

## Culture wars and Cultural diplomacy

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### Abstract

Disputes and disagreements, in the broadest sense understood as "culture wars" have always existed due to the fact that various individuals and groups of people possess representations, emotions as well as fundamental life values which are absolutely different from each other. An ethical dimension of politics is of special significance here as it is an important mechanism for regulating human behavior within a society. A principal role in this process is played by a special field of diplomatic activity, related to the use of culture as a facility and means to achieve major goals of the foreign state policy – cultural diplomacy. **Key question of the research:** what is the measure of the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy in overcoming culture wars in world politics? Can knowledge of the socio-cultural identity of the host country help a professional in the field of cultural diplomacy to overcome culture wars in the world politics?

**Keywords:** teaching of diplomats, cultural diplomacy, historical culture, socio-cultural identity, language policy, ethnocentrism.

4042 words

## **Methodology**

The study rests on the methodological principles of verification (it assumes the theoretical findings can be verified empirically), axiological (it provides for the problem analysis from the angle of different value systems), and developmental (it assumes the culture wars and cultural diplomacy can be analyzed in dynamics).

## **Culture wars**

The term of a "culture war" was introduced in the political science dictionary by D. Hunter in 1992, in the book "Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America." There are three key types of cultural conflicts: 1) *anomie* (Durkheim forces, tangible and intangible cultures); 2) *cultural lag* (when culture takes time to catch up with technological innovations, so consequently social problems and conflicts are caused by its lag in further quick adjustment to contemporary realities); 3) *domination of foreign culture* (misalignment of the parent culture of the host societies and the culture of a donor country). At the same time, cultural imperialism can be justified, if it corrects aggressive behavior addicted to violence in the national and political culture (burning of widows at the funeral pyre, human sacrifices, etc.)

Irreconcilable differences between the interpretations of different cultural texts and postulates are in the core of any cultural conflict that is why, cultural conflicts are so uncompromising.

Each culture has its own Canon in the form of a cultural value. It is determined fundamentally by its view of the essence of a man, church and society. Such a Canon can be suffering, sacrifice, help, etc. In the Russian culture, the Orthodox Maximum of humility and self-reliance is such a Canon. As Patriarch Kirill, the Head of the Russian Orthodox Church, said, "We cannot say that we live in a completely peaceful environment. And today there are battles that take place without the roar of guns, and the enemy that threatens us does not cross our borders clearly. But we are all involved in what is called "invisible warfare" in the Orthodox tradition. Today everyone participates in that warfare. We are offered chaos, but we should not fall for those recommendations and participate in creating chaos... we are offered sin, destruction of moral foundations."

Many Orthodox people in Russia consider the liberal ideas of the West to be a culture war against Russia, while Russia's resistance to standard western values in the West - hypocrisy and civilizational ignorance. At the same time, western "values have global power not because they are true (although it is possible), but because they originated in the most economically and culturally powerful States of the world, especially in the United States." Two mood vectors in the mass consciousness of modern Russians - Pro-Western and Anti-Western - coexist simultaneously. We feel culturally to be Europe and at the same time outside of it.

In addition to the global clashes taking place at the macro level, mainly between countries and regions, there is a general tendency now to examine the clash of cultures at the micro level, within one country and even within local communities. This tendency also has a long history, but it has been accelerated by the intercultural migration, which covered many countries and all continents.

## **Cultural diplomacy**

"In the long course of history, having people understand your thought is much greater security than another submarine." (J. William Fulbright). Two hundred years later nothing has changed. According to Fulbright's quotation, cultural relations still remain a central part of international affairs.

In the past decades, diplomats have been trying to do their utmost to fight with the difficulties of building relationships with countries and communities. Under current circumstances it has become clear that it is high time to put an end to the distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' power. Many of the challenges the world society now faces, such a terrorism, climate change and migration crisis, cannot be solved only by military might or unilateral policy innovations.

Cultural diplomacy is an important part of the state policy for any country, which is presented in the international arena. It covers cultural and humanitarian field, is mainly focused on the integration of the country into the global cultural environment. Activities of the state in this field develop in two directions – in the field of bilateral relations and in the field of international cultural cooperation. Aims for organizing this activity force the review of the principles and aims of preparation of diplomatic staff, assigned for its implementation.

Education of future diplomats – experts in the field of cultural diplomacy - assumes creation of a system of representations on the topic of national interests in the field of culture. This system

requires the study of mechanisms of formation, discussion and correction of formed doctrines, mastering of the necessary legal framework, including both international and national components. But particular attention should be placed on issues of study of the essence and processes of the formation of the national socio-cultural identity in the context of its historical culture. This is particularly important because the heads of Russia see the formation and strengthening of relations, mutual understanding and trust with foreign countries, increasing the country's participation in the system of the international cultural cooperation as the main tasks of the foreign cultural policy of the country. In order to develop the external political potential of the country, the expansion of the cultural influence in the world has no less significance than the strengthening of influence onto the global economy. Quite sound is the use of successfully tested, in the foreign economic field, model of "open" cooperation with the external world. Practical tasks include the provision of a sort of "mode of a maximum most-favored-nation status" toward the Russian humanitarian influence abroad. However, the "openness" of cultural foreign political model assumes a weighted approach to the borrowing of foreign experience and values in the field of culture. For successful implementation of the these tasks, success of the Russian cultural presence abroad, there is a need to arm the future diplomats with excellent knowledge of the features of the formation of socio-cultural identity of the people of other countries and the knowledge of the features of their historical culture. Moreover, bearing in mind linguistic diversity of the most cultures and any national language being a bench marker of its ethnic identity a cultural diplomacy specialist should be aware of all the language policy aspects in the country he resides.

### **Language as an important part of a culture war and as a means of preventing it**

Any human language is a reflection of any small ethnic group or even a state identity. So, what does ethnicity consist of? Firstly, it's by no means religion and, secondly, culture. It's likely to put a language in this row as the third element but language plays a far bigger role here: it is both an element of differentiation and identification for the first two elements. That is why all in all they become part and parcel of any ethnic group.

In 1982 a rather holistic definition of culture was presented by UNESCO as the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group. It includes not only arts and letters but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human beings, value systems, traditions and beliefs. Culture can also be manifested in painting, art, music, literature, folklore and cultural heritage. These constituents form the core of cultural identity of a society. It goes without saying that language is sure to be considered an inalienable of cultural heritage. So, obtaining such features as cultural heritage and cultural identity any society can be: a social group, an ethnic group, a linguistic community, a state, a nation or even a nation state.

All existing cultures can be presented as systems, especially systems of definite symbols. They usually vary from culture to culture though having a lot in common in most cases. In this context language is the most powerful symbol of any culture. For example, any language during its history undergoes certain amount of changes. No matter what kind of a language shift takes place cultural identity remains the same.

If we take a notion of cultural and linguistic identity into consideration it is worth mentioning that it is first and foremost territorial. Their territoriality may cover one separate race, a whole nation or a whole state. In the modern world, it is a norm that most countries are far from being monocultural or monolingual. More than that, practically all of them are very diverse being culturally pluralistic and multilinguistic. It means that any small nationality representing a regional language minority possesses its own national identity which is by all means tightly connected with the minor language they originally speak. In most cases this language minority is a part of a broader linguistic community.

So, since the foundation of the UN in 1948 any official language was recognized as a real clear marker of a national identity. From the very beginning and nowadays in particular it doesn't really work: the attempt to favor an official language as well as to superimpose an above-national identity over the original and inherited one has always been a failure. The usage of some European Union languages can illustrate it: such regional languages as Basque, Catalan, Corsican, Breton, Flemish are spoken on the territories where Spanish, Italian, English and French are official. So, both historically as well as in the modern society these regional languages reflect the national identity of its speakers and serve as its prominent symbol.

All the above-mentioned peculiarities are characteristic features of the European Union as it respects cultural diversity and linguistic pluralism without building a hierarchy of linguistic and cultural differences. Multilingualism is an essential part not only of Europe's culture but of European civilization and its various national identities. That is why to deal with all these peculiarities there is a special set of measures taken on a governmental level – a language policy. It is a policy about who uses what language, when, where, under what circumstances, why and in what way, no matter what its racial or ethnic background is. It should take into consideration all the peculiarities of language planning and pay attention to the overall interest of any society or a nation state. Speaking about the EU language policy, it can be presented as a system of special events carried out by state or public institutions qualified to carry out the necessary social and linguistic tasks at any time. It regulates the preservation or change of the language standards, supports languages, and determines their status.

That is why any diplomat working in the field of cultural diplomacy must be aware of the special rules and regulations of the language policy adopted in the country he is working. To avoid language conflicts and as a possible consequence misunderstanding among major and minor languages native speakers and to prevent future culture wars first and foremost he or she should understand how to contribute to correcting any linguistic imbalances for several purposes:

- 1) to ensure the respect of all the languages spoken on a territory under his supervision;
- 2) to promote full development of all the linguistic community;
- 3) to make an attempt to establish the principles for a just linguistic peace among the speakers of different regional as well as minor languages;
- 4) to maintain harmonious social relations when all languages should be seen and treated equally like all peoples in all respects.

To sum up, it goes without saying that in the future, alliances are just as likely to be forged along lines of cultural and linguistic understanding just as they are nowadays based on economic or geographic terms. Observing the principles of linguistic diversity and respectful attitude towards representatives of smaller nationalities will contribute to unofficial political relationship-building more and more: it will by all means create steady negotiating channels with countries when their political connections are in jeopardy, for example. Such cooperation will certainly help to recalibrate relationships between conflicting parties for changing times. Culture and language should be used as tools of public diplomacy. The value of cultural diplomacy in this case comes precisely from its independence, its freedom and the fact that it first and foremost represents the interests of people rather than necessarily governments and connects them afterwards.

### **Socio-cultural identity**

The problem of socio-cultural identity in the entire complex of socio-humanitarian knowledge is currently a key component in the cultural diplomacy sphere. Discussions of the means of establishment of this identity are held in the broadest range of topics. In terms of education of diplomats-practitioners general interest is focused on the sociological approach to the solution of this issue. For example, it is possible to identify five levels of socio-cultural identity: *infrastructural*, including the means of communication, telecommunication, financial system and retail trade; *institutional* - law, norms of production behavior, education, church, etc.; *the level of everyday life* as a communion of men and women, children and adults, the organization of a dwelling, family raising; *means for feeling emotions*, emotional expression, perception of the world around; *mental level*. We may say, that identity is a stable, vivid and a constant means of feeling emotions, thinking and social activity. Easily transmittable and clear. It is easily transmittable since it is well assimilated in the process of acculturation, is passed down from generation to generation. It is clear because it is always perceived as something specific, something that is not reducible to such things as life knowledge, habit or stereotype of behavior. It is something more. Unfortunately, the late understanding of identity is the two top levels — the level of *consciousness* and the level of *feeling*. That is the value and emotional levels of identity. Identified levels of formation of the socio-cultural identity are very important for the general orientation of a diplomat in a country of his/her presence, his or her understanding of the principles and stereotypes of behavior, cultural norms and norms of its population. This is also of paramount importance for understanding the causes of mobilization of the society around certain ideological dogmas and political programs.

### **Historical memory**

However, the core of a notion of socio-cultural identity can be discussed even further, within the context of relations between historical memory and historical culture. Historical memory is an important mechanism which institutionalizes history through the mental procedures combining of past, present and future in order to form a connected continuum of these temporal patterns. Nevertheless, it mainly focuses on our past rather than any future prospects of life. History is always more than just a succession of past events. The latter does not simply preserve its meaning in the present, but also influences the setting up of contours of the future. At this point, historical memory being regarded as a sole base of history reveals its own insufficiency. In this situation, it's obvious that anyone has to enrich his knowledge, formed on the basis of memory, with new stronger arguments. They can be found in historical culture (official historical culture includes study books, museums, memorials, exhibitions, etc.).

### **Historical culture**

Unlike historical memory historical culture *synthesizes* past experience and prospects of the future. It gives us a chance not just to manifest, as in case of historical memory, the symbols, which define, what exactly people take for world realities as well as their own world vision, but actually for *correct interpretation* of such kinds of symbols. There are a number of such symbols in cultural life: experience, behavior, tradition. Historical culture is based on national, regional and local components. A nation is able to obtain common future only in case it preserves its past in the form of common traditions to be transmitted into the future. As a result, the past turns out to be the driving force of the future.

### **Historical identity and ethnocentrism**

So, what is the most appropriate basis for the formation of socio-cultural identity: historical memory or historical culture? It is evident to suppose that "strong" historical identity is mainly formed in the cultural process, i.e. in the historical culture. In case socio-cultural identity is based solely on historical memory then it is "weak" identity, unable to truly unite people which makes their nation to live with its head eternally turned back. However, in the context of historical culture a means of the of historical identity formation is characterized by the logic of ethnocentrism, the so-called logic of nationalistic conceptualization of historical identity. J. Rusen identified three fundamentals of such kind of a logic.

1 *Asymmetry* in setting differences between "us" and "them". The historical image of "us" is always filled with positive values: "we are the God's children; we have reached high standards of civilized development; we are the true believers, etc.". Image of "them", on the contrary, is filled with negative connotation: "them" are barbarians, infidels, etc.". There is only one rule – in order to make one group look decent there is a need to throw dirt at the others. By characterizing "them" as aggressive, dominant, strict, amoral, etc., "us" acquired completely opposite traits of character. Rusen proposes to name this ethnocentric model "negative ethnocentrism". Positive self-evaluation of "us" seems very plausible only if "we" position ourselves as the victims of violence. It seems that a halo of innocent suffering gives "us" an indisputable moral supremacy over "them". Thus, there appears a new common trend of victimization in the present day historical culture. Moreover, this trend partially explains the fact why cruelty and violence charmed the western way of thinking and contributed a lot to practical knowledge throughout the entire period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

2. *Origin-oriented teleology*. A history of any nation starts with some very outstanding source, marked with bright, positive meaning. Its further history illustrates the expansion of this bright beginning contents, its preservation, multiplication and transition into the future.

3. *Spatial monocentrism*: "us" live in the center of the world while "them" are social outcasts. Another name for PRC – Zhongguo, meaning "middle country", illustrates this concept quite vividly.

It is clear that nowadays ethnocentric logic is being followed by almost all ethnicities: "we" place the "others" onto the dark side while "others" do the same to "us", and such a situation inevitably leads to problems and conflicts. At the same time one of the factors intensifies this conflict to a greater extent: many cultures conceptualize its identity through the absolute priority given to their own universalistic attributes. They perfect the distinctness and individuality of their identity by means of the universal values which cannot help but lead to mutual exclusion of cultures. Thus, state authorities

often regard culture as a means of improvement of its image on the world political arena as well as a tool of creating favorable conditions for manipulating public opinion abroad, implementing, through culture, certain attitudes and beliefs. Certain cultural instruments are often used for political demobilization of the population. Since the 1950s of the past century cultural diplomacy has been used more and more for destructive purposes, in order to manipulate public opinion, to impress social consciousness with definite falsified views and representations imposed by certain political forces. However, it has no longer been cultural diplomacy but *cultural expansion* aimed at creating unified world culture and at suppressing the so-called weak cultures. Mass culture products distribution worldwide, provided with the help of these instruments, including commercial television and film industry gave rise to “cultural imperialism” which in its turn resulted in depoliticization of the society. There is no doubt that to a certain extent it is a natural process. Global technical and economic progress, as well as a process of global integration lead to a de-emphasis of national culture. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to shift the blame for the current global development on any particular country or nation. In reality this is the very reverse of the truth. At the present moment, all countries are exposed to the influence of the global culture being constantly changed.

### **Conclusion**

Key question of the research: what is the measure of the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy in overcoming culture wars in world politics? Can knowledge of the socio-cultural identity of the host country help a professional in the field of cultural diplomacy to overcome culture wars in the world politics?

All the above-mentioned processes and peculiarities of the socio-cultural identity, with historical memory, historical culture, historical identity and ethnocentrism being its inalienable integral parts ought to be presented in educational programs that are elaborated to prepare future diplomats specializing in “cultural diplomacy”. Such specialists should also pay a great attention to the fact that the mutual relationship between language and culture has always remained circular as any culture feeds on the language while any language stimulates culture. As a result, it will certainly bring a harmonious balance to various educational practices, that have epistemic unity and which are united by one purpose – to strengthen connection of diplomatic activity in the field of culture with the dynamics of linguistic, social, political changes with the historical process. From now on cultural diplomacy has a more crucial role to play. The ability to mobilize cultural diplomacy is a precious resource in international relations that rests not only in the hands of the official power: diplomats together with the societies they work in all need and have a duty to realize its potential. In the twenty-first century, it will be these countries’ representatives who manage to make hard and soft power work unanimously. They should work hand-in-hand and modern cultural diplomacy will beyond any doubt succeed in achieving its goals.

### **FUTURE RESEARCH**

The research presented is the first approach to the theme, a sort of an introductory section to a vast variety of possible topics, not a final product. The on-going developments in world politics expose broad perspectives for the examination of various forms of socio-cultural identity, its essence and parameters for its application in the cultural diplomacy.

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