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US Cultural Diplomacy

Jessica Gienow-Hecht

The Cold War was the heyday of state-orchestrated cultural diplomacy in the U.S., at a time when many officials and observers sought to counter widespread expressions of anti-Americanism abroad. In recent decades, the U.S. has chosen to outsource cultural influence to the private sector, and de-emphasized its importance as a policy instrument.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jessica Gienow-Hecht

Professor of History · Director, John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies; Chair, Department of History, JFKI; · Freie Universität Berlin · Germany

Jessica Gienow-Hecht is a historian with a special interest in the role of culture in IR. She has worked on the role of Jewish emigres in the U.S. occupation of Germany, on the link between music and emotions in transatlantic relations, and on the historicisation of nation branding as a theoretical concert. Currently, she is co-editing, with Sönke Kunkel and Sebastian Jobs, a volume exploring "Visions of Humanity" while also pursuing a study of music and human rights in Europe and the Americas.

"Cultural diplomacy" describes a host of things associated with international relations, diplomacy and trans-border connections. [1] Originally defined as the use of culture for diplomatic ends, the term has morphed into a concept that now encompasses actors, organizations, issues, avenues and institutions far beyond the realm of traditional diplomatic history. Cultural diplomacy is, at heart, both a timeless theme and one that has preoccupied states and empires since antiquity. Ancient tributary systems, imperial gift exchange, the politics of art at Italian and Spanish courts, the pomp of nineteenth-century royal visits, as well as modern day cultural exchange programs can all be counted as versions of cultural diplomacy. Remarkably, intentions and actors behind cultural diplomacy have always been very diverse: in essence, anybody acting wittingly or unwittingly on behalf, or in the interest of an empire or a nation state (and it depends on the author's discretion to carve out an emphasis on either the nation or the state, or both), poses, in today's literature, as a "cultural diplomat." Alongside state officials, the list swells to include business people, tourists, stage actors, doctors, journalists, veterinarians, women's associations, orchestra musicians and many others. Collectively, they share a typology of relating their identities and actions to those of the country they are hailing from, often without even giving much thought to it.

In the Anglo-American world, authors often make a distinction between "cultural" and "public" diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy entails the management of cultural relations as well as the effort to influence the international environment by exporting and exchanging cultural resources, artifacts and achievements. Public diplomacy, in turn, delineates governmental efforts to directly address people in other countries (rather than merely their governments) by way of media such as radio broadcasting, print publications and the internet.

The United States has played a critical role in the history of cultural diplomacy and its attendant literature due to the fact that since the 1990s, much of the latter has looked extensively at U.S. cultural initiatives abroad. The Cold War, especially, was arguably the heyday of state-orchestrated U.S. cultural diplomacy. Never before, and certainly not since that time did the American state invest as much intellectual, financial and economic power in the effort to connect culturally with other people. During the post-World War period, many U.S. intellectuals, political observers, opinion leaders and academics (notably social scientists) debated the U.S. image in the public arena. They agreed that for all the "good" the United States had been doing by way of foreign aid and protection, people the world over failed to acknowledge these acts in the long run because the United States' image was unfavorable. As common consensus had it, prevailing anti-Americanism clouded any "fair" perception of the United States in the world; to change this situation, cultural diplomacy was designed to correct "misguided" perceptions of the United States abroad.

With the Cold War over, changes gradually appeared on the horizon: today's anti-Americanism appears to mushroom not only in areas that were previously targeted by U.S. cultural diplomacy before but even more so in regions formerly considered only of secondary importance. Today, the Middle East constitutes the most prominent site for outspoken criticism of American culture, society and impact in the world. Another change concerns the response of the U.S. government. While Cold War-era America turned to the government to cope with unfavorable perceptions, post-Cold War leaders have outsourced image management to the private sector, shrunk the attendant governmental bureaucracy, and de-accentuated the instrument altogether.

What has not changed much, it seems, is the nature of the critique regarding the United States itself: underneath culturally specific resistance to changes in hierarchy, the role of women, or free trade, concerns continue to highlight fears of homogenization, U.S. imperialism, and consumerism along with the suffocation of tradition and individualism. Yet there do not appear to be very many ears in the U.S.

government "hearing" those concerns. In September 2019, the Heritage Foundation hosted a discussion designed to examine the most recent changes in public diplomacy under U.S. President Donald Trump. [2] Key players in the administration elaborated on a tool of diplomacy that has been the subject of much recent speculation, ranging from Trump's one-time ambition to "Make America Great Again" to the recent reorganizations (including cuts) within the State Department's new Bureau of Global Public Affairs, created in the spring of 2019 and designed to "serve the American people by effectively communicating U.S. foreign policy priorities and the importance of diplomacy to American audiences, and engaging foreign publics to enhance their understanding of and support for the values and policies of the United States." While participants discussed how America could better and faster "advance" its diplomacy in the face of critical assessments abroad, consensus reigned regarding the key assumption of their actions: "One of our greatest advantages," Michelle S. Giuda, Assistant Secretary and Senior Official for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs in the Bureau elaborated, "is that the United States... has the best story to tell. That is our competitive advantage. It is our values and our founding values that make our country the most successful and prosperous country in the history of the world." [3] Giuda's assessment departs from the learning process that has defined the history of U.S. cultural diplomacy and the development of its attendant bureaucracy. When trying to figure out today how to cope with mounting anti-Americanism the world over, and as we think about the future of U.S. cultural diplomacy, where to allocate resources, how to communicate, what issues to target and, above all, what not to do, it may be helpful to revisit the women and men who more than 70 years ago sought to craft new relations and a new image for the United States for people across the globe.



Michelle S. Giuda, former Assistant Secretary & Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy speaking on the Trump Administration's Public Diplomacy at the Heritage Foundation, Sept. 30th, 2019.

Source: Public Diplomacy

The History of U.S. Cultural Diplomacy prior to 1945

Much of what we know about the interplay of policymaking, culture, imagery and the politics of mutual understanding in the United States has traditionally focused on the Cold War. Yet as Michael Krenn has shown, Americans were cultural diplomats before the state developed a large-scale interest in this venue. Driven by a sort of identity crisis and acting as coincidental cultural diplomats, U.S. envoys began to enchant target audiences in London and Paris right after the American Revolution. With the help of fur clothes and gigantic stuffed animals, they began to pitch an image of the United States where everything was bigger and, by implication, better. Throughout the nineteenth century, informal U.S. cultural diplomats, from lone foreign officers overseas with a penchant for cultural education and exchange to singers, soloists and socialites, along with tourists, traders, bankers and businessmen, contributed to export an image of the United States through cultural artifacts. These included clothes, literature, music, and consumer goods along with ideas, behaviors, modes of speech and many other things which expanded, as Krenn suggests, knowledge of Americans abroad from cowboys to "aristocrats." [4] While many of these actors may have acted willy-nilly on behalf of their nation state, their actions, nonetheless, had a diplomatic effect: they all contributed to shape the image of their country abroad and, in the process, to an ongoing exchange of impressions.

The preponderance of non-governmental actors in nineteenth-century cultural relations thus yielded much influence to actors unaffiliated with the state. This phenomenon was neither new nor original to the United States: most of the time, modern nation state officials did not feel much responsibility to incorporate culture into their activities. What was peculiar about the United States was that this configuration lasted for a particularly long time and it is not hard to see why. Historically, Americans have thought about education as a local and state concern and culture as a matter of private entertainment and the market rather than policy, even less foreign policy. Unlike many European nations, prior to the Cold War the United States had never put federal or state governments in charge of cultural and educational activities. There is great irony in the fact that a country whose culture has become such a source of global concern hardly had any interest, originally, in orchestrating the export of its culture.

Thus, while European nations such as France and Germany had begun to integrate a cohesive program of culture and education into their foreign policy since the nineteenth century, the U.S. government refrained from doing so until the 1930s. Mary Nolan and Frank Costigliola have shown that in the United States private actors—again bankers, businessmen, and movie stars—continued to dominate cultural exchange and export, and many of them may have perceived their actions as quasi-diplomatic.

Yet historian Justin Hart has made a strong point that the 1930s did not merely anticipate the nation's latter-day involvements in the Cold War but, more importantly, that U.S. leaders began to define the nation's role as a global leader long before the bipolar conflict. While the United States still lacked specific global programs and the attendant bureaucracy, U.S. officials did begin to cast specific images of the nation abroad, giving a foretaste of the country's quest for global hegemony. In so doing, Hart argues, they crafted a discursive construction of the nation's pursuit for global hegemony in the future.

Such efforts had much to do with the threat of fascism and authoritarianism in Europe and Asia. When U.S. officials worried about these regions, their first concern was their immediate neighborhood, Latin America. As German secret service agents worked hard to win over local leaders and elites for the Third Reich's cause, U.S. officials set out to establish organizations designed to bring Latin America culturally, economically and politically closer to the United States. In 1938, the State Department created a small-scale Division for Cultural Relations, and, shortly after the beginning of the war, an emergency agency

titled the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs or CIAA. Both helped put in place a robust state-private network running cultural relations with foreign countries, an effort that did not subside after the end of the war. While CIAA was closed in 1946, Darlene Sadlier has recently shown, the mindset, the thinking and the organization of the state-private network were now in place, ready to shift their attention to Europe.

Yet despite these early attempts to strengthen continental ties, many U.S. officials continued to be apprehensive about using culture as a tool to influence international relations due to at least three reasons. First, they felt that culture belonged to the realm of creativeness, public taste, and the market economy. Second, it was difficult to prove how one could, possibly, make any diplomatic difference by inserting cultural programs into foreign relations. Third and related to this, cultural programs smacked of state intervention and propaganda, i.e. socialism, and, therefore, lacked a domestic lobby to support such costs and brand of policy.

U.S. Cultural Diplomacy during the Cold War

Thus, the emergence of an orchestrated U.S. cultural diplomacy after World War II and a resultant historiography focusing on this period originates in three different circumstances: first, specific visions of culture predominating in the United States prior to that time hindered the establishment of a cohesive cultural foreign policy and, thus, relegated any such activities squarely to the private sector with little political or administrative supervision. Conversely, in the years following V-E Day, many Americans, but most notably those involved in some way with international relations, became convinced that the United States had a mission to advance the "American Way of Life" (whatever this meant) to audiences around the world. It would be "decadent," one State Department official state in 1945, if the United States failed to impart its standards and techniques to others, since these had evidently "contributed to human happiness." [5] Finally, in terms of historiography, U.S. diplomatic history itself was dominated for decades by questions and concerns relating to the East-West conflict between 1945 and 1989. It is that conflict, along with the full emergence of the American state as a leading protagonist, which turned the nation into a global actor, an aspiring hegemon, and an uncompromising claimant to world leadership. As a result, and for a long time, scholarship (notably scholarship devised within the United States) has focused predominantly on Cold War cultural diplomacy.

One of the reasons why both policymakers but also non-state observers were so interested in familiarizing foreign audiences with the essence of that "American Way of Life" was that whatever it entailed, American culture seemed invulnerable to challenges and autocracies from the left or the right. Postwar intellectuals from Louis Hartz to Arthur Schlesinger were convinced that the United States' enterprise-based culture formed a sort of ideological and economic bulwark against anti-democratic ideologies. [6] They held high hopes, along with many colleagues and policymakers, that the promises and fruits of liberal capitalism would eventually strengthen democracies the world over and annihilate autocratic systems, including fascism and communism, in Eastern Europe, Asia, and the Americas.

That, however, was not the only motivation behind the expansion of U.S. cultural diplomacy in the early Cold War. At least as important was a broad concern on the part of many Americans over the complete absence of modern national image management. The more money the United States seemed to be spending on foreign aid, the more soldiers went abroad to protect client states, the more the nation's reputation deteriorated. In their landmark publication *As Others See Us*, Franz M. Joseph and Raymond Aron delineated global antipathies directed against the United States. [7] From American industry and mass

production, race relations, popular culture and social mores, to intellectual achievement and the arts, American culture and society seemed to offend people everywhere. Analyses such as these always seemed to reach the same conclusions: whatever it was that the U.S. did and U.S. policymakers said, how hard U.S. soldiers fought to defend liberal principles, how much money ordinary Americans donated to crisis-stricken areas in distant places, at the end of the day, the world remained unimpressed.

Opinion polls taken in different parts of the world revealed that local populations often exhibited their unwillingness to sacrifice tradition and regional culture for democracy and liberal market economies. Many Germans interviewed between 1945 and 1950, for example, professed to prefer East European communism because they associated it with Russian literature and music, a multilingual culture and a keen interest in the canon of nineteenth-century culture. They contrasted such cultural inclinations with what they perceived as a superficial American culture as expressed in popular music (above all jazz), cartoons, and consumer culture at large.

And it was not only the interviewees themselves who articulated competing visions of cultural preferences. Communist propagandists throughout the Warsaw Pact states picked up on these images and used them in their effort to discredit the U.S. presence in Europe. Americans—above all their policymakers—were unrefined, ignorant and lacked any culture worth talking about. Worse, they were out to destroy the cultural achievements of others, either due to their innate inferiority complex or because they perceived other cultures as threatening. As a result, so Soviet propagandists had it, American culture put at risk other nations and people's ways of lives and identities, and the resulting propaganda campaigns focused very much on precisely that dichotomy: the superiority of European culture to that of the United States. Old World culture, French *culture* and German *Kultur* (both originating in countries with long-lasting cultural ties to Russia) represented a central node in this argument. Soviet propagandists and their colleagues in the German Democratic Republic incessantly attacked U.S. culture, not simply for what it was but what it did to others and what it had always stood for.

This last point is important because it was the argument that U.S. officials grappled with the most, and that was to influence U.S. cultural diplomacy for decades to come. For as far as U.S. American culture was concerned, communist propaganda did not really say anything new. Since the American Revolution, European intellectuals, political observers, travelers to North America, and publishers had entertained the notion that the creation of the first modern liberal system had profoundly damaged the colonists' way of life. And for all the political achievements that European progressive thinkers may have flirted with, their impressions were always tinged with a profound sense of uneasiness. U.S. liberal politics had toppled hierarchies, disrupted traditions, unsettled the social order and overturned codices of behavior and interaction. Worse, liberalism had squarely assigned culture to the market rather than state regulation, and, thus, turned it into an object and a toy of the public's whim.

For most of the nineteenth century, these observations had had a limited impact. They had informed elites and anybody else who cared enough about the United States to read up on its politics and society. French, German and British European conservatives in particular, who showed no interest either in change or in liberalism, abhorred what they saw as the threat of American culture juxtaposed with the lure of a presumably "free society." Yet as more people, ideas, and goods traveled to and fro on the trans-Atlantic highway, these individual concerns morphed into a more widely-shared critique. Shortly after the turn of the century, a number of European authors who did not necessarily share political and cultural inclinations published, independently from one another, several books identifying American culture as a source of concern. Among those was the German journalist Adolf Halfeld, the correspondent for the

Hamburger Fremdenblatt and the *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten* in the U.S. since 1924. Halfeld was among the first writers to construct a critique of U.S. society that would later on turn into a global and quintessential phobia—the fear that U.S. culture would annihilate local identities; that American standards would become globally acceptable; that American civilization was threatening the achievements of European culture. [8]

These lasting and not even recent perceptions, skillfully crafted into a global message by an ideological adversary, constituted the major reason why cultural diplomacy changed from a minor occupation of select governmental officials along with numerous non-state actors and organizations, into a full-fledged Cold War weapon. Take, for example, the European Recovery Plan, better known as the "Marshall Plan." It funneled $13 billion into West European economies, but it was a cultural program at least as much as an economic one. As David Ellwood, and others have shown, the Plan was meant to, and did, inspire a generation of Europeans to adjust to modernization and American ways, not only in industry but in lifestyle as well. Ellwood and Frank Mehring have pointed out that both American and European filmmakers employed the vision and the funds of the Marshall Plan to craft narratives and docudramas envisioning an efficient, modern, open-minded, multi-ethnic and cosmopolitan young Europe leaving behind the trauma and the burden of the past. Cultural diplomacy, as Giles Scott-Smith has argued, functioned as a mobilization of soft power resources in the support of foreign policy goals, notably the integration of Western and, later, Eastern Europe into a world order headed by the United States. Scott-Smith sees this as distinct from privately organized "cultural relations," a government-driven effort to develop and intensify cultural ties with Europe.

Numerous other programs and initiatives contributed to this effort: the 1948 Smith-Mundt Act sought to "promote a better understanding of the United States in other countries, and to increase mutual understanding," while the Fulbright-Hays Act, passed by Congress in 1961, aimed to "strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations." In the years following V-E Day, to further respond to the criticism and accusations presented on countless Soviet propaganda channels encompassing newspapers, pamphlets, broadcasts and lectures, the US government founded a number of organizations and programs, such as the United States Information Agency and the Fulbright exchange program that sought to counter and revise these representation and export American culture in the process. Art and music programs, exhibitions, people-to-people programs, political training programs, and many others featured prominently in these newly devised policies. The "Campaign of Truth," conceptualized in 1950 in reaction to the Korean War, was specifically directed toward multipliers such as public opinion leaders, teachers, political leaders and others.

U.S. cultural ambassadors operated best, it seems, when they ran programs on their own. As S.E. Graham has shown, when U.S. officials attempted to generate an anti-Communist consensus within UNESCO in the 1970s, they failed miserably. Instead of fostering consent, the initiative yielded heated debates and, eventually, only encouraged the politicization of culture in the early years of the organization. A contrasting point has been made by historian Karen Bell for the United States Information Service's presence in Congo, in the early 1960s. USIS, Bell writes, attempted to influence the Congo crisis and circulated pamphlets quoting remarks by the secretary-general of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld as well as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Adlai Stevenson, and President John F. Kennedy. Titled "The Truth about Congo," the text reflected a united attempt to appeal to public perceptions and attitudes in the region and gather support for U.S. foreign policy.

Messages and images were, for the most part, crafted in Washington by an agency named the United States Information Agency (USIA). They were then transferred to and given shape by countless administrative units, programs and divisions all over the world. The most prominent of these was an institution named the United States Information Service (USIS), the long arm abroad of USIA. Other programs, such as, for example, U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower's "President's Emergency Fund for Participation in International Affairs" were designed to channel millions of dollars quickly, and without much bureaucratic procedure, to individual cultural ventures on a short-term basis, among these Robert Breen's musical "Porgy and Bess." With legislation passed under the name of "International Cultural Exchange," between 1954 and 1956, more than one hundred performers, including Dizzy Gillespie and the New York Philharmonic, were commissioned to travel to nearly 90 countries during the program's first four years. In addition, the Office of Foreign Buildings of the Department of State initiated a ten-year $200 million program in 1954 to build new embassies and consulates across the world, projecting an image of modernity abroad. Finally, the International Cultural Exchange and Trade Fair Participation Act, passed in 1958, was designed to bolster the Department of State's cultural presentations program.



Leonard Bernstein shaking hands with Dmitri Shostakovich, Moscow, September 1959. Photograph by Don Hunstein. After performing in South America in 1958, the New York Philharmonic embarked the following year on a 50-concert tour in Europe, which included several performances in the Soviet Union.

Source: Leonard Bernstein Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress

U.S. propagandists remained surprisingly ambivalent in their definition of, and take on, the American Way of Life and American culture in particular. For example, USIA took pains to tout a message according to which American culture was compatible with that of European nations and that U.S. domestic and international politics were attuned to the hopes of people the world over: the United States, so the message ran, was serving the universal cause of freedom, progress, and peace. This was a straightforward message

but it was also obfuscated by many other ideas promoted by the United States which underlined, as Laura Belmonte and others have shown, the ambivalence, uneasiness, and even the inner conflict within USIA and, indeed, U.S. society at large over issues ranging from racism to historical memory.

Messages often linked the motif of freedom and liberal democracy to American culture, and American standards of living, including consumer products such as cars, homes, and household gadgets. For much of the 1950s, this agenda "worked," prompting some historians to call this decade the "golden years of cultural diplomacy." It worked because it appealed to a generation devastated by the war and deeply shaken by the terror of authoritarianism. The situation changed, however, in the 1960s, when in the face of the Vietnam War, student protests, the civil rights movement and decolonization, a new generation of scholars and young people, in particular, turned increasingly resentful of what they saw as manipulative U.S. propaganda. USIA tried to address these issues in several ways. The agency purposely detached itself from the State Department and converted into an independent institution that referred directly to the president. And there were changes in programming as well. Rather than focus on short-term events and concerts, the agency now developed country plans that covered longer periods of time, and it did not associate itself openly to State Department action. In doing so, USIA could act more independently, focus more on individual countries' concerns and deflect accusations of partisan or propagandist action.

Recent research has emphasized that one of the defining features of U.S. Cold War diplomacy was the enormous amount of exhibitions co-sponsored by U.S. government funds in cooperation with the private sector during the two decades between 1955 and 1975. Andrew Wulf has retraced the history of these cultural exhibitions designed to travel abroad and "tell America's story" to "win the hearts and minds" of people the world over. Wulf charts the formation of an official bureaucracy in charge of exhibiting American commercial goods along with political ideas at trade fairs, through official exchanges with the U.S.S.R., to pavilions at world's fairs, and museum exhibitions. Citing the spirit of the Founding Fathers, stressing the diversity of America, and putting kitchen appliances as well as entire homes on display, the exhibitions meshed U.S. identity, technology, consumerism, nation branding and design in order to appeal to hundreds of thousands of visitors. Asa McKercher has studied Montreal's *Expo 1967*, where under the header "Creative America," U.S. officials worked hard to counter mounting global opposition to the nation's policies by putting both technological achievements and popular culture on display, complete with a restrained critique of the latter, visible in a pop art section entitled "American Painting Now." Staging both mass culture and its pop art critique, officials sought to stress the need for freedom of expression in a novel fashion.

VIDEO

View online: https://archive.org/embed/1960-10-31_Satchmo_Swings_In_Congo

> *Satchmo Swings in Congo,* Universal Studio, October 1960
>
> **Source:** Archive.org

Nonverbal means of communication particularly appealed to U.S. information strategists and they used this venue, in particular, to counter charges of racism, often voiced by Soviet propagandists. Next to painting, music and sports began to carve out a significant part of the various budgets allotted for cultural diplomacy. Jazz, in particular, assumed center stage in U.S. culture exports, followed later by rock'n roll and even classical soloists. As Jon Rosenberg and Jessica Gienow-Hecht have written, in the 1950s, the United States began shipping entire symphony orchestras around the world in order to underscore the

nation's appreciation for classical music. Simultaneously, sports events became a key instrument of diplomacy because they seemed to alleviate different problems simultaneously. From U.S. athletes at the Olympics to "Ping-Pong Diplomacy" antedating Nixon's visit to China in 1971, sports offered a way to combine nationalist aspirations with multilateral, even universalistic messages. Damion Thomas has shown that sending African American sports emissaries was a means to counter Soviet charges regarding segregation, suppression and lynching. U.S. officials planned "goodwill trips" inviting international audiences to meet high-achieving African Americans who often then turned around and used these tours to criticize U.S. domestic policies, lobby for civil rights, and seek international cooperation in what they perceived as a global fight against racism. Like many of the artists, writers, and academics sent abroad on the US payroll, these athletes rarely "stayed on message" which resulted in the eventual demise of the program.



Harlem Globetrotters on Mauretania Ocean Liner on July 31st, 1950. The team was returning from a tour in Europe and South Africa. From top to bottom are: Louis Pressly; William "Rookie" Brown; Boyd Buie; Reece "Goose" Tatum; Frank Washington; Markus Haynes; Sammy Quee; Clarence Wilson; and (in front) manager Winfield Welch.

Source: Getty Images/Bettmann

USIA's efforts to detach cultural diplomacy from state diplomacy, however, only worked to an extent. While it may have alleviated public pressure for a moment, it did not stem the tide of critical arguments raised against U.S. cultural and information programs that have continued to fan the fires of anti-American protests around the globe. In many ways, what emerged in the 1960s was a form of criticism that cultural diplomacy was unable to cope with in the long run, because it was dovetailed to a new version of anti-Americanism informed both by domestic and international audiences, both by liberal and anti-liberal critics. Until then, observers had typically made a distinction between U.S. politics on the one hand and American culture on the other, and the emphasis had always been on the latter rather than the former. But

in the 1960s, popular criticism encompassed a fundamental opposition to American culture at large, associated with a particular form of capitalism and media, both of which were closely associated to U.S. foreign policy. Aversion to American culture, that is, was integrated with a fundamental rejection of U.S. diplomacy when the New Left, at home and abroad, retraced expansive capitalism as the number one reason behind the bipolar struggle and, at the same time, the primary driving force behind what the movement saw as the foremost problems of the twentieth century: mass media, consumer society, the onslaught of modernity, and, most of all, the clash between humans and the system in which they lived. Collectively, these criticisms paved the way for the study of what has since come to be known as cultural imperialism.

Cultural diplomacy, in the broadest sense, figured as part of the mix because so much of it was associated to precisely what the New Left targeted: dissemination, information and mediation. In fact, much of the scholarship that examines how U.S. Cold War culture has spread abroad since the 1960s, be it by way of official or commercial channels, concentrates on the media and its relation to policy and policymaking. Since the end of World War II, cultural diplomacy itself has been unthinkable without modern information technology: broadcasting, Hollywood movies and cartoons, and, most recently, social media and the internet—all these have been part and parcel both of information dissemination and the resulting research trend. New Left critics from Herbert Marcuse to Herbert Schiller, their colleagues and their students, produced numerous analyses that, for the most part, drew an image of the U.S. media as both the core but also the greatest adversary of modern culture. [9] Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* (1964) described a society affected by a process of cultural decomposition and an increasingly shallow discourse, repression masked as "consensus," intolerance toward opinions and views outside the mainstream and, eventually, total conformity at the expense of civil liberties. Pitched in the framework of cultural diplomacy, this approach portrayed the U.S. as determined to impose its domination by exporting its media along with the lure of consumer products, disguised as liberalism, the world over.

In this scenario, the U.S. government played a role alongside non-state actors. In addition to policymakers and foreign officers, critics drew in American businessmen and entrepreneurs, U.S. corporations, rich media czars who either acted on their own behalf or, more often than not, cooperated and conspired with national information and secret service organizations as well as the government at large in a collective effort to control the minds and markets of a global audience.

One might discard this critique as temporal and ideological but it did matter a great deal to the trajectory of cultural diplomacy and its history because for all their preoccupation with revisionism, these scholars helped later generations to understand that the making of cultural diplomacy, while ostensibly autonomous from the State Department, remained welded to the policymaking process. Even though scholars like Marcuse concentrated on capitalist ideology, their ideas pointed to the fact that any sort of cultural export or liaison, including cultural diplomacy, always entailed a heterogeneous group of governmental and non-governmental actions, intentions and actors. We know today that governmental exports focused, in the early stages of the Cold War, on highbrow culture such as books and art exhibits before it began to incorporate popular culture items and artists as well; yet the latter typically served a specific educational purpose. Closely linked to such actions were non-governmental actors whose profile included either those interested in the exchange of people and ideas (unions, women's group, foundations) or those who sold material goods abroad, notably corporate enterprises.

What is more, the New Left's critique left a permanent mark on both U.S. cultural diplomacy and its domestic reputation. Always struggling with Congressional oversight and numerous critics charging the agency with either leftist leanings or opaque spending mechanisms or both, the agency, as Nicholas Cull has shown, continuously fought an uphill battle to legitimize its existence and actions. Lacking a lobby at home and, in fact, prohibited from makings its products—including books printed for foreign audiences—accessible to domestic audiences, USIA faced both conservatives and liberals' ambivalence about its role in the larger context of U.S. foreign policy, notably at a time when the U.S. executive at large came under increased scrutiny.

Both the actors involved in, and the researchers writing on culture and diplomacy during the Cold War in the 1970s and 1980s very much understood culture as an underlying force of diplomacy wedded to the specific context of the Cold War. As it came to an end, U.S. cultural diplomacy and most notably USIA came again under domestic scrutiny. What was the point of keeping an agency in place that was, after all, founded to defy an adversary who was no longer a threat? Despite a surge of anti-Americanism, notably in the Middle East and in former member states of the Warsaw Pact, in 1999, the Clinton administration folded the venture.

U.S. Public Diplomacy since 1989

It is thus not surprising that since the 1990s, a new generation of younger scholars on both sides of the Atlantic have developed a more pragmatic approach to the study of cultural diplomacy. Part of the reason for this change has been that the ranks of historians writing on U.S. cultural diplomacy have become, for one thing, more diverse, and, for another, much more numerous. Hailing from different fields such as social history, cultural studies, and anthropology, these scholars have emphasized that U.S. cultural diplomacy did not begin in 1945 nor did it end, as one may assume, with the closure of USIA in 1999. They have expanded the meaning of culture to include social affinities, comparative analysis, cultural conceptions, psychological influences, local traditions, and unspoken assumptions. And they have become increasingly fascinated with the peculiarity of individual cultures in the context of a non-bipolar world. Under the influence of resurfacing nationalism the world over, scholars have studied the periphery in greater detail, producing analyses of individual communities that came into contact with American (or western) culture after World War II. They have shifted the focus of research from the intention of cultural transfer to, for example, international audiences watching TV programs like *Dallas* or movies such as *Gone With the Wind*.

Most importantly, these historians have significantly contributed to the expansion of our thinking on U.S. cultural diplomacy in terms of concept, geography, and temporality. Recent studies have looked at an even wider network of cultural diplomats, including archeologists, dance choreographers, theater directors, and hip hop musicians. Omar El-Kahiry and Luka Glušac have investigated the impact of hip hop music, notably in the Muslim world. Despite its novel and different appeal, Glušac observes, hip hop diplomacy incurred precisely the same challenges originally manifested by its Cold War predecessor, jazz diplomacy (and sports, one may add): artists frequently went off script and proved unwieldy citizen diplomats. El-Kahiry, in turn, has pointed out how hip-hop culture's attempts to create new spaces and do away with today's mechanisms of technopoly. Hip hop diplomacy has been taking part in the post-modern political economy along with its attendant cultural works, commercial structure, and communication networks. These scholars also moved the focus of investigation decisively away from Europe and shifted it to South

and Latin America, the Middle East and Asia, accentuating, in the process, the diverse responses of local audiences. And they began to situate Cold War cultural diplomacy within a much broader context in which the ideological struggle becomes only one out of many variables.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the preeminent mood among historians of cultural diplomacy following USIA's folding in 1999 has been one of nostalgia, notably since additional curtailment of funding under the Bush, Obama, and Trump administrations. Natalia Grincheva suggests that even though the reputation of the United States has globally deteriorated, both policymakers and the U.S. public remain hesitant to assign resources to a tool of diplomacy that appeared to work well for more than half a century. While it is difficult to measure impact and achieve quick results, state-sponsored cultural engagement with other nations and their public has undeniably benefited U.S. foreign relations at large and left us with three main lessons:

1. U.S. cultural diplomacy has traditionally been reactive, a response to attacks, but that response has taken very different forms. While Nazi activities in Latin America brought about a moderate and temporary set of agencies, the bureaucracy of cultural diplomacy exploded during the Cold War. The last three administrations, in turn, have shared an understanding that despite the global threat of terrorism inspired by Middle Eastern activists, a limited, cost-efficient response handled by an office within the State Department is in order.
2. U.S. cultural diplomacy has benefited from the cooperation of the private sector. Indeed, public-private partnerships have worked particularly well when carefully managed and balanced, and seem to appeal to international audiences.
3. Most importantly, U.S. cultural diplomacy has appealed more to foreign audiences when displaying patience and attempting to listen, not just to talk. A two-way street, an objective approach, an openness to dialogue and "hearing out others" rather than one-way communication have proven most fruitful in the long run. It is perhaps this last lesson that is of greatest significance for the leaders of the newly crafted Bureau of Global Communication in the U.S. State Department.

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NOTES

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2. "Public Diplomacy in the Trump Administration." The Heritage Foundation, September 30, 2019.
3. Michelle S. Giuda, "Trump Administration Diplomacy," September 30, 2019, C-Span, 10:42.
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