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УДК: 327. 8

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#### «GOODWILL AMBASSADOR»: BARACK OBAMA AS AN AGENT OF CONTEMPORARY U. S. CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

Розглядається процес еволюції культурної дипломатії Сполучених Штатів Америки у добу перебування при владі Б. Обами. Робиться аналіз здобутків та недоліків адміністрації чинного президента США у даній сфері. Крім того, здійснюється характеристика окремої особистості (на прикладі президента Б. Обами) у якості агента культурної дипломатії.

**Ключові слова:** культурна дипломатія, Б. Обама, адміністрація президента, унілатералізм, цінності, м'яка сила, культурний агент, США.

Рассматривается процесс эволюции культурной дипломатии США во время пребывания при власти Б. Обамы. Проводится анализ достижений и недостатков администрации действующего президента США в данной сфере. Кроме того, осуществляется характеристика отдельной личности (на примере президента Б. Обамы) в качестве агента культурной дипломатии.

**Ключевые слова:** культурная дипломатия, Б. Обама, администрация президента, унілатералізм, ценности, мягкая сила, культурный агент, США.

The article deals with the analyses of the process of cultural diplomacy evolution in the United States during the time of Barack Obama presidency. The author analyzes the achievements and shortcomings of the current U. S. presidential administration. Besides, she puts the main emphasis on characteristic of the individual (President Barack Obama as an example) as an agent of cultural diplomacy.

**Key words:** cultural diplomacy, Barack Obama, presidential administration, unilateralism, values, soft power, cultural agent, USA.

Since the Cold War, the United States of America marked as one of its biggest successes the creation and implementation of a positive image of their country abroad. American cultural diplomacy, based on a broad set of tools including those of an official and «unofficial» nature, has always served as an example for other countries. However, the global image of the U. S. as the most democratic country in the world has undergone significant «injuries» during the George W. Bush administration because of the unilateral decision to invade Iraq, among other things. This need not have been so. After the events of September 11, 2001, America experienced an unprecedented level of global support and empathy. This was short-lived, however, because of Bush's decision to «pre-emptively» strike Iraq on the pretense that Saddam Hussein harbored weapons of mass destruction or WMDs. Moreover, the George W. Bush' terminology («war on terror») and Manichean slogans («you are either with us or against us») alienated many American allies and created new enemies where none existed before [8]. As Joseph Nye summarized, the previous president had «well-defined strategic purpose (combating terrorism), but the methods of achieving this goal confined purely using hard power, not taking into account the potential of soft power» [10, p. 25].

In contrast, immediately after winning the 2008-2009 presidential election, Barack Obama and his administration started to work on improving the U. S. image worldwide by presenting it as a friendly, supportive, and open to discussions. Re-elected for a second term this year, the president began his «world goodwill tour» by extending his hand to others and not threatening them first [8]. Exactly because of this he was unofficially named in many countries as a «Goodwill Ambassador». And that's exactly why it's hard to disagree when many researchers called Obama's rule «the beginning of a new era of U. S. cultural diplomacy».

The issue of «cultural diplomacy» or, as it is often called, «foreign cultural policy», adjacent to the concept of «soft power», coined by the prominent American scientist Joseph Nye, is now increasingly

reflected in political discourse, especially in the West. Prominent researchers and proponents of these ideals include: J. Nye, Zb. Brzezinski, M. Cummings, R. Arndt, T. Friedman and others. Among Russian scientists who develop outlined problems: E. Astakhov, A. Dugin, V. Kapitsyn, V. Mezhujev, G. Filimonov, etc. Similarly, Ukrainian authors whose works highlight different aspects of the proposed topic are: I. Dudko, A. Lutsenko, S. Nedbayevskyy, I. Pohorska and others. Summarizing the available definitions of «cultural diplomacy» concept, we can assume that the most generalized and universal ones will be M. Cummings' definition which states: «cultural diplomacy» means the exchange of ideas, information, values, traditions, beliefs and other aspects of culture in order to foster mutual understanding. This exchange provides communication and respect between involved cultures, based on a mutual understanding of values and reducing stereotypical perception [6].

Unlike the monopoly governments hold over the «hard power» of military, political, and economic sanctions favored by many governmental strategists [10], cultural diplomacy is in the hands of many actors of a given nation. Museums, orchestras, opera and dance companies, especially those characterized as «national», are also players in the global arena. With the rise of non-state actors, questions are increasingly being asked in some countries about the purpose and value of governmental intervention, whether the focus is on cultural diplomacy or cultural relations. Moreover, the fact that many other actors are involved in international engagement can represent a challenge for any government foreign ministry that wishes to maintain a reasonably coherent national story or global image. In this context, the mission of the U. S. as a country that claims to be a global political actor and focuses on disseminating its values not only to certain regions of the world (which is more typical for European countries like Spain, France, Germany, etc.) is to create and offer to others more or less universal system of values: political, moral, social, economic, cultural, which is characterized by Nicolas Laos «global cultural diplomacy» [9]. Joseph Nye in this case refers to the expression of the former French foreign minister, who observed that «the Americans are powerful because they can inspire the dreams of others, thanks to the mastery of global images through film and television and because, for these same reasons, large numbers of students from other countries come to the United States to finish their studies» [10, p. 8].

It is well-known that U. S. cultural diplomacy since the Cold War has been carried out mainly on two levels: the «official» and the «unofficial». Officially, it is characterized by activities conducted at the appropriate institutional level (e. g., the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the U. S. Department of State, art organizations, private philanthropic foundations and sponsoring organizations, etc.). In turn, the «unofficial» cultural diplomacy, which in many ways is more ambitious and omnipresent as it includes a whole industry of U. S. mass culture, which is realized through such instruments as Hollywood cinema, mass media, show business, music, sports, subcultures, etc. [3].

At the same time, as the American scientist Richard Arndt mentioned in *The First Resort of Kings*: «cultural diplomacy, above all, requires cultural agents» [5]. Indeed, according to the Arendt, the biggest diplomatic victories in history were won not by various institutions, but mainly by separate individuals. As former U. S. President Bill Clinton famously put it during a conference on cultural diplomacy at the White House on November 28, 2000: «The Cold War was won by Elvis Presley» [3]. The hypothesis about the dominant role of the person in cultural diplomacy is also supported by award-winning author Thomas L. Friedman in one of his well-grounded criticisms of the Bush administration where he argues that only during the Obama presidency has America got a chance to regain its lost image on the world stage [7]. Thus, despite the fact that Article 1 of the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations provides us the definition: «diplomatic agents officially considered to be a member of a diplomatic mission, it can be a person, that according to his office is directly involved in carrying out representative functions» [1], and the widespread belief that heads of states can not directly engage in diplomatic contacts between each other on all international issues of mutual interest, the current U. S. president rightfully is considered now as the exception from these rules, and stands as the unofficial «agent» of modern cultural diplomacy of the United States. Anyway there are no doubts in the essential role of his figure in changing the nature of contemporary U. S. cultural diplomacy. Which was anticipated when Barack Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009, that was presented to him with the wording for «extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between nations».

Barack Obama is the 44th President of the United States (took office in January 2009, and again in January 2013) and the first African American on this post. As A. Zakharchenko summarized, Middle East policy of George W. Bush, which has been recognized as one of the most unfortunate in the history of the U. S., left to his successor unfavorable legacy in the region: the war in Afghanistan, the occupation of Iraq, deepening Arab-Israeli conflict, the threat of WMD proliferation, strengthening the radical Islamist ideology and accruing of anti-Americanism [2]. As the head of the United States, Barack Obama promised to abandon previous unilateral foreign policy and expressed readiness to take care not only of American interests, but the interests of countries all over the world. The actions of the

new U. S. administration aimed at reformatting U. S. relations with many countries, particularly with the Muslim world. He also stated American readiness to start negotiations with countries such as Iran, with which the United States hasn't maintained diplomatic relations for thirty years. In addition, one of the important promises of his election campaign was the completion of the military operations in Iraq and the withdrawal of American troops from there.

Having won the elections with the promise of change, particularly in foreign policy, Obama's major goal was to create a fundamentally new atmosphere in U. S. relations with other countries. The Obama administration has rejected the unilateralism of the Bush administration. As J. Gregory has observed, «Nowadays we live in the world where nothing can be done by the USA alone, but also nothing can be done without the USA. Thus cooperation is necessary, but is hard to achieve when a big part of the world has hostile attitudes towards your country» [8].

In this context, one of the priorities of the government of the newly elected president was to restore confidence to the U. S. of Middle Eastern countries, which was lost during the years of the rule of his predecessor George W. Bush. Shortly after his arrival at the White House, Obama made a number of statements that were aimed at making significant adjustments to the policy of Washington in the Middle East. This fundamentally new approach to the Middle East culminated in his so called «Cairo speech» [11].

At June 4, 2009 Barack Obama made a speech to all Muslims of the world from the University of Cairo. In this speech, the U. S. president called to turn the page in U. S. relations with the Islamic world, to start a joint struggle against extremism, to strengthen economic and scientific cooperation. As A. Zakharchenko mentioned, the preference for speech-giving exactly at Cairo wasn't accidental, one of the reasons of it was the fact that Egypt with Saudi Arabia belong to a group of «restrained Arab center» and play a crucial role in the Arab-Israeli peace settlement and the Iranian nuclear program [2].

An essential feature of the speech were the principles of cultural diplomacy as he called for a «new dialogue» between the United States and Islam, drawing attention to the fact that part of his responsibility as president of the United States was to concentrate in combating negative stereotypes about this religion [11]. Thus, the head of the U. S. administration confirmed that his approach to establish relations with the Muslim countries is fundamentally different from the approach of the George W. Bush administration, which preferred to spread Western values in the Arab world. Significantly, the 44th U. S. president acknowledged the failure and error attempts of Americans to impose their values among the states that are characterized by a completely different history and culture.

In addition, during the speech, Obama expressed confidence that his country and the Muslim world is quite a lot to do to achieve the effective collaboration. Rejecting the Samuel Huntington's theory of a «clash of civilizations», which considers the West and the Islamic world as opposite poles, he focused on the historical links and common values between East and West, such as the principles of justice and progress. Incidentally, the U. S. president has denied many myths that proliferated after the events of September 11, 2001, such as the alleged cruelty inherent in Islam and the Muslim propensity for violence. Obama repeatedly drew attention to the long history of Islamic tolerance, and in particular, he cited a quote from the Koran, indicating rejection of violence against innocent people in Islam [11].

The Cairo speech also presented a new vision of practical steps that focus on promoting general stability in the region. One of Obama's main priorities in the near future is to restore the Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations and the winding down of the military presence in Afghanistan. Especially Obama stressed that the U. S. does not plan to maintain a military presence in Afghanistan and Iraq much longer; also that America is now acting purely for the peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict with the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

It is important to note that the performance of Barack Obama at Cairo University has received mixed reviews. In the Muslim world (representatives of which «Cairo speech» was actually addressed to), there was general appreciation and support. Meanwhile, in the United States the president's statement did not go over as well. Criticism from conservatives gave the impression that the president «flirted» with Muslims and did not properly address terrorism [2]. It is noticeable, but hardly surprising, that this newest approach in U. S. cultural diplomacy doesn't sit well with the more hawkish members of the American polity. Many Americans are dissatisfied with the desire of Barack Obama to «build the bridges» between the U. S. and the Muslim world because, firstly, the events of September 11, 2001 are still too fresh in the memory of ordinary citizens, and, secondly, general American support for Israel.

Thus, we can safely say that the foreign policy of Barack Obama involves the active use of «soft power» of diplomacy and compromise and suggests a move away from neoconservative policy of exporting democracy and maintaining an uncompromising attitude towards perceived enemies around the world. If the policy of his predecessor was founded on confrontation, Obama focuses on finding and strengthening common understanding. For example, as Thomas L. Friedman remarks: «In 2009 and 2010 President Obama's Republican critics accused him of denying America's history and status



as an «exceptional» country. The charge stemmed from an overseas news conference in which, asked whether he believed in the concept, he replied, «I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism» [7, p. 348]. Obviously, said Friedman, American President preferred to focus on an American «exceptionalism» that is no longer attempts to prove U. S. superiority over other nations.

What is important, Joseph Nye emphasizes, is that «if a leader represents values that others want to follow, it will cost less to lead» [10, p. 6]. Openness, democracy, commitment to dialogue and compromise, humaneness, sincerity and genuineness, family values, all this is integrated in the public persona of the current U. S. president. In fact, even his election campaign in 2008 he did so well by creating trusting relationships with potential voters and supporters, using the social media and other features of interpersonal communication, which are also fundamental elements of public diplomacy. Obama created the image of a politician who is more open to communication and dialogue, rather than to the use of coercion. Having been a community organizer in Chicago, he cultivated the ability to listen to different points of view and how to motivate people to work for a common goal. He repeated these goals in Chicago on November 7, 2012 when he gave his first speech after being re-elected for a second term. It's very important to pay attention to some accents, that he made during the speech that once again represent his image as a «Goodwill Ambassador»: 1) commitment to cooperation and dialogue: «I just spoke with Governor Romney and I congratulated him and Paul Ryan on a hard-fought campaign. We may have battled fiercely, but it's only because we love this country deeply and we care so strongly about its future... In the weeks ahead, I also look forward to sitting down with Governor Romney to talk about where we can work together to move this country forward»; 2) pluralism and tolerance: «... we are an American family and we rise or fall together as one nation and as one people»; 3) inspiration for people to take an active part in social and political life of their country: «I want to thank every American who participated in this election... Whether you held an Obama sign or a Romney sign, you made your voice heard and you made a difference»; 4) family values: «And I wouldn't be the man I am today without the woman who agreed to marry me 20 years ago. Let me say this publicly: Michelle, I have never loved you more. I have never been prouder to watch the rest of America fall in love with you, too, as our nation's first lady»; 5) willingness to continue policies initiated in 2009 dialogue with the world: «We want to pass on a country that's safe and respected and admired around the world, a nation that is defended by the strongest military on earth... But also a country that moves with confidence beyond this time of war, to shape a peace that is built on the promise of freedom and dignity for every human being. We believe in a generous America, in a compassionate America, in a tolerant America, open to the dreams of an immigrant's daughter who studies in our schools and pledges to our flag». Besides, Obama couldn't help but use his well-known sense of humor in the speech: «Sasha and Malia... I'm so proud of you guys. But I will say that for now one dog's probably enough». Finished the speech he, as usual, with an attempt to be closer to the people, to focus their attention on the importance of each of them in the country's destiny: «And whether I earned your vote or not, I have listened to you, I have learned from you, and you've made me a better president. And with your stories and your struggles, I return to the White House more determined and more inspired than ever about the work there is to do and the future that lies ahead» [12].

Based on all the above we can claim that the years of Obama's presidency have rightly been called a new era for American cultural diplomacy [4]. Quite clearly he has demonstrated this during his political campaign of 2008 and 2012. Obama then pointed to three key issues: art education in schools, further concerning about the financial status of artists and paying more attention to the cultural exchanges. In addition, the main current strategy, in his view, is to promote cultural diplomacy (domestic as well as international) not only in times of war, as it was before, but instead the main task is to build a solid foundation for this in the post-war times. Because as Richard T. Arndt argues «the decline in cultural diplomacy continued its downward spiral until recently can be seen as the reason for the negative perception of the U. S. abroad» [5]. Thus, in agreement with several authors, we should emphasize the fact that Barack Obama, indeed, declared the beginning of the so-called new era for U. S. cultural diplomacy. In this context, the main areas of «reformatting» this sphere compared with the previous era were the following:

1) principled rejection of unilateral way of decision-making in White House and, instead of this, positioning the new presidential administration as ready for broad dialogue with the international community and ready for compromise and cooperation to achieve common goals;

2) discontinue the use of instruments of «hard» power in foreign policy (military forces, economic sanctions, etc.), and instead increase the role of «soft» power assets;

3) increasing the role of culture in domestic strategies of further United States internal development as well as in relations with other countries that now should be based not on unilateral «exporting» American values abroad, but on a true commitment to tolerance, understanding and acceptance of the

«Other» (especially in relations with the Muslim world);

4) Cultural diplomacy considered now as a necessary component of American policy not only in times of war (as it was positioned in the era of previous presidents), but it's also necessary in the postwar period and peacetime.

5) President Obama personally acts as an agent of cultural diplomacy, as evidenced by his already-established image in the international community as a «Goodwill Ambassador».

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УДК 008: 316. 77

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#### ОСОБЛИВОСТІ РОЗВИТКУ ІНФОРМАЦІЙНОГО СУСПІЛЬСТВА ТА РЕЛІГІЙНА КОМУНІКАЦІЯ: СТАТТЯ ПЕРША

В основі інформаційного суспільства лежить обмін інформацією, яка переходить у розряд культурних та духовних цінностей. Жодна продукція у сучасному світі не користується таким попитом, як інформація. Такі тенденції перевели релігійні організації та церкви у площину світської комунікації. Розвиток інформаційного суспільства більш деструктивно впливає на усталені, ієрархічні системи (такі як традиційна церковна організація та традиційні способи релігійної комунікації), у той час як новітні феномени без інформаційних технологій не можуть активно розвиватися (наприклад, неорелігії, які неофітів залучають переважно за допомогою мас-медіа).

**Ключові слова:** інформаційне суспільство, інформаційна культура, інформація, мас-медіа,

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