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The peculiarities of the modern US cultural diplomacy

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Abstract: The article deals with analyses of the main peculiarities and the potential of the American cultural diplomacy nowadays. After the 11 of September 2001 cultural diplomacy of the United States of America was actualized but at the same time faced a lot of challenged and contradictions of its realization and the tools which should be used during this process.

Keywords: the USA, cultural diplomacy, 'soft power', foreign policy, public diplomacy, cultural exchange.

Since 9/11 cultural diplomacy of the USA has emerged as a much discussed, if little understood, component of their external policy. Never, as C. Schneider mention, have the challenges of cultural diplomacy for America been greater than today, when the public opinion about the United States stands at its lowest ebb [8]. The causes for these changes and the depth of the feelings are complex and open to debate.

At the same time it is obvious that enhancing the U.S. reputation will require a multipronged strategy, at the center of which must be a carefully crafted cultural diplomacy component.

The issues of cultural diplomacy are the subject of interest of many researchers in past and present. Among others the most conventional definition of it proposed M. Cummings: "Cultural Diplomacy is the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding" [3].

Cultural Diplomacy argues that, more than ever before, culture has a vital role to play in international relations. This stems from the wider, connective and human values that culture has: culture is both the means by which we come to understand others, and an aspect of life with innate worth that we enjoy and seek out. Cultural enables us to appreciate points of commonality and, where there are differences, to understand the motivations and humanity that underlie them.

Basically cultural diplomacy comprises all a nation does to explain itself to the world. Since much of cultural diplomacy consists of nations sharing forms of their creative expression, it is inherently enjoyable, and therefore, can be one of the most effective tools in any diplomatic toolbox. Cultural diplomacy is a prime example of "soft power", or the ability to persuade through culture, values, and ideas as opposed to "hard power", which conquers or coerces through military might.

U.S. cultural diplomacy has historically enjoyed success, having spawned a mature profession and

associated industries in the public and private sectors.

It should be mentioned, that cultural diplomacy can emerge as an effective – and sometimes the only viable – means of communication. Creative expression crosses cultures, helping people from diverse backgrounds to found common ground. The Nigerian Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Wole Soyinka aptly observed that "art humanizes while politics demonizes". To maximize the impact of cultural diplomacy, the following should be understood [8]:

- Cultural Diplomacy is a two-way street;
- Cultural Diplomacy operates in the long term;
- Cultural Diplomacy does not explain or compensate for unpopular policies;
- Cultural Diplomacy can increase understanding between different peoples and cultures;
- Cultural Diplomacy can divert or entertain while communicating aspects of U.S. culture, such as diversity, opportunity, individual expression, freedom of speech, and meritocracy;
- Cultural Diplomacy can open doors between U.S. diplomats and their host countries, even when relations are strained;
- Cultural Diplomacy cannot be effectively measure; it makes a qualitative, not quantitative, difference in relations between nations and peoples;
- Cultural Diplomacy works best when it caters to the interests of a host country or region;
- In today's climate of tight budgets, cultural diplomacy needs to be creative, flexible, and opportunistic.

Effective culture diplomacy initiatives can be wholly original, or they can build on extant programs, exhibitions, or performances; they can be sponsored by the government or by the private sector.

One of the peculiarities of American cultural diplomacy is the usage of such an important tool as cultural and education exchanges. The best-known example is the Fulbright Program, which was

established after World War II by Senator William Fulbright as a way to promote mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries of the world. Fulbright grants allow U.S. citizens and nationals of other countries to engage in a variety of educational activities, including university lecturing, advanced research, graduate study, and teaching in elementary and secondary schools abroad. Research on international Fulbright participants found that 99 percent reported better understanding of the United States and its culture, 96 percent shared their experiences through media or cultural activities when returning to their home country, and 89 percent reported that their experience allowed them to assume leadership positions after returning home [4].

There are a lot of reasons why U.S. government and civil sector support such exchanges. Decades of research work have emphasized the value of face-to-face interactions in fostering understanding and affinity across nations and cultures.

Efforts such as the 75-year-old Experiment in International Living, the Peace Corps, and the State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program have brought generations of Americans together with people from around the world in ways that instill lifelong respect and admiration for the United States among foreign nationals. Recent research on the IVLP found that close to 90 percent of alumni believe the program created positive impressions of the United States and Americans [10]. Through all these programs, people come together one on one to develop friendships while acquiring the intercultural skills and curiosity about the world needed to become citizen diplomats in their daily lives.

Another peculiarity is closely connected with Americans as representatives of their country. The American public is the greatest asset the United States has to promote its noblest values to the world. Nancy Snow, a senior researcher at the University of Southern California's Center on Public Diplomacy, recently wrote: "The primary source of America's image campaign must be drawn directly from the American people. First, it's the private citizens of the U.S. who are most comfortable with acknowledging with some degree of humility that the U.S. has made mistakes in its past... Second, it's the American people who can better initiate direct contact with people in other countries whose

support and understanding we need on the state of world opinion. The American people are the best at campaign going for the world... Finally, it is also the American patriotic duty of dissent that can best illustrate to the world what free society means." [6].

There is an extensive body of literature on the ability of face-to-face interactions to break through national stereotypes. The basic finding across the research is that face-to-face interactions tend to be multidimensional. In other words, people communicate through verbal and nonverbal signals that tend to be accepted by the listener as authentic and honest. There is less questioning, more acceptance, and a more rapid change in perceptions. The change often reflects an emerging view that similarities far outweigh differences and that remaining differences can be viewed as enriching rather than threatening. Sherry Mueller recently explained that, "to the extent that free access to the diversity of the U.S. is an inherent part of a particular exchange program, the foreign participants will perceive how much we truly value freedom, openness, and our democratic institutions" [9].

Exchanges tend to be grossly underestimated in terms of the scalability of their impact. Although most individual exchange programs are small, impacting a few hundred to a few thousand people a year, many programs are operational at any given time. There has also been a steady increase in U.S. high school students going abroad on summer exchange programs. Arts-based exchanges have played a long and positive role in building relationships and friendships across the globe. Religious organizations, sports associations, and volunteer organizations also use informal channels in a host of ways to create international exchanges.

Nowadays such international exchange programs organized by U.S. government or NGOs are extremely popular among Western European and even more – Eastern European representatives.

Cultural diplomacy is one of the most potent weapons in the United States' armory. The U.S. image in the world can be restored with a carefully coordinated cultural diplomacy effort that emphasizes dialogue and exchange and recognizes and effectively utilizes all available resources. The United States is still fundamentally respected and admired across the world by millions of people.

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Особенности современной американской культурной дипломатии

Аннотация: Данная статья посвящена исследованию основных особенностей и потенциала американской культурной дипломатии на современном этапе развития. После событий 11 сентября 2001 года культурная дипломатия США приобрела новую актуальность, но в то же время, столкнулась с принципиальными противоречиями позиционирования ее целей и использования тех или иных методов ее реализации.

Ключевые слова: США, культурная дипломатия, «мягкая сила», внешняя политика, публичная дипломатия, культурный обмен.