Cultural Diplomacy and Nation Branding in Modern Competitive International Environment

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ABSTRACT

This study has as its main objective to highlight the importance of the existence of a structured cultural policy by modern states and the importance of having a structured policy in order to improve their international image. In recent decades, despite the fact that international relations continue to focus on issues of balancing military and economic power, they have been forced to simultaneously appreciate the importance of cultural and religious factors, which have acquired a transnational dimension that transcends the territorial boundaries of nation-states. Throughout history, culture has been used by organized societies to present themselves, to assert their power, but also to understand others. Culture has always been present on the foreign policy agenda of governments and has been active in defining relations between states since the two World Wars of the 20th century. At the same time, states became intensely concerned with the strategy of managing their national identity and shaping their image. This study attempts to highlight the role of the cultural element in state diplomacy and the role of cultural diplomacy in promoting mutual understanding between nations. Also, the aim of this study is to highlight the efforts of states to reshape their image abroad in order to access development and to have a stable and competitive position in the international environment. In this context, an analysis of the place of culture in the context of state diplomacy and the evolution of cultural diplomacy is presented. What are the specific characteristics of this new diplomatic discipline and what are its objectives? It also presents an analysis of the theory surrounding the formation of the "image of the country" and presents the elements that determine it and are ultimately a necessary condition for stimulating the country's competitiveness at the international level.

Keywords: Cultural Policy, Nation Branding, International Relations, Globalization.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the last decades, despite the fact that international relations continue to focus on issues of balance of military and economic power, they have been forced to appreciate the importance of cultural and religious factors, which have acquired a transnational dimension that goes beyond the territorial borders of nation-states, as well as to focus on strategies of national identity management and nation brand strategies. Throughout history, culture has been used by organized societies to present themselves, to assert their power and to understand others (Bound *et al.*, 2007). Culture has always been present in the foreign policy agenda of governments and has actively contributed to defining relations between states after the two World Wars of the 20th century. At the same time, states have always sought to build a good reputation around their name, expecting to derive multiple benefits from this. The conditions of wider establishment of soft power which have changed in recent years have led to the strategy of forming the nation brand as a means for countries to develop and achieve their strategic goals.

II. CULTURAL DIPLOMACY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The events that have recently contributed to highlighting the importance of cultural dimensions in current international politics are numerous, including contemporary conflicts that have been influenced by ethnic, cultural and religious perceptions. Of particular concern have been issues related, according to Samuel Huntington's theory, to the 'clash of civilizations', such as terrorist attacks that have been justified on religious grounds. Samuel Huntington, a professor at Harvard University, published an article in 1993 in

Foreign Affairs magazine entitled "Clash of Civilizations?" in which he stirred the waters of international relations theory and provoked many criticisms and critiques, in which he negated the existing conceptions of the cultural development of peoples. This article argued that after the end of the Cold War, states had shed the old ideological and political labels by which each defined itself and, according to the law of opposites, its opponent. In this way, the era of ideologies was over and the era of 'cultures' began, in which each state, in order to organize its international relations, resorted to cultural values, i.e. tradition, religion, language, customs and the specificity of its institutions. Thus, the elements of 'soft power' have begun to take on an increasing value in modern diplomacy (Huntington, 1993).

Today, the place of culture in the context of state diplomacy has changed significantly. The influence of the cultural element in state diplomacy is undeniable, as cultures has become a diplomatic tool and at the same time a bridge to promote mutual understanding between nations. Gradually, more and more governments are giving culture a high priority as an element of their foreign policy and diplomatic relations. As a result, a new diplomatic discipline, that of cultural diplomacy, has begun to emerge. Many contemporary political analysts have been engaged in providing a precise definition of cultural diplomacy, some following an etymological tracing of the term in order to provide a secure conceptual definition of it, and others approaching the concept of cultural diplomacy as a whole (Cummings, 2003). Broadly speaking, cultural diplomacy refers to the role played by cultural actors in international relations. For some theorists, cultural diplomacy will be one of the key foundations of international relations in the 21st century. A foundation on which mutual trust and understanding between peoples can be built. Cultural diplomacy is not only about the transmission and dissemination of national culture and values, but also about understanding other cultures and seeking a common cultural ground for communication and cooperation. Therefore, it is worth making it clear that in order for a country to have a successful cultural diplomacy, it should not only aim at transmitting its culture to other countries but also aim at the same time at developing intercultural dialogue and mutual respect (Taylor, 2006).

Through the definition of the conceptual content of cultural diplomacy, it is concluded that it is a predominant tool for the exercise of a country's foreign policy through the various manifestations of its culture. It aims to ensure and create a climate of mutual understanding and trust between states and their citizens, with a view to establishing stable relations that will produce long-term results. In the most simplified approach, cultural diplomacy is nothing more than the exercise of legitimate influence through the cultural route, a government policy that uses the cultural elements of the country in the planning and conduct of its foreign policy in order to promote its image abroad. These cultural elements may vary from time to time and include, for example, language, arts, customs and traditions, tangible and intangible cultural values and goods. Promoting a country's culture improves its image abroad and creates a climate of trust and mutual understanding that could in the long term lead to future avoidance of political crises and conflicts.

Cultural diplomacy is seen as the cornerstone of public diplomacy and has as its scope government-funded programmes whose aim is to inform and influence public opinion in other countries. Its main instruments are cultural exchanges, cinema, the publishing industry, television and radio. It is worth pointing out that while public diplomacy is concerned with both short-term political needs and long-term political interests, cultural diplomacy emphasizes long-term exchanges between countries (Shultz, 1997). However, both public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy are related to the concept of 'soft power', i.e. the ability of a country to achieve its objectives through its 'attractiveness', which derives primarily from its culture rather than through a coercive model of dominance (Nye, 2004).

Developed countries consider the cultural sector as a key factor in their foreign policy. The reasons for this approach can be condensed firstly in the fact that through cultural penetration in other countries, the country's positions and values become more understandable, which leads to a reduction of the differentiation of cultural differences through the convergence of identities and the serving of sovereign interests through the maintenance of relations of dependency. Another reason why states have integrated the field of culture in the conduct of their foreign policy is that the establishment and consolidation of a positive image in the international system also implies the improvement of the country's national relations. The economic factor also plays an important role, since the export of cultural products to the world market is a highly profitable process.

Inductively, the special role of culture in the international system is understood. The culture of each country reflects its value system, which often differs from others, but this does not mean that it has a negative effect on them. The aim of the governments of all countries must be to ensure that these value systems operate in parallel and to build relations of rapprochement and cooperation between them in order to support a structure of mutual understanding and trust in the common interest. This should be supported at both bilateral and multilateral levels, and the two levels should then complement each other. To achieve this objective, it is useful for governments to conclude transnational agreements on exchange programmes, but also for governments to provide financial support for the whole project in order to ensure that the programmes are adequately funded and that they achieve their specific foreign policy objectives. However,

this financial support is provided by very few countries because, in line with current trends, there is little state support for the arts. This restricts the movement of both creators and their products, which are the main focus of cultural exchanges. This turns the institutions and individuals involved into objective ambassadors of the host country, while governments are unable to assess the benefits immediately and thus justify expenditure on future investments. Nevertheless, the industrialized countries of the West have integrated the cultural sector into their foreign policy and have elevated the production of their cultural products from an economic activity to a force of influence. Particularly helpful in concluding cultural agreements, apart from countries as individual units, is the role of major international organizations such as the European Union and the Council of Europe.

Cultural diplomacy by definition involves country-to-country. However, its exercise is entrusted to different actors in each State, depending on who the State determines to be responsible. In many cases, these activities are also carried out by non-state bodies. Overall, cultural diplomacy can be carried out initially by a public or state body. Cultural diplomacy is carried out by governments or other state organizations that are active in order to promote their national or local interests through the dissemination of local values and the culture of the country. Cultural diplomacy can also be carried out by the private sector, where the main activity is carried out by private companies to develop intercultural communication. The penetration of the private sector into cultural production is one of the most important phenomena of modern times, since the existence of sponsors, donors, benefactors and collectors is now a global practice. The public and private sectors need to develop cooperative relationships in order to achieve the best results. The state must recognize the importance of the active participation of civil society and the effectiveness that results from direct transnational communication between citizens, without state mediation. It is also fruitful for the state to constantly seek ways of encouraging private initiative, giving significant incentives to businesses, foundations and interested donors to boost the creative output of citizens. It is worth emphasizing that the role of NGOs, which are private organizations with a national and/or global orientation, is also particularly important. These organizations operate in all organized socio-political systems and have a different role from the institutionalized state bodies (Bale, 2017).

The results of a country's cultural diplomacy depend on many factors as it is not only addressed to state institutions and representatives, but also to peoples and societies. If cultural diplomacy is addressed to people, whether it comes from the public or private sector, there is a risk that individual cultural influence may be confused with the overall cultural influence of a country. The effectiveness of cultural actions is also linked to the general political culture of the recipients of the messages, since different people understand the same concepts in different ways. When cultural diplomacy is addressed to people, the results may not be very stable, but they are nevertheless very immediate. At the same time, the effectiveness of cultural actions depends on the nature of the state and the type of political culture of the country to which they are addressed. Despite these risks, however, it is a clear objective of cultural diplomacy to address societies and peoples.

In general, cultural diplomacy aims to promote cultural elements and historical links that contribute to mutual understanding and respect between peoples, thus contributing to international peace and cooperation. Despite the diversity of the structures and components of countries' foreign policies, they all pursue the same objectives through cultural diplomacy. The most typical are the promotion of the country's values and customs, lifestyle and cultural events, the promotion of a positive image abroad and the creation of a cooperative climate with other countries, which in the long term will encourage business activity and investment.

Finally, it is worth clarifying that cultural diplomacy differs from international relations between states. International relations today do not only refer to the relations between states, but also to the relations between different actors in the international system. International relations refer to the contacts between international actors and the results of their actions, while foreign policy defines the policy of a state in relation to a particular international challenge or a particular state. In the same way, international cultural relations and cultural diplomacy are differentiated from each other. International cultural relations are actions that enjoy the support of the state in order to achieve various objectives in the cultural field, while cultural diplomacy refers to cultural actions that support foreign policy objectives. Thus, in this way, it is the type of political entity that carries out the actions of cultural diplomacy that distinguishes it from international cultural relations. In other words, governments carry out cultural diplomacy, while independent actors carry out international cultural relations. Changes on the international scene should not affect the characteristics of cultural diplomacy, which should remain unchanged in terms of their focus. And these are, as mentioned above, none other than mutual understanding, intercultural dialogue, cultural and educational cooperation. Over the last decade, the majority of countries have come to understand the value and power of culture as a fundamental part of the strategy applied in the context of foreign policy. And given the complexity of international relations, cultural diplomacy will continue to be an integral part of the foreign cultural policy of states in the future (Williams, 1990).

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF "NATION BRANDING"

In the national identity management and nation branding strategy is particularly important for countries to have access to growth, to the developments of the global economy and to have a stable and competitive position in the international environment. A country's nation brand can be described as the set of beliefs and impressions that people form about countries. The country image is essentially the product of the human mind which results from the effort to process and select key information and images from large volumes of data and information about a particular place (Kolter *et al.*, 1993).

States have always sought to build a good reputation around their name, expecting to receive multiple benefits from this. However, the conditions of wider establishment of soft power which have changed in recent years have led to the strategy of forming the nation brand as a means of developing countries and achieving their strategic objectives. The formation of a country's image is based on giving states a competitive commercial identity and is rooted in the widespread diffusion of soft power and the effective exercise of public diplomacy. This strategy should be based on the country's history and heritage, the strategic alliances it seeks to build and the investments it is interested in attracting (Dinnie, 2008).

The term nation brand captures the view of the country as a product and implies the operational transformation of states into brands that aim to promote and establish themselves in the global market. The strategy of shaping a country's image is closely linked both to international relations, since 'soft power' is its structural pillar, and to the exercise of politics since it is directly related to public diplomacy. The grid of actions of nation branding consists of the systematic portrayal of countries' core values in their external communication, the effective management of international reputation, the shaping of a positive national image and the attribution of a competitive commercial identity to countries. Joseph Nye-who introduced the concept and importance of soft power versus the traditional concept of power-said that "in the world of traditional power politics, the stakes were about who would win in economic or military terms. In today's information age, politics is about who can tell the most convincing 'story'. The highly internationalized environment in which states operate in the modern era drives them to purposefully establish an image and reputation in terms of an attractive, attractive, reliable 'product' (Dinnie, 2008).

Despite the prevalence of internationalization, the survival of each state entity is still at the centre of attention, a fact that adds new dimensions to the formation of a country's image. The very historical survival of a state may even depend on its external image or its cultural specificity. In this context, particularly from 1996 onwards, the nation brand has been the subject of much discussion, since it was introduced by the British political adviser Simon Anholt. His basic premise was based on the fact that due to the prevailing globalization, countries compete with each other for the attention, respect and trust of potential investors, tourists, consumers, as well as the media and governments of other countries. A positive and strong country image offers a significant competitive advantage in all sectors. According to Simon Anholt's theory, the most important factors shaping a country's image are its tourism promotion, foreign policy decisions commented on by the international media, export companies exporting products or services that highlight the country of origin, the way a country's companies operate internationally to attract investment, cultural exchanges and, lastly, the country's own citizens, with the emphasis on those who are particularly active abroad. The above-mentioned parameters form Anholt's 'hexagon' with which Anholt began to assess the image of countries in terms of branding (Anholt, 2007).

Anholt also stresses that in order for a country to change and improve its image to the outside world, it must start by changing the image of the country itself from within. That is, there is a close and feedback relationship between the own and the international image. The perception that citizens themselves have of their own country plays a very important role since public opinion largely shapes the real picture of the situation in which a country finds itself. The nation branding view in no way argues that countries should be treated as mere products or businesses since the rules of marketing cannot work as they do for a product or a business. In the case of states, their geopolitical position, the diplomatic relations they have developed, and their social and economic situation play a decisive role in shaping their image. However, it is certain that states can, mutatis mutandis, use image management tools to meet the needs of competition. The nation branding strategy is able to create better conditions for the development, evolution and dominance of a country in the international environment, with proper design and appropriate adaptation (Anholt, 2007).

In order to bring about a change in a country's image, the role of governments and regulators is important, whose action, combined with private initiative, can contribute to a uniform upward trend. The strategy of nation branding differs from classical diplomacy in the way it manages a country's identity and in the way it exploits its national characteristics in order to reposition the country on the map. According to Anholt, nation branding is the deliberately planned beneficial management of a country's identity based on its intrinsic national characteristics in order to highlight both its already evident and potential strategic advantages. The strategy developed through nation branding has to operate simultaneously on two levels, at home and abroad. At home it has to work in such a way as to convince citizens through the development of specific policies and the development of potential characteristics and prospects, while at home the aim

is to implement the repositioning of the country on its own terms and with worthwhile projects through the representation of the business community, institutions and individual groups by the country's government (Anholt, 2007).

Undoubtedly, a strategic approach to a country's image is a necessary condition for boosting its competitiveness at international level. Treating a country's image as part of its national policy leads to the enhancement of its reputation and the short, medium and long-term improvement of its economy, as well as its political and public life. Under no circumstances can the shaping of a country's image and reputation be dealt with in a conjectural or piecemeal manner, as the consequences will be enormous at all levels. In modern times, a country's image needs to be shaped with strategic planning and a long-term perspective (Dinnie, 2008).

IV. Conclusion

During the 20th century and afterwards, the role of culture in the relations between states, and more generally, was radically upgraded. The international system recognized the influence that culture can have on international relations and included it in the priorities of the international agenda. The 'soft power' of countries was gradually becoming a 'strong card' in the hands of countries and a strategic resource for development, governance and global diplomacy. It was now clear that culture was an intangible and flexible force that had a catalytic influence on consciousness and attitudes, and the international community worked together to establish it at every level. The cultural element has actively contributed to maintaining social cohesion and peace within countries, but also to encouraging dialogue between peoples, attracting the interest of individual and national societies.

Taking the concept of culture as a starting point, cultural diplomacy was developed in parallel on the international scene. In this way, culture became even more one of the most fundamental issues of foreign policy, since it has consistently been a unifying element between countries, both by promoting good cooperation in international and other organizations and by contributing to the creation of a symbolic horizon to many of the problems of humanity. At the same time, states began to take a more active interest in shaping their image (nation brand) in order to have access to development, to developments in the global economy and to have a stable and competitive position in the international environment.

Overall, the cultural element is on a steady upward trajectory and is expected to be even more dynamic in the future. States will continue to invest in the development of cultural policy and cultural diplomacy both for reasons of internal cohesion and for the sake of recognition and establishment on the international scene. In modern times, the development of a national cultural strategy is a primary concern for countries in order to maintain healthy relations and balance in a competitive international environment.

Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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