

Contemporary Problems of Cultural Cooperation: Issues in Theory and Practice

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Abstract: The article is devoted to the search of definition of the foreign cultural policy in modern political science. The authors give the theoretical justification for the role of culture in international relations. The authors identify the main objectives and tasks of foreign cultural policy. The conclusion is made that external cultural policy reflects many peculiarities of a cultural dialogue both at bilateral and multilateral levels. Its content, practical approaches to its implementation are related with the processes of institutionalization, regionalization, democratization of the cultural exchange, which has been developing at a rapid pace and has been constantly evolving by bringing more and more new participants into the international dialogue.

Key words: International cultural exchange • International cultural cooperation • International organizations in cultural sphere • Foreign cultural centers • Foreign cultural policy • Cultural diplomacy • Soft power

INTRODUCTION

New tendencies in the international relations at the end of XX - beginning of XXI centuries, cultural integration, globalization and acceleration of civilizational processes make cultural ties particularly significant by opening broader prospects for them and accelerating the processes of inter-cultural communication and exchange of cultural values. This is where the singularity of international cooperation of the beginning of the new millennium lies. The fact that in most cases a cultural program is made part of virtually all large-scale international summits, conferences and other events indicates that culture has firmly established itself in the sphere of international relations and foreign policy [1, 2].

Another peculiarity of cultural interaction in the XX-XXI centuries that may be distinguished is that culture and cultural ties have become an inalienable element of contemporary foreign-policy activities of almost every country. This peculiarity resulted in emergence of a new notion, that of “external cultural policy” or “foreign cultural policy”. Presently, this term

has become ingrained in the armory of many states and is used in the official documents of Russia, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Austria and many others [3, 4].

The notion of the external cultural policy is a fairly recent one. They started to introduce it for scientific and practical use only in the end of the 20th century, though the use of culture for the purpose of solving diplomatic tasks stretches its roots back into far more ancient times. The term “external cultural policy” has acquired its independent meaning and has been introduced into political and diplomatic practice thanks largely to publication of a number of documents in 2000.

Among the issues related with theoretical comprehension of external cultural policy, the most disputable one of all is the issue of working out its scientific definition. They began to gradually introduce this term for scientific and practical use as late as in the end of the 20th century. All that occurred largely thanks to publication in 2000 of concepts of foreign cultural policies in two countries: at first in Germany [5] and then in Russia [6]. They were the first to use the notion “external cultural policy” as an official term. Appearance of these documents necessitated the development of theoretical

bases of this issue and gave an impetus to formation of their own concepts of foreign cultural policy by other states.

Despite the practical usefulness of the issue and the extensive experience generated by different countries, the contemporary social sciences lack a common vision as to the definition of the foreign cultural policy as opposed to the researches of national (internal) cultural policy, which propose a multitude of different definitions [7].

Findings and discussion. In our point of view, a foreign cultural policy is a set of measures generated and implemented by a state at an external level, first of all, for the purpose of overseas promotion of national culture and language and, secondly, for the purpose of creating a favorable foreign political environment that facilitates a more productive implementation of a foreign policy course [8].

Three inter-related goals are inherent to external cultural policy. In the first place, promotion, popularization, export of national culture and language, propaganda of a country's own cultural achievements abroad. In the second place, creation of favorable conditions for implementation of political and economic tasks of a country in the international arena. And, finally, in the third place, the most general goal of external cultural policy lies in formation of a positive image of a state abroad, for achievement of which culture, cultural values and cultural ties are used as a special tool.

Images and stereotypes have nowadays firmly settled themselves in almost every sides of public life, including international relations. Positive images can improve perception of a state and, in such a way, facilitate establishment of beneficial contacts, as well as pursuit of a definite policy. Negative images are able to substantially complicate development of interstate relations, create breeding ground for conflicts, cooldown and even breach of diplomatic relations. This applies especially to negative stereotypes, which are noted for high degree of persistence. Given this property of images and stereotypes, it is necessary to purposefully form a positive image of a country and its people both inside and outside of the country and avoid forming negative pictures. And this is the focus of an external cultural policy.

These circumstances induced many contemporary states to allocate considerable funds to holding image-building campaigns and, in some cases, to a targeted image-building policy, whose priority task lies exactly in forming a positive image. As in instance we can mention experience of such countries as Germany, Great

Britain, France, USA, which have been spending significant funds on forming a positive overseas image of their countries.

External cultural policy is focused on solving specific tasks, such as assistance to implementation of inter-cultural interaction process, development of cultural ties, establishment of mutual understanding between the peoples through arrangement of cultural exchanges, enrichment of a country's own national culture thanks to joining in the best cultural achievements of humankind, as well as preservation of cultural diversity throughout the world.

The main goal of external cultural policy lies not only in popularization of a country's own culture and language all over the world, but also in strengthening the authority and influence of the country through the use of "cultural tools". The external cultural policy is also focused on provision, either directly or indirectly, to its citizens of broad opportunities for getting acquainted with modern achievements in the sphere of science, culture and education of other countries. This circumstance presupposes that one of the central elements of efficient external cultural policy must be maximum openness and tolerance to representatives of other cultures and readiness to intercultural dialogue.

While considering the theoretical bases of external cultural policy one should touch upon the debatable nature of the terminology itself, inasmuch neither the official documents, nor the scientists share any common ground regarding the terms used. For example, Anglo-American politicians and scientists prefer to use the terms "cultural diplomacy" or "public diplomacy" for defining this kind of activity of a state. A similar term is accepted to apply with reference to Japan as well. "People's diplomacy" term is more characteristic with regard to China. German scientists refuse from using "cultural diplomacy" term, as long as, in their opinion, it is only external cultural policy that can be focused on achievement of political tasks and propagandistic purposes. Several terms at once are equally used in France, such as "action culturelle exterieure" (external cultural activity), "politique culturelle exterieure" (external cultural policy), "politique culturelle internationale" (international cultural policy), "diplomatie culturelle" (cultural diplomacy).

Discussions are ongoing in the Russian science concerning the equality of such concepts as a "cultural diplomacy" and an "external cultural policy" [9]. Such an indefinite situation is largely due to these terms being neither defined, nor imited in Russia on a legislative level.

Addendum No.1 to Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation gives a broader interpretation to this term, i.e. “cultural-humanitarian cooperation with foreign countries”, which, in our opinion, reflects expansion of substantive bases, mechanisms and trends of practical implementation of external cultural policy of Russia [10].

Diversity of definitions of cultural policy existing by now reflects an obvious researchers’ interest and availability of different approaches to its understanding. By way of summing up the existing definitions, a conclusion may be drawn that the cultural policy represents a special trend of the national policy of a state, which is related to planning, designing, implementation and support of the cultural life of the state and the society.

External cultural policy envelops such spheres as art, science and education, mass media, publishing, museum, library and archive-keeping industries, sports and tourism, youth outreach and language spread. Lately, photography and design, as well as digital forms of art have been included into this group.

In the conditions of globalization the issues of generation of cultural policy become pressing not only for certain states, but also for international organizations. Thus, for example, presently the issue of generation of uniform cultural policy is being seriously and profoundly discussed. A large-scale work on generation of common cultural policy is underway in the CIS countries. The issues of the cultural policy are, besides, handled by such reputed international organization in the sphere of culture as UNESCO. Directly under the auspices of UNESCO serious scientific research of problems of cultural policy have been started.

The principles of holding the cultural policy of international organizations are not cardinally different from the principles of implementation of external cultural policy by certain states. All international organizations pursue their definite purposes in the sphere of cultural policy, inasmuch as cultural policy pursued by such an organization depends upon the purposes and the tasks of the organization itself. Regional international organizations are, most of all, focused on strengthening general values with participation of member countries and popularization of its activities throughout the world.

The trends of activities within the cultural policy of an international organization are determined on the basis of priority trends of member countries of the organization. The joint activities of member countries in the framework of the organization results in a more efficient cooperation and implementation of their external cultural policy. The

forms of implementation of cooperation between member countries may be different programs, in the framework of which the states that are members of the organization consider common problems and find the ways to find solutions in the cultural sphere.

CONCLUSION

On condition of its successful implementation, an external cultural policy is able to become an efficient means of supporting the general foreign political strategy of a state by creating a strong foundation that not only enables to uphold and promote the national interests of the state in the international arena, but also directly impact different political, economic and social processes throughout the world. The external cultural policy at the beginning of the XXI century has every reason to become one of the most efficient trends in the external policy of a state, which facilitate both the solution of problems of a definite state and many global problems that the whole mankind is facing.

An increasingly growing role of culture in the external political activities of states is a peculiarity of international relations of the contemporary period. The cultural ties are able to mitigate international conflicts, harmonize the international climate and unite people of different ethnicity, socio-political and religious affiliation. The understanding of a special role of culture in the framework of contemporary international processes is reflected in formation of a separate trend in the activities of states in the international arena, which was named as an “external cultural policy” and which developed widely in the contemporary international relations. An original and authentic phenomenon, external cultural policy reflects many peculiarities of a cultural dialogue both at bilateral and multilateral levels. Its content, practical approaches to its implementation are related with the processes of institutionalization, regionalization, democratization of the cultural exchange, which has been developing at a rapid pace and has been constantly evolving by bringing more and more new participants into the international dialogue.

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