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# Italy's Cultural Diplomacy: From Propaganda to Cultural Cooperation

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**Summary:** Cultural diplomacy has always been an important tool in Italian foreign policy. Culture represented a significant resource already in the liberal period and was also widely used by Fascism. During the inter-war period, cultural promotion abroad aimed at spreading the regime's political-social organizational model.

In the second post-war period, cultural resources played a fundamental role in Italian international relations. The democratic government carried out a transition from an essentially propagandistic action, which Fascism implemented especially in the second half of 1930's, to a cultural diplomacy more attentive to the issues of dialogue and cooperation.

The soft power of culture grew in importance. Lacking effective diplomatic tools of a political and economic nature, the new ruling class promoted the nation's cultural tradition.

Although with means and personnel widely used already during the Fascist period, democratic Italy adopted an innovative cultural diplomacy with regard to premises and goals. This policy was apparently low-key and devoid of political themes, but in reality it was aimed at acquiring,

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in the long run, the friendship and the sympathy of the elites of other countries, so as to bolster political and economic relations.

In the framework of a broader course of action, aimed at supporting multilateral diplomacy, the new leaders of post-Fascist Italy also promoted an international cultural cooperation which reversed the previous power politics and the unilateral assertion of Italian culture, but was still careful to defend the nation's interests. This cooperative dimension was realized above all with the participation in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

**Keywords:** soft power, cultural diplomacy, propaganda, cultural cooperation, foreign cultural policy, Fascism, Italian foreign policy, UNESCO

## Introduction

After the Second World War, the cultural diplomacy of the Italian Republic was characterized by the effort to promote cultural cooperation based on multilateral cultural diplomacy. This aim was realized through participation in UNESCO. With the admission to the Paris-based organization, Italian cultural diplomacy was able to pursue its goal of a reciprocal exchange and recognition. This represented a new direction, if compared to the foreign cultural policy promoted during the Fascist period, characterized mainly by a public diplomacy with a propaganda-oriented approach.

It is useful, within this context, to clarify the meaning of cultural diplomacy and propaganda (Cull, 2009; Medici 2009, pp. xvii-xx). Cultural diplomacy is a set of cultural relations promoted directly by governmental institutions, or delegated by governments to agencies and cultural institutions abroad to show a particular image of a given country. Cultural diplomacy aims at supporting traditional diplomacy through the building of friendship and sympathy with other nations in order to improve political, economic, commercial relations, as well as for purposes of prestige and acknowledgment.

Cultural diplomacy prefers bilateral and multilateral exchanges on a reciprocal basis (and this is the reason why it is often replaced

by the terms: cultural cooperation). It has a long-term perspective and is intended to affect the mentality of political, economic, intellectual and religious leaderships of other countries, as these opinion makers are able in turn to influence the shaping of a wider public opinion. Its main instruments, related to 'high culture', are: cultural and educational institutions such as cultural centres and libraries, schools abroad and universities chairs; exchange programmes for teachers, scholars and artists, through the distribution of scholarships; festivals and cultural exhibitions.

Cultural diplomacy differs from public diplomacy, which prefers unidirectional activities and has a short-term perspective. Public diplomacy aims at exerting a direct influence on foreign public opinion with initiatives directed to the broader audiences, acting mainly through the means of 'low culture' and mass communication: press, distribution of publications, radio and television, films, comics, and especially in recent decades, social networks.

Both cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy can be defined as propaganda when this term is used in the neutral rather than negative meaning. However, public diplomacy for its own instruments and recipients may turn in the negative definition of propaganda when, in an attempt to influence and manipulate public opinion, it operates gross distortion or falsification of news and data, or applies censorship. The extreme version of propaganda is psychological warfare when, in a conflict, cultural and information tools are used to consolidate domestic and international public opinion, to acquire the sympathy of neutral countries, or to undermine the morale of the enemy.

The difference between cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, propaganda and psychological warfare, therefore, is more in the purposes sought than in the instruments used. However, there is still some uncertainty about the boundaries between the various categories of the image promotion of a country. In addition, the definition of these boundaries is affected by the feelings and attitudes of users: often, cultural diplomacy promoted by a state may be discounted as propaganda by a hostile state.

Cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy are both components of the so called 'soft power', the controversial concept introduced by

Joseph Nye in 1990 to describe the ability of one country to shape the attitudes of another, and to do so through attraction, appeal and influence rather than coercion through military or economic means (hard power) (Nye, 2004).

For Italy, the cultural soft power promoted especially through cultural diplomacy has always been an important foreign policy instrument. During the liberal period (the years since the establishment of the unified Kingdom of Italy until the rise of Fascist regime), schools abroad were decisive instruments (Floriani, 1974).

An important tool was also the National Society “Dante Alighieri” founded in 1889 with the aim of supporting Italian identity abroad. Organized in committees, the “Dante Alighieri” arranged courses and lectures aimed at keeping the national sentiment of Italian emigrants alive. Over time, it expanded the field of intervention by establishing courses of Italian language, the creation of libraries, the dissemination of books and publications, the organization of conferences (Caparelli, 1985; Pisa, 1995; Salvetti, 1995).

Another instrument for the spreading of Italian culture abroad during the liberal period, which was promoted mostly by single academic institutions or by individual initiative, was the establishment of academic chairs of language, literature and, more generally, of Italian culture, which had teachers of Italian nationality. This contributed to the training of local specialists and was complemented by the presence of numerous Italian language readings at foreign universities and secondary schools (Medici, 2009, p. 7). A significant role in Italian cultural relations, with considerable political implications, was also played by archaeological missions, mainly present in the Mediterranean area (Petricioli, 1990).

## **Fascist Cultural Policy Abroad**

With the accession to power of Fascism, Italian cultural diplomacy was strengthened so much so that we can speak of a ‘Golden Age’ for the promotion of Italian culture abroad. The Fascist regime used the already established tools of cultural and public diplomacy

(Cavarocchi, 2010; Fotia, 2018). The first step of the Fascist government toward cultural diplomacy was the reorganization and the improvement of Italian cultural institutes, many of which had been created by private initiatives. In particular, a law was passed in 1926 to control these institutions, now conceived not only for culturally diplomatic purposes, like the spreading of knowledge of Italian culture and language, but also for propaganda. The promotion of the Fascist model, particularly the corporatism, and of the political, economic and social goals of the regime became one of the purposes of cultural centres (Medici, 2009, pp. 41–42).

The action of cultural institutes confirmed the instrumental value attached to cultural diplomacy by the Fascist regime. Significant were the institutes founded in the Danube-Balkan area, where Italy had traditionally wanted to spread its political and economic influence (Santoro, 2005), and in Latin America, where there were vast communities of Italian immigrants (Fotia, 2019). The activities of the institutes were directed at political and economic elites, particularly teachers, professionals, the clergy and others who were shapers and multipliers of public opinion<sup>2</sup>.

In the capitals without proper cultural institutes, not only London, Paris, and New York, but also Berlin and Tokyo (in the Japanese city the institute opened only after the beginning of the Second World War) (Medici, 2009, pp. 23–26), Italian cultural traditions and the Fascist image were promoted by other means, like Case d'Italia, Dopolavoro, libraries, universities chairs, lectureships, and archaeological missions. Additional means were the network of Fasci all'estero and Case del Fascio (de Caprariis, 2000; Franzina & Sanfilippo, 2003), the Gruppi Universitari Fascisti (GUF) abroad (Garzarelli, 2000), and the Comitati d'Azione per l'Universalità di Roma (CAUR) (Cuzzi, 2005). Fascism also used tools of public diplomacy, including radio broadcasts (Marzano, 2015), movies, and documentaries (Garzarelli, 2004, pp. 99–112), with the purpose of reaching an even larger sector of public opinion.

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<sup>2</sup> See the sections dedicated to cultural institutes and schools abroad in the review *Romana: Rivista degli Istituti di Cultura Italiana all'Estero* [1937–1943].

Like during the liberal period, education had an essential role in the propagation of Italian culture and language abroad, whether in primary and secondary schools or universities. After a series of laws enacted in the early 1920s, schools came under the control of the regime and became a tool of Fascist propaganda, even if their activity was directed especially to the sons of Italian emigrants (Fotia, 2019). When local students attended Italian schools, they were themselves vehicles for the Fascist ideology (Pretelli, 2010). The Fascist government also seized control of private cultural and educational institutions, such as the Società “Dante Alighieri” and turned over their buildings and libraries to state-established cultural institutes (Caparelli, 1985, pp. 124–131; van Kessel, 2016).

During the Fascist period, the cultural promotion abroad, supported also by the signing of cultural agreements, worked to spread the model of political and social organization of the regime (corporatism, water reclamation projects, public housing, construction of new cities, policies for families, after-works, kindergartens, youth associations, summer camps, etc.) and gradually took on propaganda connotations (Medici, 2009, pp. 32–53).

Indeed, the regime placed emphasis on historical and cultural aspects, such as Italian language and civilization, and conferences on Italian cultural tradition. Nevertheless, themes of the Roman era, myth of *Latinità*, the Renaissance and the Italian Risorgimento were functional to the Fascist image abroad, since they were portrayed as historical steps toward the “Fascist Revolution” (Santoro, 2005, pp. 25–27). Fascism was well aware, however, that propaganda could be counterproductive. Fascism hardly ever used the term “propaganda” (Garzarelli, 2004, p. 31).

The Fascist control of cultural policy abroad grew stronger after the 1935–36 Ethiopian war, when the propaganda effort was designed to justify the aggression in the eyes of foreigners (Goglia, 1984). The need to control the means of communication led to the founding of a new propaganda apparatus (Garzarelli, 2004). The Ministero della Cultura Popolare was created in 1937 on the model of the German Propaganda Ministry, with the goal to control access to information and manage cultural activities not only inside the

country but also abroad. The new Ministry approached cultural policy abroad strictly in terms of propaganda, the control of which was shared with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under the direction of Galeazzo Ciano since 1936, a formerly chief of the Ministero della Stampa e Propaganda (Cannistraro, 1975; Garzarelli, 2004).

Thanks to increased funding, Ciano promoted activities of new cultural institutions and also the signing of bilateral cultural treaties, especially with friendly or allied countries like Germany, Japan, Bulgaria, Romania, and Portugal. These were conceived for the defense and the spreading of Italian culture abroad, thanks to the principle of reciprocity (Medici, 2009, pp. 21–26, 66).

After the Italian exit from the League of Nations in 1937, the Istituto Nazionale per le Relazioni Culturali con l'Estero (IRCE) was created in 1938, with the purpose of putting a nationalistic stamp on cultural diplomacy. The president of the institute was Alessandro Pavolini, chief of the Ministero della Cultura Popolare (Pavolini, n.d. [but 1943]).

IRCE replaced the international cultural organizations related to intellectual cooperation, like the Commissione Nazionale Italiana per la Cooperazione Intellettuale, that was created in 1926 to interact with the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation, born in Paris in 1925, and the International Commission of Intellectual Cooperation, born in Geneva in 1922. These international organizations were founded to rebuild the “republic of academics” and the common basis of “international culture” definitively corroded by nationalism in the First World War. Their purpose was to strengthen the relations among intellectuals from different countries and the beginning of a cultural cooperation as an instrument for the reconciliation and understanding among people against the temptations of totalitarianism and racism (Renoliet, 1999).

The presence of Fascist Italy within these organizations, often accused of being an arena for useless discussions or nests of “socialist masons”, was instrumental and intended to maintain the country’s “reputation”, in spite of contributions from a number of prominent intellectuals who were tied to the regime but relatively independent, such as the nationalist Minister of Justice, Alfred Rocco (Rocco,

1935). In practice, the Commissione Nazionale Italiana per la Cooperazione Intellettuale was an apparatus for a strict control over cultural relations with other countries<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, the IRCE would replace intellectual cooperation with a promotion of Italian culture abroad according to nationalistic ideals which characterized Fascism, unlike the institutes linked to intellectual cooperation of which Italy had also been part of the inter-war period (Medici, 2009, pp. 53–71). The Fascist propaganda effort intensified with the beginning of the Second World War, when it assumed the characteristics of psychological warfare (Pavolini, n.d. [but 1943], p. 5).

## **Foreign Cultural Policies during the Cold War**

After the closures of Italian cultural institutions due to the outbreak of war, and in spite of the poor financial resources, during the post war period the Italian government resumed and strengthened cultural activities. However, the Italian Republic did not pursue a one-way strategy within its cultural policy abroad, as it did during the Fascist era (Medici, 2009, pp. 73–85).

The attitude of Italy toward cultural diplomacy became different also from that of other Western countries which, after the world conflict, continued to use a propaganda approach. That was the case of the United States and the United Kingdom, which foreign cultural policy was affected by the Cold War, and also of France, which mission was the promotion of French language and culture. The different international standing and responsibilities of Italy in comparison with other countries explains the different nature of their respective cultural diplomacies.

With the beginning of the Cold War, the United States became deeply concerned about Soviet propaganda. The United States

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<sup>3</sup> Archivio storico-diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Società delle Nazioni, pos- 49, Commissione Internazionale per la Cooperazione Intellettuale, pp. 131–143.

reacted with a hard-hitting propaganda campaign of its own, particularly in the form of information and public diplomacy-focused programmes. The long duel with the Soviet Union shaped American cultural diplomacy for more than forty years. U.S. propaganda was intended to expose the fallacies of Communism and to emphasize American values of freedom and democracy. Propaganda goals were to be achieved by controlling information and manipulating its interpretation (Hixson, 1997; Belmonte, 2008).

Meanwhile, cultural diplomacy was carried on also through educational institutions, such as schools and universities, often funded and run by nongovernmental organizations. Other cultural instruments utilized at the time were the financing of art exhibits, concerts, archaeological missions, and academic and educational exchange programmes. Examples included the Fulbright Programme, the scholarship plan established in 1946 for the exchange of students, scholars, teachers and artists (Dudden & Dynes, 1987; Arndt & Rubin, 1993).

Nevertheless, the outcome of foreign cultural policy pursued mostly in the form of propaganda was a general feeling of manipulation. Sometimes American public diplomatic efforts to counter Soviet propaganda in the world (Ebon, 1987; Gould-Davies, 2003) proved counter-productive, concentrating almost exclusively on incessantly broadcasting its own openness and love for dialogue, rather than actually engaging in it (Kroes, 1999). This was the case of many of information programmes controlled by the United States Information Agency (USIA) created in 1953 (Puddington, 2000; Heil Jr., 2003; Cull, 2008). In addition, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), as a part of its covert efforts to fight Communism abroad, supported a wide variety of intellectual and cultural programmes overseas (Coleman, 1989; Stonor Saunders, 1999; Scott-Smith, 2002). As a consequence, foreign public opinion began to characterize the United States as a “subjugator”, and charged America with cultural imperialism.

In the same way British and especially French cultural policies abroad became defined by the desire to promote the image of their own country rather than advocate dialogue with other cultures. Like

in the United States, there was the need to counter Communist propaganda, a threat to their colonial empires. Hence, the feeling of being manipulated and culturally colonized by Western nations became widespread, particularly in Third World countries, once former colonies of European empires.

A lack of organization and coordination weakened British cultural promotion, as culture was not a concept that attracted enthusiasm within the nation government. For a long time, the British government did not give particular importance to culture as a valuable good to export. Unlike Paris, London did not place particular attention to culture and did not perceive a link between cultural policy abroad and political or commercial gains. The United Kingdom assumed that its military, political and economic power should be sufficient to expand its influence throughout the world (Parsons, 1984–1985, pp. 3–4; Taylor, 1999).

As a result, Britain did not develop a cultural policy abroad as a form of coordinated government action. London gave importance to target audiences and preferred separate agencies to a single administration (Smith, 1980; Lucas & Morris, 1992; Aldrich, 2003). The main instruments of British cultural policy were officially independent organizations, like the British Council (Donaldson, 1984) and the External Services of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which received government funding even if both were regularly under the threat of cutbacks (Beresford, 1959; Taylor, 1981, pp. 181–215; Partner, 1988, 1–17).

British cultural policy abroad officially refused the term propaganda and preferred that of “projection” (Willcox, 1983, p. 101). But in the Cold War years the grudging acceptance of the tools of public diplomacy and the experience of the Second World War propaganda led to a preference for political and psychological warfare, intended to promote liberal and democratic values against totalitarian ideologies. Above all, British public diplomacy focused its effort to maintain the colonial empire (Carruthers, 1995; Vaughan, 2005).

Like the British, the French considered cultural relations as an instrument to strengthen the links between the colonies and the motherland, but unlike Britain, France pioneered cultural relations

and had a long tradition in foreign cultural policy with a well-organized structure. French cultural instruments and designations, such as cultural *attachés* and cultural institutes, were replicated by other countries (Roche & Pigniau, 1995, pp. 6–190; Haize, 2012).

French cultural policy abroad was also perceived by its end-consumers, especially in the former colonies, as a one-way relationship, and something similar to propaganda. Yet, unlike the United States and Great Britain, this was not necessarily a consequence of the Cold War. The French believed the representation of their culture to be virtually a sacred mission, a *mission civilisatrice*, which made them consider their values and cultural products, and especially their language, as worthy of adoption by other people (Weinstein, 1976; Burrows, 1986; Chaubet, 2006). This “messianism” overlapped with political nationalism, and after the Second World War, France’s desire to regain its rank as a world power prevailed on any other kind of cultural diplomacy (Frank, 2003).

## **The Cultural Diplomacy of the Italian Republic**

After the Second World War, Italian cultural policy abroad was different from that of these countries, since it was the result of the new nation status as a medium rank-power (Riccardi, 2017). The post-war Italian Republic used the same tools of cultural and public diplomacy that the Fascist regime improved in the 1920s and 1930s. This apparatus was well articulated, and after the world conflict could be used once again, even if political ideals and purposes had changed. Italy’s foreign cultural policy was not characterized by a one-way relation linked to Cold War mentality, like the United States and also Britain, or by a civilizing mission related to the diffusion of the language, like France.

As a consequence of its military defeat, in the years immediately following the Second World War Italy did not have the political or economic means for an effective foreign policy (Varsori, 1998; Di Nolfo, 2010; Monzali, 2011). However, as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Alcide De Gasperi well understood that the Italian govern-

ment could draw on a prestigious cultural tradition. In December 1946, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established the Direzione Generale delle Relazioni Culturali, with the task of reorganizing cultural diplomacy (Ferraris, 1954, pp. 656–657). Nevertheless, the disastrous experience of Fascism and its use of nationalistic values made it difficult for Italy to project a strong image abroad (Gaja, 1995). The country was not able and did not want to promote a foreign cultural policy based merely on self-serving returns and propagandistic purposes. De Gasperi thought that cultural relations should be not only a political instrument to reflect national interests but also a tool to promote peace (Medici, 2009, p. 88). For him, the cultural policy abroad could be one of the most effective tools through which Italy could again have a voice in international relations: not as a way to make preparations for nationalistic successes, but to arouse sympathy and understanding in relations with other countries and to facilitate any political or cultural relations with them<sup>4</sup>.

Italy had no colonial empire to defend and, since the mid-1950's, promoted a “neo-Atlantic” policy which aimed, within the Atlantic Alliance, to bridge the East and the West, as well as the North and the South, and to acquire a political and economic role in the Mediterranean (Martelli, 2008). Within this framework, a cultural exchange of ideas would promote commercial exchange.

The Italian Republic paid attention to bilateral cultural relations but, unlike Fascism, the focus was on listening and establishing a dialogue with foreign audiences with a long-term and non-propagandistic perspective. With a decree promulgated in 1950, new cultural institutes opened all over the world, including in Paris, London and New York, where the Fascists had never opened institutes<sup>5</sup>. The cultural institutes and centres housed libraries and organized conferences and monographic courses. They offered classes in Italian language, literature, and the history of fine arts, *Lectura Dantis*, musical concerts,

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<sup>4</sup> ASMAE, Gabinetto (1943–1958), b. 83 (1944–1947), posiz. 6 Ris. 2/13, Istituti e scuole all'estero – Finanziamenti, promemoria, il ministro degli Esteri Alcide De Gasperi al presidente del Consiglio Ferruccio Parri, Roma, 14 luglio 1945.

<sup>5</sup> “Decreto di fondazione degli istituti italiani di cultura all'estero,” Decreto ministeriale 24 giugno 1950, no. 2707.

art exhibitions, theatrical representations, projections of educational, cultural, but also commercial movies, organized conferences, distribution of prints, and provided scholarships for foreign students to enable those who had promise and potential to be educated in Italy (Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 1996, pp. 71–156).

The conferences and lessons were held in Italian and in the languages of host countries, with cultural programmes focused primarily on historical topics such as the Roman era and the Renaissance, and especially in the Mediterranean countries, on the results of archaeological missions (Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 1997). These subjects did not have political implications and did not seem unidirectional and assertive to foreign elites. They were developed with a perspective to common civilization in the Mediterranean and between the Western and the Eastern side of the curtain, and not as an expression of Italian supremacy, as it had been under Fascism (Medici, 2008).

Apart from the cultural institutes, new university language centres opened, and a stronger network of Italian schools offered educational programmes (Floriani, 1974, pp. 96–154). Starting in 1946, Italy signed a number of new bilateral cultural treaties. Whereas during Fascism they had been part of the propaganda apparatus and had been concluded only with allied countries, under the Republic the bilateral treaties were finalized for cultural, technical and scientific cooperation, and intended to foster better relationships between Italy and foreign countries. In the 1960s, these received much attention, with treaties aimed at economic and social development of Third World countries in particular (Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 1972; Medici, 2011).

The Italian government also paid attention to public diplomacy, promoted through media outlets such as radio broadcasts, but which purpose was neither primarily propagandistic nor involved in Cold War strategies (Medici 2009, p. 190).

## Italy's Cultural Cooperation and UNESCO

First of all, the sympathy with which the Italian image was received by foreign public opinion was the result of cultural diplomacy based on international cooperation. For a new ruling class, multilateral diplomacy and cultural cooperation befitted a country reshaped after the war as a medium-rank power, which could play an important role in international organizations and promoting multilateral relations (Santoro, 1991; Costa Bona & Tosi, 2007).

The admission to UNESCO in 1947 was an essential step for Italian cultural diplomacy, which conformed its action to the purposes of peace, mutual understanding and cultural cooperation of the Paris-based organization (Medici, 2003). If for the United States and Great Britain UNESCO was an instrument to counter the Soviet Union, and for France a reason of prestige, for Italy it was an essential component of its foreign cultural policy (Pendergast, 1976; Archibald, 1993; Sayah Chniti, 1997; Graham, 2006; Medici, 2013).

In 1950, the Commissione Nazionale Italiana per l'UNESCO replaced the Istituto Nazionale per le Relazioni Culturali con l'Estero, the organization created by Fascism to coordinate cultural relations for nationalistic purposes. The commission guaranteed the link with the international organization, prepared the Italian action in the UNESCO General Conferences and promoted the realization of the assembly resolutions (Azzario Chiesa, 1999). Ironically, admission to UNESCO was possible thanks to the existence of IRCE, one of a few cultural institutions still existing after the end of the Second World War. UNESCO officials approached the commissioner of IRCE, the anti-Fascist philosopher Carlo Antoni, to invite Italy, now a democratic country with a strong cultural tradition, to become a member of the organization. This opportunity was grabbed quickly by Antoni, who was persuaded that the best foreign cultural policy for Italy was to have no foreign cultural policy<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> ASMAE, Gabinetto (1943–1958), b. 106 (1944–1947), fasc. 49, I.R.C.E., *Relazione sul lavoro compiuto per la riorganizzazione dell'Irce e per la ripresa dei rapporti con l'estero nel campo della vita culturale*, Antoni a Sforza, Roma, 29 marzo 1947.

After being admitted, Italy immediately wanted to play an important role, based on pragmatic goals. It proposed that UNESCO should abandon ambitious and ideological projects, like the “scientific-humanism” proposed by its first secretary, Julian Huxley. In Italy’s opinion, UNESCO should avoid the dangers of bureaucracy and utopia, because these could cause future divisions in the organization (Paronetto Valier, 1999).

Additionally, during the 1950s and the early 1960s, the tougher years of the Cold War, in which the closure of many Italian cultural institutes in the Eastern European countries occurred (only the institute in Budapest remained open), the Italian cultural community continued to prefer dialogue and solidarity of interests also with intellectuals behind the Iron Curtain, in the name of apolitical ideals that should connote UNESCO<sup>7</sup>. In the Paris-based organization, the Italian government supported U.S. positions but urged Washington to take a moderate stand during the case of the blacklisted American officials in the organization accused of Communist sympathies (Behrstock, 1987; Archibald, 1993, pp. 171–184).

UNESCO’s initiatives of the 1950s and the 1960s saw relevant contributions from Italy. These initiatives were aimed at mutual comprehension and safeguarding peace, like the Major Project on Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western cultural values, to avoid a future clash of civilizations and like educational projects for new independent countries or campaigns to save cultural heritage. The important role of Italy in UNESCO was proved by the appointment of Vittorino Veronese as General Director from 1958 to 1961 (Medici, 2006; Medici, 2010).

In the late 1960’s and the 1970’s, Italy finally resumed cultural ties with the Soviet bloc countries, while it had a peacemaker role in the organization, where Western countries lost their hegemony in favor of formally non-aligned but indeed pro-Soviet countries (Medici, 2017).

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<sup>7</sup> Maria Luisa Paronetto Valier, Interview released to the author, 17 October 2003. Paronetto was General Secretary of the National Italian Commission for UNESCO from 1959 to 1987.

## Conclusion

After the Second World War, Italy had inadequate financial means to support its cultural policy abroad, and often it filled this void with rhetoric about its old-established cultural tradition. Moreover, for the Italian Republic, even if mainly declining in cultural cooperation, cultural diplomacy was a political tool, serving the national interest in regaining a significant rank in international relations, without being conceived as nationalistic or mere propaganda.

Also in the following decades, Italian cultural diplomacy remained well-grounded on these principles. The political and economic conditions of Italy after the defeat in the world conflict and the consequent status of medium-rank power in international relations made this choice a necessity. Nevertheless, this weakness was the basis for a successful cultural diplomacy founded on listening and dialogue with foreign audiences, so different from the tough cultural policy abroad promoted by the Fascist regime with nationalistic aims and propaganda tools. In the Cold War years, many Western countries' cultural diplomacies also used advocacy instruments, a strategy to succeed in their political aims of countering Soviet propaganda and keeping a strong link with former colonies.

As part of a broader political orientation attentive to multilateral diplomacy, Italian postwar governments stressed international cultural cooperation. The new strategy avoided any power politics and unilateral assertion of Italian culture, but it was careful to protect the interests of the country. The multilateral cultural cooperation was also characterized by a bilateral cultural diplomacy, based on dialogue and mutual exchange, so that even in this area, during the following years, the term most commonly used would be "cultural cooperation".

As declared in 1970 by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aldo Moro, cultural diplomacy should operate on a long-term basis and point out universal values, both on a bilateral and multilateral level. It should be based on the principle of cooperation, which means mutual acknowledgement and education for understanding, and should promote an exchange – the cultural exportation should integrate

the concept of cultural importation (Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 1971, pp. V-VII; 15–16).

The Italian Republic founded its bilateral and multilateral cultural relations on a real cultural cooperation. Educational and cultural programmes usually take years to produce dividends, but effective foreign cultural policy should be measured not by the immediacy of its results as much as by the durability of those results (Mulcahy, 1999). This was the choice of Italy, which preferred paradoxically not to promote its own cultural diplomacy, in favor of the realization of UNESCO's principles and purposes.

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## Dyplomacja kulturalna Włoch: Od propagandy do kooperacji kulturowej

**Streszczenie:** Dyplomacja kulturowa zawsze była ważnym narzędziem w polityce zagranicznej Włoch. Kultura była ważną wartością już w okresie liberalnym, a także w znacznym zakresie używana przez włoskich faszystów. W okresie międzywojennym promocja kultury poza granicami kraju miała na celu szerzenie pewnego organizacyjnego modelu ustroju społeczno-politycznego.

Po drugiej wojnie światowej zasoby kulturowe odgrywały fundamentalną rolę we włoskich stosunkach międzynarodowych. Rząd demokratyczny dokonał zmiany metod działań od zasadniczo propagandowych, stosowanych przez faszystów głównie w drugiej połowie lat 30. XX wieku, do dyplomacji kulturowej, bardziej wyczulonej na kwestie dialogu i współpracy.

Soft power polityki kulturowej zaczęło nabierać coraz większego znaczenia. Ze względu na brak efektywnych narzędzi dyplomatycznych o charakterze politycznym i ekonomicznym, klasa rządząca skupiła się na promowaniu tradycji kulturowych swojego narodu.

Demokratyczne Włochy wciąż wykorzystywały środki i personel zapewniony przez faszystów, jednak przyjęto innowacyjny program dyplomacji kulturowej z uwzględnieniem nowych przesłanek i celów. Taka polityka była umiarkowana i z pewnością pozbawiona motywów kulturowych, jednak w rzeczywistości i dłuższej perspektywie nastawiona była na pozyskiwanie kontaktów z nowymi krajami, zaprzyjaźnienie się z nimi i zyskanie sympatii ich elit, a w ostateczności na nawiązywanie z nimi relacji ekonomicznych i politycznych.

W ramach struktury szeroko zakrojonych działań nastawionych na wspieranie multilateralnej dyplomacji, nowi liderzy post-faszystowskich Włoch promowali międzynarodową współpracę kulturową, która odeszła od torów polityki siły wyznaczonych przez poprzedni reżim, oraz uznanie integralności kulturowej Włoch. Mimo to pozostawali czujni, by chronić interesy narodowe. Wymiar zamierzonej przez nich współpracy był realizowany przede wszystkim poprzez uczestnictwo Włoch w UNESCO.

**Słowa kluczowe:** soft power; dyplomacja kulturowa; propaganda; współpraca kulturowa; kulturowa polityka zagraniczna; faszyzm; polityka zagraniczna Włoch; UNESCO.