

Cultural Diplomacy¹

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Theory and Literature

In the case of internet sources for research, over 90% of the available material is reporting activities based on American initiatives, one of the few continental references being John Holden's DEMOS publication². Moreover, on an institutional level, the dominant and explicit reference to a place of cultural diplomacy training is the Cultural Diplomacy Institute in Berlin (which, in fact, is also a US initiative). This is not surprising since cultural diplomacy is considered to have been shaped during the Cold War by US actions meant to contain the Soviet Union's expanding influence in Europe (Donfried, Gienow-Hecht, 2010; Bu, 1999). However, on international scale, things are developing gradually, by the emergence of BA or MA programs in the cultural diplomacy field, as well as conferences and workshops on these matters. Also, in the same manner, on the Romanian internet channels, few references are made regarding this particular subject, showing that the domain is seriously underdeveloped/yet to be developed.

For the written literature, there are entire series of works that are focused upon case studies (Aguilar, 1997; Alden, 2005; Alden, Soko, 2005; Hugon, 2005; Akami, 2008; Lee, 2008; Young, 2008; Lam, 2009; McGiffert, 2009) or pieces that tangentially address the cultural diplomacy area (Eban, 1983; Barston, 1988; Kissinger, 1994; Bissard, Chossudorsky, 1998; Hamilton, Langhorne, 2000; Boot, 2004; Baylis, Smith, 2005; Domett, 2005; Curtin, 2007). However, the theoretical approach and framework in the sense of shaping a definition and an operationalizing of the concept is still poor because cultural diplomacy is still hard to define (Schneider, 2006).

In the same sense, on the Romanian side, an extremely reduced number of books cover the niche of the cultural diplomacy. Moreover, the entire field of study is somehow overlapping other areas such as propaganda, branding or advertising (Elliot, Percy, 2006;

¹ The article is part of the chapter entitled *Losing Focus: an Outline for Romanian Cultural Diplomacy* published in Topic, Martina, Rodin, Sinisa (eds.), *Cultural Diplomacy and Cultural Imperialism. European perspective(s)*. Peter Lang, Berlin, 2012.

² According to Helena Drobna (UNESCO) at 'Cultural Diplomacy and Culture in a Changing World'. An international forum, 18th June 2009, London, UK.

Anholt, 2007; Clifton, 2009; Govers, Go, 2009), diplomacy per se (Eban, 1983; Barston, 1988; Kissinger, 1994; Bissard, Chossudorsky, 1998; Hamilton, Langhorne, 2000) or intercultural communication (Dodd, 1995; Gudykunst, 2005). But cultural diplomacy is much more than that. It is the cultural dimension of the public diplomacy that is in charge with the dissemination of a country's message outside its borders (Adelman, 1981). „Cultural diplomacy can be defined as a track II, non-conventional diplomatic practice, aimed at identifying cultural patterns of behaviour as well as the commonalities of two or more competing groups in order to find a common ground of dialogue, while preserving culturally sensitive aspects”, says professor Vasile Puscas (2011), also former Romanian Minister of European Affairs, and ICD Advisory Board Member. Also, in one of the reports made public by the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy of the U.S. Department of State (September 2005), it is considered to be `the linchpin of public diplomacy`. In other words, for a proper representation of the national idea abroad, the cultural dynamics is the best channel to use.

Cultural diplomacy appears as an area of expertise which, if properly exercised, has the power to recalibrate international relations(hips) in this new interconnected world (Baylis, Smith, 2005) that is constantly changing its paradigm of power. In fact, metaphorically speaking, `cultural diplomacy reveals the soul of a nation`³, because it implies a wider and more connective network of human values of culture that form the basis of any negotiation between parties.

Why the need for a cultural diplomacy? The truth is that there are several reasons. For powerful countries such as the USA, it can be the propagation of a counter-balancing image to the one created by its military actions that attracted an entire phenomenon of anti-Americanism (Bohas, 2006). For emerging economies such as India is the idea of projecting its modernity and, thus, investing heavily to self-consciously develop its cultural diplomacy instruments all over the world. For China a way of promoting itself has to do with the censorship of internet data and activity, thus a security related reason. ***And for Romania is (or it should be) the idea of showing the world who we really are, not who we are not, and***

³ See official report of the U.S. Department of State, 2005

*neither who we are supposed to be*⁴. In this sense, the positioning of culture domestically determines the degree and the way culture can be used for national purposes abroad.

As well, one prior investment of this concept is given by the state. Cultural diplomacy is first of all a matter of states, diplomacy (in its classical form) being inevitably linked with negotiations between states. Nevertheless, cultural diplomacy has extended both to non-governmental organizations or institutions, the third party in these state-to-state relations, and to individuals as such.

We will introduce here the issue of personality, in close relation with the cultural aspect of the state. This issue is of high importance for the cultural belonging and international recognition of the state. Personality is thus mainly a project of the state that invests in one of its primary potentialities – population. Education comes here as an important factor, shaping each individual according to his own potential. In this logic, personality consists of two aspects: it is about *knowing* and about *character* (Baltasiu, 2007). Each *timeframe that we proposed for analysis in the current material bears the hall-mark of its created personalities*. What are the means one must take in order to correctly and clearly transmit and control (Sevin, 2010) the intended message? Recent developments of this area try to focus upon the idea of finding commonalities on a cultural level with the Other, in order to attain peace and progress (Constantinescu, 2010), trying to direct cultural diplomacy towards the idea of mutuality and reciprocity. However, this particular tendency did not yet create a clear-cut paradigm, where the notion of gaining, conserving and expanding power is still dominant (Barrett, 2002), and easier now with the help of a new instrument at hand called cultural diplomacy (Wein, 2012).

Cultural diplomacy's recent developments

Nowadays, with the 24-hour news channels of communication (both official and informal), pure information is disseminated without a proper cultural or official processing. This is the moment in which governments are no longer able to dominate communication and are no longer the primary actors of communication⁵. And to close the loop, this is why culture and cultural diplomacy become a significant part in the international relation area. In this

⁴ Interview with Prof. Adrian Severin, Member of the European Parliament, former Minister for Foreign Affairs

⁵ Terry Sandell (British Council, Council of Europe), speech at 'Cultural Diplomacy and Culture in a Changing World'. An international forum, 18th June 2009, London, UK

manner, cultural diplomacy, if properly utilized and promoted, successfully assures the open-doors policy extension, especially well rated in the case of two parties that share a history of cultural clashes.

Moreover, a long run cultural policy assures not only the conservation of an own cultural background, but also creates a cultural profile for the future that can prevent any misunderstandings, misfires or offences as well as prepare for new cross-boundary elements such as music or visual arts productions.

Thus, a final definition of the cultural diplomacy can be considered the one given by the Institute of Cultural Diplomacy as “the exchange of ideas, information, values, systems, traditions, beliefs and other aspects of culture, with the intention of fostering mutual understanding”⁶. And this mutual understanding must be based upon a *cultural transfer* (Droste, 2006) made in a universal language that can serve as a cultural bridge. And in the last decades, we noticed a widening of the range of cultural diplomacy that jointly developed peaceful agendas (Randall, 2005), activities such as sports (Black, 2007; Defrance, Chamot, 2008; Redeker, 2008), arts (Chapman, 2007) or music (Adlington, 2009; Gienow-Hecht, 2009)..

Another dimension of the cultural diplomacy is represented by a two folded branding concept: `nation branding` and `national brands` (Anholt, 2007; Clifton, 2009; Govers, Go, 2009; Sevin, 2010). Basically, this is the part of cultural diplomacy which represents *the economizing* part of national identity, specific to the age of globalization and market economy. This is the moment when the value based culture transforms itself into the commercial based culture (e.g. cultural tourism).

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⁶ See http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/index.php?en_culturaldiplomacy

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