

*Daniel Gołębiowski**

From Europe to the Arab Peninsula? – Cultural Diplomacy Practices in the United Arab Emirates

Abstract

This paper analyzes the practice of “cultural diplomacy” and “soft power” in the United Arab Emirates in light of previously developed practices in European countries such as France and Germany. These two concepts referred to international relations and invented in the Western world, describe strategies that have been taken up by non-Western governments, either to complement their hard power capacity with its soft equivalent or to fill a gap where hard power is missing. Diverse (especially state) actors in international relations appear convinced that public and cultural diplomacy, as an example of soft power, is the most advanced, non-invasive way of conveying a positive image, values, or lifestyle, being at the same time a non-violent means of pursuing national interests. How is the concept of cultural diplomacy applied and facilitated in non-Western countries? Which model of public diplomacy best describes actions undertaken by the Emirati authorities and what are the reason for developing a soft power strategy in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)? This article answers these questions through a comparative analysis of the United Arab Emirates with the examples of France and Germany. It points out the potential challenges and opportunities which arise from a non-Western government using a tool of cultural diplomacy by analyzing diverse initiatives undertaken by UAE, including the “Emirati Film Review in Poland”.

Keywords: Soft Power, Cultural Diplomacy, Public Diplomacy, Foreign Policy, United Arab Emirates, France, Germany

* **Daniel Gołębiowski** – Jagiellonian University, e-mail: daniel.golebiowski@doctoral.uj.edu.pl, ORCID: 0000-0002-4109-1768.

Introduction

Public and cultural diplomacy in the United Arab Emirates has only been used in an institutionalized form very recently. It is interesting and important to explore how these practices are adjusted and implemented by non-Western states, especially in the context of historical experiences, cultural background, and geopolitical goals which are different from those in Europe and North America. European countries started to institutionalize culture in the early 20th century. Cultural institutions such as the Alliance Française, the British Council, and (later) the Goethe Institute are French, British, and German examples. The reasons for governments to use public and cultural diplomacy are numerous. Nowadays, many political scientists describe culture used by states as “soft power”, which may complement or replace “hard power”, i.e., the military or economic strength of a state.¹ Hence, public or cultural diplomacy used as a soft power tool may be very helpful for governments which lack hard power means. Using public and cultural diplomacy, however, in order to facilitate national interest or foreign policy goals is a complex process with many variables requiring consideration while planning and designing strategies in the field. The reasons for the UAE government to develop its own soft power strategy result from the globalization, geopolitical situation and foreign policy goals which are briefly analyzed in the following sections in order to answer the question: why does the UAE need soft power tools such as public and cultural diplomacy?

The interdisciplinary character of cultural and public diplomacy means that the numerous terms used to describe it are confusing and conflicted. This problem is compounded by the extensive literature on the subject. To compare Emirati and European public and cultural diplomacy in a clear manner it is best to approach the topic primarily from the perspective of one discipline. Thus, this article refers to the work of political scientists such as Eytan Gilboa and Martin Zamorano and applies models developed by them to describe public and cultural diplomacy in the UAE, France, and Germany. These models offer a useful way to frame public and cultural diplomacy and allow comparison between them. By examining these contexts through a descriptive analysis and presenting case studies such as the “French Summer Cinema Pavilion”, the “German Cinema Week”, and the “Emirati Film Review in Poland”, I will show differences not only at the macro level of geopolitics and international relations but also at the micro level, which involves the practical dimension of working

¹ J. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, New York 2004, p. 5.

with cultural diplomacy in the field. Such comparison may allow international relations scholars to predict directions of possible developments in the UAE strategies for public and cultural diplomacy. Furthermore, Emirati policymakers drawing on experience of their European counterparts may use the comparison as an indicator on how to adjust and improve soft power tools to specific political context and needs. Finally, this is an attempt to systemize Emirati public and cultural diplomacy within existing theoretical framework.

This paper proceeds as follows: the next section defines the concepts of cultural and public diplomacy by discussing models and types offered by political scientists in light of soft power theory. The French and the German models of cultural diplomacy are presented in section three; these can be understood as the Western archetypes of public and cultural diplomacy. Section four presents the geopolitical situation of the United Arab Emirates, as well as the history and the characteristics of Emirati statehood and recent developments in the field of public and cultural diplomacy. The analysis takes place in section five, where examples and case studies of public and cultural diplomacy as soft power tools are discussed and compared. The sixth section offers a conclusion.

Theory and Methodology

The concepts of public and cultural diplomacy are very often examined through the lens of diverse disciplines. Likewise, it is related and sometimes confused with terms such as international public relations, branding, advocacy or international cultural relations. The ongoing debate on the nature and coherent definition of public and cultural diplomacy, however, is not the subject of this article. Hence, in this paper cultural diplomacy is understood as a subcategory of public diplomacy or its instrument which uses cultural heritage and the resources of a state to pursue its national interests through foreign policy goals. Nick Cull described cultural diplomacy as the activities: “to manage the international environment through making [that nation’s] cultural resources and achievements known overseas and/or facilitating cultural transmission abroad”.²

Therefore, the question of who is responsible for cultural exports is a major preoccupation for scholarship. However, for the purposes of this paper, the focus is on the role of the government, obviously, as long as cultural diplomacy amounts to policy which aims at encouraging public

² N. Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Lessons for the Past*, FIGUEROA Press, Los Angeles 2009, p. 19.

opinion to influence a foreign government and its attitudes towards the sender country.³

The perspective presented above by Manuela Aguilar is reaffirmed in the foreign policy definitions and goals used by other international relations scholars. For instance, in a list of the functions of foreign policy, Renata Włoch⁴ suggests that the adaptative and representational-informational function could be fulfilled by tools such as public or cultural diplomacy. Józef Kukułka,⁵ on the other hand, specifies ensuring security, increasing the power of the state, and strengthening its international position as major foreign policy goals. Especially in a field of increasing power and international positioning, cultural and public diplomacy may be significant tools which can effectively accomplish the aims of foreign policy. Such an understanding of the role and goals of foreign policy is clearly reflected in Joseph Nye's theory of soft power and the liberal paradigm of international relations where the importance of public opinion and its impact on political decision making is highlighted. The theory quite aptly explains states' reasoning to develop public and cultural diplomacy.

Soft power arises from the attractiveness of a nation's values, culture, and policies.⁶ It causes people to act through cooperation rather than duress and obligation. When the values, culture, and policies of states or nonstate actors have moral authority or are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, their soft power is increased.⁷ From the perspective of government policies, the difference between hard and soft power in states' activities is that hard power would amount to coercive diplomacy, war, and alliance in the military sphere, or sanctions and bribe in the economic sphere, whereas public diplomacy is presented as an official policy translating soft power resources, such as cultural heritage and values, into action".⁸ To make it simple, the main difference between them is coercion and force on the one hand and collaboration and attraction on the other. To summarize, for the purpose of this analysis, public and cultural diplomacy are examined from the perspective of political science, being understood as

³ M. Aguilar, *Cultural Diplomacy and Foreign Policy: German-American Relations 1955–1968*, Peter Lang, New York 1996, pp. 10–11.

⁴ R. Włoch, *Funkcje polityki zagranicznej państwa (State's Foreign Policy Functions)*, in: *Wstęp do polityki zagranicznej państwa (Introduction to the Theory of the State's Foreign Policy)*, ed. R. Zięba, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2004, p. 124.

⁵ J. Kukułka, *Międzynarodowe Stosunki Polityczne (International political relations)*, PWN, Warszawa 1980, p. 43.

⁶ J. Nye, op. cit., p. 6

⁷ E. Gilboa, *Searching for a theory of public diplomacy*, „The Annals of the American Academy of political and social science”, no. 3/2008, p. 57.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 61.

foreign policy tools designed to fulfill national interests through information, cooperation, and non-coercive means which is reflected in Joseph Nye's soft power theory.

Comparative Analysis and Case Studies

To compare practices and approaches towards cultural and public diplomacy in the UAE, France, and Germany, a methodological framework is also required. Comparative analysis and case studies are methods often used in political science. They both help researchers to frame reality or phenomena and construct theories and models. Through comparative analysis, scholars are able to highlight similarities and differences among actors and programs. Etan Gilboa⁹ indicates several categories of case studies in public diplomacy including actors, such as a particular state, international organization, or NGOs; public diplomacy instruments such as international broadcasting or cultural diplomacy; target states or regions; and individual leaders. Alexander George offered an interesting approach to comparative research in public diplomacy which he called a "structured focused comparison".¹⁰ This structure systematizes the instruments of public diplomacy depending on the time range and involvement of the government. Three time-dimensions are proposed: immediate, intermediate, and long. Each indicates different goals and means, attitudes to communication techniques and public opinion, a different degree of a government commitment, and therefore the choice of relevant public diplomacy instruments. Interestingly, cultural diplomacy in George's structure is a public diplomacy instrument designed for long-term results, remotely linked to government with the purpose of building relationships and favorable conditions for government operations through media and public opinion. Having examined public and cultural diplomacy using the aforementioned methodology we are able to indicate most significant variables and relations between them and therefore organize our knowledge by constructing diverse models.

Models & Types

Etan Gilboa in his article "Searching for Public Diplomacy Theory"¹¹ amongst others came up with following public diplomacy models: the

⁹ Ibidem, p. 70.

¹⁰ A. George, *Case studies and theory development: The method of structured, focused comparison*, in: *Diplomacy: New approaches in history, theory and policy*, ed. P. Gordon Lauren, Free Press, New York 1979, pp. 43–68.

¹¹ E. Gilboa, op. cit., p. 59.

Basic Cold War model, and the Domestic PR model. He used five variables to distinguish between them: major actors, initiators, goals, types of media, and means and techniques. In the Basic Cold War model, public TV, newspapers, and radio stations are used by the government to conduct public diplomacy. In the Domestic PR model, the government hires PR firms, NGOs, or even lobbyists in the target country to achieve its goals. As Gilboa quite aptly noted, “the establishment of a local support group or a movement in the target country could also strengthen the legitimacy and authenticity of the campaign. A local PR firm or NGO is likely to know best how to achieve the desired goals in a given political and cultural context [...]”¹² Gilboa’s models fit into Alexander’s George framework for comparison where cultural diplomacy is only a Public Diplomacy instrument. Martin Zamorano, however, presents an approach which is more centered on cultural diplomacy and which explains its character and nature as more autonomous phenomenon, characterized by policies belonging to diverse models, “centralized” and “agencied” (or “delegated”),¹³ which we can collate with Gilboa’s Cold War and Domestic PR models. A centralized model is characterized by a well-marked state presence with a greater national tone. As an example, Zamorano discusses France where cultural diplomacy is the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture and Communications and of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. An agencied model is based on the “arm’s length” principle concept. It involves the establishment of agencies (usually the quasi-nongovernmental organizations – quango) with less marked reference to government as well as autonomy in cultural design indirectly fulfilling foreign policy goals. The British Council serves well as an example, since it is dependent on the United Kingdom’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office but with private sponsorship and quango’s structure.

Most states operate within either the “agencied” or “centralised” system, but mixed models are also present. According to Andreas Wiesand, in Europe, two thirds out of 44 countries have inter-ministerial cultural diplomacy and 21 of these states maintain cultural centers abroad, although not all under the arm’s length principle.¹⁴ Zamorano, building on the pre-

¹² E. Gilboa, op. cit., p. 55.

¹³ M. Zamorano, *Cultural diplomacy Definition historical evolution and current trends*, Teaching materials for the Postgraduate Diploma on International Cultural Cooperation and Management, Universitat de Barcelona 2015, p. 9, https://www.academia.edu/24217940/Cultural_diplomacy_Definition_historical_evolution_and_current_trends (access 2.10.2020).

¹⁴ A. Wiesand, *National Policies Influencing Cultural Cooperation and Mobility in Europe An overview of Research Results*, European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research, Bonn 2007, p. 5.

vious work of Villanueva,¹⁵ Chartrand¹⁶ and Zahrana,¹⁷ offers two types of cultural diplomacy: culturalist and neopropagandist; however, only one of them is presented positively. The culturalist type “emphasizes the cultural value of heritage, arts, and identities (as opposed to prioritizing their instrumental form), assumes at the same time the relative absence of governmental control over the creative process linked to artistic diffusion”.¹⁸ On the contrary, the neopropagandist type represents the instrumental use of culture by a state and is limited to “unilateral dissemination of cultural content that shows a positive view of the political territory in question”.¹⁹ These types of cultural diplomacy (culturalist and neopropogandist) are reinforced by soft power theory, usually involve the transnational private sector, and eventually lead to reduction of social participation.²⁰ Hence, the neopropagandist type represents a purely instrumental use of culture in order to fulfill national interests without any effort to engage the addressees in dialogue.

The models and types presented above significantly differ one from another. Gilboa’s models always recognize government participation in cultural diplomacy and only the extent of its involvement may vary. Zamorano describes the culturalist type as one where government commitment is not observed. The question remains, however, of what is meant by “relative absence of governmental control” and what would distinguish this type of cultural diplomacy from international cultural relations as defined by Richard Arndt.²¹ Gilboa also pays more attention not only to actors and goals, but also to techniques and the time range of researched activities. Zamorano tends to look into the motivations behind cultural

¹⁵ C. Villanueva, *Representing Cultural Diplomacy: Soft Power, Cosmopolitan Constructivism and Nation Branding in Mexico and Sweden*, Växjö University Press, Växjö 2007, p. 38.

¹⁶ H. Chartrand, *International cultural affairs: a 14 country survey*, „Journal of Arts Management”, Law & Society, Ottawa, no. 22/1992, pp. 134–154.

¹⁷ R. Zaharna, *Mapping out a Spectrum of Public Diplomacy Initiatives*, in: *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, eds. by N. Snow, P. Taylor, Routledge, New York 2009, pp. 86–100.

¹⁸ M. Zamorano, *Reframing Cultural Diplomacy: The Instrumentalization of Culture under the Soft Power Theory*, *Culture Unbound*, no. 8, Linköping University Electronic Press, Linköping, 2016, p. 178.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 179.

²⁰ R. Ulldemolins, M. Zamorano, *Spain’s nation branding project Marca España and its cultural policy: the economic and political instrumentalization of a homogeneous and simplified cultural image*, „International Journal of Cultural Policies”, no. 1/2014, p. 21.

²¹ R. Arndt, *Cultural Diplomacy, Political Influence, and Integrated Strategy*, in: *Strategic Influence: Public Diplomacy, Counterpropaganda, and Political Warfare*, ed. M.J. Waller, Institute of World Politics Press, Washington DC 2009, p. 74.

diplomacy, taking a quite judgmental position in which the culturalist prevails over the neopropagandist type, which already has in its name a pejorative link to propaganda. The problem with such an outlook was well addressed by Radosław Zenderowski who said that scholars assigning cultural diplomacy purely to the role of “creating the atmosphere of trust and understanding and building interest in life and values of the nations is somewhat wishful thinking. These authors tend to ascribe to states intentions characteristic of cultural people and a kind of empathy and the ability to understand other cultures. In reality, states pursue their goals, which are often egoistic in nature”.²² Therefore, I presume that the neopropagandist type of cultural diplomacy may appear more relevant to monarchies and authoritarian regimes, whereas governments could be interested in unilateral communication instead of dialogue with the audience. However, this needs to be reaffirmed in the analysis below.

France & Germany the Western Archetypes of Public and Cultural Diplomacy

France and Germany are examples of European countries recognized amongst “precursors” of cultural diplomacy. They are both very creative, using art, film, music, and literature and design in the promotion of their culture and heritage and thereby in the implementation of the policies set by their national governments. Both countries are able to use their unique cultural products worked out over the years. Although, they represent different approaches to cultural diplomacy, their experience may serve as precedent in planning public and cultural diplomacy strategies.²³

France

French cultural diplomacy is performed under the auspices and supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Communication and of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It has at its disposal both a network of 96 French Institutes around the world and over 800 branches of Alliance Françaises. The concept of French culture as a “civilizing mission” is strongly expressed

²² R. Zenderowski, *Uczestnicy i kreatorzy międzynarodowych stosunków kulturalnych (Participants and creators of international cultural relations)*, in: *Międzynarodowe Stosunki Kulturalne (International Cultural Relations)*, eds. R. Zenderowski, K. Cebul, M. Krycki, PWN, Warszawa 2010, p. 152.

²³ Primary activity of the cultural institutes in both cases, was the teaching of French and German languages respectively. The analysis carried out by the author however, leaves this part of the activity of French and German cultural diplomacy outside the spectrum of interest.

in the official doctrine of having cultural diplomacy as a foreign policy tool. This assumes the use of the attractiveness of French art, thought, and technology abroad.²⁴ Cultural diplomacy has been discussed in a series of important political documents, including “Rapport pour le président de la République sur la France et la mondialisation”²⁵ by Hubert Védrine, “La France et l’Europe dans le monde: livre blanc sur la politique étrangère et européenne de la France, 2008–2020”²⁶ by Alain Juppé and Louis Schweitzer, and the acting law “LOI n°. 2010-873 du 27 juillet 2010 relative à l’action extérieure de l’Etat”.²⁷

France stressed the importance of culture in its foreign policy after the Second World War. It was affected by the postwar reality where France went “from the status of a weak major power to something less”.²⁸ Through the use of culture and its cultural capital, France was trying to manage its position in the new international order. Since then culture was the key element to “validate/elevate its national brand in a globalized world”.²⁹ In French cultural diplomacy, multilateral organization with state-level representation is observed, where language is the main component. The concept of Francophonie based on a common heritage and language established a safeguard in upholding the alliance between the ex-colonies, countries with a significant French language population, and France itself. In 2019, L’Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie encompassed 56 member states, 2 associate members, and 13 observers. As Kevin Mulcahy has argued: “Aesthetic, linguistic, and stylistic concerns have been long-standing political issues that have generated a strong French commitment to cultural diplomacy. Indeed, the glories of French civilization have long been seen as a reflection of national greatness and have for long periods been eagerly adopted by other nations as a model worthy of imitation”.³⁰

Hence, France has a reputation which allows lifestyle, values, and cultural heritage transmission to other countries. But certainly, it required

²⁴ K. Mulcahy, *Public Culture, Cultural Identity, Cultural Policy*, Palgrave, New York 2017, p. 47.

²⁵ H. Védrine, *Rapport pour le président de la République sur la France et la mondialisation* Fayard, Paris 2007.

²⁶ A. Juppé, L.Schweitzer, *La France et l’Europe dans le monde: livre blanc sur la politique étrangère et européenne de la France, 2008–2020*, Collection des rapports officiels, Paris 2008.

²⁷ LOI n° 2010-873 of 27th July 2010 relating to the State’s external action, *Legislatif Dossier* 2008.

²⁸ H. Lebovics, *Mona Lisa’s Escort: André Malroux and the Reinvention of French Culture*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1999, p. 5.

²⁹ K. Mulcahy, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 38.

years of engaging with its counterparts convincing them about advantages of a “French attitude” on the one hand and the conscious ability to answer the question of what it means to be French on the other.

As a case study of the practical application of French cultural diplomacy, film events organized and co-organized by the French Institute in Poland are presented below. The Pavilion of French Summer Cinema (fr. “Pavillon Estival du Cinem Français”) is part of an event called “Summer Cinem Pavilion” (pl. “Pawilon Kina Letniego”) organized on a yearly basis by the National Museum in Kraków. Films are screened from July until September in the city center, in the open air, on one of the walls of the museum buildings. The admission is free of charge after previous registration. The event is officially supported by the French Institute and French Consulate General in Krakow. Amongst private entities in the project there is a small cafeteria, “Petite France”. The thematic scope of the films varied in the year??, including contemporary French films and many others. Similarly, The French Institute in Warsaw participates in an initiative called the “Film Capital of Summer” (pl. “Filomwa Stolica Lata”) organized from July until September in Warsaw in 18 diverse and very attractive locations.³¹ Amongst the partners, which comprise both local authorities and private entities, French Institute is the only cultural institute partnering with this project. Admission is also free of charge.

The “Review of the New French Cinema” is one of the initiatives exclusively organized to show French film productions. In 2020, the 11th iteration was held. Usually films are screened during one week in different Polish cities and towns³² in intimate studio cinemas. The difference from aforementioned events is that tickets are charged according to cinemas’ pricelists. The review gives the audience an opportunity to see a wide range of film genres, including drama, comedy, and documentary.

In an attempt to fit these three examples of French cultural diplomacy in Poland into a theoretical framework, on top of the means which were used (film screenings), we need to identify the goals, time range, and major entities involved. The major entities are easy to identify from the

³¹ DOK Ursynów, Doróżkarnia, Filмотeka Narodowa, Kamionkowskie Błonia Elekcyjne, Kępa Potocka, Kopa Cwila, Ursynów, Muzeum Warszawy Lapidarium, Niepodległa – miejsce spotkań, Ogród Saski, Park, Henrykowski, Białołęka, Park nad Balatonem, Park Polińskiego, Park Szymańskiego, Parking Arcelormittal, Plaża Romantyczna, Royal Wilanów, Urząd Dzielnicy Wilanów, Wola Park.

³² Warszawa – Kino Muranów; Katowice – Kino Światowid; Toruń – Kino Centrum; Łódź – Kino Charlie; Wrocław – Kino Nowe Horyzonty; Zamość – CKF Stylowy; Szczecin – Kino Pionier; Białystok – Kino Forum; Olsztyn – Kino Awangarda 2; Poznań – Kino Muza, Gdańsk – Klub Żak; Kraków – Kino Pod Baranami, Sala kinowa w Małopolskim Ogrodzie Sztuki; Radom – MCSW Elektrownia.

description above. We can see that the French model could be a representation of what Zamorano called the “agencied” approach. Despite occasional involvement of the French Consulate General, the French Institute remains the major perpetuator. Its cooperation with non-governmental actors, such as cinemas, NGOs, and entrepreneurs but also governmental institutions, such as the National Museum or local authorities, seems to be crucial for implementing cultural diplomacy projects. “The French Institutes however, are subordinated to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a large part of their budget comes from a state subsidy”.³³

Therefore, it would be mistaken to use one model for describing both British and French strategies for cultural diplomacy. For this reason, it is more appropriate to describe French model rather as centralized than agencied. The time range should not be described only by the time of particular event, for example a given week or month, but also its regularity, i.e., a yearly basis.

These two factors indicate so far that the French cultural diplomacy model in Poland fits the purpose of the PR Domestic model proposed by Gilboa, but it should be further reaffirmed by the goals of these projects which are not explicit, and in order to identify them we need to have a look at French foreign policy goals in Poland. These can be found in detail in the official communication on the webpage of The Foreign Affairs Ministry of the Republic of France,³⁴ but we can also summarize as follows: “Poland and France strive to strengthen the political dialogue in the field of security and defense, education, science and culture, and the economy, as well as to coordinate positions at the European level, so as to jointly create the Europe of tomorrow”.³⁵ Hence, we can assume that long-term French cultural diplomacy projects may help achieving foreign policy goals through non-coercive transmission of cultural content into diverse spheres of Polish society, thus creating a positive atmosphere and attitude towards France. Obviously, the elite and intellectuals of major cities are aimed as the audience of events such as “Pavilion of the French Summer Cinema”, but the fact that the “Review of the New French Cin-

³³ Z. Kisiełowska, *Promocja kultury francuskiej za granicą – Instytut Frnacuski (Promotion of French Culture Abroad – French Institute)*, in: *Europejskie Modele Polityki Kulturolanej (European Models of Cultural Policy)*, eds. B. Gierat-Bieroń, K. Kowalski, Małopolska Szkoła Administracji Publicznej Akademii Ekonomicznej Kraków 2005, p. 111.

³⁴ French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/poland/> (access 2.10.2020).

³⁵ Onet.pl, <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/tylko-w-onecie/emmanuel-macron-w-polsce-ambasador-z-uwaga-obszerwujemy-francje/rjhr9rg> (access 2.10.2020).

ema” takes place amongst other cities in Radom, Olsztyn and Zamość indicates a willingness to broaden the scope of the potential audience.

Germany

In the West Germany, the time after Second World War was a period of actively constructing a strategy of cultural diplomacy, although it was hampered by the events of the global conflict that had just ended. In order to create a coherent image abroad, taking into account the difficult experiences of the war, West Germany proposed a strategy of cultural diplomacy in which independent, non-governmental organizations have a mandate to represent German culture. This division was to ensure an objective representation detached from political power and party politics.³⁶

Currently, after reunification of Germany, three institutions are mainly responsible for German cultural policy. DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) works in the area of students’ mobility and teaching German at a university level. The Alexander von Humboldt Association deals with international research in Germany and international research projects. The Goethe Institute aims to represent German culture and language abroad, outside the academic community and to create a contemporary image of Germany in the world.

The Goethe Institute is the largest of the three organizations with a network of 169 language schools and cultural centers worldwide.³⁷ Although the Institute is independent of the German federal government, its main directions of activity are discussed with the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs every year. While creating the aforementioned narrative, the activities of the Institute focus on the topics of the Third Reich, East Germany, reunification, and multiculturalism in Germany. Works of literature, art, music, and film are used to engage the international community in dialogue with Germany on the image and culture of their country. German cultural diplomacy is favored by the fact that the country has abandoned the elite approach to culture promoted by the Frankfurt School. The Germans stress that cultural exchange is the dominant principle in their international cultural policy. The importance of festivals as a means of cultural diplomacy is also clear, as cultural festivals themselves

³⁶ I. Herrschner, *The Role of Art in German Cultural Diplomacy: An Analysis of the Festival of German Films in Melbourne, Australia*, *Media Transformations* no. 11/2015, p. 125.

³⁷ Goethe Institute Annual Report 2019–2020, https://www.goethe.de/resources/files/pdf202/gi_jahrbuch_2020.pdf (access 29.10.2020).

act as cultural diplomacy, creating a space for discussion and exchange of ideas for audiences and artists.³⁸

In Poland, the “German Cinema Week” has been organized annually for over 20 years. Originally, these were local events taking place in Krakow, Warsaw, or cities in south-west Poland. Six years ago, the organizers of these screenings (Goethe-Institut in Warsaw and Kraków, and the Nuremberg House in Krakow and the German Consulate General in Wrocław) decided to join forces and present a joint program for the German Film Week in several cinemas across Poland.³⁹ The screenings are organized in the local studio cinemas and tickets are charged according to cinemas’ pricelists. Each iteration of this presentation of German cinema is a display of various film genres dealing with many topics, with particular emphasis on those with relevance to contemporary Germany and to circumstances the artists and directors working in Germany react immediately. Additionally in 2019, Q&A sessions with Cordula Kablitz-Post, the director of the film “Die Toten Hosen on tour” (2019), took place in Wrocław and Poznań and a Q&A session with Mohammad Farokhmanesh, the director of the “Little Germans” (2018), was organized in Kraków and Wrocław.

Germany follows the agencied or delegated model, with the Goethe Institute as the main actor behind German cultural diplomacy in Poland. The national element, however, is more prominently highlighted in the content of the programme, closely connected to a historical narrative but also to current issues within German society. The Domestic PR model determinants are fulfilled with a time range which is long-term and the participation of local studio cinemas, which have their own particular audience mainly consisting of intellectuals and the elite. Again, the tendency to broaden the audience was marked by a jointly drafted programme and by extending the list of screening locations. The goals are in line with the general activity of Goethe Institute which is creating a positive image of contemporary Germany and engaging the public into dialogue on problems such as the Holocaust or multiculturalism which also amount to German foreign policy goals.

UAE – Cultural and Public Diplomacy Beyond the Western World

In the past four decades, the United Arab Emirates has become one of the most dynamic and successful forces in the MENA region. From

³⁸ I. Herrschner, op. cit., p. 126.

³⁹ Wrocław, Kraków, Gdańsk, Katowice, Opole, Kielce, Poznań, Zielona Góra, Gorzów Wielkopolski, Łódź, Rzeszów, Warszawa.

a small monarchic federation with a tribal society and little experience of statehood, it reached the point where ‘The Economist’ magazine has referred to it as ‘Little Sparta,’ emphasizing the UAE’s growing hard power capabilities.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the UAE’s soft power is under constant development, with a vision of transforming itself into a global player acting through tolerance and understanding to achieve peace and prosperity. The geopolitics of the country are complex. Iran on the other side of the Gulf is perceived as the biggest threat to UAE security, which forces Emirates to make alliances with Saudi Arabia, for example, and to maneuver between the USA and China. Economic competition, through maintaining trade relations with most parts of the World and counterbalancing the influence of other players such as Turkey, is another challenge. Finally, the internal demographic situation, with an uneven ratio between the incoming population and the autochthons pushes the UAE to keep close relations with India, which is the motherland for the majority of migrants in the Emirates. All these aspects have to be considered while planning foreign policy directions and the best tools to fulfill its goals. Soft power through public and cultural diplomacy has gained importance as complementary to the developing hard power of the country.

Legal & Institutional Framework

Reflective of this strategy, several steps were taken in order to incorporate a soft power strategy, including cultural diplomacy actions into the Emirati legal system. First was the foundation of the UAE Soft Power Council in 2017. The UAE Soft Power Council was supposed to review all the legislation and policies that have an impact on the UAE’s image and reputation abroad. Just a few months after its foundation, it published the UAE Soft Power Strategy in September 2017. This strategy aims to increase the country’s global reputation abroad by highlighting its identity, heritage, culture, and contributions to the world. It also revealed the global and regional aspirations of the country through four objectives:

- “– to develop a unified direction for various sectors including the economy, humanities, tourism, media, and science
- to promote the UAE’s position as a gateway to the region
- to establish the UAE as a regional capital for culture, art and tourism
- to establish its reputation as a modern and tolerant country that welcomes all people from across the world”⁴¹

⁴⁰ TheEconomist, <https://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-andafrica/21720319-driven-energetic-crown-price-uae-building-basesfar-beyond-its> (access 30.09.2020).

⁴¹ Emirates News Agency, <http://wam.ae/en/details/1395302634954> (access 2.10.2020).

Secondly, the governmental conference titled *The Future of Culture Retreat* was organized in 2018. The “UAE Cultural Development Fund” and the “Creative Industries Contributions Index” were initiated in the venue by the Prime Minister and the Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum. The event brought together a number of cabinet ministers and senior government officials to work on the implementation of a comprehensive development plan for innovative cultural initiatives and projects. The “UAE Cultural Development Fund” provided the necessary funds to support the proposed cultural activities within the country and encouraged projects and initiatives aimed at promoting the development of UAE cultural products.⁴²

In June 2018, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation opened the Office for Public and Cultural Diplomacy (OPCD) to coordinate a range of entities and stakeholders from the private and public sectors both on federal and local levels. Its purpose is to help explaining what constitutes Emirati culture to international partners. The office will also oversee the training for UAE diplomats focused on cultural diplomacy.⁴³ The most promising artists, filmmakers, and writers from the United Arab Emirates will be encouraged to work with 183 embassies across the globe to showcase the best creative talent the country has to offer. The head of the OPCD is the highly respected Minister of State Zaki Nusseibeh, who was a translator and close adviser of Sheikh Zayed, the country’s founding president.

Emirati Films

Beyond the official framework for public and cultural diplomacy, there are several projects run by diverse semi-private entities. One of them is Image Nation Abu Dhabi. The United Arab Emirates has quickly developed a movie industry that entertains and helps to spread Emirati values and culture abroad. Image Nation Abu Dhabi is one of the biggest film producers in the Gulf and within only ten years it has grown to an impressive size, partially due to state financial support. Launched in 2008, the company’s mission is not only to build the foundations of a strong local film industry in the UAE, but also a film and entertainment industry across the GCC and MENA. Image Nation uses a combination of local talents and international expertise. It also encourages young filmmakers to self-development through the program called “Arab Film Studio”. The company produces, TV series, documentaries, and entertainment for an

⁴² Emirates News Agency, <http://wam.ae/en/details/1395302665018> (access 2.10.2020).

⁴³ OPCD, <https://opcd.ae/about-opcd/cultural-diplomacy/> (access 2.10.2020).

audience throughout the world and is the first UAE company to have multiple productions globally on Netflix.⁴⁴

Since April 2016, Image Nation Abu Dhabi has been involved in the annual Emirati Film Review in Poland organized on a yearly basis by the Nahda Foundation and supported by the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs through its Embassy in Warsaw. Nahda operates as a non-profit organization providing direct, open communication as a means towards a more profound and solid connection that leads to countering stereotypes and increasing cooperation between Poles, Europeans, and Arabs.⁴⁵ The main purpose behind the Emirati Film Review in Poland was to inspire a change in the prevailing biased thinking and outlook towards the Arab world and culture.⁴⁶ Films are strong information carriers and throughout the four editions a range of movies were selected to show major differences but also similarities that can create a basis for future understanding. One of the key elements was to show the Emirates with all of its virtues and imperfections in order to highlight social and cultural challenges that people living in the UAE face in their everyday life. The films were screened mostly in local studio cinemas in Kraków (Kino Pod Baranami), Warsaw (Kino LAB and the Museum of Asia and the Pacific) and Katowice (Kino Światowid). The tickets were charged according to cinemas pricelists. The Emirati Film Review was also an opportunity to meet filmmakers personally. Every year, a special guest was invited from the UAE to answer questions from the Polish audience and to give the Emirati perspective. For the first event it was Nawaf Al Janahi, director of “Sea Shadow” (2011).

The UAE follows the centralized model of cultural diplomacy. Unlike in the case of France, however, the UAE lack organizations such as a cultural institute which could play a role in facilitating cultural diplomacy projects abroad. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was directly involved in coordinating and cooperating with local partners, e.g. Nahda. Still, the characteristics of the Emirati Film Review in Poland may suggest that the UAE follows the Domestic PR Model with annual events and by pursuing foreign policy goals through local partners. The goals themselves were specified in the UAE Soft Power Strategy, and the case study of cinema review fits the purpose of promoting a positive image of the country, countering stereotypes about it and attracting investors and tourists.

⁴⁴ Image Nation Abu Dhabi, <https://imagenationabudhabi.com/about-us/> (access 2.10.2020).

⁴⁵ Nahda, <http://nahdafoundation.org.pl/about/> (access 2.10.2020).

⁴⁶ Emirati Film Review, <http://kinoemirackie.pl/?lang=en#przeglad> (access 2.10.2020).

On top of that it seems adequate and wise to organize Q&A sessions to accompany film screenings. The idea of broadening the scope of the events beyond simple film screenings has been widely debated in academia since the 1990s, and a broader approach is aptly encompassed in the concept of film festivals which create an interpretative framework around each film.⁴⁷ Q&A sessions, lectures, and the presence of artists establish great potential for cultural diplomacy. Foreign films provide a window onto a different culture by offering an immersive experience of difference and thus the film festival is a transnational space, communicating between cultures and allowing people to empathize with characters on screen.⁴⁸

Why Centralized? – The Analysis

The major difference in the case studies discussed here is that the United Arab Emirates presents a centralized model of cultural diplomacy. What could be the main reasons for this? The answer to this question is not straightforward and encompasses various elements. The unique context for cultural diplomacy practices within the UAE, besides its short history and lack of extensive national heritage, is the partisan mentality of its people and the presence of an overwhelmingly expatriate workforce. The problem which arises is that out of a population of almost 10 million living in the country, Emiratis account for only one million. In order to face the future, when the natural resources are exhausted and the current economic model will need to be replaced with a new one, it seems inevitable that there the UAE will need to be unified as one nation primarily loyal to a sovereign. Hence national culture, which already features prominently in cultural exports, may serve well as a unifying mechanism, conveying the same comprehensive and consistent image inside the country. I presume that in light of shortages of human and cultural resources and the importance of the issue, the Emirati government has made a decision to coordinate the internal and external use of cultural assets itself.

The centralized model may also result from the necessity of preparing cultural products before they are exported as there is nothing ready waiting on a shelf. A difference between states such as France and Germany and the UAE, is that the former do not need to expend a great deal of effort to propose something culturally exclusive and related to their nation, whereas this is the case for the latter. Data presented in Elcano's Global

⁴⁷ D. Iordanova, R. Rhyne, *The Festival Circuit*, St. Andrews Film Studies, Gate Press, St Andrews 2009, p. 2.

⁴⁸ B. Nichols, *Discovering Form, Inferring Meaning, New Cinemas and the Film Festival Circuit*, „Film Quarterly”, no. 47(3), Oakland 1994, p. 18.

Presence Report 2018 reaffirms this view. Good public relations and visibility are the most important methods by which the Emirati government strives to achieve their designated goals in the field of soft power and cultural diplomacy. According to Elcano's Report,⁴⁹ the UAE is 22nd out of 120 researched countries listed in the soft presence index. "Information", followed by "Migration" and "Cooperation", is the main variable that ensures the high position of the UAE in the list. "Information" in this case translates into a number of mentions in news of major international press agencies, such as the Associated Press, Reuters, AFP, DPA, ITARTASS, EFE, ANSA, and Xinhua. Interestingly, "Culture", which stands for exports of audiovisual services (cinematographic productions, radio, television programs, and musical recordings), amounts to a 0% share in the UAE's position.⁵⁰ It means either that the data obtained from the WTO international trade statistics is not complete, or that movie production probably plays a minor role in the UAE and does not appear in the official records.

The UAE's tribal character together with the centralized model may reinforce another important variable of Emirati cultural diplomacy: namely, the type of audience. The French and especially German examples show that cultural diplomacy is mostly facilitated outside of the sphere of public administration. The Goethe Institute specializes in presenting German films and accompanying events in order to engage foreign low-profile audiences in dialogue on the German image abroad. Unfortunately, in the UAE most of the events are directed to high-level officials or public administration representatives, which may be a result of the large power differential in Emirati society and perhaps the more prosaic reason that high-profile audiences are more easily accessible for Emirati officials. The tribal aspect and its impact on the cultural diplomacy model can be inferred from Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory. According to this theory, one of the factors characterizing any national culture is called "Power Distance". People in societies exhibiting a large degree of Power Distance accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place, and which needs no further justification. In societies with low Power Distance, people strive to equalize the distribution of power and demand justification for inequalities of power.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Elcano Global Presence Report 2018, https://www.globalpresence.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/data/Global_Presence_2018.pdf (access 2.10.2020).

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 40.

⁵¹ Hofstede Insights, <https://hi.hofstede-insights.com/national-culture> (access 2.10.2020). Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is a framework for cross-cultural communication. It shows the effects of a society's culture on the values of its mem-

This indicator is quite low in the case of Germany (35 out of 100 points) and very high (90) in the UAE. It means that it is natural for Emirati people and administration that cultural diplomacy strategies drafted by its authorities should be first of all perpetuated by state officials and directed to its counterparts abroad and not simply to whole societies. Indeed, all the activities are supported by high-profile state officials, but do not sufficiently underline the role and meaning of the average Emirati citizen. The Emirati Film Review in Poland established an exception which should be followed by the UAE in the future. The Office for Public and Cultural Diplomacy also sets a good example by getting involved in low-profile initiatives involving the contributions of local artists. The office communicates its actions through social media and on their webpage and it constantly develops further means and channels to keep in touch with the public, abroad and in the country. This trend should definitely be upheld in order to decentralize Emirati cultural diplomacy and stress the importance of using “organic” cultural flows as a political tool.

Conclusions

Public and cultural diplomacy strategies depend to a large extent on diverse political and geopolitical circumstances, as well as historical experience in the statecraft and nationhood. Consequently, “centralized” or “domestic PR” models in case of France are not equal to the same models applied in the UAE. In France, the centralized model is the result of the state’s unitarity and the special competences assigned to the central administration. Alternatively, in Emirates lack of cultural assets, human resources and extensive experience in statehood, requires strong and firm leadership for which centralized model allows more control. Therefore, distinction between neopropagandist and culturalist type of cultural diplomacy proposed by Mariano Zamorano may be more adequate in comparing cultural diplomacy practices beyond western world with its archetypes, as it primarily differentiates intentions and goals of governments using culture as foreign policy tool.

In the cases of both France and Germany, the ability to answer the “identity question” – what does it mean to be French or German? – was preceded by years of shaping specific attitudes which are upheld by shared values, customs, and language. The uniqueness of culture is already implicit. The French language is “a way of thinking and of action: a certain

bers, and how these values relate to behavior, using a structure derived from factor analysis.

way of asking the question and of finding solutions”.⁵² When the time came and the necessity of using culture in an institutionalized form arose, there was a ready product to be exported abroad.

The United Arab Emirates has a very short history as a state, and therefore the time to define the identity of its own people was very limited. It is even more complicated when we look at Emirati demographics, where 90% of the society is established by non-citizen foreigners who already belong to other cultural circles and have diverse identities. The problem is complex, and it touches upon the issue of migration, naturalization, and the tribal mentality of Emiratis which makes them strict when it comes to accepting new members of the community. The cultural products which the Emirati authorities try to label as part of Emirati culture, whether it is falconry, Bukhur, henna, or pearl diving, are in fact typical for the whole Gulf region. The Arabic language is also not unique only to the Emirates. Therefore, very often, we may receive the impression that Emirati cultural diplomacy is somewhat artificial. The political framework is drafted, but there is an obvious agenda and a difficulty in filling this framework with meaningful cultural content.

It seems, the UAE government understood crucial role of the soft power tools such as public and cultural diplomacy, for the successful fulfillment of its foreign policy goals. Its strategy, however is continuously developing and not fully shaped yet. Although certain practices, such as Emirati Film Review in Poland are similar to venues organized by France or Germany, it is far from copying their cultural and public diplomacy models. It appears obvious when we examine macro factors such as political, cultural and geopolitical situation of these states. I presume that UAE drawing on experience of its European counterparts will use this particular knowledge to develop its own public and cultural diplomacy model going beyond previously known theoretical framework and therefore giving space for more detailed research in this area.

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⁵² J. Hamilton, *Canada in Action: The Commonwealth, La Francophonie*, Routledge Taylor, Detroit 1994, p. 5.

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