

PROMOTING CULTURE ABROAD: THE EXPERIENCE OF
GERMANY AND JAPAN IN THE FIELD
OF CULTURAL DIPLOMACY



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Abstract. This paper focuses on German and Japanese efforts to form a positive national image abroad in the field of cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy of both countries is characterized by: the lack of a centralized organizational structure; the emphasis on intercultural dialogue encouragement and deepening of mutual understanding between nations; the active role of international broadcasters; and the use of social media for cultural promotion. The author concludes that one of the main differences between the foreign policy cultural strategies of these countries is the Japanese focus on pop-culture as a tool for its own public diplomacy. From this point of view, Japanese modern media culture demonstrates the potential for rapid development in the future.

Key words: cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, digital diplomacy, soft power, social media, national branding, media culture.

Introduction. The first attempts at using culture as a tool of foreign policy were made in ancient times. The Greek construction of the great library at Alexandria, the Roman Republic's policy of inviting the sons of foreign 'friendly kings' to be educated in Rome, and the activities of medieval Byzantine missionaries in the Slavic lands are vivid examples of the promotion of a national culture abroad to achieve foreign policy goals [Cull, p. 19]. However, the institutionalization of cultural diplomacy as an integral part of diplomatic practice happened only at the end of the nineteenth century with the establishment of the first specialized cultural-diplomatic institutions, such as Alliance Française (1883) and Dante Alighieri Institute (1889).

Nowadays cultural diplomacy can be considered an important trend of foreign policy developments, whose aim is "to improve a nation's image and prestige through such aspects of culture as fine and performing arts, language education and intellectual traditions" [Ogoura, p. 45]. One of its important tasks is "the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understandings" [Cummings, p. 1].

Cultural diplomacy like public diplomacy is oriented towards the widest range of foreign audiences, including notable figures and opinion formers. Nonetheless, it is necessary to distinguish these terms. As the Slovak scholar Eric Pa-

jtinka rightly points out, one of the main reasons why cultural diplomacy is not an equivalent of public diplomacy is the fact that "public diplomacy can include not only activities undertaken within the framework of cultural diplomacy, but within other fields of diplomacy" [Pajtinka, p. 101].

According to the British historian N. Cull, cultural diplomacy is a part of public diplomacy along with listening, advocacy, exchange programs (which often overlap with cultural work) and international broadcasting [Cull, p. 10]. Culture promotion is often realized by non-governmental institutions, which have a more reliable reputation than government structures [Nye]. That is why cultural diplomacy can be especially effective in countries, where any attempts by the state to influence public opinion are perceived as negative.

Germany and Japan have long-term experience in the field of cultural diplomacy. They used culture as a tool of foreign policy when they had their empires, but achieved the greatest success only in the early 21st century. After World War II the governments of Germany and Japan faced a difficult task to transform the negative national image emerging from their militarist past. It took them a considerable time to create an attractive national brand abroad. It is not surprising that in 2015 Germany and Japan occupied the second and sixth places respectively among states with the most attractive national brands (according to

Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index¹). Probably, efforts by the German and Japanese governments in the field of cultural diplomacy also influenced their positions in the rating, as the GfK study is always based on six dimensions: exports; governance; culture; people; tourism, and immigration / investment.

The experience of German and Japan's cultural diplomacy is absolutely unique, because before Germany and Japan could being the battle for the "hearts and minds" of foreign audiences, they had to make a big effort to decrease the level of negative perceptions about themselves abroad. Surprisingly, both countries chose different audiences for their foreign cultural policy in the Cold War era. While the Federal Republic of Germany used cultural diplomacy for its reconciliation with neighbours, Japan for a long time focused on the US and Southeast Asian nations instead of South Korea and China (countries, where the local population still had traumatic memories about the Japanese annexation) [Aoki-Okabe, Kawamura, Makita, p. 214].

To strengthen the theoretical foundations of cultural diplomacy and broaden understanding of how countries need to use various aspects of culture to break stereotypes and change historical memory, this study investigates German and Japanese foreign policy efforts in the field of

¹ The GfK official site. "USA regains position as top nation brand from Germany" Accessed 25.05.2016. <http://www.gfk.com/en-in/insights/press-release/usa-regains-position-as-top-nation-brand-from-germany-1/>

cultural diplomacy. The main research methods are historical institutionalism and comparative analysis. The first method helps to consider the structure of German and Japanese cultural diplomacies as well as understand better how the development of their key institutions in the past has influenced modern policies of both countries in the field of cultural promotion. The second method is used for the search of similarities and differences in the cultural diplomacies of Germany and Japan.

Structure of German cultural diplomacy

As with many other countries, one of the key actors of German cultural diplomacy is the country's Foreign Office, which has a special department responsible for planning, coordinating and steering national cultural relations and educational policy abroad (Directorate-General for Culture and Communication). According to the Federal Foreign Office's website, the Directorate seeks to "provide information about Germany, its culture, science and society, and inspire an interest in dialogue and exchange"².

The Federal Foreign Office cooperates with different non-governmental organizations on various specific projects in the field of cultural diplomacy. It acts as a coordinator of their campaigns and financial provider. Many NGOs have autonomous structures and do not want to be

² The official site of the Federal Foreign Office. Accessed 25.05.2016. http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Startseite_node.html.

perceived as an instrument of the government in great part due to historical reasons [Auer C., Srugies A., p. 28].

One of the most active NGOs is the Goethe-Institut, founded in 1951 in Munich as a successor to the German Academy. This cultural institution promotes the study of German language abroad and encourages international cultural exchange. The Goethe-Institut organizes festivals and exhibitions in the fields of film, dance, music, theatre, literature and translation on regular basis in different countries. It also has an extensive network of libraries (with worldwide access to over 800,000 media) and information centers, where anyone can find information about German arts, education, society, etc.¹

Another famous non-governmental organization, involved in the cultural diplomacy of Germany is the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), whose history goes back over 90 years². DAAD's programs are focused on the internationalization of German universities and the promotion of German studies and the German language abroad. Additionally, the German Academic Exchange Service assists developing countries in establishing effective systems of higher education. DAAD is one of largest funding organizations in the field of academic exchange, attracting a great number of students,

scholars and artists to participate in its programs. For example, in 2014 over 121,000 Germans and foreigners received grants from the German Academic Exchange Service. DAAD' exchange programs are characterized by a high level of organization and transparency.

Deutsche Welle (DW), Germany's international broadcaster, also contributes to the promotion of German culture abroad³. DW was founded in 1953 as a radio service to inform foreign audiences about post-Nazi Germany and has become a recognized mass media abroad over recent decades. It is perceived as a reliable source of information in countries where media censorship is rampant and where there is a lack of unbiased reporting [Zöllner, p. 264]. According to the DWAct, its goals are "to convey the image of Germany as a cultural state in the European tradition and as a free and democratic constitutional state"; "to provide a forum in Europe and on other continents for German (and other) points of view on important topics, primarily in the areas of politics, culture, and economics, with the aim of promoting understanding and the exchange of ideas among different cultures and peoples" as well as "to promote the German language"[Deutsche Welle Act, p. 8].

Besides the non-governmental organizations mentioned above, the Federal Foreign Office collaborates with the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the Institute for Foreign Cultural

¹ The official site of the Goethe-Institut. Accessed 25.05.2016. <https://www.goethe.de/en/>.

² The official site of the German Academic Exchange Service. Accessed 25.05.2016. <https://www.daad.de/en/>.

³ The official site of Deutsche Welle (DW). Accessed 25.05.2016. <http://www.dw.com/>.

Relations, the International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Commission for UNESCO, the German Archaeological Institute, the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, etc. All these organizations are considered by experts as so-called “mediators” of the German Foreign office in the implementation of foreign cultural policy [Devyatkov; Zimin, p. 137].

Another group of NGO's are German political foundations like the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Friedrich Naumann Foundation, etc., which associated with German political parties, yet independent of them [Zimin, p. 137.] They focus on the dissemination of German political culture and values through collaboration with mass media, universities and public organizations. For example, Konrad Adenauer Foundation (founded in 1955), organizes a large number of different conferences, workshops and exhibitions to inform foreigners about the experience of Germany in building a law-based and democratic state.

The Main Actors of Japanese Cultural Diplomacy

The key actor of Japanese cultural diplomacy is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA). It has a special division (Public Diplomacy Strategy Division), which is responsible for promotion of the Japanese language and culture

abroad as well as fostering people-to-people exchange with other countries¹. Since 2006 MOFA considered Japanese pop-culture (manga, anime, J-pop, J-fashion, etc.) as an integral part of its foreign policy and a tool to promote Japan's brand image abroad. That is why the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan began to sponsor the World Cosplay Summit (the event, where participants dress up as a characters from the Japanese genres of manga or anime) in 2006, and created “the International Manga Award” for encouraging non-Japanese manga artists in 2007. Additionally, it launched the “Anime Ambassador” project to attract the interest of the foreign public to Japan through anime (the most lovable national anime character cosmic cat Doraemon became the first Anime Ambassador of Japan) in 2008.

Apart from the dissimilation of manga and anime worldwide, nowadays MOFA is also realizing a great number of interesting projects in the field of cultural diplomacy. One of them is the “Japan Brand Program”, which aims at sharing Japanese culture with foreign audiences through lectures, seminars, and workshops. For instance, through that program, in February 2016 a famous Japanese architect and planner, Ryusuke Nanki, visited Belarus to deliver a lecture about redesigning Japanese traditions.

Another interesting project is the Japanese Exchange and Teaching Program (JET), offering the youth from different countries the opportu-

¹ The official site of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Accessed 25.05.2016. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/index.html>.

nity to serve in Japanese local authorities as well as public and private elementary, junior high and senior high schools for a one-year period. In 2014, there were 4,476 participants on JET from 42 countries¹. The Japanese government prefers to consider JET alumni as a valuable bridge between Japan and their home countries.

MOFA also supports the work of the first Japan Creative Center in Singapore, established in 2007². The Center introduces Singaporeans and the peoples of other Southeast Asian countries to Japanese advanced technology, design, gourmet, fashion, traditional crafts, traditional art, music and movies, anime and manga. For example, from 8 April – 7 May 2016, the Japan Creative Center organized an exhibition entitled “The Way of Tea: Tea Culture of Singapore and Japan”, which included tea lectures and demonstrations with a guided tour.

The main mediator of MOFA in the field of cultural diplomacy is the Japan Foundation, which was established in October 1972 to promote international cultural exchange worldwide³. Before 2003 it was supervised by MOFA and then became an independent administrative

¹ The official site of the Embassy of Japan in Moscow. Accessed 25.05.2016. http://www.ru.emb-japan.go.jp/EDUCATION/JET2015/2015_APPLICATION_GUIDELINES_eng.pdf.

² The official site of the Embassy of Japan in Singapore. Accessed 25.05.2016. <http://www.sg.emb-japan.go.jp/JCC/>.

³ The official site of the Japan Foundation. Accessed 25.05.2016. <http://www.jpf.go.jp/e/>.

institution. Now the Japan Foundation works in three fields: arts and cultural exchange, Japanese language education overseas and Japanese Studies and Intellectual Exchanges. The first field includes organizing international exhibitions and exchange programs for artists and art professionals, introducing various Japanese traditional and modern performing arts to overseas audiences (Kabuki, Bunraku, Sho-gekijo, J-pop, etc.) The second field is based on providing support for Japanese language learners (creating learning materials, training future teachers, co-sponsoring the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) abroad, etc.) The last field of work by the Japan Foundation includes support of Japanese Studies institutions around the world as well as implementing international intellectual collaborative projects (e.g. international conferences).

Although international broadcaster NHK World is not considered an “official” cultural diplomacy institution of Japan [Snow], it brings its principal contribution to promoting Japanese culture abroad. It was founded in 1998 on the basis of national broadcaster NHK. One of the main aims of NHK World is “to present broadcasts with great accuracy and speed on many aspects of Japanese culture and lifestyles, recent developments in society and politics, the latest scientific and industrial trends, and the Japanese role and opinions regarding important global issues”⁴. Now the structure of NHK World con-

⁴ The official site of NHK World. Accessed 25.05.2016. <http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/about/>.

sists of three services: NHK World Radio Japan, NHK World TV and NHK World Premium.

Apart from the above-listed above organizations, the actors of Japan's cultural diplomacy are also government agencies (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT); The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI); the Agency for Cultural Affairs; Council of Local Authorities for International Relations, The Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, etc.), thinktanks (Japan Center for International Exchange; The International Academic Forum, etc.); universities (Tsukuba University, Kyoto University, Waseda University, etc.), non-profit organizations (Matsumae International Foundation, the Canon Foundation, the Konosuke Matsushita Memorial Foundation, etc.) However, it should once more be underlined that MOFA is the key strategic planner and promoter of Japanese cultural diplomacy [Naoyuki, p. 225.].

Similarities

The analysis demonstrates that the cultural diplomacies of Germany and Japan have many things in common. Firstly, they are characterized by a decentralized structure consisting of governmental and non-governmental organizations. NGOs involved in cultural diplomacy often have an autonomous status and are able to form and implement their own policy. However, the government (including the ministries of foreign affairs) and the parliaments of both countries have

the opportunity to coordinate the foreign policy actions of the key actors of cultural diplomacy. Probably, the institutional diversification of German and Japanese culture diplomacy is predetermined by one reason: an intention to gain and hold the confidence of the public abroad.

The foreign cultural policy of Nazi Germany and militarist Japan in the first half of the 20th century was completely dictated by the government and was more like the imposition of culture than its promotion. It would not have been amazing if any attempts by these countries to implement cultural policy abroad after World War II could be considered by foreign audiences as propagandistic and therefore, a priori, "lying". That is why the creation of the autonomous non-governmental organizations was especially important for Post Nazi Germany, wishing to break with its totalitarian past.

American scholar, J. Nye, also reckons that NGOs play a great role in world politics [Nye]. From his point of view, they have more credibility with audiences than government agencies. The reason is that non-governmental organizations are autonomous and that provides them with a certain independence from the government.

Secondly, the cultural diplomacies of both countries focus on not only on the presentation of their own cultural heritage, but place emphasis on encouraging intercultural dialogue¹ and

¹The official site of the Goethe-Institut. Accessed 25.05.2016. <https://www.goethe.de/en/>.

deepening mutual understanding¹. To improve intercultural dialogue between Germany and the Islamic world, the Federal Foreign Office with the Goethe-Institut, the German Academic Exchange Service and the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations realized some projects. One of them was the creation of the Internet portal Qantara.de in 2003 as a platform for discussion between Europeans (Germans) and Islamic intellectuals. Another is the Ernst Reuter Initiative for Intercultural Dialogue and Understanding for enhancing German-Turkish cooperation in the fields of the arts and culture, politics and the media, the economy, science and education².

Japanese cultural diplomacy practitioners also offer different interesting ideas for a better understanding of the cultural experience of other countries. For instance, the Japan Foundation has organized the Asian Museum Curator's Conference since 2005 to learn different approaches and methods of curatorial practices in Asia and explore the potential for networking³. Since 2013 MOFA has launched a new youth exchange program "JENESYS 2.0" between Japan and ASEAN Member States, including the attendance of

¹ The official site of the Japan Foundation. Accessed 25.05.2016. <http://www.jpf.go.jp/e/>.

² The official site of the Federal Foreign Office. Accessed 25.05.2016. http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Aussenpolitik/KulturDialog/06_InterkulturellerDialog/ERI/Uebersicht-ErnstReuterInitiative_node.html.

³ The official site of the Japan Foundation. Accessed 25.05.2016. <http://www.jpf.go.jp/e/project/culture/archive/information/1307/07-03.html>.

cross-cultural events by high school and University students of both countries during bilateral short-term visits⁴.

Focusing on intercultural dialogue is a necessary part of modern public diplomacy. 9/11 Attacks have led to an increase in the studying of non-Western cultures from diplomats and scholars. Mutual cultural understanding began to be considered a certain way to avert conflicts between nations.

Furthermore, intercultural dialogue is one of the most relevant approaches for Germany and Japan, taking into account their active cultural imperialism in the first half of the XXth century. German scholars C. Auers and A. Strugies note that during the Third Reich the communication of the German government was directed towards foreign audiences and «focused on the superiority of German culture and language as well as the superiority of the "Arian race"» [Auer, Strugies, p. 21]. The foreign cultural policy of Japan of that period was also based on the superiority of Japan's culture over other cultures. According to Israeli scholar N. Otmazgin, "Japan's assimilation policies in Korea, Taiwan, and Manchuria were especially intrusive and included the imposition of Japanese culture and language at the expense of local culture and traditions" [Otmazgin, p. 38]. Even now historical memory is able to hinder the dissemination of Japanese and German cultures abroad. That is why the deepening

⁴ The official site of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Accessed 25.05.2016. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/index.html>.

of mutual understanding is the way to avoid accusations of the resurrection of cultural imperialist ambitions.

Thirdly, international broadcasters play an important role in German and Japanese cultural diplomacies. That significance lies in the ability to address the general public, unlike most elitist exchange programs with their focus on current opinion makers or future leaders. For instance, the average weekly DW audience recently topped over 118 million people worldwide. According to the official website of NHK World, its English-speaking channel is available to approximately 290 million households in about 150 countries and regions¹.

DW TV and NHK World TV produce some programs with a focus on national culture. For example, DW offers such programs as “Discover Germany” (about Germany’s most beautiful destinations), “PopXport” (about modern German music), “Kino” (about German movies)². NHK World TV prefers to show videos about Japanese music (“J-Melo”), fashion (“Tokyo Fashion Express”), theatre (“Kabuki Kool”), cuisine (“Our Japanese Kitchen mini”), poetry (“Haiku Masters”), etc.³ to foreign audiences. Apart from programs about national culture, both countries

¹ The official site of NHK World. Accessed 25.05.2016. <http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/about/>.

² The official site of Deutsche Welle (DW). Accessed 25.05.2016. <http://www.dw.com/>.

³ The official site of NHK World. Accessed 25.05.2016. <http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/about/>.

broadcast language courses in different languages through their radio services.

Fourthly, Germany and Japan actively use social media to disseminate their culture abroad. All actors of both countries involved in cultural diplomacy have accounts on different social networking services like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. Every day they post a considerable amount of information about their national culture, with the aim of promoting a positive image of the country abroad. Embassies and cultural institutes have been undertaking most of the work in the field of cultural diplomacy on social media, trying to be not only a communication channel for the audience, but also a “friend”. Undoubtedly, one of the best ways to be closer to subscribers is by providing two-way communications. Understanding this fact, some organizations have engaged in a dialogue with the social media public that helps to form an atmosphere of credibility between them.

Differences

The study also demonstrates some differences in cultural diplomacy of both countries. Firstly, compared with Japan, Germany doesn’t consider the dissemination of national pop-culture as one of the key elements of its cultural diplomacy. Probably, it would be a deep misapprehension to think that Germany doesn’t try to tell the world about its modern mass culture. However, the basis of Germany’s “soft power” is its high intellectual culture, provided by the legacy of Albrecht

Durer, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Richard Wagner and other outstanding Germans.

Certainly, modern German media culture can be very attractive to the foreign public (this confirms the success of such music groups as the Scorpions, Rammstein, Tokyo Hotel as well as films with Moritz Bleibtreu and Til Schweiger). The question arises as to whether German popular culture holds something akin to superpower status. It is difficult to provide a general answer to this. But, Japan's media culture definitely has such status [Watanabe].

Secondly, the cultural diplomacy of Germany includes the activity of German political foundations like the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, Hanns Seidel Foundation, etc. As previously mentioned above, they have played an important role in promoting national political culture abroad and in helping to form Germany's image as a multifaceted state. In contrast, such foundations are not characteristics of Japan's cultural diplomacy. Moreover, the modern public diplomacy of Japan is criticized for the too active participation of the Liberal Democratic Party and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe personally in its implementation [Snow].

Thirdly, German cultural diplomacy is characterized by greater depth and coverage than Japan's effort in this field. For example, the Goethe Institut has 149 institutes and 10 liaison offices in 93 countries, while the Japan Foundation has only 24 overseas offices in 23 countries¹. The oth-

¹ The official site of the Goethe-Institut. Accessed

er example is international broadcasting. While DW TV launches programs in four languages (in German, English, Spanish and Arabic), NHK World TV uses only Japanese and English for broadcasting.

Conclusions

Germany and Japan have invested a lot of effort in the transformation of their national image over the last half century. Now both countries have a good reputation not only for economic development, but also for active cultural and exchange programs. However, German efforts to reconcile with their neighbours and "former enemies" seem to be much more successful than Japan's foreign cultural policies towards Korea, Taiwan and China.

Germany, immediately after World War II, started to develop a cultural dialogue with France to break the ice between the two countries as a result of historical past differences [Cull, p. 36.]. In contrast, for a very long time, Japan avoided activities in cultural diplomacy towards South Korea and China on the assumption that it might be assessed by local governments as a revitalization of Japanese cultural imperialism in the region [Otmazgin, p. 38]. Then Germany continued to develop cultural relations with other Western European countries, Israel, Poland, and

25.05.2016. <https://www.goethe.de/en/>; The official site of the Japan Foundation. Accessed 25.05.2016. <http://www.jpff.go.jp/e/project/culture/archive/information/1307/07-03.html>.

Russia, transforming the image of the country from negative to positive.

Japan still faces a negative attitude from its near neighbours [Iwabuchi, p. 425]. This results from a lot of factors: Japan's aggressive foreign cultural policy towards some countries of the Asia-Pacific region in the first half of the XX century; the process of updating Japan's Constitution, destroying the pacifist image of Japan in 2015 (Japan gets the right to use force in a limited way for collective self-defense); current geopolitical competition between Japan, China and Korea in the region. Apart from political rivalry, both neighbours are real competitors in the field of cultural diplomacy, especially Korea with its K-pop.

The analysis showed that now German cultural promotion has wider geographical spread than Japanese efforts in the field. But Japanese cultural diplomacy has such a prominent tool in its arsenal, namely pop-culture, which is oriented towards youth. This offers the potential for the development of modern Japanese cultural diplomacy, because young people do not remember the past as clearly as previous generations and some of them have the chance to become leaders in their own countries in the future. However, not all scholars tend to look at pop-culture as an effective tool of cultural diplomacy, because sometimes it is difficult to find a direct causal correlation between the enjoyment of manga and anime and a change in one's attitudes toward a nation as a whole

[Iwabuchi, p. 426; Snow, p. 5].

Undoubtedly, the experiences of Germany and Japan in the field of cultural diplomacy are excellent examples of the aspiration of individual countries to break with their "dark pasts" and show the greatness and beauty of their own national culture. In fact, both countries have cultures that are attractive to the foreign public. However, one of the most important merits of the cultural diplomacy of Germany and Japan is its openness and readiness for intercultural dialogue.

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