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CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AS A DRIVER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS HARMONIZATION

The foreign policy of a modern state has many drivers, including the ones that are reasonably treated as priorities: first, ensuring the sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of the country; second, creation of appropriate information, socio-psychological and cultural prerequisites for effective international cooperation. If the first group of factors is traditional and has always been and remains the focus of every state's attention, the second group has long been supported only by the leading countries, while the rest saw it as something supplemental and not quite obligatory.

In the second half of the twentieth century, it became apparent that any member of the diplomatic ser-

vice must pay great attention not only to the social, political and economic realities of the host country, but also to the values and attitudes that are common among its citizens. Knowledge of history and culture, understanding of the governing spiritual atmosphere in the country and its prevailing way of thinking have become essential prerequisites for making good diplomatic decisions.

The world community consists of the countries of the East and West, South and North; the differences in their cultures, value systems, and moral standards are generally well-known. In my opinion, harmonious development of the global civilization is impossible unless the nations *understand* each other's interests and aspirations and *trust* each other. Only these prerequisites can help the states cooperate effectively in a range of domains and improve well-being of their people and quality of their lives. This path of planetary development can prevent a catastrophic *clash of civilizations*, according to the warning by Samuel Huntington.²

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² Хантингтон С. Столкновение цивилизаций. М. : АСТ, 2016.

The dialogue between the national cultures is a necessary prerequisite for sustainable development of the society, and successful intercultural communication is impossible without *mutual understanding*. However, three fundamental factors underlie success and development. First, treating different cultures as equals; second, respecting their identities; third, unconditional recognition of their typical features and peculiarities.

Famous Russian cultural scientist M. M. Bakhtin reasonably believed that culture can reveal itself more deeply and fully in communication with another culture.¹ There is a reciprocal influence that generates self-reflection, an awareness of the value and character of cultures. Meanings unfold when there is a possibility to view them in comparison and mutual interaction. The dialogue between meanings lifts boundaries, enriches all participating cultures, and makes them multifaceted. By opening up to the world, the national culture simultaneously remains holistic and preserves its face.

The diplomatic activity is only possible in the form of dialogue. The essence and purpose of diplomacy is to “build bridges.” This requires an understanding of the other, otherwise there is a danger of misunderstanding and misinterpreting certain realities and statements, which can lead to a breach in adequate perception of the geopolitical situation. Mutual understanding can only be achieved through understanding the culture and its context.

Diplomacy, which, among other things, takes into account the humanitarian and socio-psychological factor, is in great demand today. It underlies the basis of the so-called soft power. The concept was introduced by the American political scientist Joseph Nye in 1990. Initially he interpreted the soft power as the ability to exert spiritual, intellectual, ethical, and aesthetic influence on the subject of international relations to achieve a preferred result.² Subsequently, in 2004, Nye developed his ideas in the book “Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics.” He concluded that soft power is the ability to obtain the desired political and other results on the basis of creation of multifaceted humanitarian efforts of sympathy, attractiveness, and confidence in a particular country.³

Creation of effective soft power is possible at an appropriate level of material and spiritual culture of the country – effective economy, advanced science, elaborate system of education, and respect for the canons of civil society. These are the necessary prerequisites for the extensive cultural cooperation between civilized countries.

The soft power thus appears as a multilayered generalized concept whose structure is defined by targeted exchanges in literature, art, science, education, cinema, television, sports, cooking, tourism, etc. Taken together, all this constitutes the content of *cultural diplomacy*. In this sense, culture can be considered a systemic factor of soft power; it can play a key role in international relations, directly or indirectly influencing world politics and business relations. In my opinion, cultural diplomacy generates a *positive feedback effect*: the more attention a country pays to cultural cooperation with other countries, maintaining a cultural dia-

logue, the more significant and profound are the harmonious relations between nations and states.

Cultural diplomacy can be effective under certain historical, political, and economic conditions and given an appropriate information policy, which together constitute the necessary social and psychological climate, *trust* between countries, nations, organizations and citizens of cooperating countries. Successful cultural diplomacy is possible only if it takes into account the global trends in the development of specific domains of culture and knowledge of the peculiar features of the country on which it is focused. It is necessary to determine in advance the dominant cultural needs, spiritual and intellectual expectations of different segments of the population and especially the young people.

A good example of successful cultural diplomacy in the international relations is the Republic of Korea. Unprecedented development of this country over the past 30 years is associated with its involvement in the processes of globalization, the spread of information and digital technology, and the exponential growth of social media. A favorable socio-psychological environment has helped South Korean goods and services win over many markets in the world. Korea’s experience in combining cultural and economic cooperation is worthy of global scaling. Cultural diplomacy takes on a special significance in the era of globalization because it determines the possibility of constructive dialogue and partnership in the interests of strengthening the international cooperation. This dialogue usually takes place in a variety of ways: through the government, through public organizations, and through individual citizens.

Cultural factors have become an important tool for realizing the economic and foreign policy goals of today’s independent Azerbaijan. President Ilham Aliyev pays a lot of attention to this issue, and First Vice President Mehriban Aliyeva directly supervises it.

In formulating and implementing the foreign policy, Azerbaijani diplomats try to rely not only on sociological, political, economic and other scientific knowledge, but also on the cultural, religious, value and worldview qualities of the subjects of international life, on the characteristics of spiritual and intellectual climate in different countries.

Azerbaijan’s arsenal of cultural diplomacy tools certainly includes numerous events organized to promote national fiction, music, visual arts, films, theater productions, and culinary techniques. Performances by our music and dance groups in other countries and participation in international sports competitions serve the same purpose. This helps form a positive socio-psychological attitude towards Azerbaijan and an interest in the culture and way of life of our people in different countries.

In Azerbaijani families, children are brought up from an early age in a spirit of respect for other peoples and cultures; throughout centuries, it has become inherent to our mentality. Spiritual development of our people in history has undergone three major stages associated with different religions – Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Islam. It is imprinted in the historical memory and subconscious of people and today plays an essential role in building harmonious intercultural communications both within the country and internationally. The modern Constitution of Azerbaijan stipulates the basic norms of national policy, which include a provision on the equality of all citizens regardless of their racial and ethnic origin. We believe that the

¹ *Бактин М. М. Эстетика словесного творчества. М. : Худ. лит., 1979.*

² *Nye J. Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power. N. Y. : Basic Books, 1990. P. 20–21.*

³ *Nye J. Soft Power. The Means to Success in World Politics. N. Y. : Public Affairs, 2004.*

cultures of small peoples are a precious asset. The need to preserve these cultures springs not only from their historical and social significance, but also from the requirement to respect human rights, since any national culture is the embodiment of the right of people to their own world, to a traditional worldview developed over centuries. In Azerbaijan we believe that multiculturalism should become the worldview basis of a polycultural world and intercultural dialogue.

High level of cultural development in Azerbaijan produced a significant impact on development of an effective system of public administration and shaping of a well-functioning social reality. Ultimately, this is reflected in the im-

pressive economic, social and humanitarian development performance of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

In recent years, Azerbaijan has become a special point of attraction for the world community through organizing and successfully carrying out large-scale international scientific, cultural, sports and other events, and implementing various humanitarian projects of the UN, UNESCO and ISESCO.

Effectiveness of cultural diplomacy certainly depends on understanding the meaning and significance of worldview, spiritual, socio-psychological, and cultural factors. Hence comes the need to adjust the process of training future diplomats, and pay more attention to cultural, psychological, and ethical issues in the educational process.