

The Challenges of Cultural Diplomacy - Intercultural Relations between the European Union and Latin America

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Abstract

Cultural diplomacy is facing various evolutions and conversions on a national, regional, and global scale. In the first instance, the governments' systems are increasingly influencing the agenda and the objectives of states' foreign cultural policies. On the other hand, several actors, such as local and regional governments, as well as social organizations and transnational cooperation networks, have gained much more importance regarding the international cultural scenario. From this standpoint, the relation between Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean have been frivolously analyzed despite their long history -marked by a tumultuous past with many migrations-, the rich flow of exchanges in cultural heritage, and their vast diversity representing a monumental pillar in the general understanding of the concepts of public diplomacy and international cultural relations.

For a greater understanding regarding this controversial topic, many questions concerning the future strategies of the EU and Latin American relations were raised, highlighting the validity, reliability, and limitations during the data collection process. The aim of the paper is thus to provide a holistic understanding of cultural diplomacy and the impetus is, therefore, to investigate cultural challenges, using the qualitative research method as a basis to indulge in further analysis and research. Hence, the main objective of the research is the comparative analysis of diplomatic activities and cultural relations in relation to the two regions - the European Union, respectively Latin America and the Caribbean, closely studying the ideology, agreements, and challenges, underlying these relations, and carefully pursuing future perspectives. To find as many answers as possible on this highly debated and often controversial topic, various reports have been studied, focusing especially on the last four years, but also considering vital events that happened in the distant past, specialized literature and scientific reports playing a vital role in meticulously shaping this article.

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1. Introduction

Cultural diplomacy plays an important role in today's dynamic and complex world but all the positive effects of globalization have brought with them some new challenges and threats too. To acknowledge both the differences and the strong connection between diplomacy and cultural relations, we need to thoroughly

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understand which are the fundamental paradigms of diplomacy and its forms of manifestation, to recognize the theoretical differences, the audience segments, the objectives, and the future perspectives.

Regarding the cultural challenges between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean, the current situation of cultural and social relations has been analyzed closely, emphasizing the general framework of bilateral, regional, and global dynamics and the specific context of external cultural action. Therefore, it was a starting point for reflection on the most relevant challenges, contributing simultaneously to the blooming of new cooperation approaches. The assessments of the underlying activities and interests of institutional relations were analyzed, shaping a dense and complex institutional and legal framework underlying both bi-regional cultural relations and asymmetries between regions.

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Accordingly, the main fundamental research questions are: What are the objectives and potential perspectives of diplomacy and cultural relations? How can international cooperation be influenced by different cultural programs and projects? What are the interests and future guidelines, emphasizing the relationship between the EU and Latin America? And at the same time, how can we combat current problems for the best cooperation possible?

To find adequate answers and to offer a holistic understanding of what this highly debated topic is, there have been used some of the latest scientific reports. Two of the most motivational papers are “The challenges of an EU strategy for international cultural relations in a multipolar world”, written by Tamás Szűcs and “The Challenges of Cultural Relations Between the European Union and Latin America and The Caribbean”, written by Lluís Bonet and Héctor Schargorodsky. Through these extremely well-structured reports, with clear and complete information, it was laid the foundations of this research.

2. Methodological approach

To purvey a holistic understanding of the topic that addresses a new issue, with an exploratory character, specific research methods are involved, the examination being based on a mixed methodology - both quantitative and qualitative. The research methodology, data processing, and analysis are in line with the project objectives, the main axis being based on how cultural diplomacy influences the international landscape, providing an overview of the relations between the European Union and Latin America, and the Caribbean.

The starting point of the research is built on a comprehensive analysis of the known cultural context, using current data that have outlined the current diplomatic situation. Thus, the current topic uses the results of previous surveys, scientific reports, and literature articles as research tools. These are complemented

by interviews and dialogues with people directly involved in this subject – diplomats that provided highly valuable information.

In conclusion, empirical research will be used, carefully observing reality, and contributing to the enrichment of the theory, and highlighting certain characteristics and behaviors of international encounters. The research will be carried out using the updated and verified research infrastructure, the proposed approach evaluating the impact of cultural diplomacy on the global stage.

3. Definition and fundamental paradigms of cultural diplomacy – purpose and objectives

Cultural diplomacy plays an important role in today's dynamic and complex world. All the positive effects of globalization have brought with them a series of new challenges, interdependence becoming a major feature of modern international relations. Thus, the semantic implications of "cultural diplomacy" have expanded considerably over the years, being tremendously convenient today to the various practices that support intentional cultural cooperation.

Over the last few years, the term has come to be used interchangeably with other terms such as international cultural relations, international cultural exchange, international cultural cooperation, public diplomacy, human diplomacy, as well as branding or propaganda. This semantic confusion stems from the fact that cultural diplomacy is very different from other types of diplomatic interactions. According to Gienow-Hecht and Donfried, cultural diplomacy does not simply involve communication between governments, inherent in other types of diplomatic interactions, but communication between governments and citizens of foreign countries. Thus, the broad field of cultural diplomacy can be described as an exchange of ideas, values, traditions and other aspects of culture or identity, aiming to strengthen relations cooperation and promoting national interests. In such wise, the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy emphasizes that the goal of cultural diplomacy is to promote peace and stability through intercultural relations.

M.C. Cummings defines cultural diplomacy as an exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture between countries, to facilitate mutual understanding, while P.M. Taylor looks at the concept from a media perspective, and he considers it an idea invented by the French in the late nineteenth century, whose basic tools are language teaching, educational exchanges, exhibitions, and presentations. In other words, cultural diplomacy, both nationally and internationally, seeks to address various issues such as social cohesion, racism, inequality, discrimination against minorities and migrants, the cultural dimension of inter-religious issues, and conflict resolution. In recent years, the European Union (EU) has placed a strong emphasis on cultural diplomacy in its foreign policy, culture being an essential tool for delivering important social and economic benefits, both inside and outside the EU.

Regarding the national image, cultural diplomacy focuses not only on the cultural characteristics of a state, but often also on economic and technological

achievements. In India, ICCR's activities have sought to convey a contemporary image of India as an economic power and technology giant in the development process. In Australia, the International Cultural Council aims to project a positive image of Australia as "a modern, prosperous and technologically advanced country with a rich and diverse culture". Cultural diplomacy can therefore offer a strong range of benefits to the government and the country. It can raise the profile of a state, promoting basic interests, connecting with the elite public, offering strong opportunities to racial minorities, and providing students benefits through educational scholarships anywhere in the world. This shows that lasting friendly relations between states are the most important goals of diplomacy, focusing on creating peace and promoting international education between countries, making friendly exchanges, and establishing channels of communication with the foreign public. Along these lines, cultural diplomacy possesses the potential to become a more valuable tool for states in the future and a more appreciated and significant component of public diplomacy.

4. Cultural diplomacy in European Union VS Latin America

Regarding the cultural diplomacy promoted by different countries, European ones have specific characteristics, due to their historical trend and the model of internal cultural policy. Spain is the country that has had the largest presence on the diplomatic scene in recent decades and has invested perhaps the most resources in the cultural relationship with Latin America. However, cultural cooperation and European diplomacy in the region cannot be understood without the actions of countries such as Germany, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom. It must be borne in mind that these four countries alone accounted for more than three-quarters of the total number of foreign cultural centers in the world at the beginning of the 21st century.

German cultural diplomacy, as we know it, was born after the Second World War, in order to regain the reputation lost with the propaganda of the Nazi regime, based on the promotion of academic culture, language, and cultural exchanges. In 1920, the Department of Culture was created, incorporating the German Institute for Foreign Affairs (now known as IFA). Deutsche Akademie was founded in 1923 - the forerunner of the Goethe Institute (1951) - and two years later, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the international station Weltrundfunksender - the predecessor of Deutsche Welle (1953) were born. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the economic effort involved in unification, available resources were reduced and tensions rose between the cultural sector that supported cultural relations between equals and some government attempts to operate in the service of foreign policy. At the end of the century, the Konzeption 2000 strategy was approved, setting four objectives: promoting the country's cultural and educational interests abroad, projecting a positive, modern image, fostering European integration, and encouraging discussions to prevent conflicts.

Although Latin America and the Caribbean were not among the regions in which Germany was particularly interested in the first place, Spain and its cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean have been at the center of their cultural activities since the early decades of the twentieth century. In the early stages, it was inspired by the French model of academic and cultural cooperation, in order to establish relations with American intellectuals and to increase the influence and prestige of Spanish culture. After the short but fruitful republican period, the French dictatorship consolidated the political-propagandistic strategy legitimized by the Spanish evangelization by extending the network of cultural centers and the scholarship policy. After the dictatorship, the Spanish-American frame of reference was extended to the term Ibero-America, incorporating Brazil and Portugal into a regional cooperation policy led by Spain. This strategy ended with the celebration of the fifth Centenary, the creation of the Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government (1991), and the implementation of an ambitious regional agenda for cultural cooperation. At the same time, Spain has significantly increased its cultural cooperation in remarkable ways. With the creation of the Cervantes Institute in 1991, Spanish cultural centers scattered throughout the Arab world, Europe, and Brazil.

On the other hand, French cultural diplomacy is the oldest, most ambitious, famous, and most widely implemented internationally. It dates from the eighteenth century, enjoying the presence of great intellectuals (Diderot, Beaumarchais, or Voltaire) in some key embassies and in major academic missions. Roche and Pigniau distinguish the main objective of the creation of the Alliance Française - influencing the elites with trade ties through the prestige of the French language and culture. From the interwar period until the 1980s, the Alliance Française expanded into Latin America, and in 1982 it still had 50% of its influential forces in the region, which is addressed not only to wealthy elites but also to a middle-class audience.

As for the United Kingdom, it did not develop explicit cultural diplomacy until the second third of the twentieth century, when Nazi propaganda began to invade strategic regions, and the economic crisis called for the addition of public diplomacy at the forefront of geostrategic policy. The British Council (1934), was particularly active in the early years in Europe, with the dual mission of ensuring the teaching of the English language and the dissemination of British culture. After the war, when the empire was disintegrated and the United Kingdom lost its political and economic importance, national prestige increasingly focused on cultural elements. External cultural actions have become a soft power alternative for maintaining economical, political, and cultural relations. Through educational assistance and scholarships, scientific cooperation, and technology transfer, their main goal has been - and continues to be - spreading its culture as widely as possible.

When it comes to Latin America and the Caribbean, the international cultural policy has extremely unequal levels of development. While Argentina and Mexico began their activity simultaneously with Europe, other countries had an

irrelevant or intermittent international cultural presence. In general terms, most countries institutionalized and strengthened their cultural diplomacy in the 1990s, due to the democratic advancement of the region. At the same time, due to the influence of the United States, cultural diplomacy has been progressively added as a tool of soft power in the service of other national interests on an international scale, especially for Brazil, Chile, Peru, Colombia, and Mexico.

In terms of the history of cultural diplomacy in Argentina, the elite of liberal intellectuals has created several mechanisms - exhibitions and cultural events were organized abroad - for example, the Argentine pavilion won the first prize at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1889, a prize that later brought the possibility of opening new educational centers, libraries, and theaters in France. A pivotal element of public diplomacy was the promotion of sport, with the hosting of the 1951 Pan American Games. Subsequently, Raúl Alfonsín's government integrated cultural sources into foreign policy and played a more active role in Latin American integration, especially in the process of creating Mercosur.

As for Brazil, the country's foreign cultural image has been influenced by the symbolic potential of cultural heritage. Under the presidency of Getúlio Vargas, between 1930 and 1954, an explicit cultural action was launched. In its relations with other European countries, Brazil has benefited from being considered a strategic country by the European Union. One of the landmarks of this relationship was the Year of France in Brazil and the Year of Brazil in France in 2005. Regarding the role of Brazil in Ibero-American cooperation, this is reflected in the management of the Ibermuseos program and the creation of the Iber-Cultura Viva program (2013).

When it comes to Colombian cultural diplomacy, it has been influenced by the long internal conflict and its need to project an international image of the country, based on its artistic energy and rich cultural heritage, the US and Europe being the key targets of these efforts. Colombia's promotion plan abroad was established in 1983, during the government of Belisario Betancur, The Colombian Institute for Culture (Colcultura) within the National Ministry of Education carried out several international promotion activities, which were continued by the Ministry of Culture, created in 1997. The Department of Cultural Affairs of the Ministry of Culture has developed 51 action plans with strategic lines in terms of foreign policy, and a peace agreement was signed with the FARC during the term of President Santos and a set of programs was initiated. In addition to being one of the countries promoting the Andrés Bello Convention, which has had its executive headquarters in Bogotá since 1972, Colombia has seen an increase in multilateral cultural activity since the beginning of the 21st century.

Finally, Mexico has been one of the Latin American forerunners of international cultural activities, and since the 1910 revolution, the Mexican state has taken greater leadership in managing the national cultural heritage and promoting the country's arts locally and internationally. Cultural diplomacy reached a higher degree of institutionalization in the 1960s when the cultural environment was integrated as a department within the State Secretary of Foreign

Affairs. Since then, the country has been more actively involved in international culture forums, especially during the reign of Luis Echeverría. Subsequently, Mexican cultural centers in Madrid (1977) and Paris (1979) were created, and agreements and other mechanisms for cultural cooperation were established continuously. Only some of the most specialized projects were strengthened, such as the Andrés Bello Convention, which has made significant contributions internationally.

5. Underlying interests in institutional relations between the EU, Latin America and The Caribbean – future guidelines and perspectives

Cultural relations between Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean began with colonization and have since developed with continuous migration and trade relations along the Atlantic Ocean. Since the 1990s, in the context of the so-called local and entrepreneurial transformation of cultural policies, the interdependence between cultural diplomacy and local cultural policy has been strengthened.

In line with these trends, there have been many changes in external cultural action between the two regions. First, a new foreign effort from Latin America and the Caribbean has begun to consolidate, leading to a process of rebalancing between the regions. Secondly, the coordination and institutionalization of supranational cultural cooperation strategies have increased, creating a complex system of interrelationships. For example, EUNIC was set up in Europe in 2006 as a network of European cultural institutions abroad, organized in local collaboration and information exchange groups. This network, originally run by countries such as Germany and France, has recently focused on Latin America and the Caribbean.

One of the apparent weaknesses of the EU-LAC area is the lack of civil society networks and initiatives that permanently promote interregional cultural cooperation. While in relations with other regions, especially with neighboring countries, there have been civil society initiatives that have encouraged exchanges - such as the Roberto Cimetta Fund or the European Foundation for Culture, the network linking the two regions is weak, partly due to the absence of cooperation frameworks. The framework established by the 2016 Joint Communication and the New European Agenda for Culture in 2018 provides a context in which we can build a new framework to facilitate cultural cooperation between the EU and Latin America.

Given the existing legal framework and resources in the area, it seems inevitable that national cultural institutes - grouped under the EUNIC umbrella - and other delegations of EU Member States will play a significant role. All mechanisms of cooperation and integration in Latin America and the Caribbean recognize culture as an important area of activity. Cultural cooperation and integration are seen as a tool to stimulate sustainable development in the region and to strengthen a "fair, balanced and peaceful multipolar and democratic world". The

EU and the LAC recognize the cultural industries and the audiovisual sector as major pillars of cultural and economic cooperation. Efforts to deepen exchange should be stepped up to promote respect for cultural identities, cultural and linguistic diversity, as well as to encourage intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

6. The asymmetry of cultural trade between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union

The current situation of trade relations between the two geographical blocks indicates intra-regional and extra-regional economic asymmetries and highlights the potential for higher exports and imports of cultural and creative goods from the EU. The working hypothesis is that the differences between LAC countries in terms of exports are largely due to the existence of active public-private strategies in areas such as human capital, the tax treatment that companies receive, and the attraction of foreign direct investment (FDI). In addition, few subregional integration schemes have active initiatives to promote this type of creative trade. Empirical evidence showed that bi-regional trade was characterized by a pattern of deep economic asymmetries that differentiated the EU in both exports and imports from Latin America and the Caribbean.

Most LAC countries do not have a viable business model that allows them to have a competitive commercial return on their cultural and creative goods and services with EU countries. The data indicate that in very few LAC countries there is a global strategy that fits or coincides with the different EU markets. Although the cultural and creative sector of the LAC countries has maintained sustained growth over time, their behavior has not been so satisfactory in the sphere of international trade and especially in the case of transactions with the EU. The cultural and creative industries in LAC have several problems that limit their development and projection on the EU international market. LAC countries need to strengthen their data analysis capabilities, as well as improve their information management, in order to overcome the asymmetries of foreign trade with the EU. On an optimistic note, in June 2019, the EU reached an agreement for a trade treaty with South American countries. Representatives of the European Union and Mercosur have finalized, during negotiations in Brussels, the drafting of an agreement on the future trade treaty, which will lead to the creation of the largest international free trade area in the world.

7. Results and discussions

Cultural cooperation is currently an essential framework for achieving objectives such as the coexistence, dialogue, social cohesion, sustainable development, and value consolidation. In this sense, the bi-regional relations between the European Union and the Community of Latin American and the

Caribbean are essential pillars that must be oriented and adapted to face the regions marked by a wide ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity.

Thus, the interactions between Latin America and the European Union generate dynamics that can contribute to the strengthening of relations between the two areas, through cooperation based on fair exchanges that strengthen mobility, technical assistance, exchange of knowledge, and experiences in the artistic, educational, scientific, and cultural. On the other hand, they have the potential to generate alliances, networks, co-productions, and projects involving rural and urban contexts and, in general, generate a long-term strategy that strengthens EU-LAC cooperation through new forms of participation and collaboration. Which consider collective groups, identities, values, and singularities at a local, national, and regional level. Bi-regional relations involve joint action and represent strategic potential and added value in addressing and addressing agenda items.

In terms of objectives, governments have stated that they are committed to cultural diplomacy to achieve idealistic goals: to develop mutual understanding, to combat ethnocentrism and stereotyping, and to prevent conflict. The functional objectives of cultural diplomacy also include promoting political, diplomatic, and economic interests, developing global relations, and maintaining them in times of tension.

8. Conclusions

Cooperation between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean is currently trying to create a space for dialogue between countries, in order to promote strong synergies between nations. In this context, European experience can be used to carry out a comprehensive analysis, especially in those issues that are not regulated in Latin American and Caribbean countries. Different institutes which were mentioned earlier have a significant value, constituting an exercise that promotes the articulation between different approaches and interests, generating collaboration between perspectives of distinct nature.

In conclusion, in a modern world where the messages of states disseminated through public diplomacy are sometimes viewed with suspicion and stated values and ideas do not correspond exactly to foreign policy actions, cultural diplomacy may be the factor that meets the problem, helping to overcome the gap. Cultural diplomacy has the potential to become a much more valuable tool for states in the future and a more appreciated and significant component of diplomatic practice, creating a space for common dialogue between countries to promote synergies between nations, to promote national interests, and strengthen long-term relations.

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