



# Cultural Diplomacy as a Form of International Communication





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### Introduction

Cultural diplomacy involves a specific set of activities used by authorities of a state to promote foreign policy interests of the state and foster cultural exchange with other states. The real practice of cultural diplomacy involves promoting the cultural values of a state on the global platform, supporting expatriate communities of foreign states, promoting the national language, cultural values, and identity of a particular state, and negotiating cultural cooperation and international treaties of a state. The state, structure, and degree of cultural diplomatic activities vary from state to another but the underlying priorities, ambitions, and objectives of states remain constant. Cultural diplomacy is an essential part of state pursuits whose importance is attached to the critical areas of state operation such as economic excellence, defense and strategy, and the overall performance of the state on a global scale. The underestimation of cultural diplomacy leads to false and unclear ideas regarding the scope of state activities and

the implementation of foreign policies.

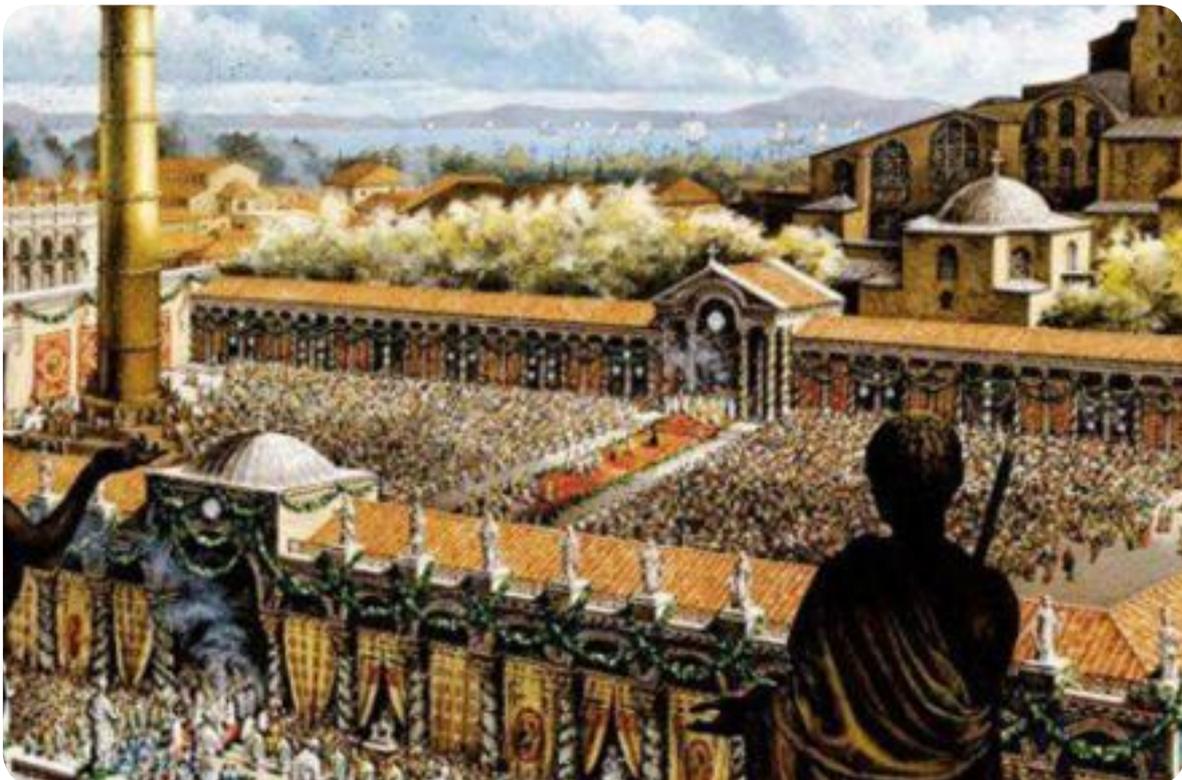
The idea of cultural diplomacy is based on the cultural relations of a state, it is defined as the undertakings of a state regarding its international cultural relations. According to Isar (2020), cultural relation is used to ensure cooperation and understanding between states and societies to achieve mutual benefits and advancements. Henceforth, main goal of cultural diplomacy is to familiarize the foreign recipients within a country with the culture, language, and people of that country, therefore, painting a positive image of the country. Reputation management is a critical part of cultural diplomacy since a successful process is measured by its achievement of a positive perception. A proper communication process is critical to the promotion of a positive state perception. The main objective of this study is to outline and analyze cultural diplomacy as a form of international communication and evaluate its overall relevance in foreign policy implementations in rudimentary international state relations.



## History of Cultural Diplomacy

Historically, cultural diplomacy is back to the medieval Byzantine missionaries who vehemently disseminated Christian religious doctrines and a new view of the world thereby strengthening the widespread influence of the Byzantine Empire. Later advancements in cultural diplomacy are associated with the initial establishment of cultural diplomatic institutions such as the Alliance Francaise founded in 1883 (Richard, 2002). The main activities of this Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) were to support the promotion and adoption of the French language in other countries across the world. State-based diplomatic institutions

were later popularized in the first half of the 20th century during and after World War 1 . The war necessitated state diplomats to conduct cultural propaganda and counteract enemy propaganda, particularly in Latin America and the Middle East. Consequently, the Division of Cultural Relations was established at the U.S Department of State in 1938 prompted by President F. D. Roosevelt's decision to coordinate and implement cultural relations with Latin American countries thereby counterbalancing the rising influence of fascist ideologies in the region (Richard, 2002). Since then, the functions of the division of cultural relations have been instrumental in the popularization of American culture across the globe. Further effects of the division are seen





during the Cold War cultural diplomacy era.

During the Cold War the USA achieved unprecedented success in harnessing the hidden power of culture as a stealth weapon to use against state enemies such as the Soviet Union and their communist ideologies. The US government coordinated an extraordinary spread of American ideas and artistic expression through the State Department and other organizations, including the CIA all over the globe. The admission that the CIA funded cultural projects, in a report published in Ramparts magazine in April 1967 eventually led to Substantial revelation of cultural programming produced by the US government (Schneider, 2004). The cultural programs from the Cold War were generally brilliantly adapted to their objectives. For instance, the interactions between individuals and their respective American and Russian authors, artists, and academics started soon after the death of Stalin appealed to the innate respect that Russians had for intellectualism and cultural expression while contesting some fundamental assumptions about both their own and our societies. The brightest and greatest of the two including John Steinbeck, Joyce Carol Oates, and Arthur Miller Aleksander Kushner, Vasily Aksyonov, and Yevgeny from the

US, as well as Yevtushenko, met to talk about their art and the Soviet Union's settings in which it was produced.

Along with the exchanges, Americans worked in both public and private capacities to translate and distribute subversive literature both inside and beyond the Soviet Union. The renowned Amerika magazine was published by USIA, and despite Soviet efforts to restrict its circulation, it gave the Soviet audience a glimpse into the American way of life through both text and photos. Private organizations and the US government translated and disseminated works by Russian dissident authors, English-language classics, and political analysis from authorities like Brzezinski and Kissinger (Huntington, 2007). Well-known dissidents like Alexander Solzhenitsyn relied on these book programs to get access to western literature and commentary as well as Russian dissidents' writings that were forbidden in the Soviet Union.

At the end of the Clinton administration, cultural diplomacy's prospects started to look more promising following the demoralizing USIA's elimination. The Clinton White House and State Department organized a star-studded event in late November 2000 to try to match the rhetoric about cultural diplomacy



with more obvious support (Huntington, 2007). This, however, changed following the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, which prompted a reconsideration of the significance of outlining cultural values in other countries, particularly in nations with Islamic culture, and, as a result, a rediscovery of the importance of cultural diplomacy.

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## Public Diplomacy and Cultural Diplomacy

Public diplomacy is the activities of a country to get other countries to exchange their policies for mutual benefits. The evolution of public diplomacy has changed over the years with the inclusion of people, the media, and the attempts to create a positive environment for foreign policy and national goals. The modern advancement

in media tools and the world coverage of social media and mainstream media has created a more aware society which makes public opinion a central part of government considerations. Schneider, (2003) explains that public diplomacy is based on complex interrelationships between the state, the media, and public opinion. The more actors and media engaged the greater the reach and influence of public opinion. Henceforth, public diplomacy deals with the communications of day-to-day issues and how the foreign audience is treated in comparison to the domestic audience. States are required to strategically communicate and manage their overall perceptions of other countries and foreign visitors. Creating long-lasting relationships through public diplomacy can involve offering





scholarships, training, and seminars to important foreign individuals. Public diplomacy is therefore aimed at promoting national goals and policies to foreign individuals through the communication of state ideas and values and building a common understanding and relationships. Public diplomacy is considered to be one of the key instruments in the acquisition of a state's soft power. According to Schneider (2003), public diplomacy is the process of pursuing direct relationships with citizens of a nation to advance their interests and spread their ideals. Public diplomacy, according to Finn (2009), is the process used by governments to engage with foreign audiences to promote awareness of their countries' institutions, culture, and national goals and policies. Finn (2009) reveals that public diplomacy is intended for foreign publics, and methods for communicating with them should be distinct from domestic diplomatic socialization. Nevertheless, distinguishing between public affairs aimed at domestic audiences and the "interconnected" reality of international relations is at tension with diplomacy when dealing with foreign audiences. It is clear that material intended for a local audience frequently reaches audiences abroad or vice versa, but the connection

between public affairs and public diplomacy has grown increasingly complex. Public diplomacy is a one-way information flow, yet it aims to share favorable elements of a nation with international audiences.

Cultural diplomacy subtly varies from public diplomacy in the sense that it is used by states to disseminate their interests and position to the overall global platform. Feigenbaum (2002), suggests that cultural diplomacy may involve academic, professional, artistic, and cultural exchange programs that enable the establishment of constructive dialogue and the promotion of a positive image in a country. Henceforth, cultural diplomacy is a special form of public diplomacy that includes the exchange of fundamental ideas, information, language, art, and other aspects of culture between states and citizens to promote mutual understanding. The purpose of cultural diplomacy is for the other country to gain an awareness of their institutions and principles to strengthen support for their political and economic objectives. Cultural diplomacy is a result of understanding the other's culture and is enhanced by it. It also helps in amplifying and promoting that society and culture to the rest of the globe. The best qualities of a country can be shown in its cultural activities. By using these



resources and accomplishments and spreading their awareness overseas, cultural diplomacy tries to control the global environment. Cultures interact organically without the involvement of the government. Although it cannot create culture, the government can promote national culture. Daily cross-cultural interactions are boosted by the industries of trade and tourism, education, communications, migration, and media access (Nye, 2000). Cultural diplomacy is a two-ways conversation aimed at promoting understanding and gaining sway in the target country. With the use of non-violent means to support a good relationship of mutual understanding and support among the countries involved, cultural diplomacy is seen as a silent weapon to control over another country. There is some

overlap between what modern cultural relations do and what public diplomacy practitioners do.

## Cultural Diplomacy as a Subtle Means of Communication

The dynamics of cultural diplomacy and its influence as a subtle means of communication and the source of soft power is a rising area of academic interest. Baskoro (2020) reports that the widespread exportation of culture and arts through interstate communications is the basic instrument for soft power. Soft power is increasingly replacing traditional forms of power such as military measures and economic sanctions. In the era of global information, soft power is becoming more implicit through the existing





communication channels. Although frequently focusing on ethereal and elusive concepts like “culture, political principles, and foreign policy especially when they are perceived as legitimate and endowed with moral authority, soft power is concerned with a nation’s attractiveness in the business of motivating others to want what you have (Baskoro, 2020). With the clear disparity between the amount of thought, money, and column inches devoted to this area that is connected with more formal international relations, culture plays a crucial role in international diplomacy. Foreign policy rhetoric, which is typically controlled by the *realpolitik* concept, frequently views culture and social interaction as desirable but not vital.

Communication has an impact on cultural norms, meanings, presumptions, ideals, and perceptions. Officers have started activities in the realm of public diplomacy based on local situations and concerns. Cultural diplomacy is therefore an effective tool when used as a subtle means of communication. Adaptation is an important characteristic for foreign diplomats in their attempts to communicate and negotiate across social, cultural, and linguistic barriers. Ang et al., (2015) reports from the theory

of intercultural communication that the increased threats of misunderstandings are based on the different cultures and points of view between states towards specific concepts. Since the majority of international communication is currently happening on online platforms, the risk of misunderstandings in intent and meaning is high. States are therefore expected to effectively explain and translate their ideas using modern communication technologies such as real-time translation software programs. An emphasis should be placed on tact, politeness, and clarity of communication depending on the subject’s culture and communication style.

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## **The domain of Cultural Diplomacy**

Although the concept of cultural diplomacy looms large in today’s foreign policy practice of nation-states there is often a notable lack of clarity in the definition and application of the concept regarding what the concept involves, its significance, and how it works. The main assumption stems from the recognition of cultural diplomacy as *stricto sensu* meaning that it is an interest-driven state practice driven by ideals rather than the interests of the actor (Isar & Triandafyllidou, 2021). However,



in the recent past, a rising interest in cultural diplomacy among specialists in international relations has placed an emphasis on the various perspectives of cultural diplomacy that defines the existing cultural diplomacy practices within their social, political, and ideological contexts. Those specialists are motivated by the need to demystify cultural diplomacy to better understand how it operates across the world today. Such interests would also facilitate the implementation of policy parameters in the field of cultural diplomacy as it operates beyond national interests.

The landscape of cultural diplomacy that results from all the contributions of international relations specialists is complicated and occasionally conflicting, with misaligned objectives, delivery

methods, and expected benefits and outcomes. The definition of cultural diplomacy in this context may range from very broad, involving a variety of forms of intercultural recognition, many of which, though not all, are mediated by states, to narrower, as an “overplayed hand,” prone to “ambiguous and overstated” claims, such as its capacity to “manage the international environment.” (Papaioannou, 2017). The main contradiction in the definition and implementation of cultural diplomacy is based on the juxtaposing positions that cultural diplomacy is supposed to advance the interests of a nation by presenting it in the best possible light to the rest of the world. On the other hand, cultural diplomacy can be defined as a tool to promote a





harmonious international order for mutual state benefits. This conflicting perspective stems from the pervasive tendency in contemporary discourses to ignore cultural diplomacy's core institutional setting inside the workings of government and, consequently, the limitations put on it in terms of the interests it is intended to serve. This omission, as previously mentioned, results from the uncertainty in the ways that cultural diplomacy is confused with the more general concept of cultural diplomacy.

Significant changes in cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy are mainly influenced by the changing architecture of international relations in a rapidly advancing and interconnected world. McGinn (2015) suggests that while nation-states are the initial primary actors in the international relations arena, their sovereign status is gradually eroded by the rising globalising forces that are facilitated by the transnational and often disjunctive flow of people, media, and ideas. The study observed that in the recent past, the global relations stage has increasingly become dense following the introduction of a vast range of non-governmental actors that interact both on local and international platforms using horizontal and transnational forms of communication. States continue to play significant roles

in daily international affairs, but their numbers are relatively small in comparison to all the organisations that now do their business across international boundaries.

All parties of international communications should strike a balance to look independent from governmental influence. For instance, the UK has acknowledged the importance of independent organizations like the British Council and the BBC World Service in delivering "global public goods," based on a position of initial. Independence and objectivity have always been pillars of British cultural diplomacy. To maximize public diplomacy and soft power outcomes for the UK, on the other side, there are calls for increased policy cooperation between foreign affairs and cultural/media services. Presumably, having it both ways is required to win in this game of cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy is therefore considered to be a messy landscape rather than a coherent concept of policies and strategies that can be easily evaluated in terms of its success for a given nation-state.

Additionally, the cultural diplomacy concept is particularly prone to a hazy coexistence of divergent rationales within government practices. Authors in this issue have described the



multitude of cultural diplomacy policy discourses and programs using a variety of terms like “fragmented,” “ambiguous,” “superficial,” or “vague.”(Klavins, 2021) Perhaps consistency and coherence cannot be expected from a field that encompasses very different conceptualizations of “culture,” varying goals and types of instrumentalization, and a variety of institutional settings, including trade promotion organisations, foreign affairs departments, and cultural ministries.

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## Impact of Cultural Diplomacy on International Communication

The implementation of cultural diplomacy in nation-state negotiations is increasingly becoming an important aspect of state operations, especially in an era where global warfare

is a less acceptable means of settling the conflict. The question of whether communication between people from different nations is effective and whether all parties come to an agreement with the same understanding is of utmost importance because significant decisions in business, politics, education, health, and culture affect citizens of more than one nation. People who interact with people from other cultures are interested in learning how to boost their performance by strengthening their communication abilities. According to Sysalova, (2020), diplomats and international relations experts should use a more direct communication style that reduces incidences of misunderstanding between different cultures, languages, and other non-homogenous interlocutors.





The argument for the significance of language and culture is based on the idea that semantic distinctions reveal various perspectives on reality and accepted social norms. Words and their translations are keys that open the door to various world configurations, not just interchangeable labels designating some fixed, unchangeable property of the world. They can potentially evoke a wide range of specialised references, uses, and associations. Words are regarded to be polysemic in the sense that they possess multiple clusters of meaning and usage. Cost is one of the major issues with the increased need for translation in diplomacy. The cost of interpretation and translation is exorbitant, even though most organisations and conferences attempt to limit the number of languages utilised by choosing a few official or working languages, as Crystal (2018) points out. "Several years ago, it was determined that the cost of translating just one page into each of the UN's official languages would be enough to pay for one person's expenses in India for an entire year! It is simple to support the idea of establishing a common language as the language for worldwide communication when one considers the sheer number of international organisations

and the hundreds of pages that are translated virtually daily.

## **Cultural Diplomacy in Practice**

The interaction of peoples, and the sharing of languages, religions, ideas, arts, and social structures have all helped to enhance relations between diverse groups throughout history. For instance, the development of regular trade routes makes it possible for businessmen and government officials to often exchange information as well as cultural presents and sentiments. These intentional initiatives to exchange cultures and communications might be seen as the earliest forms of cultural diplomacy. In international relations, this entails taking into consideration differences in decision-making cultures as well as how officials and executives make choices and give guidance to their negotiators (Scott-Smith, 2018). The decision-making process and protocol are produced distinctively by national institutional culture.

The French tend to approach international relations using the French language and diplomats who can reflect their sense of self-assurance and logic of their position. For them, negotiations resemble a discussion forum where there is flexibility and accommodation made purely to reach agreements. The French



have the propensity to think of themselves as occupying a unique position in the world. On the other hand, the Japanese engage in negotiation through a methodical process of establishing consensus. They avoid formal gatherings since disagreeing in public would be offensive and embarrassing (Scott-Smith, 2018). For the Japanese, harmony is ensuring that social interactions are peaceful and that there is general agreement. Comparatively, Americans view negotiations as problem-solving exercises, and it is precisely difficult that they take delight in conquering. The US is not racially and culturally homogeneous like Japan. There will therefore inevitably be variations in negotiation style. The US's task-oriented

negotiating style has implications for the procedures that take place during the actual negotiations. US negotiators undoubtedly took a step back due to the absence of cultural emphasis and business-like handling of negotiation.

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## Research Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study explain some of the ambiguous aspects of cultural diplomacy and the role of communication in international relations. The underlying goals, livelihoods, and activities of resident populations across the globe are affected by cultural diplomacy issues thereby necessitating the need for research. Therefore, one of the most prevalent findings is concerning the advances in the diffusion of diplomacy and





international relations capabilities as global communications opened new horizons for nation-states and their residents to interact, communicate and have transactions more easily than ever before. A community's values, attitudes, beliefs, or fundamental presumptions serve as the foundation for communication, which is the sharing of ideas, messages, thoughts, and emotions. As a result, a state's social communication is a reflection of its culture.

People from many ethnicities and cultural backgrounds can communicate with one another through global communication channels, which has a big impact on how they interact with one another. Because people prefer to view the world through the lens of their own culture and implicitly assume that their international partners will feel, think, and act in the same manner, a specific culture may be perceived and understood in surprising ways by other cultures. People who engage in international communications are likely to encounter cultural differences with people who have different mindsets and ways of thinking. They misjudge their relationships, leading to miscommunication, mistrust, and discouragement on both sides. We would be wise to adopt an understanding of culture and

communication derived from contemporary cultural theory, which emphasizes culture as an ongoing process and as inherently relational, and communication as a social process of co-production of meaning, to move beyond a focus on soft power projection, cultural diplomacy policy, and practice. Such comprehension would support and legitimize the more collaborative, dialogic methods of cultural diplomacy that have started to be advanced.

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## Conclusion

Cultural diplomacy mainly gives foreign recipients in a country an understanding of that country's culture, language, and people to present a favourable image of that nation. Since the achievement of a positive perception is the yardstick by which a process is judged successful, reputation management is a crucial component of cultural diplomacy. The promotion of a positive state perception depends on effective communication. Traditional kinds of influence, such as military actions and economic sanctions, are being increasingly replaced by soft power. Soft power is becoming increasingly implicit through the current communication channels in the age of global information. Soft power is concerned with a nation's attractiveness, the business of getting others to want what you



have, despite frequently focusing on ethereal and elusive concepts like culture, political principles, and foreign policy, especially when they are perceived as legitimate and endowed with moral authority. Moving forward, it would be wise to adopt an understanding of culture and communication derived from contemporary cultural theory, which emphasizes culture as an ongoing process and as inherently relational, and communication as a social process of co-production of meaning, to move beyond a focus on soft power projection, cultural diplomacy policy, and practice.

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