

CULTURAL POLICY, CULTURAL DIPLOMACY, CULTURE: PILLARS OF "SOFT POWER"

Katerina Papaioannou

University of Patras, GREECE, papaioannou.kat@gmail.com

Abstract

This study focuses on the theoretical analysis of the concepts of "cultural policy" and "cultural diplomacy". Adopting the UNESCO definition, we analyze important aspects of "cultural policy" and present relevant key-points such as procedures, models and objectives of cultural policy. Cultural policy is determined according to various components, and in each case the existence of strategies for the implementation of the "cultural policy" is important. An efficiently designed cultural policy must have solid constitutional bases; it must always respect and comply with international declarations and conventions, as well. Of particular interest is how new diplomatic practices, more suitable to the contemporary international scene, emerged from national cultural policy making, leading to the development of cultural diplomacy.

Starting from the 20th century, in the context of the exercise of cultural policy and cultural diplomacy at a national level, the cultural sector has been significantly upgraded, it has received a fundamental role in the relations of states and it has been officially included in the foreign policy structure. The concept of culture has formed the basis on which cultural policy and cultural diplomacy have been developed.

In the context of (i) an overwhelming effervescence of interculturalism in the international arena and (ii) the growing importance of "soft power", culture suggests an excellent heritage for a state: culture can enhance the international presence of a state in a variety of fields, thus, upgrading accordingly its standing on the global cultural scene.

Culture, cultural policy and cultural diplomacy are concepts closely related and interdependent. Culture has become one of the most basic foreign policy issues and its presence is indisputable in the formation of the global image of each state. In the following, we address in detail "cultural diplomacy" emphasizing on its nature, main objectives and expected benefits for states exercising it. Furthermore, we present and analyze how culture emerged to a collective social practice which is increasingly influential in international relations and is included in the priorities of the international agenda.

Keywords: Culture, cultural policy, cultural diplomacy, soft power.

1 INTRODUCTION

The role of culture in the policy of every state participating in the modern international system is increasingly upgraded. Modern states, having recognized the significant role of culture, exploit it as a means of exercising soft power. The existence of cultural policy, the exercise of cultural diplomacy and the institutionalization of culture as one of the pillars of foreign policy by the state governments underline even more the role of cultural elements in policy area. Culture, cultural policy and cultural diplomacy are concepts closely interrelated and interdependent. The concept of culture is the basis on which cultural policy and cultural

diplomacy have developed. It is therefore of particular interest to analyze these concepts as well the way in which states have integrated them into their active foreign policy workplan.

2 CULTURAL POLICY, CULTURAL DIPLOMACY, CULTURE

The term "cultural policy" is defined by UNESCO as a set of social practices and interventions aimed at satisfying certain cultural needs by using all the material and human resources that a given society possesses at a certain point in time. Cultural policy is expected to determine certain criteria for cultural development and link culture to personality shaping and socio-economic development (UNESCO, 1969, p. 8). Of particular interest is the clarification of important aspects of what cultural policy essentially is as well as the focus on key points such as the processes, models and objectives of cultural policy.

Cultural policy is defined according to various components. Using the range of influence and the authorities responsible for implementation as guidelines, cultural policy includes international, national, regional and local policy components. Individual disciplines are also formed according to the thematic areas addressed (i.e., communication, folk culture, cultural heritage, etc.) thus promoting the need for a sectoral policy. However, regardless of the existence of individual disciplines, the existence of implementation strategies of a cultural policy is of particular importance. A functional cultural policy must have solid constitutional foundations and, furthermore, it must be appropriately formed in order to respect international declarations and conventions.

Although initially the development of a cultural policy was mainly based on state actors, the growing importance of non-state actors in the application of a cultural policy gradually began to appear. Through the process of developing a cultural policy, new diplomatic practices emerged. These diplomatic practices, which were more suitable to the contemporary international scene, gradually resulted in the emergence of cultural diplomacy (Pigman, 2010, pp. 107-109). The term cultural diplomacy implies a complex set of activities, enterprises, programs and initiatives orchestrated by the state with the assistance of various actors for foreign policy purposes. Cultural diplomacy accommodates various cultural events, at local and national level, as well as various historical moments with the aim of building relations between countries, strengthening ties with the world, exchanging ideas, information, values, traditions and beliefs as well as encouraging mutual understanding between actors (Montoya, 2012, pp. 166-167). The main objective of cultural diplomacy is to support the foreign policy of a state. Through cultural diplomacy, states seek to promote a positive image abroad in order to obtain a favorable public opinion and, thus, facilitate the achievement of more specific policy goals. Given the extremely inclusive nature of culture, cultural diplomacy can deploy various means to achieve its objectives. UNESCO, in its 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, argued that culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs (UNESCO, 2002). This is why all these components of culture are also addressed by cultural diplomacy.

From the 20th century on, culture has played a fundamental role in the relations among states and has, therefore, been included in their foreign policy structures (Gómez-Escalonilla, 1992, p. 2). "Soft power", a term coined and popularized by Joseph Nye in the late 1980s (Nye, 2004), demonstrates the ability of a country to use its "attractiveness" as a tool of persuasion and achievement of goals. In contrast to "hard power", which is the ability to change what others do, Nye defines "soft power" as the ability to shape what others want by being attractive. This attractiveness rests on intangible resources, such as culture, ideology, and institutions, which could help to legitimize the power and policy of a given state in the eyes of others. According to Nye, the "soft power" of a country is based on three pillars: its culture, its political values, and its foreign policy. For further analysis of the features that constitute these three pillars, emphasis should be placed on elements such as language, quality of academic education, distinctions in Olympic Games, historical monuments, quality of democracy, level of freedom, level of technology, corruption and much more. Soft power is essentially based on how others see us: a measure of attractiveness. As Nye concludes, according to some critics, "soft power" is not something new: it was formerly called "imperialism."

In the context of an overwhelming interculturalism in the international arena, "soft power" has become increasingly important and, therefore, culture has turned into a collective social practice which is increasingly influential in international relations and of high priority in the international agenda. Efficiently exploited, culture can make a strategic resource for governance, development and global diplomacy. It can evolve to an intangible and flexible force which is never neutral as it acts in a catalytic way in consciousness and attitudes. For each single state, culture forms an excellent heritage with a high potential in enhancing its international presence in various fields and ensuring a discrete role in the global cultural scene. Culture emerges as an indispensable element for social cohesion, dialogue between peoples, social peace and

global development and welfare.

Based on the discussion so far, it can be clearly seen that culture, cultural policy and cultural diplomacy are concepts closely related and interdependent. The concept of culture provides the basis where cultural policy and cultural diplomacy can be developed and flourish. Although cultural diplomacy may still have not been valued appropriately, it can certainly play a very decisive role if it is supported by strong political will and an appropriate external cultural policy framework. The development and application of a cultural policy mainly relies on states, which exploit the support and assistance of national associations or organizations while also trying to obtain financial support from the private sector.

Apart from the direct connection of cultural policy with the official and non-official institutions of a country, it is also directly related to the potential of the individuals who develop and implement it. An effective cultural should reflect the development, creativity and diplomacy of a country. The clarity of the objectives of a cultural policy highly depends on the professionalism of the various actors involved in its development. Such actors include central administration experts, like for example diplomats and ambassadors, as well as all state and non-state officials who are in charge of the image and visibility of a state. This is why; talent and human intuition are essential elements for effective and successful cultural policy and cultural diplomacy.

3 CONCLUSION

The analysis above clearly implies that culture has become one of the most important foreign policy issues. This is mainly due to (a) the fact that culture contributes to the creation of a symbolic horizon for several major problems of mankind (including environmental issues, war conflicts and also issues related to globalization, technological and scientific advances), and (b) the unquestionable potential of culture in what is called "creative economy". The term "creative economy" was initially induced by John Howkins in 2001 (Howkins, 2001, p. 8). He defined the creative economy as "the transactions of creative products that have an economic good or service that results from creativity and has economic value". Howkins' creativity model includes all kinds of creativity, expressed both in art and innovation. Models based on culture focus on arts and design and are usually limited to certain disciplines. In a more general context, the term refers to all economic activities that depend on a person's individual creativity and have an economic value. The creative economy appears where the individual creativity is the main source of value and the main cause of a transaction.

Furthermore, recent changes in the concepts of international relations and the undeniable presence of culture in the international image of countries have also played a very important favorable role in the inclusion of culture into important foreign policy issues.

There is interdependence between states participating in international or non-governmental organizations, and it is culture that favors dialogue among states, social peace, social cohesion and common development. Culture has flexibility and plasticity and can be seen as an intangible power originating from cultural diversity, values and justice in social and political practices. An indicative example of the potential of culture as a collective social practice with increasing influence on international relations is the fact that investigations for determining the reasons for the September 11 attacks (2001) focused on issues related to culture rather than economics or politics.

In conclusion, from the 20th century on, the concept of culture as well as the concepts of cultural policy and cultural diplomacy have received particular attention and have played an important role in international relations. They are interdependent concepts which form the basis of the "soft power" of modern states. There is strong evidence for the ever increasing potential of culture, cultural policy and cultural diplomacy. States are expected to continue to invest in the development of cultural policy and cultural diplomacy for obtaining internal coherence as well as recognition and respect on the international stage.

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