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Уредувачки одбор/Editorial board: тел. (+389) 2 3066 232,
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„CORONA VIRUS HANDLING – ‘NAMASTE’“

Dr. Sande Smiljanov⁸⁴

Abstract: Handshake is an established practice of “good behavior” and formality and as such is extremely important in creating a positive first impression, as a basis for successful social interaction. The question we all ask ourselves is - how has this practice changed into a pandemic that has changed social and professional life globally. The main goal of this paper is to give a historical perspective on the development of protocol rules, their meaning and the change that has become a reality in today’s life. The methods used in the elaboration of the topic of this paper are theoretical and practical analysis in the field of protocol, labeling and norms for “good behavior”.

Keywords: protocol, etiquette, pandemics, bon-ton, handshaking, greeting.

1. Basic rules for proper behavior (etiquette)⁸⁵

Protocol (Etiquette) is a combination of a good behavior and logical reasoning, which is based on the goal of effective communication between people, during social life - in the working environment, in various types of ceremonies, and even in everyday life. Protocol is neither just a science nor just an art. The protocol is both the first and the second, converging in a matter that does not stop evolving. And, not only is this science and art constantly evolving, but it is more than subtle. The slightest shifts in established rules of conduct can and will be interpreted as a “non-verbal message” that has a strong impact on international relations. Simply put, protocol is a kind of practical profession that has its own academic background, a profession that is essential in maintaining the international order and whose misunderstanding can lead to the collapse of the delicate world puzzle.

Etymologically, the term “protocol” comes from the Greek term referring to the marking of documents. In more detail, the protocol is named after the “protókollon” coinage of the words “protos” and “kólla”, which mean first, or glue, which literally means “first glued sheet” (Smiljanov, 2020).

In today’s highly connected world, protocol is a kind of so-called “social discipline” without which the meetings of sovereigns (crowned heads of states), presidents of states, governments, assemblies, top officials in each of the three pillars of government, would have little importance. The combination of the essence of the protocol (good behavior and logical reasoning) enables a successful and efficient combination.

⁸⁴ Contact address: ssmiljanov@gmail.com

⁸⁵ More information regarding protocol, etiquette, security and diplomacy in: Смиљанов, С. (2021). Улогата на протоколот и одбранбената дипломатија во остварувањето на безбедноста на Република Македонија. Докторска дисертација. Скопје: Филозофски факултет, <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12188/13176>

The simplest definition of a protocol is: It is a set of rules that require good conduct in official life and in ceremonies involving entire governments and nations, as well as their representatives. It is a recognized system of international courtesy (Thompson, 2001).

The protocol in a broader sense is in fact a "set of rules" to be applied in protocol, state and diplomatic ceremonies, official relations and social life (Smiljanov, 2020. pp. 23 – 38).

Etiquette (derived from the word "Etiquette", which means good behavior) is actually the basis of manners, which arise from customs, practice and authority. Etiquette is accepted as the right behavior in the process of interpersonal interaction. Etiquette makes it possible to preserve respect for the rights of others.

Etiquette is essentially an unwritten code of conduct designed to facilitate social interaction, both personally and professionally. Etiquette is a kind of milestone that can lead us through a network of personal and professional interactions. It differs from good manners because the etiquette prescribes certain rules that are appropriate in a particular context or condition, while good manners include more general rules such as respect for the elderly, the rule of not interrupting a person while speaking, and so on. Good behavior is in fact a reflection of an individual's personality, and unlike etiquette, it provides relatively the same elements of behavior that are considered correct, in most of the world's cultures.

The beginnings of the protocol

The protocol took its form in the time of the ancient Egyptians, who through the work "The Instructions of Ptahhotep" (or "The Maxims of Ptahhotep") laid the foundations for the protocol as a science and practice. This work was written in 2,000 BC, on the letter of the priests, and today can be found in the National Library in Paris, under the name "Papyrus Prisse" (after the name of the donor) (Donaldson, 1990). The French terms "protocole diplomatique" and "protocole della chancellerie" until the 19th century denoted ceremonial rules that were required to be followed in written official contacts between state ministers. Today, on the other hand, protocol is a kind of code of international courtesy that absorbs etiquette, ceremony, and diplomacy. And the power of protocol is known not only in the world of diplomacy, institutions, the state, but also within the private sphere, which sees protocol as a "powerful tool for business development" (Smiljanov, 2020. pp. 23 – 38).

Opinion polls show that 99 out of 100 people in the business world say that having knowledge and skills in the field of protocol is one of the conditions for success in the business sphere. This especially refers to good behavior, having appropriate manners for behavior at official dinners, the ability to run the so-called "courtesy conversation", self-presentation and knowledge of the basic rules of courtesy. In fact, through diplomacy and protocol, skills are acquired to present the worst in the best possible way. Etiquette and protocol are skills and knowledge that can give a global image to any business person who wants to become a successful leader (Johnson, 2011).

Protocol specifics

Protocol, like any other practically focused science, sets before itself certain preconditions that are necessary for its development. Vision is the de facto basis for progress in all fields and is a managerial function, a skill that only successful leaders and heads

have. In order to successfully pass to the planning phase, it is necessary to anticipate the situation well, to set and determine the goals, to extract appropriate priorities, time frames and deadlines, to make it all operational, or to determine the specific activities. Planning is especially important in order to achieve the defined goals, in the most efficient and effective way. The success of an organization, and of each process separately, is valued through the achieved, not according to the set goals (Petkovski, 2000).

Each activity consists of several phases that must be realized in order for the activity to be implemented in the most efficient way. The already mentioned planning is followed by the execution phase, or the "time for action". That segment demands the so-called planned action, full realization to the last detail, but also requires creative and quick thinking in case of an unforeseen situation. Of course, the third step is the analysis of the completed activities, the determination of the lessons learned and the process of generating the so-called "360 degree feedback", using all stakeholders (Smiljanov, 2020. pp. 29 - 32).

In the process of operationalization, i.e. realization of the protocol plans, one important segment is the innovation. The protocol is a specific area from that aspect because innovations drastically affect the efficiency of the implementation of activities. Simply speaking, the use of the landline telephone, as opposed to today's electronic communication, the use of e-mail, mobile telephony and the availability of the Internet network causes complete changes in the realization of the practical protocol activities. Through all these technological advances, the protocol service as a final product is more efficient and is realized in a much simpler and faster way. What appears to be a challenge is of course the respect of the established etiquette, i.e. professional behavior through these forms of modern communication.

Practically it would look this way:

- Phone call: the business phone is never answered with "hello" or "yes please", but the professional approach would be "name and surname, please";
- The mobile phone is an even bigger challenge considering that the call can come in any situation - the mobile phone is turned off during meetings, cultural activities, religious buildings, visiting restaurants, concerts...
- voicemail should be recorded with full professionalism;
- the conference call is not a communication between two people, and if it takes place through a speaker, before a certain person engages in communication, it should be informed about who is present in the room and within the call;
- Email should be perceived as business and professional correspondence and should contain all the elements of a business letter. In official correspondence, only the official e-mail address is used, and all elements of the e-mail are always filled in, starting with the "subject". In addition, the use of e-mail should take into account the fact that it may at any time be used for other purposes or be perceived more harshly than the sender intended. An email response should be returned within a maximum of 24 hours (Smiljanov, 2020. p. 38).

But innovation is not always the only advantage in practicing any profession, especially protocol. From a practical point of view, for the realization of the protocol, the resources (technical, human and financial), the tradition and the cultural differences of the sender and the receiver have always been a kind of limiters.

Why are determining the specifics of a practical protocol so important? Simply put, the protocol is the face of the state. Practitioners in this field are de facto the first people as representatives of a foreign country meets.

This applies in particular to the practice and implementation of the “rules of good conduct” of the diplomatic corps, which can be used both in a narrower and broader sense, distinguishing between ambassadors and all persons holding a diplomatic passport.

2. The power of the first impression and the handshaking

In the moments when some important decisions have to be made, they can very much depend on the so-called first impression we left on the interlocutor. The first impression is inextricably linked to the application of “good conduct”, but also to the rules of etiquette and protocol. One thing is clear, there is no possibility for a corrective exam. With our verbal, but even more with our paraverbal and non-verbal communication, we transmit signals to the people around us from which the people around us form an image of us and our personality. Thus, the impression can be positive or negative, i.e. sympathetic or antipathetic.

People make their first impression based on their appearance, character and speech, as well as their smell and skin. The person is first noticed the way he dresses, the type of hairstyle, the application of make-up, the choice of jewelry. Additionally, people express their character with facial expressions, the manner of walking, posture, gestures, looks and kindness. All of these elements must be complementary as a positive impression on the person can seriously jeopardize another important element, such as body odor, personal contact (for example when handshaking) or inaccuracy.

Therefore, the rules of etiquette provide some basic tips for a good first impression:

- Always be on time;
- look the interlocutor in the eye;
- smile kindly;
- speak calmly and at the same pace;
- respect the interlocutor;
- be calm, professional, confident and believe in yourself;
- pay attention to your appearance: be rested, tidy and clean. Keep your hair tidy, as well as your teeth and nails. Keep body odor pleasant and unobtrusive.



Winston Churchill (United Kingdom), Harry Truman (USA) and Joseph Stalin (USSR) at the Potsdam Conference in 1945, two months after the end of World War II

When it comes to handshaking, it has its historical value. One of the earliest representations of handshaking is found in relief from the ninth century BC. which depicts the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III as ruler, thus signaling an alliance. In

the Iliad and the Odyssey, Homer repeatedly describes handshaking, often associated with vows and expressions of trust. This gesture is a common motif in ancient Greek funeral art, plaques often depict the deceased shaking hands with a family member, symbolizing either a final salutation or an eternal bond between the living and the dead. In ancient Rome, the handshaking was often used as a symbol of friendship and loyalty, and pairs of clasped hands were also found on Roman coins.

Daily handshaking is considered a more recent phenomenon. Some historians believe it was popularized by 17th century Quakers, who saw the gesture as a more egalitarian alternative to bowing, kissing a hand, or saying goodbye by lifting a hat. By the 19th century, there were books on etiquette that included correct or incorrect ways of handling. The Victorian consisted of a firm but not excessive grip, and an 1877 manual advised that “a gentleman who rudely presses other’s man hand, or shakes it too aggressively, should never be allowed to repeat this offense.”

In the modern world, depending on the country and culture, shaking hands is a traditional greeting to meet or congratulate, but also when meeting officials. Bon-ton envisions doing it with the right hand (whether left-handed), and greeting women first, except in (mostly Islamic) countries where handshaking with women is not common. While shaking hands, the other hand should be free, not in the pocket. And there is an order in which someone shakes hands, according to age and status.

An unaccepted hand of greeting is considered an insult and a signal of open hostility or protest. A handshake between politicians, especially from opposing sides, is a sign of peace and cooperation (although the outstretched hand can be like that only for taking photography). In 1963, a certain Lance Dawson shook hands with 12,500 people for 10.5 hours, and Atlantic City Mayor Joseph Lazaroff is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records for shaking hands with 11,000 people in one day in 1977, breaking Roosevelt’s record with 8,510 handshakes during the White House reception on January 1st, 1907.

The latest scientific research⁸⁶ in the field of neurology shows that a positive approach to handshaking and initiating handshaking helps to form a positive first impression. “A firm and friendly handshake has long been recommended as a way to make a good first impression in the business world,” said a study in the Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience, led by the Beckman Institute. The handshake that precedes a particular social interaction enhances the positive impact, while annulling the possibility of negative feelings before the basic part of the social interaction. This de facto can also be taken as an empirical evidence for the centuries-old belief that handshake does play a significant role in social or business interactions. The study actually proved that avoidance-based behavior leads to clearly shown indifference in the further course of the interaction, if it develops at all. In contrast, handshaking, not in any form, but firm, stable, confidential, but also friendly handshake is what can be a good practice for developing closer social interactions.

Having in mind the abovementioned, there are some basic rules for handshaking:

- The elderly person reaches out first;
- the woman extends her hand to the man;
- a person of higher rank gives his hand to the one who is lower in rank;

⁸⁶ More information on the science behind handshaking on: <https://beckman.illinois.edu/about/news/article/2012/10/19/833c5312-07dc-499e-b192-941f95db727b>

- men need to take off their gloves when handling, but not women;
- we shake hands with the same person once, i.e., in exceptional situations twice a day.

When shaking hands, you should look at the person you are shaking hands with and smile at them. Hand kissing is commonly practiced today to greet religious leaders.

If the handshaking is considered as opening the door to further social interaction of a personal or professional nature, the next step would be the act of greeting, and then the presentation, for which, again, certain basic rules apply, widely used worldwide. When greeting, the rule is to greet all the people we know. If we are not quite sure that we know someone, it is better to greet them than not to do so. The greeting is a sign of friendship, attention and respect. The greeting must be cordial, not just a formality. It must be an expression of affection and respect for the person we greet.

Some basic rules apply when greeting, such as:

- The man greets the woman first, unless he is much older than her. An exception to this rule is when a woman should first greet a senior official or church leader;
- the younger person greets first;
- when you meet an acquaintance with his wife, you greet first;
- it is better to greet ten times more than once less;
- younger always greets older and lower in rank greets the one who is higher in rank.

In addition to these rules, it is necessary to pay attention to several others, as follows: the offered hand should be accepted, and the withdrawal is an insult; the right hand is always extended when greeting; the hand should not be "limp", but we must not squeeze it too hard and hold the other person's hand for too long. Additionally, when handshaking, care should be taken not to reach behind a person's back. When shaking hands, care must be taken not to cross your arms. When handshaking in the street, men take off their gloves and women do not. The greeting must be returned. Greeting should be avoided if the person you want to greet is in an "awkward position" and you think it would be better if you act as if you have not noticed.

In terms of representation, the following rules should always be followed:

- Look the interlocutor in the eyes;
- you should always have a self-conscious, correct attitude;
- have a smile on your face;
- have a vivid expression;
- practice firm handling;
- have a clear and concise pronunciation of the name and surname;
- look and gesture at the person you represent;
- use the rule of advantage;
- Do not look at the person from head to toe.

3. Etiquette during pandemic

The Corona pandemic - the virus in all aspects changed social life. Personal, social and professional life got their new "normality", and that to a large extent influenced and influences the way the rules of etiquette work. The change in the generally accepted norms of "good conduct" occurred abruptly and without a period of adjustment. Shaking hands became a forbidden form of greeting, social distancing while maintaining any physical contact became the norm, and professional life began to function "on-line". At the beginning of the global pandemic, any refusal to shake hands was equated with arrogance, especially since the ritual of shaking hands was so deeply ingrained in social practice that people were confused when left without it.

In fact, this is understandable because the handshake has been around for thousands of years, and the popular theory is that the gesture began as a way of signaling peaceful intentions - if your hand is free to shake hands, then you are not holding a weapon. Another explanation is that it was a ritualized way to seal a deal or relationship. However, the habit of greeting someone in this way is so deeply ingrained that at least in Western culture people are confused when that ritual is missing.



◀ Tanzanian President John Magufuli (right) welcomes the country's opposition leader Seif Sharif Hamad (left) in March 2020

Shaking hands is a well-known way of spreading pathogens that is now beginning to be replaced by "elbow bumps", "foot shakes" (greeting by foot kicking instead of shaking hands), bows, a slight bowing with the palms joined

together in a prayer position. The tai wai salute is widespread in many countries in Southeast Asia, and since ancient times is also known as the Indian "Namaste" or Burmese "Minglar par". (like the Indian "Namaste") or simply not initiating a contact bowing (like the Indian "Namaste") or simply not initiating contact. On the other hand, history has also remembered awkward characters who wanted to convey messages from God to people through handshake.

So far it has been noticed that this way of saluting has been used by the former US President Trump and even Prince Charles.

And, according to the "new normal", handshaking, i.e. lack of handling was not the only change in the rules of generally accepted etiquette. Simply in the race to stop the spread of the Corona virus, states have banned any kind of close social interaction - hugging, discussing at a distance of less than two meters, communication without masks indoors and the like. This led to the creation of a new kind of etiquette in the pandemic that produced new rules of good conduct, such as:

- Continuous wearing masks, especially indoors;
- More extensive non-cash payment in any type of trade;

- Increasing the use of technology (on-line video conferencing) in the business sector, but also in maintaining contacts with loved ones;
- Need to adhere to strict measures and rules when visiting restaurants, fitness centers, cinemas, theaters, sports competitions;
- Reduced flow of people between countries in the world;

Conclusion

Modern society operates according to rules of good conduct, etiquette and protocol rules that have evolved over the centuries. These rules are not only implemented as part of the social norm derived from beliefs and customs - recent empirical research has shown a correlation between a positive first impression that opens the door to effective interaction and a handshake as a first step towards the communication process. The pandemic we are experiencing has greatly changed the way we live in both personal and professional contexts, with new rules coming to the fore, the disobedience of which leads to both personal and social condemnation which greatly closes the possibilities for establishment of effective and purposeful communication. However, this does not mean that the importance of the established norms of labeling has decreased, but on the contrary it is expected to intensify after the declaration of the end of the global Corona viruspandemic.

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