining power and are stronger when they approach a matter of international interest rather than individual states. For instance, the East African Community member states pursue a regional approach with regard to the equitable utilization of River Nile water resources; this provides an area of convergence for all parliaments of the five member states. Similarly, the African Union (AU) is likely to succeed at the United Nations General Assembly on an issue such as climate change or terrorism when it submits a case on behalf of the member states.

<sup>26</sup> Hudson, A. 2007: *Parliamentary Strengthening in Developing Countries*. Overseas Development Institute, DFID

<sup>27</sup> Kioko, J. 2012: *Personal Communication*. The Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training, Nairobi.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Hamilton, K. and Langhorne, R. (1995), *The Practice of Diplomacy Its evolution, theory and Administration*, UK, US: Routledge.

#### **4.9. Creating Credibility and Accountability of Parliaments**

Parliamentary training institutes help in building more responsive, accountable and credible governance by designing programmes that strengthen national parliaments. In his argument, Hamilton (1995) notes that even though building the capacity of parliaments does not guarantee an impact in the overall performance and credibility of the government, it plays a crucial role in building a more effective parliament.<sup>30</sup> To improve on this feature, parliamentary institutes can borrow other good practices from academic institutions that have applied research findings to practice. Academic institutions can also engage specialist consultants and subject experts in designing training programmes for various groups of people in the national assemblies.

##### **4.9.1. Coping with Existing Geopolitics**

The current configuration of the geopolitical environment in various regions may undermine the efforts by parliamentary training institutes in empowering national parliaments to build regional cooperation. For instance, it has been a challenge to get all the parliaments in the East African region on the same page when it comes to regional integration on a number of issues. Tanzania has inclined more towards the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) than the East African Community.<sup>31</sup> This has led to stalling of some issues such as having a common regional travel document that is acceptable in all the five countries. This reflects some of the geopolitical factors that may undermine the pursuit of regional cooperation and parliamentary diplomacy.

#### **4.10. Harmonizing Different National Policies**

Each country has different national policies when it comes to the context of regional cooperation. In any case, the national interest of any state transcends regional interests. This may pose a challenge when national parliaments are collaborating on a number of common goals such as security as each parliamentarian at the negotiation table strives to further the interests of the country or people he or she represents. This competitive position in most cases has led to the stalling of processes on a number of important issues at the regional level.

### **5. Conclusion**

This paper has sought to examine and analyze the role of academic institutions, in collaboration with parliamentary training institutes, in fostering the building of strong governance institutions, well equipped for national and regional cooperation through parliamentary diplomacy. While we are aware of the numerous challenges in this endeavor, we submit that well-targeted and strategic partnerships between parliamentary and academic institutions can serve as a useful mechanism of strengthening parliamentary democracy and diplomacy.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Manda, I. 2008. *Regional Integration and Parliamentary Diplomacy: A critical Analysis of the Contribution of the SADC Parliamentary Forum to Southern Africa Integration*. London: University of Westminster.

It is also important that the training programmes in these institutes be extended to other parliamentary staff such as the secretariat, members of the various committees, and clerks of the national assemblies at the national and county levels. All programmes should be designed to equip the staff with the necessary skills, language proficiency and knowledge on diplomatic procedures. This should ensure they are well equipped to perform their specific functions, including providing necessary support to the parliamentarians they are attached to.

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## The Role of PTIs in Regional Cooperation and Parliamentary Diplomacy

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### Introduction

Capacity building of personnel through intensive training has become an integral part of organizations. States across the world seek to ensure their institutions perform to an optimum level and therefore it is necessary to promote and enhance the abilities of their legislative members as well as the larger workforce. Other stakeholders of democracy are included in this process in order to expand parliaments' access and coordinate public participation in the legislative processes and other parliamentary activities.

The need to train political representatives arises from the multifarious functions they perform. Representatives need to be well-versed in the legislative process and its various factions such as parliamentary committees and procedures that enable them to raise matters and pose questions to the House. They must also be familiar in nuanced issues such as privilege, traditions, budget, voting mechanisms, state-centre and legislative-executive relations. This is in addition to their duties to the electorate and legislative law-making processes. Consequently, there is a need for extensive training and continuous learning processes to be in place.

It is an established fact that parliamentarians, irrespective of their language, religion and cultural values, are united by common interests such as rule of law, individual rights and freedoms, and democratic polity. It has been noted that several regions in the world are moving in the direction of integration. Though this process was started in Europe, similar moves are also being made in Africa, Latin America, and Asia and in the Middle Eastern region. Here national parliaments and their elected representatives play a significant role.

This paper on 'The Role of Parliamentary Training Institutes (PTIs) in Regional Cooperation and Parliamentary Diplomacy' seeks to examine the concept of parliamentary diplomacy, the need and imperative of regional cooperation among national parliaments, and the aims and objectives of parliamentary training institutes. It further examines the significant contribution made by the Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Training (BPST) of India in promoting and strengthening parliamentary diplomacy and regional cooperation. An analytical summary is also provided of BPST's customized capacity building programmes in parliamentary practices, processes and procedures, conducted for the benefit of many groups, including parliamentarians, officials belonging to various services, media professionals, and students from foreign parliaments, governments and institutions.

### **Need for Regional Cooperation**

The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the emergence of regional integration processes for a variety of reasons. The countries concerned aspired for unity to overcome historical divisions and secure regional stability and peace. They were convinced that there was strength in unity and realized that nations inevitably belong to a community. They have expressed the desire of taking certain decisions collectively to construct a harmonized framework and life of their societies. In this perspective, the elected representatives started contributing more and more on international issues in national parliaments as well as in international fora. In fact, the individuals and institutions involved in international affairs have increased in number. National parliaments, both individually and collectively, have been playing a significant role in influencing international relationships. Parliamentarians, as statesmen, sometimes play a quasi-diplomatic role.

### **Parliaments, Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Diplomacy**

The growing awareness and enlightenment together with the introduction of democratic polity in more countries and in wider areas of governance have given new impetus to parliamentary diplomacy, which is now a new denominator in the vocabulary of international politics. However, it should be remembered that the guiding principle behind parliamentary diplomacy is that the domain of diplomacy is too important a vocation to be left to diplomats only. No wonder Nobel Laureate Mikhail Gorbachev<sup>3</sup> very succinctly put it, “...*the new style in international relations implies extending their framework far beyond the limits of diplomatic process. Parliaments along with governments are becoming increasingly active participants in international contacts, and this is an encouraging development. It points to a trend towards greater democracy in international relations.*”

In a way, parliamentary diplomacy is an institutionalized device available to members of parliament to protect and promote national interests and the enlightened collective interests of mankind. The means available for pursuing diplomacy are bilateral and multilateral contacts such as visits and other exchanges, workshops, study visits, and attending customized programmes at parliamentary training institutes. However, it must be borne in mind that the effectiveness of parliamentary diplomacy and its scope are limited to the extent of influencing the diplomacy rather than determining the policy itself, which is the prerogative of the executive in a parliamentary form of government. Nonetheless, it does promote a climate of cordiality and mutual trust, which is no doubt an important input in shaping foreign policy.<sup>4</sup>

With the advent of the era of globalisation, things have changed. The emergence of global issues such as terrorism, climate change, MDGs, SDGs and resultant international agenda and plans to deal with these challenges has made it imperative that parliaments take an active part that goes beyond merely ratifying treaties/resolutions/agreements. There is greater realisation on the part of parliamentarians that they need to engage at global and regional level as the key challenges to the new globalised world affect all. This way they should be able to scrutinise those negotiations. They should keep themselves fully informed

<sup>3</sup> Rabi Ray, 'Parliamentary Diplomacy'; 1991; (New Delhi, S. Chand and Company Ltd), p.2

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

to express their political views to the executive.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is well accepted that meetings and exposures at the level of parliaments will go a long way in promoting diplomacy.

Parliamentary diplomacy calls attention to the maneuvering of various regional and special interest groups. It must be noted that parliamentary training institutes such as BPST provide a forum where they can be more frank, spontaneous and go beyond the parenthetical grammar of executive diplomacy. These training institutes also provide ‘technical assistance’<sup>6</sup>, which can be best described as the action of institutions or persons to help build capacities in a parliament, especially those in developing countries and emerging democracies, in order to enable them to perform their functions more effectively. The technical assistance is provided both in the form of financial and material resources. Expertise is also provided from the more established democracies to emerging democracies. The assistance also includes development of infrastructure, institutional development through improved procedures and modernization of parliamentary processes. Building awareness through exchange of experiences and information among members of parliament of different countries is a continuous process. Capacity building and professional development involving training of members and staff of parliaments and legislative and committee development are two areas where special attention has been given by PTIs.

### **Regional Cooperation and Parliamentary Diplomacy: The Role of BPST**

Since its inception in 1976, BPST has been consistently playing a genuine and valuable role in fostering a sense of fellowship and developing commonality of views among parliamentarians. Over the decades, it has developed close bonds of friendship between India and several parliamentary democracies of the world. It has also been instrumental in inculcating democratic values among parliamentary officials and other stakeholders of democracy.

BPST, through its well-established practices, has helped nations to establish parliamentary training institutes. The Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training (CPST) of the Parliament of Kenya is one such example.

BPST has boosted parliamentary diplomacy and regional cooperation through its various programmes for foreign parliamentarians/parliamentary officials and other stakeholders of democracy. The training imparted in BPST is demand-driven, focusing on thematic parliamentary topics, understanding individual skills and presenting comparative analysis wherever required. Attachment programmes, study visits and special customized programmes are organized by BPST on request. These programmes of the duration of three to five days offer an opportunity to the visiting parliamentarians to have a first-hand knowledge and experience of the working of parliamentary institutions in India. Customized programmes are designed to cater to the special demands and requirements of the visiting dignitaries and are *ad hoc* in nature.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Parliament and Democracy in the Twenty-first Century, a Guide to Good Practice’, IPU, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*