

Cultural and public diplomacy in the foreign policy of the republic of Uzbekistan

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Abstract: The article explores the integral role of cultural and people's diplomacy in the foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, focusing on its significance, strategic objectives, and future development. Cultural diplomacy refers to the exchange of ideas, values, traditions, and other aspects of culture to build mutual understanding and strengthen international relations, while people's diplomacy emphasizes the engagement between the citizens of different nations. In the case of Uzbekistan, these forms of diplomacy have become essential tools for enhancing the country's soft power, promoting its unique cultural heritage, and fostering positive relations with other nations.

Uzbekistan's foreign policy, under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, has seen a paradigm shift, with a more active engagement in international diplomacy, particularly through cultural exchanges. This strategy aims to raise Uzbekistan's global profile and reinforce its regional and international ties. Historically, Uzbekistan's foreign policy has been influenced by its strategic position in Central Asia and its rich cultural heritage, including the legacy of the Silk Road. The country's cultural diplomacy efforts have sought to highlight its contributions to world civilization, emphasizing key areas such as art, literature, music, and architecture.

People's diplomacy in Uzbekistan has similarly grown in importance, reflecting the nation's commitment to fostering people-to-people contacts, academic exchanges, and tourism as a means to enhance mutual understanding. In recent years, the government has undertaken significant steps to promote Uzbekistan's cultural diversity and historical significance on the global stage. These efforts have included hosting international forums, exhibitions, and cultural events that showcase Uzbekistan's historical and contemporary cultural achievements.

The article also delves into the concept of soft power as it relates to Uzbekistan's use of cultural diplomacy and people's diplomacy, outlining their role in the country's foreign policy. It will analyze the successes and challenges faced by Uzbekistan in this area and propose practical recommendations for the future development of its cultural diplomacy. The focus will be on the importance of education, digital engagement, and regional cooperation in strengthening Uzbekistan's diplomatic outreach and global image.

Keywords: Public diplomacy, kultural diplomacy, soft power, foreign policy, perspectives, influence, implementation, resources, impact policy, state image.

Introduction: Cultural and people's diplomacy have become integral components of modern foreign policy strategies, as countries increasingly recognize the importance of soft power. The significance of culture and people-to-people engagement in shaping international relations is becoming more prominent.

For Uzbekistan, with its rich cultural heritage and strategic location in Central Asia, cultural diplomacy provides a unique opportunity to promote international cooperation and increase its visibility on

the global stage.

This article examines the development and current state of cultural and people-centered diplomatic initiatives in Uzbekistan's foreign policy. It analyzes the theoretical underpinnings and practical implications of these initiatives.

The geopolitical location of Uzbekistan, bordering countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan, places it at the heart of a region that has served as a crossroads for different

civilizations, cultures, and empires throughout history. This rich historical background has provided Uzbekistan with a wealth of cultural assets that can be utilized for diplomatic purposes.

Under the leadership of President Mirziyoev, significant political and economic reforms have been implemented in Uzbekistan with a focus on regional stability, international cooperation, and enhancing Uzbekistan's international image. These initiatives have been supported by a renewed emphasis on cultural diplomacy, including strengthening people-to-people ties and promoting the rich cultural heritage of Uzbekistan.

Cultural diplomacy in this context refers to strategic engagement with other countries through cultural activities such as art exhibitions, performances, and educational exchanges. The aim of this approach is to promote mutual understanding and respect among different nations.

People's diplomacy focuses on direct interaction between citizens of different countries in order to foster mutual respect and understanding. These two approaches contribute to Uzbekistan's broader foreign policy objectives, including promoting peace, securing economic opportunities, and enhancing the country's leadership role in Central Asia.

Through cultural and people's diplomacy, Uzbekistan works to establish stronger relationships with other nations in order to contribute to regional stability and prosperity.

This paper will examine the development of Uzbekistan's cultural and people-to-people diplomacy over time, its influence on the country's international relations, and the challenges and opportunities that it presents for the future. Through an analysis of the role of cultural and people-to-people diplomacy in Uzbekistan's foreign policy, the paper aims to enhance understanding of the nation's efforts to establish itself on the global stage. Furthermore, it provides practical suggestions for the development of these forms of diplomacy in the future.

Currently, countries seeking global or regional political leadership are actively developing their national systems of public diplomacy. Governments create special funds, invest significant funds in the development of educational and humanitarian projects, and increase support for thematic Internet resources. However, having all the above-mentioned tools, states do not always achieve their foreign policy goals, often due to the underdevelopment of the relevant institutions and the lack of sufficient funding. And even the existence of developed programs in the field of public diplomacy does not always lead to the

intended result.

It can be assumed that one of the key reasons for the failures is the lack of a clear strategy for action in relation to a particular country. As a rule, the leadership of the state formulates foreign policy priorities, based on which the main vectors of activity of governmental and non-governmental organizations are determined.

Analyzing the programs of public diplomacy implemented by the governments of different countries, we can conclude that in many cases, when determining a new priority (or a new confirmation of the existing foreign policy vectors), different participants – from universities to environmental organizations – simultaneously begin to work in this direction.

It should be noted that before starting the development of the program, it is necessary to analyze the internal state of the target country and its position in the international arena.

Interaction with the societies of other states, which is public diplomacy, implies that at least one of the participants in this interaction is not the state, but society. In practice, this means that foreign business, journalistic and academic communities, non-governmental organizations, organizations of compatriots and numerous other actors are involved in public diplomacy. All of these participants in the world political processes have existed for decades, but the unprecedented development of information and communication technologies, coinciding with a new awareness of the importance of public diplomacy, has made them significantly more influential than before.

The activation of the modern foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the adoption of effective measures to promote national interests more widely in the international and regional arena on the basis of the principles of openness, mutual benefit and pragmatism actualize the discussion on the formation of new tools for the implementation of long-term goals in this important area and the use of all available potential and resources of the state and society.

In this context, an effective tool for implementing the priorities of Uzbekistan's foreign policy is the use of the concept of "soft power", the role of which in the practice of international relations has been steadily increasing recently.

Consequently, the task of conceptual significance becomes the use of all available forces and means "to form a new image of the country" [1].

In this regard, the statement of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly on September 19,

2017 that “while maintaining its non-aligned status, Uzbekistan is open for dialogue” and “is interested in expanding cooperation with all partners in the name of peace, progress and prosperity” is significant [2].

Literature Review

It is generally recognized that global geopolitics today is at the peak of its fundamental transformation, literally “throwing in” all new challenges for many states of the world. Against the background of the observed turbulent processes in international relations, the foreign policy apparatuses of various countries resort to the use of the latest approaches and tools to defend their interests, including the concept of “soft power” by J.Nye.

The resources of “soft power” form the foundation for the external reputation of the state, and communication strategies take them forward, using them to create a narrative. It seems that the result of the effective use of “soft power” resources through communication strategies is the strengthening of the international influence of countries. Conversely, the inability to form a convincing narrative based on the resources of “soft power” and the inability to use them to achieve specific goals with the analysis and definition of objects puts these resources in a “dormant state”.

At the present stage, in academic and practical terms, the study and effective use of the tools of “soft power”, which with the rapid development of communications takes on various forms, is of great relevance.

In recent decades, governments and other international actors have invested significant financial resources and time in trying to effectively use “soft power” in their foreign policy, creating a favorable perception of the country abroad through such measures as setting the agenda, structuring international problems, holding international events and public diplomacy [3].

Public diplomacy as one of the main tools of “soft power” and its implementation in the external field is aimed at the government's attempt to form public opinion through global communications in relation to the target audience [4].

Foreign political scientists emphasize that it is necessary to distinguish public diplomacy from international cultural relations. According to the Dutch scientist Ya.Melissen, public diplomacy strictly takes into account the opinion of the people, in other words, it is a two-way movement [5]. Moreover, the main task of public diplomacy is not self-promotion. On the contrary, it was designed to demonstrate and explain a national policy or culture to the people of another country. As for cultural relations, they are carried out

at the level of non-governmental organizations and civil society, but not at the level of the State. According to J.Nye, there is a great danger of confusing public diplomacy with propaganda, but this concept has a negative connotation, and therefore propaganda cannot form a “soft power” [6].

In 2016–2018, the republic “is undergoing deep reforms in all areas”, the purpose of which is “building a democratic state and a just society, where the priority is the implementation of a simple and clear principle – the interests of the individual above all” [7].

METHODS

This research was conducted to study the current state of the structure pursuing foreign policy in the field of public diplomacy and the implementation of its “soft power”. The potentials and prospects for the state's implementation of foreign policy goals are also systematically assessed.

DISCUSSION

The Theoretical Foundations of Cultural and Public Diplomacy. This section will discuss the definition and significance of cultural and public diplomacy, as well as the role of soft power in international relations and theories of public diplomacy. It will also explore the interplay between culture and diplomacy.

The Historical Context of Cultural Diplomacy in Uzbekistan. The section will provide an overview of Uzbekistan's cultural history and its role in Central Asia. It will discuss the impact of the Silk Road on cultural exchange and Uzbekistan's previous foreign policy. The section will also examine the shift towards public and cultural diplomacy under the leadership of President Mirziyoev and the significance of Uzbekistan's cultural heritage in international affairs.

This section will focus on President Mirziyoyev's approach to public diplomacy and initiatives implemented by the government. It will examine the influence of cultural events and exchanges on international relations and how they contribute to the promotion of Uzbekistan's image abroad.

The article discusses a variety of initiatives and events aimed at showcasing Uzbekistan's rich cultural heritage on the global stage. It emphasizes prominent events such as international cultural symposia, exhibitions, and conferences, as well as the significant role of the Silk Road Festival and UNESCO-listed heritage sites.

The article emphasizes the importance of using soft power strategies, such as media diplomacy, cultural tourism, digital diplomacy, and people-to-people engagement. This includes educational exchange programs, academic partnerships, and youth diplomacy initiatives, as well as sporting and cultural

outreach programs that promote people-driven diplomacy.

The article concludes by recognizing the complexities and possibilities of Uzbekistan's cultural diplomacy. It emphasizes the significance of ongoing efforts to promote the country's rich cultural legacy on a global scale. Economic constraints, limited resources, political considerations, security issues in Central Asia, geopolitical changes, and the impact of digital platforms all influence Uzbekistan's strategies. A carefully planned diplomatic approach is crucial for success.

Case studies of Uzbekistan's successful participation in international arts festivals, educational exchanges, cross-border collaborations, and research initiatives serve as examples of effective cultural diplomacy approaches. Diplomatic interactions by Uzbek officials and partnerships with foreign governments contribute to enhancing cultural understanding and collaboration.

The main competitive advantages of Uzbekistan in the context of the implementation of the “soft power” policy are the ancient history, rich original culture and architecture. Uzbekistan has consistently strengthened its position as an authoritative center of Islamic culture and spirituality. Measures are being implemented to promote national and tourist branding, expand diaspora ties, and use traditional methods of holding cultural days, festivals, and other events in the country and abroad.

The plans of the head of Uzbekistan expressed from the rostrum of the UN General Assembly that “not the people should serve the state bodies, but the state bodies should serve the people”, on the development of a program of measures to strengthen guarantees for the protection of human rights, the abolition of exit visas, the activation of an open dialogue with national and international non-governmental organizations on human rights issues, on the social rehabilitation of citizens who stumbled under the influence of the ideology of extremism, on the growth of the role of political parties, civil society and the media, ensuring the true independence of the judiciary, as well as other fundamental changes, can serve as fundamental principles in implementing the concept of “soft power” and further strengthening the country's international authority. These and other undeniable achievements of the country in the domestic political field are interesting and attractive to foreign audiences, especially in the Central Asian region and in the developed democratic states of the world.

Of course, among the main competitive advantages of Uzbekistan in the context of the implementation of the “soft power” policy are the ancient history, rich original

culture and architecture that are recognized all over the world and recognized by authoritative international organizations. Uzbekistan has consistently strengthened its position as an authoritative center of Islamic culture and spirituality. Measures are being implemented to promote national and tourist branding, expand diaspora ties, and use traditional methods of holding cultural days, festivals, and other events in the country and abroad. Efforts are being made to find ways to use strategic communications (television and radio, social networks, the Internet, etc.) to influence regional and international audiences.

One example of the use of “soft power” tools is the attractiveness of the country's educational system for foreign students. It seems that the practice of teaching foreign students at universities in Uzbekistan will gradually expand, primarily at the expense of citizens of the region.

At the present stage, Uzbekistan is “resolutely committed to dialogue, constructive interaction and strengthening of good-neighborliness” with the countries of Central Asia[8], which is confirmed by the initiatives of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to hold regular consultative meetings of the heads of state of the region, the proposal to adopt a special resolution of the General Assembly in support of the efforts of the Central Asian states to ensure security and strengthen regional cooperation, Uzbekistan's support for the draft conventions on the use of water resources in the Amu Darya and Syr Darya basins, measures to promote the peace process in Afghanistan, the introduction of the draft UN International Convention on the Rights of Young People and the General Assembly resolution “Education and Religious Tolerance”, decisive steps to strengthen confidence-building measures in the region, and much more.

The Committee on Interethnic Relations and Friendly Relations with Foreign Countries under the Cabinet of Ministers [9], the Information and Analytical Center “Development Strategy”, the Youth Union of Uzbekistan, the Center for Islamic Civilization in Tashkent and the Imam Bukhari International Research Center in Samarkand, as well as the international folk music festival “Sharq Taronalari”, the promotion of intangible values of the people included in the UNESCO lists, are designed to become, along with the existing national actors, new important mechanisms in the implementation of the “soft power” strategy, especially for working with foreign target audiences.

When developing practical measures in this relevant area, it is necessary to differentiate and develop a specific approach to image and soft-power issues. With this in mind, when implementing a soft power policy, a

methodological chain should be used, including the definition of the object and subject of soft power, the development of a mechanism and tools for influencing the object, the impact assessment, and the correction of the impact policy.

It is advisable to search for an individual approach to the objects of “soft power” in the country and regional context. At the present stage, the priority areas of application of the “soft power” tools could be the neighboring states, then the CIS countries (primarily Russia) and the main strategic partners of Uzbekistan in the international arena (China, the United States, European states).

It is necessary to systematize and classify the resources of “soft power” (diplomacy, culture, sports, art, science, education, and others). The direction of this process in a controlled and constructive direction, the development of forms and methods of implementing the concept in relation to each country individually will allow us to systematize and form the necessary channels for promoting national interests and ensuring the security of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

It seems that at the first stage, based on the experience of many States, it would be advisable to include the concepts of “soft power” and public diplomacy in the developed conceptual documents in the field of foreign policy, with the further formation of an integral interdepartmental program for the development of this sphere.

It should be remembered that the assessment of the effectiveness of the use of public diplomacy technologies should be based on an analysis of the achievement of the stated political goals, for which a specific set of tools is selected. The wrong balance of technologies and goals is a frequent reason for the weak effectiveness of public diplomacy programs. The most common reasons for the low efficiency of the implementation of public diplomacy programs are also: weak governance of the national public diplomacy system; lack of effective feedback from the target audience; insufficient involvement of ordinary citizens in participation in programs; insufficient funding; lack of training of professional personnel for the implementation of specialized projects.

RESULTS

Based on the analysis of the functioning of national public diplomacy systems, the author came to the conclusion that the most urgent task in the field of improving the effectiveness of public diplomacy programs is to improve the quality of its state planning and management.

In this connection, the following recommendations can

be put forward for Uzbekistan regarding the development of national public diplomacy:

- use a methodological chain that includes the definition of the object and subject of “soft power”, the development of a mechanism and tools for influencing the object, the impact assessment, and the correction of the impact policy
- to search for an individual approach to the objects of “soft power” in the country and regional context
- systematize and classify the resources of “soft power” (diplomacy, culture, sports, art, science, education, and others)
- to direct this process in a controlled and constructive direction, to develop forms and methods of implementation of the concept in relation to each country individually, which will allow to systematize and form the necessary channels for promoting national interests and ensuring the security of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

This material gives a clear idea of the need to develop national systems of public diplomacy for countries seeking regional and international leadership. Public diplomacy cannot be separated from official diplomacy, but in many cases it is a more effective and flexible tool for influencing political processes in foreign countries. In today’s complex and dynamic geopolitical environment, only a systematic and combined approach of the state to the use of various foreign policy instruments can allow it to achieve its political goals.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy have played a significant role in Uzbekistan's foreign policy, contributing to the improvement of international relations. Through the strategic use of its cultural heritage, promotion of educational exchanges, and exercise of soft power, the country has made remarkable progress in strengthening ties with neighboring nations and the international community.

The engagement of the nation, sharing of its historical heritage, and fostering mutual understanding have enhanced its diplomatic standing and promoted regional stability. However, there are challenges that need to be addressed in order to fully realize the potential of cultural efforts and diplomatic initiatives in Uzbekistan. Limited financial resources, regional security issues, and complexities of global diplomacy require a more strategic and collaborative approach.

Future endeavors should focus on enhancing digital diplomacy platforms, expanding academic and cultural exchange programs, and fostering people-to-people connections through targeted initiatives and programs.

Based on the analysis and findings presented above, the following recommendations can be formulated:

1. Increase funding for international cultural exchange

programs and educational scholarships.

2. Strategically utilize digital platforms to showcase Uzbekistan's cultural heritage globally.

3. Collaborate with international media to enhance Uzbekistan's visibility and presence in global discourse.

4. Strengthen partnerships with regional and international cultural organizations and non-governmental organizations.

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