

THE ROLE OF CULTURAL DIPLOMACY IN THE NEW ERA OF CHINA-UZBEKISTAN RELATIONS

Liu Chunyan

School of International Relations, University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Tashkent 100174, Uzbekistan; School of Marxism, Jining Normal University, Wulanchabu 012000, China

Abstracts: In today's world, the role of culture plays an increasingly important role in international communication. The cultural diplomacy philosophy of "proximity, sincerity, benefit and tolerance" is an important concept actively advocated in the development of China-Uzbekistan relations in the new era. Based on the historical origins, cultural ties, common values and long-term and unremitting efforts of China and Uzbekistan, the value of cultural diplomacy in the new era of China-Uzbekistan relations has become more and more prominent and fruitful, greatly promoting high-level contacts between the two countries, enhancing political mutual trust, constantly strengthening the foundation of economic and trade cooperation between the two countries, accelerating strategic docking between the two countries, strengthening security cooperation, enhancing people-to-people contact between the two countries and opening up broad prospects for humanistic cooperation. In particular, as China enters a new era, and as the political, economic and cultural exchange practices between China and Uzbekistan are in full swing, the two countries still need to make sustained efforts in terms of culture, mechanism, capacity, industrial support and talent training, so that cultural diplomacy can make a greater contribution in promoting dialogue between civilisations, mutual friendship, mutual help and common development.

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About the Author: Liu-chunyan(1986-), Chinese, University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Current PhD student. E-mail: 447559477@qq.com

I. The concept of cultural diplomacy

The world is a wonderful place because of its diversity. Human society is a community of diverse cultures. Every culture exists, communicates and develops in its diversity. Every nation and country is constantly creating its own culture through cultural exchange and collision. Culture is the deeper, more enduring and broader strength of a Ethnicity. With the development of economic globalisation and political multipolarity, culture plays an important role not only in shaping the national character and uniting the forces of progress within the country, but also plays a profound and extensive role in international exchanges. In today's world, the cultural sphere has become a key area in national diplomacy. The foreign relations of each country are deeply marked by its own cultural identity and values. And through its cultural identity and values, the country presents its image and enhances its influence, appeal and attractiveness in the international community. As a result, the concept of cultural diplomacy has gradually attracted the attention of both official and academic circles as the role of culture in international communication has become increasingly prominent. The concept was first introduced by the American scholar LarfTurner in the 1940s, and was further elaborated and developed by Frank Ninkovich. Traditionally understood, "cultural diplomacy is diplomacy carried out with the content of cultural dissemination, exchange and communication, a

diplomatic activity in which sovereign states use cultural means to achieve specific political objectives or foreign strategic intentions.”¹ It follows that, in terms of scope, cultural diplomacy is a diplomatic activity of sovereign states and belongs to the field of diplomacy in a broad sense. Cultural diplomacy is closely linked to political, economic and military diplomacy. The extent to which a country’s cultural diplomacy is achieved depends on the strength of its political, economic, military, scientific and technological power. It also has a profound impact on national political, economic and military diplomacy as a softer form of diplomacy. Effective cultural diplomacy is not only conducive to enhancing international understanding and tolerance, easing international conflicts and contradictions, promoting international exchanges and cooperation, pushing the international order in a more just and rational direction, and maintaining world peace and development, but also helps to enhance a country’s credibility, strengthen international recognition and political support for a country, and thus promote the development of its economy, politics, culture, society and other fields. As moral realism argues, good strategic credibility is one of the core elements for large and powerful countries to safeguard their national interests. On the basis of sufficient material strength, a country with both virtue and prestige has more political appeal in the international arena, and is able to win more “friends” and gather strength for win-win international cooperation. Unwarranted cultural diplomacy may reap short-term benefits, but it can lead to a loss of credibility and consequent damage to the long-term interests of the country. Proper cultural diplomacy that demonstrates “proximity, sincerity, favour and tolerance” is in line with the interests of people around the world, and is bound to be supported by the majority of the international community, which will in turn gain strategic credibility and better safeguard national interests. It is clear that cultural diplomacy is inseparable from political, economic, military and scientific elements, but has a unique value in the development of national relations that cannot be ignored.

II. The important role of cultural diplomacy in the new era of China- Uzbekistan relations

Over the past 30 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Uzbekistan, China has always upheld the “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence”, “Harmonious World” and the concept of “Community of Human Destiny”, and has built up a cooperative relationship of equality, trust and mutual respect with Uzbekistan. In particular, as China enters a new era, and as political, economic and cultural exchanges between China and Uzbekistan are in full swing, cultural diplomacy is playing an increasingly important role in promoting dialogue between the civilisations of the two countries, mutual friendship, mutual assistance and common development.

First, China- Uzbekistan cultural diplomacy is conducive to promoting high-level contacts and enhancing political mutual trust. Despite the complex and volatile international situation, cultural exchanges between China and Uzbekistan are growing closer and relations between the two countries are developing smoothly. The two countries established strategic partnership in 2012, and signed “the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Uzbekistan” and “the Joint Declaration between the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Uzbekistan on the Further Development and Deepening of Strategic Partnership” in 2013, “the Joint Declaration between the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Uzbekistan” in 2014, and “the Joint Declaration between the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Uzbekistan” as well as other bilateral treaties and agreements in June 2016. Since 2016, the two countries have entered a new phase of comprehensive strategic partnership, with high-level exchanges and political mutual trust reaching an unprecedented high level. These achievements could not have been achieved

¹Lizhi.Cultural Diplomacy:a interpretative mode of communication[M].China:Peking University press,2005,P.24.

without the long-standing cultural contacts, exchanges and mingling between China and Uzbekistan. For example, in 1999, the two sides signed “the Agreement on Information and Communication Cooperation between the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan” “the Agreement on the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights between the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan” “the Agreement on Cooperation between the Diplomatic Academy of the People’s Republic of China and the University of World Economy and Diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan” “the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China and the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan” “the Agreement on Cooperation in Tourism between the Tourism Administration of the People’s Republic of China and the National Tourism Company of the Republic of Uzbekistan”. In 2013, the National Astronomical Observatory of the Chinese Academy of Sciences signed a cooperation agreement with the Astronomical Institute of Uzbekistan. In 2013, the University of World Economy and Diplomacy of Uzbekistan established the first “China Pavilion” “China Pavilion” in Central Asia, and in the same year, Shanghai University set up the Centre for Research and Educational Exchange in Uzbekistan. In 2014, China and the UWL jointly organised the first Evergreen Cup Sino-Ukrainian Knowledge Competition. In 2014, the first Chinese Studies Department in Central Asia was established at the U Oriental Institute. In 2022, in a speech delivered on the eve of the SCO Summit in Samarkand, President Xi Jinping noted that the two countries are good friends who have made friends with each other, that I have established a good working relationship and deep personal friendship with President Mirziyoyev, and that the two countries have established a comprehensive strategic partnership and support each other on issues concerning each other’s core interests.² This political mutual trust has benefited from both sides’ long and tireless efforts, shared development philosophy and pursuits, and has further contributed to the prosperity of both countries’ construction endeavours.

Secondly, China-Uzbekistan cultural diplomacy is conducive to strengthening the foundation of economic and trade cooperation between the two countries. Economic cooperation is one of the most important cooperation in the relations between China and Uzbekistan. However, the establishment of a stable economic partnership cannot be achieved without the promotion of cultural diplomacy. In terms of cultural origins, China and Uzbekistan share cultural concepts such as “cooperation” and “integration”, and both have strong cultural inclusiveness, and this historical and cultural connection is a stabiliser of economic cooperation between the two countries. In recent years, the depth and breadth of China-Uzbekistan cultural diplomacy has continued to advance. There are frequent exchanges and cooperation between the two countries in culture, education, science and technology, sports and tourism, with rapid development in the form of language and cultural dissemination, export of cultural products and large-scale comprehensive cultural exchange activities. The development of cultural relations between China-Uzbekistan has entered a new phase of development. This has created a stable external environment for the development of the economic and trade partnership between the two countries. Since 2016, China has been the number one trading partner and the number one export destination of the U.S. for consecutive years. At present, China still maintains its position as the number one trading partner of Uganda. There are over 2,000 Chinese companies in Uganda. The two sides have been cooperating closely in the fields of trade, investment, new energy, transportation, agriculture, finance and modern communications, with projects such as

²Xi Jinping. Working together to create a better future for China- Uzbekistan relations[N]. Xinhua Daily. September 14, 2022.

the Pengsheng Industrial Park, the Andijan Industrial Park and the Huaxin Jizak Cement Plant being among the representative achievements. President Xi Jinping noted in his article “Working Together to Create a Better Tomorrow for China- Uzbekistan Relations” that “We are good friends who have made friends with each other2021 and bilateral trade volume exceeded US\$8 billion. bilateral trade volume in the first half of 2022 was nearly US\$5 billion and is on track to reach the annual 10 billion dollars and are making steady progress towards the goal of US\$10 billion for the year.”³ Practice has proved that the development of cultural relations between the two countries is indispensable to the achievement of each, and every result of China- Uzbekistan economic and trade cooperation. China- Uzbekistan cultural diplomacy has promoted the continuous leapfrog development of relations between the two countries, creating a peaceful and stable environment for greater friendship, mutual trust, common development and prosperity between China and Uzbekistan.

Thirdly, China- Uzbekistan cultural diplomacy is conducive to accelerating the strategic alignment of the two countries and strengthening security cooperation. Both the Chinese and Uzbek peoples have a long history and rich cultural heritage, and together they have created the miracle of the prosperity of the Silk Road. The people of the two countries share the common characteristics of hard work, simplicity, hospitality and love of peace. During their long-term friendly exchanges, they have fully respected each other's historical and cultural traditions, promoted civilizational dialogue and forged a deep friendship. Over the past thirty years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, humanistic exchanges and cooperation have flourished. In particular, in recent years, the two sides have further expanded cooperation in the fields of culture, education, science, sports, tourism and archaeology, strengthened friendly exchanges between the press, media, academic institutions, civil friendship organisations and performing arts groups, and jointly run the Confucius Institute in Uzbekistan. The two governments and peoples have a deeper understanding on the basis of which to develop their relations with a more open and inclusive mind. From the development of friendly and cooperative relations, to the establishment of a strategic partnership in 2012, to the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2016, the two countries have achieved a strategic upgrade in their relations. Vivid examples of pragmatic cooperation between the two countries, which have benefited people's livelihoods, abound. In June 2016, the “Angren-Papu” railway tunnel, the longest tunnel in Central Asia, was opened to traffic. “The flourishing construction of the Belt and Road” has widened the avenues of cooperation between the two countries. The “China-Central Asia Gas Pipeline” is a comprehensive and close cooperation between the two countries for the benefit of the people. The two countries have been cooperating closely on security matters, both bilaterally and under multilateral frameworks such as the SCO, and have been conducting intensive law enforcement and security cooperation and exchanges with their counterparts, including increased intelligence and information sharing, and combating the “three forces”, including the “East Turkistan” terrorist forces, drug smuggling, cybercrime, and other transnational organised criminal activities. Close communication has been maintained in maintaining information security; exchanges between the defence departments of the two countries at all levels have continued to expand; cooperation in the military and military technology fields has been strengthened; exchanges of information, technology and personnel in areas such as disaster risk warning, emergency response mechanisms and post-disaster recovery and reconstruction have continued to be actively pursued; and cooperation in the training of professionals and the use of advanced technology has been vigorously promoted. We will cooperate on all fronts to combat

³Xi Jinping. Working together to create a better future for China- Uzbekistan relations[N]. Xinhua Daily.September 14, 2022.

epidemics and promote in-depth cooperation in areas such as poverty reduction and relief, green development and modernisation and connectivity. President Mirziyoyev has spoken of the deep and fraternal trust that exists between Uzbekistan and China. In September 2022, when President Xi Jinping met with President Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan, he said: China is willing to practice the China-Uzbekistan community of destiny with the Uzbek side, deepen all-round mutually beneficial cooperation and create a better future together.⁴ Since the new era, the two countries have been able to engage in comprehensive strategic docking, upgrade strategic cooperation, continuously strengthen security cooperation and jointly maintain regional security and stability, with deep-rooted cultural factors in addition to political and economic factors.

Fourth, China- Uzbekistan cultural diplomacy promotes people-to-people contact and opens up broad prospects for humanities cooperation. On 14 May 2017, President Xi Jinping emphasized in his keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the “Belt and Road” International Cooperation Summit Forum that “

Friendship among nations lies in people-to-people relations, and people-to-people relations lie in heart-to-heart relations”. China and Uzbekistan have become good friends for mutual friendship, good partners for common development, good role models for civilizational dialogue and good brothers for mutual help, all of which require mutual respect and affection, resonance and resonance of ideas, and mutual integration and intercommunication. The Uzbeks in China and the Uzbeks in Uzbekistan are cross-border people of the same origin, and other ethnic minorities in western China also have close blood, cultural and religious ties with the inhabitants of Uzbekistan. This is a valuable historical resource for the “people-to-people” relationship between China and Uzbekistan. The border between China and Uzbekistan is only 150 kilometres apart and the convenient geographical location is a natural resource for “people-to-people” relations between China and Uzbekistan. In traditional Chinese culture, it is said that there is no victory in time, place and people. Since China entered a new era, “people-to-people contact” has remained an important project to which both countries have always attached great importance. In particular, the strength and depth of engagement between the two governments has further increased significantly since 2016. The good relations at high level lead to the harmonious development of China- Uzbekistan relations, setting an international example of good neighbourliness, efficient cooperation, openness and win-win situation. In recent years, the two countries have built a more stable and extensive platform and channel for “people-to-people contact”. The exchanges and cooperation between the two countries in the field of humanities have been expanded and new breakthroughs have been achieved. The high-quality development of the “Belt and Road”, the expansion of cooperation between the two countries in the fields of local, think-tank, media, art and archaeology, especially the solid promotion of China- Uzbekistan high-tech and archaeological cooperation. The Chinese Ambassador to Uzbekistan, Sun Lijie, said that Xinjiang Agricultural University and Tashkent State University of Economics have jointly established the China-Uzbekistan Science and Education Centre, and Huawei has set up an information and network technology institute based on Tashkent University of Information Technology. The Chinese Academy of Sciences has established a comprehensive drug research and development centre and a number of advanced laboratories in the country, and a number of proprietary Chinese medicines have been approved for registration in the country. The joint archaeology of China and Uzbekistan is at the forefront of China’s overall foreign archaeological cooperation, with two teams of archaeologists from the Institute of Archaeology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Northwestern

⁴Xi Jinping meets with President Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan, Xinhua Network: http://www.news.cn/politics/leaders/2022-02/05/c_1128334005.htm. February 5, 2022.

University carrying out archaeological excavations in Uzbekistan, including the ruins of the ancient city of Ming Tieppe and the remains of ancient nomadic peoples. The conservation and restoration of two monuments in Khiva, which China has sent experts to assist in, has received strong support and recognition from the local government and residents. The restoration of the ancient city of Khiva has not only contributed to conservation initiatives in Asia's cultural heritage, but has also resulted in a genuine friendship between the two peoples. With the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a platform, education and science cooperation is steadily advancing, academic exchanges and talent training are flourishing, the tourism industry continues to rise, medical and health cooperation is becoming increasingly close, and there are broad prospects for humanities cooperation between the two countries.

III. concluding remarks

With the increasing frequency of international cultural exchanges, cultural diplomacy is becoming one of the hot issues of concern to the international community. Although different schools of thought have different perceptions of cultural diplomacy, such as realism, institutionalism and constructivism based on different perspectives, there is a basic consensus on the important role of cultural diplomacy in international relations. Over the past 30 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Uzbekistan, the two countries have always upheld the principles of equality, mutual benefit and respect, and have actively played a role in cultural diplomacy, promoting a historic leap from a strategic partnership of good neighbourliness and friendship to a comprehensive strategic partnership and then to a community of destiny. As the relationship between the two countries enters a new journey, there is still a need for cultural diplomacy to continue to gain momentum and inject more strength into the friendship between China and Uzbekistan for generations to come. To this end, it is important to further strengthen the understanding of the history of exchange and mutual appreciation of civilisations and the cultures of the two countries, and to enhance cultural identity, mutual political trust and people-to-people contact between the two countries. In terms of mechanism, we will establish and improve the mechanism of cooperation and dialogue among governments at all levels, enrich social exchange channels and platforms, and effectively promote policy communication in a deep and practical manner. In terms of capacity, we will increase our cultural diplomacy efforts, enhance our cultural diplomacy capabilities, seize strategic opportunities for cultural diplomacy, break the cultural diplomacy dilemma and expand the international influence of both countries. In addition, deepening the socio-economic and humanistic foundation and increasing industrial support and talent training will lay a solid social and human resource foundation for enhancing mutual understanding and support between the two countries on a range of regional and international affairs. In conclusion, with the deepening of relations between China and Uzbekistan, the importance of cultural diplomacy has become increasingly prominent, especially in promoting the high-quality development of the "Belt and Road" and building a closer community of destiny for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. This is of great significance in deepening the level of cooperation between the two countries, promoting joint cooperation and sharing of opportunities, and strengthening people-to-people and heart-to-heart ties between the two peoples.

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