The Government of the Russian Federation

Saint Petersburg State University

School of International Relations

Master’s Thesis

**The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in the Formation of Global Civil Society**

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Saint Petersburg

2017

**Abstract**

Cultural Diplomacy has generally been associated and analyzed as a source of a state’s soft power, with its successful implementation being a factor of a state’s capabilities. The state centered approach has discarded the other actors involved in cultural diplomacy, in particular, civil society. This research proposes an alternative outcome of cultural diplomacy separating from the usual prescription. It does this through a two-step process: (1) the paper proposes a model linking cultural diplomacy and global civil society, and then (2) it traces the correlation through a least-similar case study analysis. The qualitative approach explored three different cultural diplomacy institutions to determine a difficult to quantify correlation. Nonetheless, it opens the floor for further discussion on the relation of cultural diplomacy and global civil society.

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For centuries, cultural diplomacy has served to open doors, share knowledge, and build relationships. Even before the Treaty of Westphalia’s modern state system, cultural diplomacy was used to engage across societies. The earliest form of diplomacy is described as the interaction between cultures, preceding social groups who defined themselves by customs, rules, and eventually laws[[1]](#footnote-1). Through ritual ceremonies, gift exchanges and language, early groups used cultural components to communicate with each other and establish collaboration. As social structures evolved, so did diplomacy. Nevertheless, cultural diplomacy remains an intrinsic component of state relations. In modern society, traditional ceremonies are still attended by state representatives; gift exchanges remain the norm between foreign dignitaries; and language continues to be an important cultural aspect studied by foreign nationals. Even through the accommodation of a realist approach, cultural diplomacy has a necessary role in international relations. In a perspective full of power struggles, cultural diplomacy is another way to gain power over others. Neo-liberal theorist, Joseph Nye explained, “culture can also be an instrument of power”.[[2]](#footnote-2) Unlike conquest and coercion, culture is a resource that allows for the persuasion of others through attraction. In other words, it is the appeal of a state’s culture and policies that serve to co-opt countries, not only at the government level, but also at a public level. Hence, cultural diplomacy entices the formation of international associations at different levels.

This dissertation explores the relations established by cultural diplomacy. In particular, the relations that extends past the prescribed narrative of inter-state and international relations, focusing instead on cultural diplomacy starting in the state and surpassing the nation-state system. Through the exploration of the cultural diplomacy agency, the research will trace the development of a bottom-up approach in world affairs. More precisely, the research aims to reveal the role cultural diplomacy to the formation of a global civil society.

**Theoretical Background**

The terms discussed in the research are contentious in nature. Regardless of their extensive exploration, both cultural diplomacy and global civil society are a source of debate among scholars. On the one hand, global civil society is criticized as an abstract idea of an “imagined community of mankind” with no real substantive value.[[3]](#footnote-3) On the other hand, cultural diplomacy has been distorted by its frequent and common use to describe a number of occurrences that it’s meaning has been lost. The absence of clear and concrete boundaries is the reason both terms struggle to gain a solid definition in the social sciences. In the upcoming sections, general background information and definitions are provided to understand the significance of the research at hand, starting with the most abstract and divisive subject, global civil society, followed by a definition of cultural diplomacy. Further, explanations of these terms are available throughout the research.

**Defining Global Civil Society**

Global civil society is a heavily contested subject among scholars because of its “fuzziness”.[[4]](#footnote-4) Questions regarding its existence, function and capacity in the international arena are rampant among social scientists. While the critiques are discouraging, they reflect the immaturity and abstruseness of the subject. First, it is important to understand that the premise behind the concept of a “civil society” has its roots in antiquity. Early philosophers such as Aristotle equated the term with a righteous community operating under a set of norms, while Cicero explored the virtuous “societas civilis”.[[5]](#footnote-5) Furthermore, numerous other philosophers and theorists contributed to the development of the concept of civil society, including John Locke, Montesquieu, Karl Marx etc. In the 18th century both Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith established civil society within an economic market system.[[6]](#footnote-6) It wasn’t until the 19th century that a distinction between the state and civil society was made. According to G.W.F. Hegel, civil society was a public sphere operating outside the realm of state and family, a “territory of mediation where there is free play for every idiosyncrasy, every talent, every accident of birth and fortune and where waves of passion gust forth, regulated only by reason glinting through them”.[[7]](#footnote-7) Political theorist, Antonio Gramsci, further elaborated civil society’s competence by positioning the social sphere within the superstructure of the state, thus “civil society… …operates without ‘sanctions’ or compulsory ‘obligations’, but nevertheless exerts a collective pressure and obtains objective results in the form of an evolution of customs, ways of thinking and acting, morality, etc."[[8]](#footnote-8) More recently, Mary Kaldor summarized civil society as “the process through which individuals negotiate, argue, struggle against or agree with each other and with the centers of political and economic authority.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

Kaldor’s democratic interpretation is vague and omits some of the internal debates among civil society supporters, but for the purpose of this paper, it sets the tone for a global civil society. As per the aforementioned descriptions, civil society occupies a set territory, where individuals interact, yet with advances in modernity, geography has become less of a barrier for this interaction to occur. The fast rise of communication technology that enabled the rapid growth of a globalized world has also extended the outreach of civil society. This new outreach has encouraged the notion that a global civil society is emerging or currently in place. The extent of the global-ness is a source of contention given the disproportionate growth in the West. Nonetheless, technological advances have facilitated interaction between non-governmental institutions trans-nationally. Furthermore, the global aspect of a global civil society is not only an extension in scope but also “a response to rising concerns about the need for a new social and economic and political deal at the global level”[[10]](#footnote-10). Global civil society is viewed as an attempt to reframe the global system through a bottom-up approach. For the purposes of this research,

“Global civil society refers to networks of citizens and non-governmental, non [governmental] organizations (NGOs) and associations that combine efforts to engage in social, political, and economic reform on the local, national, and international levels with the intent [of] advancing societal interests and the quality of life”. [[11]](#footnote-11)

Critics of the concept of global civil society categorize it as an abstract, normative ideal rather than an actual social occurrence[[12]](#footnote-12). Global civil society is often dismissed as a utopian archetype, not realistic in a state-centered world. Additionally, others reject the empirical claims of an increase in civil society networks as misleading and overstretching the globalist aspect. Even supporters of the subject question the evidence provided due to variations in meaning and accountability, as stated by John Keane:

“Empirical perspectives on global civil society have limitations. In spite of a growing body of data, the actual contours of global civil society remain elusive, for understandable reasons… Lots of activities within this society, for instance the travel patters of individuals, the initiatives of grass-roots groups, the loose network of organizations and the growth of public opinion across borders, are informally structured, and for that reason do not register (easily) as 'data'."[[13]](#footnote-13)

Critics also discredit the objectives often attributed to global civil society, questioning the universality of human rights, the ability of addressing “the lack of democracy, increasing inequality, re-colonization and ecological crisis” single handedly, and the ability to compete or substitute the state system.[[14]](#footnote-14) This critique is well founded, as global civil society needs the state in order to function as a part of a system of check and balances. It is evident; the concept of global civil society still has a lot of room for improvement, yet its critiques imply its premature stage in conception rather than its futility.

**Defining Cultural Diplomacy**

Given the various definitions of culture and diplomacy, the term cultural diplomacy is interpreted differently in different spheres. In order to better understand the scope of the term cultural diplomacy, a dissection of its components provides the necessary tools to construct a comprehensive definition.

Culture has various definitions, but for the purpose of this paper, the anthropologic definition utilized by the United Nations is most applicable. Accordingly, culture “is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”[[15]](#footnote-15) Given that these features can be acquired, they are also subject to dissemination. Resulting in culture being a collection of shared features of a social group that can be transmitted through communication. Additionally, these traits are developed through direct and indirect negotiations between the members of the group, making culture a unique characteristic of each group. Consequently, culture varies between social groups and includes, but is not limited to, variations in language, diet, rituals, etc.

Similarly, diplomacy also has various definitions. It is a skill often used in communications and negotiations: tact. However, this research focuses on diplomacy as part of international relations and foreign policy. As a result, the research focuses on the following interpretation:

“Diplomacy’s role in foreign policy is hampered by multiple understandings of what diplomacy is and does. A broad definition of diplomacy holds that it encompasses more than the promotion of peaceful international relations. Instead, it is the sum of those relations—peaceful, hostile, and everything in between. Thus, foreign relations—so long as they involve the interests, direction, and actions of a sovereign power—may be regarded as synonymous with diplomatic relations, whereby foreign policy relates to the theory and practice of setting diplomatic priorities, planning for contingencies, advancing strategic, operational, and tactical diplomatic aims, and adjusting those aims to domestic and foreign constraints.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

As a result, diplomacy is the relation between states, the process of official interaction regulated by the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Based on the combination of the definitions above, cultural diplomacy would ideally entail the communication of culture between states for the satisfaction of their own interests. However, most academics in the field argue cultural diplomacy is “the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understandings.”[[18]](#footnote-18) This definition illustrates cultural diplomacy through an altruistic lens, focusing on the promotion of common interests and communal appreciation. Yet, the reality is different; cultural diplomacy operates in a structure of power rhetoric. In a world where states seek to secure their own interests, cultural diplomacy is not only used for mutual understanding but for the advancement of national interests. As previously mentioned, Joseph Nye’s soft-power theory asserts the appeal of a culture, usually displayed through cultural diplomacy, is a factor aiding and abetting in the persuasion of others. Not surprisingly, cultural diplomacy is commonly identifies as a tool during times of conflict or tension.[[19]](#footnote-19)

The disparity between theory and practice causes a great rift in the denotation and understanding of cultural diplomacy. The interaction between the promotion of national interest in foreign policy and the promotion of greater common interest is a source of tension.[[20]](#footnote-20) As a result, the use of cultural diplomacy is not widespread and programs vary from country to country. Furthermore, cultural diplomacy is categorized as a part of a larger public relations category, public diplomacy.[[21]](#footnote-21) While diplomacy is usually association with the state and official state emissaries, this is not the case with public or cultural diplomacy. Public diplomacy, as its name describes, is intended to influence foreign public for the benefit of a state. Similarly, cultural diplomacy is intended to reach the public, but is also partaken by a variety of actors, not only the state. This leads to confusion; implying cultural diplomacy is the same as ‘cultural relations’.[[22]](#footnote-22) Hence, cultural diplomacy should involve the state and maintain some sort of state objective to not be underrated by the state.

Unlike other types of diplomacy, cultural diplomacy is a practice that is partaken by various types of actors in the international arena. In other words, the state is not considered the sole actor participating in the promotion of culture across state borders. Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are also active partners in the dissemination of culture. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) or the Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) are intergovernmental organizations working not only in the promotion but also in the protection of culture. Similarly, numerous national and international nongovernmental organizations exist to contribute to the dissemination of cultural knowledge. NGOs operate independently or cooperate with states to carry out cultural awareness objectives. These objectives vary based on the mission of the organization. Some organizations focus on the overall promotion of a specific country’s culture, such as the Alliance Française, discussed later in the research. On the other hand, some NGOs focus on the promotion of a particular aspect of culture, such as the International Association of Art, tasked with “[stimulated] international cultural cooperation, free from any aesthetic, political or other bias, among the artists of all countries”.[[23]](#footnote-23) Nowadays, multinational corporations (MNCs) inadvertently drive the spread of culture through product marketing. However, it’s important to note, this is an externality of a globalized world and does not directly constitute cultural diplomacy.

**Significance**

A substantial portion of English literature focused on cultural diplomacy is US-centered and/or through a historical perspective, predominantly about it’s golden period during World War II and the Cold War.[[24]](#footnote-24) The remaining focuses on state-specific analysis, prescription and relation to public diplomacy. The predominant US-centric motif has, in turn, “limited our understanding of the general nature of cultural diplomacy.”[[25]](#footnote-25) As a result, the long-term contribution of cultural diplomacy is often underestimated and unexplored. Instead, cultural diplomacy is viewed as a mere vessel to excerpt soft power or a tool for nation branding, “[it] has a powerful manifestation in nation branding and has proved to be very successful in helping a nation raise its profile abroad.”[[26]](#footnote-26)

The following research takes the limited assessment of cultural diplomacy into account, proposing an alternative long-term objective. The paper looks into cultural diplomacy as an instrument for global civil society. This is an original assessment and contribution to the field, backed by institutional examination and analysis. While social scientists have studied both concepts in depth, the relation between cultural diplomacy and global civil society has been missing in international relations literature.[[27]](#footnote-27) This is not surprising, as the scope, purpose, and impact of the concepts differ greatly. Nevertheless, there is a logic-based connection between cultural diplomacy and global civil society worth considering. The association is the result of a framework of relationships based on the transitive property (see Figure 1). Accordingly, given the common element sharing an independent connection with cultural diplomacy and global civil society, a common connection between both exists. The relationship relies on two existing premises: 1. A relation between civil society and cultural diplomacy, and 2. A relation between civil society and global civil society.

**Transitive Relation:**

A is related to B,

A is related to C,

Then, B is related to C.

Consequently,

Civil society (A) is related to cultural diplomacy (B),

civil society (A) is related to global civil society (C),

Then, cultural diplomacy (B) is related to global civil society (C).

Figure 1: Transitive Property

The relation of the latter has been already acknowledged in the definition of global civil society. Nevertheless, global civil society is the escalation of the third sphere of national life, civil society.[[28]](#footnote-28) Its development is attributed to the current interconnected and interdependent world order. In other words, as a result of telecommunication and technologic advances, the opening of markets, migration and the open movement of capital across state boundaries; civil society has extended its reach globally. While often contested, the significance of global civil society is not altered by its critiques. Instead, the critiques reflect global civil society’s still emerging focus and role in the power struggle of the international arena. While a succinct and widespread definition is still needed, the mere conceptualization of it reflects the continuous process occurring in society, as needs and interests are constantly negotiated and constructed.[[29]](#footnote-29) Global civil society offers a door of possibilities to international relation’s power politics.

In addition, experts in the field have connected the former premise in numerous occasions. Civil society is a major participant in cultural diplomacy. The 2011 Outlook report by the Institute of Cultural Diplomacy claims, “civil society has had a substantial impact on the practice of cultural diplomacy worldwide in recent years, with numerous bodies operating in a multitude of different ways to promote cultural diplomatic approaches in dozens of states worldwide.”[[30]](#footnote-30) Civil society is an actor of cultural diplomacy, both as a transmitter and recipient. Civil society engages and disseminates cultural diplomacy, as well as, it’s the intended public. As Nye, concluded in an increasingly interconnected world, effective diplomacy entails “an understanding of the roles of credibility, self-criticism, and civil society in generating soft power.”[[31]](#footnote-31)

**Relevance**

The attacks of September 11, demonstrated the visible disconnect between the Western world and the Middle East. Shockingly, scholars had already anticipated these events. In his article, Samuel P. Huntington forewarned, “the great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural.”[[32]](#footnote-32) While the world feared ‘The End of History?’, Huntington forecasted nation-states would remain the main actors in the international arena, but the major world conflicts were no longer the procurement of resources or power.[[33]](#footnote-33) Instead, conflict would be driven by cultural identity and the differences between cultural entities, civilizations.[[34]](#footnote-34) The terrorist attacks and failed military operations illustrated the importance of “soft power”. Consequently, cultural diplomacy regained popular interest as a resource to bridge gaps in communication and foster constructive interactions through cultural awareness.

More than fifteen years have passed since the attacks of September 11, and conflict rooted in divergent cultural values, remains rampant. The pervasive carrot and stick approach has proven unsuccessful in eliminating extremism. Furthermore, the continuous development of globalization and its effects, including the increase in disenfranchisement, requires new approaches. Even, public diplomacy solutions have limitations, as they are often associated to propaganda and self-seeking objectives.[[35]](#footnote-35) The research at hand supports a paradigm shift in cultural diplomacy’s purpose to offer a potential solution that builds long-term rapport, while simultaneously granting more representation and accountability to civil society globally.

**Methodology**

Given the number of actors and numerous components associated with cultural diplomacy, the subject is difficult to dissect and trace pragmatically. As a result, while determining the methodology to analyze the role of cultural diplomacy in the formation of a global civil society, limitations to the ample and vague scope of research were required in order to establish a uniform criterion. Taking into consideration the pragmatic critiques of global civil society, case study analysis was selected as it allows for “the combination of process tracing and typological theorizing.”[[36]](#footnote-36) The theoretical component has already been delineated through the transitive relation logic, and the process tracing will be conducted through a multiple case study analysis in order to confirm the theory in different settings. The use of comparison is a part of the methodology but not the bulk.[[37]](#footnote-37)

In view of the state’s principal role in diplomacy, three different states were selected as case studies in order to have their individual cultural diplomacies analyzed. During the selection process, third party ranking systems were considered to avoid selection biases. Given the lack of research in the linking the subjects, the final selection was determined by selecting the top three states with the greatest number of diplomatic missions abroad. The criterion was selected given the wide reach that the top three countries covered with their diplomatic missions, thus truly extolling a global influence. Accordingly, The United States of America led the list with 166 embassies, followed by The People’s Republic of China (Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo) with 162 embassies and finally the French Republic (La République Française) with 160 embassies.[[38]](#footnote-38) Moreover, the preliminary analysis determined the selected three states possessed distinct notions of cultural diplomacy and of its implementation. Thus enabling a least-similar case design in order “to use process tracing to show that the common independent variable is related to the outcome through a plausible causal path”.[[39]](#footnote-39)

**Objectives**

In order to trace the function cultural diplomacy undertakes in facilitating a global civil society, the research ascribes cultural diplomacy as the independent variable that varies across states due to variations in political systems, institutions, and ideology. On the other hand, as per the transitive relationship hypothesis stated earlier, global civil society would be the dependent variable the research seeks to uncover. To determine the correlation, the research analyzes three different independent variables and their relation to global civil society. The distinctive cultural diplomacy institutions of the United States of America, France and China were examined for the following:

1. Historical development
2. Conceptual definition
3. Institutional structures / programs
4. Assessment of contribution towards a Global Civil Society

The historical overview is done to clearly trace distinctions in the development and conceptualization of each cultural diplomacy program. Moreover, the official state definitions are further reviewed to secure a clear characterization of the programs. Next, a breakdown of the institutional structures and programs provides context on the relation of the state towards cultural diplomacy. Finally and most importantly, the ability of each state’s cultural diplomacy in contributing a global social network is examined, under the assumption that social exchange is the base of the formation of a civil society. Not to mention, critics of global civil society often contest that the current GCS more closely resembles a network of NGOs rather than a truly global community.

**Documentary Basis**

For the purpose of this research various sources of information mostly in English, with a few exceptions of literature in French, were evaluated and analyzed. There were two predominant types of sources utilized: primary sources and published literature in the forms of books and articles. Given the methodology of the research, least-similar case study analysis, the conceptualization of cultural diplomacy varied slightly between each case study yet differed greatly in implementations.

**Primary Sources**

The Primary sources utilized in the research originated directly from the governments of the three separate case studies, and consisted of information available in governmental websites, speeches by government representatives, including former heads of state and ambassadors, and documents denoting commitments to cultural diplomacy practices. While cultural diplomacy is often conveyed as a benevolent practice, the concept of frequently interrelated with different, more authoritative themes depending on the state. The United States more often associates cultural diplomacy with public diplomacy, often diminishing the role of culture. Starting from the earliest document reviewed, the Convention for the Promotion of Inter-American Cultural Relations, the amicable and humanist undertones of a “good neighbor” was complemented with public relations techniques. Later documents demonstrate the intertwined nature of public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy.[[40]](#footnote-40) On the other hand, the primary sources reviewed while researching the cultural diplomacy of France, clearly indicate the primary role of culture in French foreign policy and the direct association between it and Joseph Nye’s ‘soft power’. As per the Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development M. Jean-Marc Ayrault, France’s “soft power helps to promote dialogue among cultures on a daily basis…Culture is key to promoting France’s influence and raising its profile.”[[41]](#footnote-41) Similarly, for the Chinese government, cultural diplomacy is associated with soft power, but also linked to nation branding efforts as reflected by their efforts to portray China as non-threat, “culture represents the face and the soul of a nation… …China has never colonized smaller countries. Even at its prime time, in the past, seldom did central china launch invasive wars against others. Today, China has always opposed a defensive policy of national security and will never embark on an old path of some countries in seeking hegemony when being strong.”[[42]](#footnote-42) While China has sought to build it’s international image, there is a limited amount of primary resource available in English.

**Literature Review**

Literature on Cultural Diplomacy varies greatly by country and language of analysis. As previously stated, a significant portion of cultural diplomacy literature in English focuses on the United States. This is not surprising, as of the United States was one of the countries who proficiently employed culturally diplomacy during the Cold War, leading to the development of new trains of though about the practice, such as the already mentioned, soft power by Joseph Nye and more recently Nicholas Cull’s types of soft power.[[43]](#footnote-43) While there is a substantial amount of cultures relation to the French state, it’s the more recent material that sees a division in opinion. Most recent, French cultural diplomacy literature deals with the loss of influence and the future of French soft power. Similarly literature about China’s cultural diplomacy often utilizes the term soft power, however, the implications show a lack of humanist interest in actual cultural exchanges. It is safe to say that cultural diplomacy literature has expanded towards the use of culture as a tool of the state to exercise influence. Nonetheless, there has been a lack of literature about the effect of cultural diplomacy in society. In particular, there is a lack of focus on the empowerment of civil society through the participation and exposure to cultural diplomacy.

1. **Case Study: The Cultural Diplomacy of The United States**

*“Cultural Diplomacy is the linchpin of public diplomacy; for it is in the cultural activities that a nation’s idea of its self is best represented.” [[44]](#footnote-44)*

* Report of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy, DoS, USA

The United States of America has a long history of broadcasting its cultural values due to its uniting factor. Beginning before the inception of the state, culture was increasingly a divisive feature, setting apart the colonies from its Royal leader. While some colonies implemented structures similar to its colonial master, differences, primary driven by the autonomy of the colonies, gave rise to a growing sense of otherness that was only resolved through independence. [[45]](#footnote-45) During the birth of the nation, the Founding Fathers, the representatives of the original thirteen colonies, set the course for the state’s cultural identity. They capitalized on the autonomy of the English colonial system to establish a *land of opportunities*. Values depicted in the Declaration of Independence, such as freedom and equality, are the cornerstone of American culture[[46]](#footnote-46). The upholding of these ideas has allowed for the development of a multifaceted national culture identifying under the same geographic boundaries. More interestingly, it’s the endorsement of these values that has motivated the United States’ cultural diplomacy.

**1.1. History**

Culture has long held an informal place in the United States’ interaction with foreign states, commencing with Thomas Jefferson’s assertions on the role of art in improving taste, increasing reputation, reconciling respect and procuring worldly praise for fellow Americans.[[47]](#footnote-47) However, it wasn’t until the 1930’s when it gained official recognition in the state’s foreign policy agenda under the Good Neighbor Policy towards Latin American. The Convention for the Promotion of Inter-American Cultural Relations in 1936 was the first official document outlining a cultural foreign policy. The document employed the term “cultural relations”, which consisted of the:

“[advancement] by greater mutual knowledge and understanding of the people and institutions of the countries represented and a more consistent educational solidarity… that such results would be appreciably promoted by an exchange of professors, teachers, and students among the American countries, as well as by encouragement of a closer relationship between unofficial organizations which exert an influence on the formation of public opinion…” [[48]](#footnote-48)

Hence, the first cultural policy of the state consisted of bilateral academic exchanges and partnerships to increase awareness and influence public opinion, sketching the blue print for the Fulbright exchange programs. The Convention led to the eventual establishment of the Division of Cultural Relations, the first federal entity responsible for the sole advancement of cultural understanding. This agency experimented with a cultural agenda based on academic exchanges led by private partnerships under a cultural internationalism outlook. Simultaneously, the state endorsed institutional exchanges and solidified its cultural relations with Latin America though the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs.

The next years were crucial for the development and expansion of the United States’ cultural foreign policy. World War II redirected the still developing cultural efforts of the United States to new fronts and limits. New administrative units were erected to address the war efforts, including the Office of War Information. This division’s main task consolidated the information disseminated domestically and internationally, but eventually the agency’s mission focused on spread of information and propaganda abroad, including the spread of American culture and values.[[49]](#footnote-49) It wasn’t until after the war that the US developed a cultural foreign policy worldwide. With defeat of the Axis and the ideological differences with the soviet bloc, the United States intensified the spread of American values and culture, in western Germany and across the world.

The Cold War prompted the monopolization of culture in the US’ foreign policy. While previous efforts focused on partnerships with the private sector, efforts during the Cold War were directed and organized directly by the state. The Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 embodied this prioritization of culture in foreign policy. As per the U.S. Department of State (DoS):

“[the act] established a statutory information agency for the first time in a period of peace with a mission to "promote a better understanding of the United States in other countries, and to increase mutual understanding" between Americans and foreigners. The Smith-Mundt Act gave full recognition to the importance of educational and cultural exchanges sponsored by the government. In recognition of the need to build up a corps of well-informed intellectuals and opinion leaders in the political and social infrastructure, the International Visitor Program was started.”[[50]](#footnote-50)

While the Act appeared innocuous, its aim was to contain and counter the spread of Soviet ideology. Through art exchanges, academic exchanges, radio broadcasting and American libraries established abroad, the US engaged the world in an ideological campaign, at times, serving as covert CIA operations.[[51]](#footnote-51)

It wasn’t until the 1950’s that the state officially recognized its cultural efforts as ‘cultural diplomacy’. Through the establishment of the United States Information Agency (USIA) and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Relations, the US State Department ratified its commitment to promote cultural awareness. Furthermore, in 1959, the Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for the Coordination of International Educational and Cultural Relations, Robert H. Thayer, affirmed the role of culture in US foreign relations and set its agenda:

“Foreign relationships are no longer relationships between government, or heads of state—foreign relationships are the relationship between people of all countries—and relationships between peoples are governed by the way people think and live, and eat, and feel and this represents the culture of a people; and so today we have in the forefront of the implementation of our foreign policy, cultural diplomacy, and to my mind the most important means of bringing complete mutual understanding between peoples, which in turns compels mutual understanding between governments. …

The objective of American cultural diplomacy is to create in the peoples of the world a perfect understanding of the life and culture of America…it is the requirement of mutual understanding, which is the basis of successful cultural diplomacy, and it is this requirement, which helps make cultural diplomacy so vitally important today.” [[52]](#footnote-52)

While cultural diplomacy played an important role during the Cold War, it soon lost funding and support in US Congress after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Reports show that “since 1993, budgets have fallen by nearly 30%, staff has been cut by about 30% overseas and 20% in the U.S., and dozens of cultural centers, libraries and branch posts have been closed.”[[53]](#footnote-53) The United States cultural diplomacy programs were seen as mere public relations strategies along with advertisement and propaganda.[[54]](#footnote-54) USIA was dismantled and its remnants absorbed by the State Department. Eventually, US cultural diplomacy lost the precedence it once possessed and instead become a sub-section of public diplomacy. As per the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, between 1995 and 2001 the number of exchange participants in Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs’ programs fell by a third, from about 45,000 to 29,000.[[55]](#footnote-55)

The events of September 11 placed focus on the lack of government led cultural engagement, resulting in the growth of anti-American sentiment. As a result, cultural diplomacy funding increased after 2001 and for the first time, from 2001 to 2009, public and private sectors coordinated lasting institutional collaborations through the Global Cultural Initiative.[[56]](#footnote-56) Additional efforts were made during the Obama administration as it sought to restore and strengthen relations with other countries. In particular, efforts to engage countries with long standing tensions, such as Iran and Cuba, proved successful. The latter has seen an influx of mainstream Hollywood celebrities promoting art exchanges and a one million dollar commitment to support academic exchanges after a five-decade absence.[[57]](#footnote-57)

**1.2 Definition**

As previously stated the original association of culture in the foreign policy of the United States occurred in 1936 under the term of cultural relations or relations that “grow naturally and organically, without government intervention—the transactions of trade and tourism, student flows, communications, book circulation, migration, media access, intermarriage—millions of daily cross-cultural encounters”.[[58]](#footnote-58) Cultural diplomacy was not defined by the U.S. Department of State until more than twenty years later, in 1959, as “the direct and enduring contact between peoples of different nations” designed to “help create a better climate of international trust and understanding in which official relations can operate.”[[59]](#footnote-59) Accordingly, unlike cultural relations, cultural diplomacy is the politicizing of culture in order to improve international opportunities. As a result, culture diplomacy is viewed as a tool. This is reflected by cultural diplomacy falling under the much broader category of public diplomacy,

“which involves government-to-people diplomacy and reaching out to non-executive branch officials and the broader public, particularly opinion-shapers, in foreign countries, explaining both foreign policy and the national context out of which that policy arises. Public Diplomacy is carried out by both diplomats and, under their programs and auspices, non-officials such as academic scholars, journalists, experts in various fields, members of non-governmental organizations, public figures such as state and local government officials, and social activists.”[[60]](#footnote-60)

* 1. **Institutions and Programs**

Since the inception of U.S. cultural relations in the late 1930’s, the organizers longed for the program to be conducted mostly by private partners. Accordingly, “no more than 5 percent of overall activity... ...would come from the government, leaving 95 percent to the private world.”[[61]](#footnote-61) The state’s role was intended to be a mere facilitator. Since then, several major events have changed the structure of American diplomacy, yet, the reliance on private partnerships remains at the heart of U.S. cultural diplomacy. Today, most efforts in cultural diplomacy are undertaken by a private public partnership. Furthermore, there is no single, highly integrated state organization driving cultural diplomacy in the United States. The closest cultural body is a small department within a larger framework. Instead, cultural diplomacy is conducted by a number of agencies and partners detailed in Figure 2.

There are two agencies that while not in charge of cultural diplomacy, perform associated tasks as an externality. The first agency is The White House as it employs cultural diplomacy practices to achieve foreign policy goals. These are intended for both state and public audiences. Through participation in cultural programs, administrations open means of communication directly with other states. In 1962, President John F. Kennedy hosted French Minister of Culture, André Malraux, in The White House. In return, Malraux offered to temporarily loan a French cultural icon to the United States. La Giaconda, also known as the Mona Lisa was displayed several months later in Washington D.C. and New York City for millions of Americans to appreciate.[[62]](#footnote-62) The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) is the other agency that indirectly contributes to cultural diplomacy by disseminating “a broad spectrum of programing including news reports and analyses, features on American culture and society including on current issues, and in-depth background pieces that helped ... audiences understand America better.” While the efforts are part of public diplomacy, those made to educate and advance understanding of America, are contributions to the state’s cultural diplomacy. The programing is an important source for the advancement of American culture, society, and values in a non-threatening form as they are broadcasted in many different languages with state-specific audiences in mind.

Most efforts aimed at the development of cultural understanding are a product of inter-agency cooperation. Both the White House and the BBG work jointly with the DoS to direct cultural diplomacy efforts. In particular, they work with the bureaus under the public diplomacy and public affairs umbrella. The Bureau of International Information (IIP) is one the departments assisting with the dissemination of American culture through public diplomacy efforts. The Bureau assists embassies with print material, manages social media accounts and provides safe spaces abroad with information about American society, culture and values.

Figure 2: U.S Government Institutions participating in Cultural Diplomacy[[63]](#footnote-63)

However, it’s the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) that conducts majority of U.S. cultural diplomacy. The Bureau is composed of several offices, as shown on figure 3, working “to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange that assist in the development of peaceful relations.”[[64]](#footnote-64) The Bureau encourages public-private partnerships currently focusing on the fields of Civil Society and Entrepreneurship, English Language Teaching Worldwide Partnerships, Cultural and Sports Diplomacy and Youth Programs.[[65]](#footnote-65) The partnerships serve to extend the reach and exposure of the department through non-governmental organizations. Furthermore, the ECA provides grant-funding opportunities to further the involvement of citizens and NGOs in cultural affairs. Similarly, the Bureau’s programs receive funding from its partners. In 2005, “three of the Bureau's top exchange programs received roughly one-quarter to one-half of their funding from nongovernment sources.”[[66]](#footnote-66)

The ECA has special programs dedicated to cultural diplomacy focusing on the advancement of the arts, including visual, performance and literary arts. Programs include programs such as the American Arts Incubator, American Film Showcase, American Music Abroad, Arts Envoy, Biennales, CenterStage, International Writing Program (IWP), Next Level, DanceMotion, and One Beat. Other programs work to connect cultural institutions such as the Communities Connecting Heritage and Museum Connect programs. Finally, Global Media Makers is an innovative exchange focused on growing media trends.[[67]](#footnote-67) Cultural programing is further supplemented through all the student exchange programs, allowing for individuals to explore foreign culture themselves and contribute to their personal development.

Figure 3: Organizational Structure of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) including some culturally oriented initiatives[[68]](#footnote-68)

**Assessment of Contribution**

The U.S. reliance on the private sector to implement cultural diplomacy activities, rather than maintain centralized control over the craft, is a reflection of the empowerment of the private sector abroad. Its important to note, the private sector does not refer to the market, but refers to civil society, the third sector of society in which private individuals interact with the state and the market to meet their necessities and desires. The U.S. state funding of programs and NGOs and the funding of U.S. state programs by private donors, demonstrate the equal role of actors through a two-way international partnership. Since the interaction is no longer contained within the geographic borders of the state, and instead supplanted to an international sphere, civil society loses its adhered territorial claim. Instead, civil society gains a greater domain, where the interactions are more complex; interactions are not only with one state, but also with multiple states and international actors. The civil society organizations that coordinate cultural diplomacy gain a global function.

Nongovernmental organizations receiving U.S. government sponsorship through funding to conduct cultural related activities outside of the United States also require the approval and at times, partnership with other states in order to accomplish objectives. CEC ArtsLink, an NGO promoting “international communication and understanding through collaborative, innovative arts projects,” began in the United States in 1963 facilitating exchanges with the Soviet Union.[[69]](#footnote-69) Today, CEC ArtsLink is an international organization serving “the United States and 37 other countries”.[[70]](#footnote-70) Nonetheless, the NGO uses U.S. state funding to conduct art exchanges in Russia and other former Soviet Union states with the approval of national governments.[[71]](#footnote-71) Organizations like CEC ArtsLink operate all over the world, interacting with the U.S. and foreign governments, multinational corporations, small private businesses, local civil societies and individuals, establishing informal, difficult to trace connections.[[72]](#footnote-72) These networking ties are not intended to materialize to concrete results, instead form long-term consequences. Even in times of tension, these organizations and associated networks serve to meet the void of the state. CEC ArtsLink and similar organizations continue to provide American arts programing in Russia regardless of bilateral sanctions and discontinued lending between state museums.[[73]](#footnote-73)

**Conclusion**

Overall, the United States’ cultural diplomacy helps support the premise that cultural diplomacy has a role in facilitating the formation of a global civil society. The exposure and amplified role of local civil society abroad, creates long-term networks that while facilitated by the State, can also promote self-serving interests outside of state control. In addition, these organizations and networks help realize objectives the state is not always able to accomplish abroad. Finally, the organizations can also stimulate the State through private funding and local expertise. The U.S. cultural diplomacy provides a safe space outside of the direct control of the state for people to communicate, negotiate and understand each other bilaterally and at times, multilaterally, in order to advance their societal interests and quality of life similar to the general objective of global civil society.

1. **Case Study: The Cultural Diplomacy of La Rèpublique Française (the French Republic).**

“*We have, once and for all, come to the conclusion that it is through free intellectual and moral relations, established between us and others, that our cultural influence can spread for the good of all, and that conversely what we are worth can grow.”[[74]](#footnote-74)*

* General Charles de Gaulle, leader of the resistance movement in WWII and Former President of France

France is commonly considered the birthplace of diplomacy, with the French language serving as the predominant language of diplomats for many centuries. France has been a prototype of cultural diplomacy both in a political and humanist perspective. Through the use of cultural appeal, France has been able to strategically harness its soft power to maintain an influential status in the international arena. While France’s military power may be trivial in comparison to other countries, its opinion has substantial weight as denoted by the U.S. efforts to appeal to French public opinion.[[75]](#footnote-75) France has also taken a leading role in preserving its own cultural heritage and that of many other societies through museums exchanges and extensive historical and cultural archives. Not surprisingly, France is a main supporter of UNESCO’s Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

**History**

Culture has been an essential component of French foreign relations even prior to the Westphalian state system. The French monarchy promoted cultural development in order to establish an influential nation brand. In the sixteenth century, through organs such as the “*Superentendent des Batiments Royaux*”, Francois I began the projection of a grandiose French image that surpassed his immediate domain, securing treaties along the way to safeguard French culture, arts and language.[[76]](#footnote-76) He was a significant contributor to the cultural development of France. His decree making French the official language of the court, laid the foundation for the prominent role of the language in French identity and foreign policy.[[77]](#footnote-77) Not surprisingly, France’s emissaries to other kingdoms were often men of letters, promoting the use of the language, such as “Diderot in Russia... …Voltaire at the court of Prussia”.[[78]](#footnote-78) As J. Nye asserted, “French not only became the language of diplomacy, but was even used at some foreign courts such as Prussia and Russia.”[[79]](#footnote-79) King Louis XIII furthered the importance of the French culture and language, especially through the establishment of the Académie Française in the seventeenth century to guard the development of the language.[[80]](#footnote-80) By the eighteenth century, France was an established cultural powerhouse, “attractive for its claim more than its wealth. . . Men of intelligence flocked into it, and its empire was one of taste. . . When one rules by virtue of opinion, does one need any other kind of empire?”[[81]](#footnote-81)

In the late eighteenth century, the leaders of the French Revolution attempted to use the well-established influence of the French culture to disseminate the ideals of the revolution. French culture, no longer formed by and for elites, became a symbol of liberty, equality and brotherhood (liberté, égalité, fraternité). The Louvre, once a symbol of royalty, embodied the new principles, as “its dedication as a public museum in 1793 marked it as a manifestation of the democratic impulse. In a remarkable transvaluation of signs, a king's palace and its aesthetic treasures became a major depot of the cultural hopes of the Revolution.”[[82]](#footnote-82) The democratization of the arts arose the “principles that still prevail in French cultural production including “the education of the citizen and free and independent formation of artists.”[[83]](#footnote-83) Notwithstanding, France temporarily lost their cultural appeal as their new revolutionary values threatened their neighboring monarchs. Napoleon Bonaparte attempted to regain France’s cultural high ground by including scholars, teachers, artists, intellectuals, and engineers in his military endeavors, establishing treaties and institutions promoting French values. The exchanges Napoleon established with Egypt were later categorized as the first example of French state cultural “cooperation”. [[84]](#footnote-84)

The empowerment of French cultural affairs allowed for the development of one of the most prominent international French cultural institutions outside of government constraints at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1883, the Alliance Française was founded by citizens in order “to propagate the national language in the colonies and abroad.”[[85]](#footnote-85) The success of the Alliance spread quickly and by 1904, it had 150 committees in France and 450 abroad.[[86]](#footnote-86) Furthermore, the Alliance became a part of a French network abroad of private and religious schools and universities operating with the support of French embassies. In 1909, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministére d’Affaires étrangères)(MAE) opened the Bureau des écoles et des oeuvres françaises à l’étranger, later renamed the Service des écoles et des oeuvres françaises à l’étranger after the first world war.[[87]](#footnote-87) The Bureau formalized the commitment of the state in promoting French education abroad centered on the French language.

The First and Second World War redirected French cultural activities abroad setting a new direction for France’s foreign policy. Starting with the WWI, the numerous language and educational institutions outside of France became means to spread French ideals and establish alliances, “our universities, our schools abroad are truly centres of propaganda in favour of France.”[[88]](#footnote-88) During the war and interwar period, the increase in state funding for activities associated with cultural foreign affairs, including it’s ‘civilizing mission’, demonstrate the success of the policies, as per the 1943 remarks of General Charles de Gaulle, “we have, once and for all, come to the conclusion that it is through free intellectual and moral relations, established between us and others, that our cultural influence can spread for the good of all, and that conversely what we are worth can grow.”[[89]](#footnote-89)

The culmination of the Second World War caused the restructuring of France’s cultural brand and consequently, cultural foreign policy. Internally, France consolidated departments to form the Ministry of Culture. Externally, the focus was on the improvement of cultural diplomacy through existent networks and the formation of new partnerships. Cultural attaches were sent to embassies around the world to promote the promulgation of culture. Cultural diplomacy rapidly developed with an ongoing emphasis on the French language, “the French language is perceived as the symbol of French identity. In consequence, to promote the language is to promote France and French interests; to protect the language is to protect French interests; to protect French interests is to protect the language.”[[90]](#footnote-90) Nonetheless France saw its influence threatened by the emergence of new cultural powerhouses and in 1970, joined a movement to establish a network between all French speaking countries led way to the formation of L’Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (International Organization of La Francophonie) , which “represents one of the biggest linguistic zones in the world. Its members share more than just a common language. They also share the humanist values promoted by the French language.”[[91]](#footnote-91) Furthermore, in 1979 France sought to expand cultural links to new realms through the Direction Générale des Relations Culturelles, Scientifiques et Techniques (General Directory of Cultural, Scientific and Technical Relations).

The end of the Cold War and the new global world order caused the reexamination and restructuring of the French cultural diplomacy. Globalization and the spread of American pop culture threatened the identity of French culture and soft power, plus the lack of long term objectives lead to the reassessment of cultural diplomacy mediums. Starting from 1995, a series of structural reforms led to the formation of new state agencies in 2010, in charge of overseeing cultural diplomacy activities. The most significant change was the centralization of cultural diplomacy related activities under a new division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development (MAEDI). The Institut Français (French Institute) became the new institution “in charge of implementing France’s cultural action abroad.”[[92]](#footnote-92) The Institute was integrated to the broader French international network, under the authority of embassies and in collaboration with existing partners, such as the Alliance Française. As per the Institute, “the creation of a common brand, ‘Institut Français; embracing both the Paris institution and the instituts français abroad, lends coherence and visibility to France’s cultural diplomacy.”[[93]](#footnote-93) Consequently, through the branding of the cultural diplomacy vehicle, France aims to rebrand its cultural diplomacy efforts.

**Definition**

Culture has been integral to France’s foreign policy efforts, yet its function has changed depending on France’s role in the world. As detailed in a 1920’s budget report to the Chamber of Deputies, "our letters, our arts, our industrial civilization, our ideas have always exerted a powerful attraction on foreign nations. Our universities, our schools abroad are real homes of propaganda in favor of France; they constitute a weapon in the hands of our public authorities. That is why the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its agents abroad must direct and control the initiatives, inspire at all costs the French intellectual penetration with the conviction that it is one of the most effective forms of action abroad, that is, in regards to different nations, one of richest resources and least debatable means of our foreign policy."[[94]](#footnote-94) Consequently, cultural diplomacy is often referred to diplomacy of influence, viewed as a way to gain power over others. A more recent definition, asserts cultural diplomacy as, “an indispensable tool for preserving [the] cultural diversity which makes the richness of human civilizations. It is also what motivates French policy to support artistic creation in developing countries, with programs like ‘Africa and the Caribbean in Creation’ or ‘Aid to Cinemas of the World’”.[[95]](#footnote-95) This new conceptualization demonstrates cultural diplomacy remains a weapon for France, however, its role has evolved to not only an offensive strategy, but also to a defensive one. Cultural diplomacy is now safeguarding the institution of humanity by safeguarding the charcteristics that make each social group unique.

**Institutions and Instruments**

The Structure of France’s cultural diplomacy has changed considerably since the end of the Cold War as a result of global changes that saw the deterioration of French incfluence in the world. The current structure is fairly recent, having been developed by the French Foreign Cultural Action Act of 27 July 2010 and made effectine as of January 1st, 2011.[[96]](#footnote-96) Nonetheless, it incorporates centuries old ideas and instruments. Given the important role of culture in France, its no surprise that country sought to redirect its cultural efforts. The new structure is the product of a collaboration between two important French ministries, the Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication (Ministry of Culture and Communication) and the Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et du Developpement International (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development) (MAEDI).[[97]](#footnote-97) Both of these organizations cooperated to modernize French cultural diplomacy for the 21st century through “the creation of an external cultural agency”.[[98]](#footnote-98) Based on the decree establishing the new structure, the Ministries will continue to work jointly to steer cultural diplomacy.[[99]](#footnote-99)

In France, national cultural policy is directed by the Ministry of Culture and Communication, whose mission is “to make accessible(approachable) to the largest number the major works of the humanity and at first France”.[[100]](#footnote-100) This includes the management and protection of cultural institutions, instruments and agents. In addition, the Ministry of Culture, “in association with other interested ministries, …implements(operates) the actions(shares) of the State intended to assure(insure) the influence(radiation) in the world of the culture, the French artistic creation and the Francophony,” by “[preparing] and [implementing] the actions(shares) which contribute(compete) to the distribution(broadcasting), to the employment(use) and to the enrichment of the French language as well as to the conservation and to the promotion(valuation) of languages of France.”[[101]](#footnote-101) The Ministry administers organizations, which dissimilate artistic cultural products abroad, such as UniFrance, in charge of distributing French movies abroad. [[102]](#footnote-102)

Figure 4 French Cultural Policy Actors[[103]](#footnote-103)

Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication

CampusFrance

National Policy

Foreign Policy

Institut Français

Agency for French Education Abroad (AEFE)

France Médias Mondes

Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et du Developpement International (MAEDI)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development is the main organ directing foreign policy strategies and consequently, cultural diplomacy. The ministry’s cultural diplomacy priorities include:

###  1. Disseminating contemporary creation in all its forms.

### 2. Promoting French culture and implementing cultural diversity.

### 3. Building the professional capacity of different artistic sectors.[[104]](#footnote-104)

The Ministry aims to accomplish these priorities through various operators working in different spheres. Some agencies have a more active role in cultural diplomacy than others. CampusFrance and the Agency for French Education Abroad indirectly perform the dissemination of cultural knowledge through educational exchanges. France Médias Mondes broadcasts “information about the world and the diversity of cultures and points of view, through newscasts, reports, magazines and debates,” contributing to exchange of cultural information.[[105]](#footnote-105) While the role of these agency is geared more to educational and information exchange, they remain an essential component of France’s cultural diplomacy efforts.

# Yet, it is France’s overseas cultural and cooperation network, as seen in Figure 5, that is at the forefront of its cultural diplomacy. Since January 2011, the Institut Français has been leading the efforts under one brand. The Institut operates like a “Public Industrial and Commercial Undertaking”, in other words, a public institution operated like a private business, with financial flexibility.[[106]](#footnote-106) The Institut Français was incorporated to the extensive French international network under the tutelage of embassies. It replaced CulturesFrance, taking over various existing projects and implementing new ventures to retain relevance. [[107]](#footnote-107) The institute oversees five departments: Cinema, Artistic Exchanges and Coopertaions, Digital, Development and Partnerships, French Language, Books and Ideas geared to the main areas of focus of the Institut. While there are only 96 Institut Francais, it leads a larger network of organizations, including state sponsored and NGOs, covering 161 countries.[[108]](#footnote-108)

# Figure 5 World map of the French cultural and cooperation network (La carte du réseau dans le monde)[[109]](#footnote-109)

# The network state and non-state actors, including one of the most extensive French cultural NGOs, the Alliançe Française. The Alliance expands through 132 countries with over 800 associations.[[110]](#footnote-110) The long history and wide reach of the Alliance makes it one of the most well established cultural networks in the world. Not surprisingly, the MAEDI established a partnership with a portion of the Alliancea in 2010, in order to “envisages a convergence of the visual identities of the two public and private networks, the complementary nature of geographic locations and the increase in joint initiatives.”[[111]](#footnote-111) Other organizations in the network include state organizations, such as embassies, and NGOs like Mission Laïque Française, executing French education abroad since 1902.[[112]](#footnote-112)

# Assessment of Contribution

The current French cultural diplomacy structure is fairly new, yet it relies on a system of networks that has existed for centuries, allowing it to have strong, long-lasting links. France’s cultural network reflects the idea that cultural diplomacy is long-term project that takes time and encouragement to develop. France’s commitment to cultural diplomacy proves that these international networks ensure cooperation, build trust and understanding. While France’s cultural diplomacy developed as a way to civilize and influence other cultures, its evolution has helped France establish partnerships of equal footing, even encouraging the public to participate freely in the exchange of ideas. A prime example is the development on the Francophone movement. As stated by Senegalese poet and former President of Senegal, "in the rubble of colonialism, we found this wonderful tool, the French language." [[113]](#footnote-113) What was once a tool of control and influence has empowered others to seek equal standing.

The fact that the main French agency disseminating the French language outside of France, the Alliance Française, is a nongovernmental organization reflects the significant capability of non-state actors have in accomplishing objectives across state boundaries. It’s the ingenuity and success of the Alliance that has made it a symbol of France abroad. Furthermore, it has led to a partnership with the French government in order to extend the states capabilities in promoting France. While the state seeks to capitalize on the contribution of the private entity through the partnership and by branding and operating the Institut Français as a commercial entity, the vastness of the French cultural and cooperation network has surpassed state jurisdiction with its presence in over 160 countries.

As the name states, the French cultural and cooperation network has exceeded cultural interests and extended to cooperation. The potential of this network has not gone unnoticed. Social causes have been incorporated into the network, such as protection of cultural diversity and “global economic, social and environmental issues”.[[114]](#footnote-114) The network, a combination of private and public members tied by their French origin, utilizes its many members to promote ideas and issues abroad and contribute indirectly, not only to their country, but to the world.

**Conclusion**

The long history of France’s cultural diplomacy provides an interesting historical reference of the development of cultural diplomacy. While the state is currently focused on maintaining influence in international relations through cultural diplomacy, the success has occurred at the ground level. France has created long-standing ties that have empowered communities by contributing to their global worldview. Furthermore, the cultural network has extended to include humanist aspects formulating an international or global civil community, where issues are addressed through cooperation from private and public actors.

1. **Case Study:  The Cultural Diplomacy of The People's Republic of China**

*"Every nation has her soul in culture -- the roots on which she depends for survival and progress.”*

-Wen Jiabao. Former Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China[[115]](#footnote-115)

Cultural Diplomacy has long been associated with soft power strategies utilized by Western nations, in particular during the Cold War. Nonetheless, historical analysis shows that China has been utilizing strategies similar to those of cultural diplomacy for thousands of years, influencing philosophies throughout the world.[[116]](#footnote-116) More recently, China has capitalized on its long history and multi-layered culture to inspire trust in others. Through a focus on its unique cultural, and social characteristics, China has been crafting a national image that greatly differs from western prescription, instead “[presenting] the developing world a recipe for success.”[[117]](#footnote-117) Similar to the Chinese concept of face, culture is a way to elicit respect for the country. This strategy has proven successful given the increased role of China in international affairs, especially outside of the common domains of economics and politics. Although China has been able to quickly build bilateral and multilateral relations through financial strength, it’s through its cultural diplomacy that China has been able to strengthen these ties and reassure their longevity.

**History**

The long history of Chinese civilization makes it one of the few civilizations with extensive experience practicing diplomacy, including cultural diplomacy. Practices associated with modern cultural relations can be traced back centuries. There is a particular period in Chinese history, associated with the Hundred Schools of Thought that is known for the significant cultural and intellectual development of China.[[118]](#footnote-118) Prevalent philosophers, such as Confucius, led major paradigm shifts by focusing on education and humanity, which in turn facilitated amity and cooperation internally and externally,

“It can be said that the intellectual activities of the period were characterized by: firstly, their unanimous acceptance of the ancient cosmology based on the yin-yang theory; secondly, their primary concern with the imperfect world and indeed the imperfect man rather than metaphysics; and thirdly, their aim to improve man and the world through developing a better system of politics and economics, and most importantly establishing an ideal system of ethics.”[[119]](#footnote-119)

Similarly, Taoism and Mohism doctrines shaped Chinese society with messages focused on the virtues of discussion and persuasion for solving problems. The pacifist approach and emphasis in education and humility stimulated the development of worldviews. Ideas, such as the use of culture in order to defeat an enemy before the battle is fought are seen in ancient Chinese writings.[[120]](#footnote-120) Furthermore, it’s the fundamental idea that shapes modern day Chinese cultural diplomacy strategies of soft power.

Following this period of cultural and philosophical development, came the period of the First Emperor, Qin Shi Huang, from 259 BC - 210 BC. The First Emperor, considered the Founding Father of China, unified and centralized the empire. Through binding policies, such as the establishment of a set coin, script of law, and the building of the original Great Wall, he was able to craft a highly centralized administration and cement the basis for the state.[[121]](#footnote-121) Later dynasties, such as the Tang Dynasty, were able to leverage Chinese civilization throughout the region. [[122]](#footnote-122) Furthermore, interactions with other societies through trade enabled the spread of Chinese cultural material and traditions. Nonetheless, it was the First Emperor’s policies, which greatly influenced China’s inward-focus,

“His [the First Emperor’s] legacy of unity, despotism and the building of a centralized state is taken as a template for the way the nation is ruled, not only under the empire that lasted till 1912 but also in the communist regime which has held sway since 1949.”[[123]](#footnote-123)

The twentieth century, communist-led, China’s political landscape was heavily influenced by the First Emperor’s centralized control over the territory, as reflected by the communist Chairman Mao Zedong parallelization of himself to the founding father role of the First Emperor.[[124]](#footnote-124) Nonetheless, in 1949, the same year the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was founded, the Foreign Cultural Affairs Liaison Bureau was established to oversee all cultural diplomacy. The Bureau, like most organizations in the centralized state, operated under the State Council and the Central Committee of the Communist Part of China (CCCPC).[[125]](#footnote-125) Mao highlighted the congruence of culture and politics, “there is no such thing as art for art’s sake. Proletarian art and literature are… as Lenin said, cogs and wheels in the whole revolutionary machine.”[[126]](#footnote-126) Much of what Mao emphasized in his regime was what he termed a ‘New Democracy”, national and anti-imperialistic, advancing the dignity and independence of the Chinese nation, and not the individual.[[127]](#footnote-127) Thus the PRC was not only a regime change, but led to a worldview, that remains in Chinese contemporary cultural thinking, creating a separation from Western nations.

Since the founding of the PRC, China’s strategies for developing relationships with the rest of the world were predominantly sporadic way into the late 1980’s. Herbert Passin's 1962 book, China's Cultural Diplomacy, deailed how the communist government careful selected and supervised visitors to the country, in order to control the impressions and restrict the dissemination of culture.[[128]](#footnote-128) China’s closed-door policy greatly limited the world’s understanding and portrayal of the country until 1978. Nonetheless, cultural and social understanding remained low after the opening of the market. China’s weak international reputation, triggered internal discussion to initiate repair, “a nascent interest in soft power began taking shape in the 1990s with scholars and academics deliberating the virtues of dialogue and interaction.”[[129]](#footnote-129) Leadership in China became aware of the need to change their previous position of isolation and took drastic measures to change public opinion abroad by contracting one of the largest public-relations firms in the world, Hill & Knowlton, in order to help repair the China’s image in the U.S.[[130]](#footnote-130)

Additionally, in January 1991, the Communist Party leaders tasked the State Council Information Office (SCIO) with the responsibility to manage international cultural exchanges and publicity.[[131]](#footnote-131) The office has been in charge of conducting bilateral and multilateral cultural exchanges in order to promote cooperation. Throughout this time, China continued developing mostly bilateral and some multilateral cultural exchanges. Nonetheless, their effectiveness was limited and in 2004, Hanban, an agent of the Ministry of Education, launched an international non-profit project called the Confucius Institute. The Institute promotes the education of Chinese language and culture abroad, increasing the reach of Chinese soft power. Furthermore in 2007, China held a special session on the Cultural Construction as the Main Approach for National Soft Power Building, in order to establish a Five-year Plan for Cultural Development.[[132]](#footnote-132)

**Definition**

China’s cultural diplomacy is commonly interchanged with soft power, implying its sole purpose of gaining influence over others. Consequently, the Chinese government has sought to reassert the intrinsic role of culture in China, “Culture in Chinese history has long been compared to water, which are both gentle and nourishing. It is compared to spring rain at night, quietly nourishing everything from human souls to society to the whole world.”[[133]](#footnote-133) Accordingly, China’s aim is not to gain influence, but to present itself as a historically peaceful actor willing to partner with the rest of the world,

 “The fundamental task and basic goal of China’s diplomatic work at present and a certain period in the years to come is to maintain the important development period featured by strategic opportunities and strive for a peaceful and stable international environment, a good neighborly and friendly surrounding environment, an environment for equal and mutually beneficial cooperation, and an objective and friendly publicity environment so as to build a fairly well-off society in an all-around way”.[[134]](#footnote-134)

Consequently, China’s cultural diplomacy efforts once called “peaceful rise” are now named “peaceful development”, intended to “‘shape China as a responsible power in international affairs’, to demonstrate China’s pursuit and determination for peaceful development.”[[135]](#footnote-135)

**Institutions**

The manifestations of cultural diplomacy through soft power in modern day China come in a variety of forms. Government organizations such as the SCIO, key government leaders such as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and international embassies are the primary means of state-sponsored tools of diplomacy. [[136]](#footnote-136)As for non-state sponsored initiatives, the NGO sector is now recognized and invited to collaborate on policy making. However, “the majority of NGOs, in particular the ‘younger’ ones, are: (1) not initiated by the state; (2) not operated by the state; and (3) they aim to serve their own societal or commercial interests.”[[137]](#footnote-137) Other non-state sponsored stakeholders such as Universities and Think Tank institutions are also engaged in cultural policy framing.

The State Council Information Office is the main agency tasked with administering all affairs across borders. The mission of the SCIO includes responsibilities such as “to promote the Chinese media, to explain China to the world, including the introduction of China's internal and external policies, economic and social development,” among other duties.[[138]](#footnote-138). As a result, the Office assumes the role of a foreign affairs department, addressing national and foreign efforts. Most interestingly, it is tasked the responsibility to perform task associated with cultural diplomacy, conducting “inter-departmental and trans-regional cultural exchange activities; publishing and producing books, audio recordings, videotapes, and television and film production.”[[139]](#footnote-139) The office performs its cultural efforts in typical ways, such as showcasing Chinese visual and performance arts abroad among other activities.



Figure 6 Organizational Structure of Hanban[[140]](#footnote-140)

In some areas, the instruments that China utilizes to conduct cultural diplomacy externally do not vary much from other nations. Mainstream media, publications, events, student exchanges, development aid and business deals are all core tools utilized across the globe.[[141]](#footnote-141) Where China distinguishes itself most clearly is with the 2004 establishment of the Confucius Institutes; “Confucius Institutes have spread globally. The implicit strategic objective behind the proliferation of CIs can be traced to the vision of China nursed by a core group of foreign affairs decision-makers in the Party’s Central Committee emphasizing a globally benign image of China.”[[142]](#footnote-142)

The institute operates under Hanban, a non-profit of the Ministry of Education (see figure 5). It has five core missions: “1. Offer Chinese teaching programs to people from all walks of life; 2. Offer Chinese teachers training programs; 3. Organize all kinds of Chinese proficiency tests and Chinese teachers qualification authentication; 4. Provide information and consultation services about Chinese education, culture and economy; 5. Develop study programs about modern China.”[[143]](#footnote-143) It works mutually with universities abroad to establish the Institutes and/or Classrooms. Nonetheless, Hanban, aligning with the Chinese communist party ideology and receiving generous founding from the Chinese state, sets the curriculum. Since it’s founding in 2004, the institute has spread dramatically, currently with over 500 establishments in five continents.[[144]](#footnote-144)

**Assessment of Contribution**

China’s cultural diplomacy was launched in order to improve the public’s opinion of the state and consequently establish stronger partnerships. While it has contributed to a change in opinion, it has also allowed for the simple act of what it is, an opportunity to showcase its richness and vastness. China’s recent focus on culture and cultural diplomacy, demonstrates the importance of the civil society of a state. Civil society’s public opinion can sway state relationships for the better or the worse. In the case of China, it has worked for the state’s advantage reflected by the number of Confucius Institutes around the world.

Yet the question remains, how has China’s cultural diplomacy helped global civil society? For one, it has expanded understanding of the second largest economy. It has made the state more directly relatable to individuals on the other side of the world. By stimulating discussion, cultural diplomacy has enabled an open line of communication. Growing interest in the state has caused for the increase of foreign students in China. Furthermore, Chinese nongovernmental organizations have been expanding their reach outside of China, “given that the number of NGOs in mainland China have increased dramatically in the past two decades. There are now approximately 500,000 registered NGOs in the nation, working in areas such as education, poverty alleviation, community development, environment and health.”[[145]](#footnote-145) Unfortunately, the contribution remains one sided as the Chinese government continues to restrict the access of international NGO’s to the country, limiting the bilateral or multilateral communication needed to form a global civil society.[[146]](#footnote-146)

**Conclusion**

China’s contemporary cultural diplomacy efforts are fairly new and mostly one sided given the governments restrictions. Nonetheless, they are promising even if filled with ulterior motives. In the past five decades, China has gone from an isolated state to one who is attempting to be considered a peaceful partner and international player. The cultural diplomacy of the last two decades reflects a Chinese state that is more aware of the role of private citizens and civil society in other countries. In order to secure the image and role China seeks in the world, it’s forced to appeal to this population. While the future is uncertain, this may be seen as the start of China’s contribution to global civil society.

1. **Conclusion**

Cultural Diplomacy has generally been associated and analyzed as a source of a state’s soft power, with its successful implementation being a factor of a state’s capabilities. Historical analyses focus on its implementation during World War II and Cold War to gain support from countries and establish a sphere of influence. Furthermore, country specific research often connects the concept to the state’s soft power. Not surprisingly, most research about cultural diplomacy mentions Joseph Nye and other soft power scholars. Cultural diplomacy in international relations has been degraded to a soft power activity. Without discrediting the significance and validity of soft power and its role in the foreign affairs, this research began as an exploration of what other roles does cultural diplomacy have in the world stage. The predominant state centered approach of cultural diplomacy was abandoned; instead, focus was given to the other actors involved in cultural diplomacy.

Through a least-similar case study analysis as described in A. Bennett’s” Case Study Methods in the International Relations Subfield” the research employed a two-step approach to identify the role cultural diplomacy in the formation of a global civil society.[[147]](#footnote-147) First, the research established a theory connecting the concepts of cultural diplomacy and global civil society. Then, it traced the theory pragmatically though case studies. The theory confirming approach required the use of cases with different independent variables to reach to the dependent variable. Consequently, cultural diplomacy was deemed the independent variable and global civil society was the dependent.

In the first part of the research, the definitions of the concepts were explored, as there are great inconsistencies about cultural diplomacy and global civil society in the social sciences. Accordingly, cultural diplomacy was agreed to mean “the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understandings” although it omits some aspects commonly associated with the concept, in particular its soft power use. On the other hand, the definition for global civil society was established as “networks of citizens and non-governmental, non [governmental] organizations (NGOs) and associations that combine efforts to engage in social, political, and economic reform on the local, national, and international levels with the intent [of] advancing societal interests and the quality of life”. [[148]](#footnote-148)

Through a basic logic model, a transitive relation between the two concepts was proposed as the basis for the case study. Given the premise that civil society is related to both global civil society and cultural diplomacy, then cultural diplomacy and global civil society must be related. While the extent of the relation is undetermined, the tracing portion of the research attempts to connect the institution of cultural diplomacy within the networks that form part if a global civil society. The qualitative approach of the case study serves to establish the first base for the exploration of the topic. Additional exploration and development of the topic is recommended in order to establish quantitative research.

The first case study focused on the cultural diplomacy institution of the United States. Through a historical approach, it was established that the state has lost interest in cultural diplomacy after the Cold War. An analysis into the structure determined the institution currently relies on NGO’s and private partnerships to share the burden of cultural diplomacy activities. The sharing of financial costs further reveals the two-way partnership between the state and civil society. Through this equal footing, the civil sector has gained more freedom in the international sphere. The state has empowered domestic civil society to expand its reach across state boundaries. NGOs and citizens, acting through U.S. state funding, are interacting directly with international actors, state governments, international NGOs and foreign citizens, creating a web of networking that promotes direct and indirect dialogue. While these networks have not materialized significant results, their existence show the premise of global civil society taking place.

The second case study explored the cultural diplomacy institution of France. The historical overview determined the long-standing and significant role of cultural diplomacy in France. The country has prided itself on its culture and shared it with the world for centuries. As a result a well established cultural and cooperation network exists outside of France. While some of the organizations in the network are governmental agencies, some of the organizations in this network are NGO’s and have been in existence for longer than a century, building ties in foreign communities and among themselves. More recently, the cultural diplomacy institution of France has undergone a series of restructures in order to expand the state’s maneuvering capability over this network and increase France’s soft power. Through the establishment of formal partnerships with NGOs in the network and by creating a new public commercial entity specializing in French culture to join the network, the state acknowledges the power of the long developing network and of its civil society members. The NGO partners have been able to accomplish significant progress in diffusing French culture without the bureaucracy of the state. The French culture and cooperation network is focused on a particular theme, all things France. Yet it operates in a world with multitude of networks and social, political and economic issues. This in turn, has led to the extension of these networks to promote different issues including environmental ones. While it’s a reach to claim the network is the symbol of global civil society, it’s definitely a reference point.

Finally, the last case study observed was the cultural diplomacy institution of China. The institution itself is fairly new, although it contains and portrays historical associations. Furthermore, the institution is highly centralized, as are most institutions in China. This limits the involvement of most non-governmental organizations as China aims to control what message it sends abroad. Nonetheless, the mere existence of cultural diplomacy strategies reflects an interesting fact about the importance of civil society’s opinion about international players. If a foreign state does not appeal to local civil society, it will not be able to establish relationships with the states. While culture serves to create bonds, these need to be dual sided, something that China is still trying to limit.

Overall, correlations between cultural diplomacy and global civil society are more visible in states with established cultural diplomacy practices that involve private-public partnerships to accomplish goals. These institutions have been able to empower NGO agents to operate in the international sphere and develop their own local and international networks. While these organizations operate under a cultural oriented objective, they still represent civil society actors that have a global reach. Unfortunately, the tracing of these networks are difficult as they consist mostly of informal, undocumented interactions. Yet there’s no denying that social processes are taking place globally between the numerous NGOs operating under cultural diplomacy umbrellas. The result of these processes is still being determined, just as is the aim of a global civil society.

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