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Research Field: Cultural Diplomacy and Its Role in Improving International Social Capital of China

# Cultural Diplomacy and Social Capital in China

## 1. The Concept of Cultural Diplomacy

In the classical sense, diplomacy can be defined as the substance, aim and attitudes of a states's relations with others, diplomacy is one of the instruments employed to put these into effect. It is concerned with dialogue, and negotiation and in this sense is not merely an instrument of a state, but also an institution of the state-system itself. "Cultural diplomacy" is often seen as one dimension or branch of public diplomacy, encompassing a range of instruments such as arts, education, language, sports and religion. The concept was famously defined by political scientist Milton Cummings as "the exchange of ideas, information, values, systems, traditions, beliefs, and other aspects of culture, with the intention of fostering mutual understanding." Today, public and cultural diplomacy alike are seen as important elements in the arsenal of "soft power." The term, which was coined by Harvard professor Joseph Nye, can best be understood as "the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment," with the latter being characteristics of hard—economic and military—power. In short, soft power is "attractive power."(the diplomat, 2013)

Cultural diplomacy, as a type of public diplomacy and soft power that includes the "exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding." (Waller, 2009) The purpose of cultural diplomacy is for the people of a foreign nation to develop an understanding of the nation's ideals and institutions in an effort to build broad support for economic and political goals. (Maack, 2001) In essence that "cultural diplomacy reveals the soul of a nation," which creates unimaginable influence on international relations in turn.

As for the forms of cultural diplomacy, it is diversified. Normally, it includes:

**Arts** (e.g. films, dance, music, painting, sculpture, etc.) **Culture Exhibitions**, **Educational Programs** (e.g. universities and language programs abroad, etc.) **Exchanges** (e.g. scientific research, artistic performance, educational study etc.) **Literature** (e.g. Nobel Prize, the establishment of libraries abroad and translation of popular and national works, etc.), **Broadcasting of News and Cultural Programs**, **Gifts to a Nation**, **Religious Diplomacy** (e.g. inter-religious dialogue), etc.

## **2. The Concept of China's Cultural Diplomacy**

Concepts such as public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and soft power now figure prominently on the Chinese government's agenda. For example, at the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, then Chinese president Hu Jintao stressed the need to promote the attractiveness of Chinese culture as a way of enhancing the country's "soft power." The China Public Diplomacy Association was founded in Beijing on December 31, 2012. Peng Liyuan, wife of the current President Xi Jinping, has received growing attention as adding a soft touch for China thanks to her role in public diplomacy during presidential visits abroad. As concerns over China's economic and military power mount in some parts of the world, the Chinese government is thus showing greater awareness of the importance of communicating with foreign publics.

Towards current situation of China's cultural diplomacy, culture is the new tool in diplomacy. For China, Chinese leaders have been aware of the growing relevance and importance of cultural diplomacy, taking its unique culture and utilising platforms for cultural exchange programs, festivals, movies, music, religious forums, sports and tourism with the outside world in the 2000s, such as these new initiatives: Confucius Institute, exports of Chinese cultural products, and recently, efforts to make the Chinese media global players. Its aim has been to enhance China's soft power and project its image of peaceful rise, also to document the main forms of cultural diplomacy encouraged and even sponsored by the state for that purpose. China has seen its cultural profile in the world growing. However, China's cultural diplomacy is limited by its economic resources and defects in its political system.

For China, next to politics and economics, culture has increasingly become the third pillar in China's diplomacy. China has already done some achievements in cultural diplomacy, such as: Confucius Institute Projects, Buddhist forum in Hangzhou in April 2006, Beijing Olympic Games in 2008, Shanghai World EXPO in 2010, Year of Chinese Culture, etc. Even Joseph Nye, the architect of the concept of soft power, agrees that by sustaining fast economic growth, emphasizing Chinese culture and proclaiming peaceful rise, China has expanded its soft power and promote its cultural diplomacy.

### **3. Strategies of China's Cultural Diplomacy**

To promote a more favourable image of China in the world and facilitate the country's "peaceful development," the Chinese leadership seems to have relied on three main strategies.

First, it has been active in releasing White Papers to make Chinese policy more transparent and easier to understand for English-speaking audiences. To date, such papers have covered a broad range of topics, including energy policy, climate change, human rights, the rule of law, foreign trade, national defence, arms control and disarmament, space activities and foreign aid.

Second, China is encouraging the establishment of Confucius Institutes on university campuses all over the world to further the study of Chinese language and culture. Since the creation of the first Confucius Institute in Seoul in 2004, the total number of institutes worldwide has risen considerably. At present, there are 324 Confucius Institutes in countries and regions across the world - more than twice as many as the German Goethe Institute and more than four times the number of the Spanish Instituto Cervantes.

Third, China recently hosted cultural mega-events such as the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the 2010 Shanghai World Expo. Both events were major platforms for the Chinese government to showcase the country's achievements and provided opportunities to increase its international recognition and status.

#### **4. Social Capital**

Social capital, was first coined in the occasional use in 1960s, and then became popular in the political field in 1990s due to Robert Putnam's book 'Bowling Alone'. Social Capital refers to the expected collective or economic benefits derived from the preferential treatment and cooperation between individuals and groups. Although different social sciences emphasize different aspects of social capital, they tend to share the core idea "that social networks have value". (Putnam, 2000) The sociological concept of social capital has grown in popularity in recent years and research programs in North America, Europe, and East Asia have demonstrated how social capital has a significant impact on occupational mobility, community building, social movement, and economic development. Moreover, all these elements are strongly connected with the foundation of cultural diplomacy.

#### **5. Relations of Cultural Diplomacy and Social Capital**

Cultural diplomacy is an important part of soft power, and social capital can be regarded to play a decisive role in soft power. So, the connection influences between cultural diplomacy and social capital cannot be ignored. Good social capital could promote the development of cultural diplomacy, while poor social capital not only influences the progress of cultural diplomacy, but also will damage the positive image of a nation.

Besides that, culture is an essential component of international relations and cultural exchange has been intertwined with the pursuit of foreign relations throughout history, and cultural diplomacy has also gained in significance as the world has moved from the bi-polarity of the Cold War to the uncertainties of the present multi-polar world. This has a profound impact on the ways in which nations construct and project their international social capital. This research will provide a fine-grained analysis of the link between cultural diplomacy and social capital in China. The authors of this research project will examine various kinds of cultural diplomacy policies and activities, the types of social capi-

tal they produce, and their effects on the international social capital in China.

In today's world, where cultural diplomacy will be ever more central, and in recent years, China has sought to supplement its traditional use of hard power. The peaceful development policy in Chinese grand strategy has sought to integrate Chinese hard power and soft power to create a soft rise for China, and thus Chinese government paid more and more attention to cultural diplomacy. As an emerging powerful state, keeping the relation of cultural diplomacy and social capital in a balanced situation will bring benefits to China. But whether China could sustain its influences and credibility of social capital by the support of good qualified, wide ranged cultural diplomacy remains to be seen.

### **Brief Literature Review**

1. *What is Cultural Diplomacy*, written by Dr. Emil Constantinescu, who is the former president of Romania and now he is the president of the Academy for Cultural Diplomacy. In this book, he described the concept of cultural diplomacy clearly and divided the main contents into several parts: History of Cultural Diplomacy, Cultural Diplomacy in Practice, The Importance of Cultural Diplomacy, Cultural Diplomacy & the Public Sector, Cultural Diplomacy & Private sector. This book provides the basic theory support for this research.
2. *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*, written by Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried. According to this book, it mainly describes cultural diplomacy agents and the state, then in the following volume it contains the significance of cultural diplomacy in regions, some specific examples concerning the current situation, progress and achievements of cultural diplomacy in different continents or states, such as: Cultural Relations and the Soviet Union, Cultural Diplomacy in Central Europe, Cultural Diplomacy in the Middle East, International Rivalry and Culture in Syria and Lebanon, etc.
3. *Soft power: Review: Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, written by Joseph. S.

Nye in New York 2004. Joseph Nye coined the term “soft power” in the late 1980s, but now it is now used frequently and often incorrectly by political leaders, editorial writers, and academics around the world. So in this book, Joseph. S. Nye describes what soft power is, the importance of soft power, differences between soft power and hard power.

3. *The Quality of Government: Corruption, Social Trust, and Inequality in International Perspective*, written by Bo Rothstein. In this path breaking book, leading political scientist Bo Rothstein provides a theoretical foundation for empirical analysis on the connection between the quality of government and important economic, political, and social outcomes. Focusing on the effects of government policies, he argues that unpredictable actions constitute a severe impediment to economic growth and development—and that a basic characteristic of quality government is impartiality in the exercise of soft power.
  4. *Social Capital and Institutional Constraints: A Comparative Analysis of China, Taiwan and the US*, written by Joonmo Son. Different from other books about social capital, this one uses new empirical data to test how social capital works in different societies with diverse political-economic and cultural institutions. In particular, this book tests whether political economic and cultural differences between capitalist and socialist economic systems and between Western and Confucian cultures create different types of individual social networks and usages. This comparison leads to Joonmo Son’s fundamental argument that the institutional constraints of a society’s political economy on the one hand, and culture on the other, profoundly impact on both the composition and utilization of social capital.
1. Maack, M. N., 2001. Books and Libraries as Instruments of Cultural Diplomacy in Francophone Africa during the Cold War. *Libraries & Culture*, Volume 1, p. 55.
  2. Putnam, R., 2000. Bowling Alone. In: *The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Washington: Touchstone Books by Simon & Schuster.
  3. Putnam, R., 2001. *Bowling Alone*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
  4. Rothstein, B., 2011. *The Quality of Government: Corruption, Social Trust and Inequality in International Perspective*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
  5. Waller, M. J., 2009. Cultural Diplomacy, Political Influence, and Integrated Strategy. In: *Strategic Influence: Public Diplomacy, Counterpropaganda, and Political Warfare*. Washington DC: Institute of World Politics Press, p. 74.

6. Wang, Y., 2008. Public Diplomacy and the Rise of Chinese Soft Power. *ANNALS, AAPSS*, March , pp. 257-271.