

Cultural Diplomacy for Colombia: An Opportunity to Be Taken*

La diplomacia cultural para Colombia: una oportunidad que debe ser aprovechada

[Artículos]

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Abstract

This paper elaborates on the results of qualitative research on the role of cultural diplomacy in Colombian foreign policy between 1991 and 2014 and its links with the current scenario. Based on a comparative analysis of various experiences on cultural diplomacy from five States, and taking Wendt's constructivism in dialogue with Nyes' soft power, the paper elaborates on the current challenges of Colombian cultural diplomacy. This paper argues, that despite the minor and discontinuous role of this diplomacy in the Colombian Foreign Policy, there is an opportunity to be taken for re-framing the role of the Colombian State in the construction of a postconflict scenario and the achievement of a renewed Colombian performance in the international system.

Keywords: cultural diplomacy, postconflict, Colombia, foreign policy, human rights.

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Resumen

El artículo reflexiona sobre los resultados de una investigación cualitativa acerca del rol de la diplomacia cultural en la política exterior colombiana entre 1991 y el 2014 y sus vínculos con el actual escenario. A partir del análisis comparado de diversas experiencias de diplomacia cultural de cuatro Estados, y acogiendo una aproximación anclada en el constructivismo de Wendt y el *soft power* de Nye, el artículo argumenta que esta diplomacia, a pesar del rol menor y discontinuo en la política exterior colombiana, representa una oportunidad que debe ser aprovechada para re-encaminar el rol del Estado colombiano en favor de la construcción del escenario de posconflicto y para renovar el papel de Colombia en el sistema internacional.

Palabras clave: diplomacia cultural, postconflicto, Colombia, política exterior, derechos humanos.

Introduction

The international scenario witnesses a new stage of the State, traced by changes and transformations in the nature of resources that influence actors' behavior within the international system. Non-Western powers such as China, India, Japan, and Russia play substantial roles on the international agenda while emerging powers deploy international leadership to address *glocal* (i. e., global and local) challenges. The United States (US) and the European Union (EU), whose economies during the twentieth century built a tradition of stability and solidity, have witnessed periods of a financial crisis. In Europe, migratory flows defy both integration projects and the EU's vision of security and defense.

Simultaneously, armed conflicts continue to be the greatest threat to human development in the world. As the UN (2015) points out, almost 60 million people have been forced to leave their homes, which is the highest number of forcibly displaced people since the Second World War. In 2015, during the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the UN Secretary-General highlighted:

I am keenly aware that inequalities persist and that progress has been uneven. The world's poor remain overwhelmingly concentrated in some parts of the world. In 2011, nearly 60 percent of the world's one billion extremely poor people lived in just five countries. Too many women continue to die during pregnancy or from childbirth-related complications. Progress tends to bypass women and those who are lowest on the economic ladder or are disadvantaged because of their age, disability, or ethnicity. Disparities between rural and urban areas remain pronounced. (UN, 2015, p. 3)

This reality draws part of what Colombia and the Latin American region face, i. e., poverty; lack of progress for lower economic groups, in particular women, indigenous people, and Afro-descendants; gaps between regions within the States; and gender inequality. In Latin America and the Caribbean region (UN, 2015), women are more likely than men to live in poverty; indeed, between 1997 and 2012, the proportion of women and men in poor households increased from 108 women for every 100 men in 1997 to 117 women for every 100 men in 2012. Not only the gap between rural and urban areas in developing regions remains high, but also children from the poorest 20 percent of the population are also more than twice as likely to be stunted than those from the wealthiest quintile (UN, 2015).

With a previously ongoing process of deepening inequality and the spread out of a neoliberal model, the 2019 pandemic has tragically exposed:

the weaknesses in every society, and widening and persistent inequality was a feature of almost every country. We are witnessing [...] to prepare and respond. Developing countries and those in crisis, [are suffering] the most, along with the already vulnerable all over the world; those that rely on the informal economy, women, those living with disabilities, refugees, and the displaced, as well as those that suffer from stigma. (UNDP, 2019)

The most striking shared issues imposed by global, regional, and national contexts in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic also call for global, regional, national, local, and communitarian responses, which require simultaneously building bridges on cooperation for mutual understanding and trust. From these lenses, I argue that deep cultural diplomacy is one of the feasible alternatives to building necessary bridges in Colombia, as it constitutes a platform and represents a multidimensional tool to face challenges in both re-framing the role of the Colombian State to develop a postconflict scenario and achieve a renewed performance in the contemporary international system.

Today, it is highly needed to include cultural diplomacy in the Colombian foreign policy, as well as getting greater advances in human rights protection. These are key issues that have been losing importance in the Colombian government agenda since 2018. Cultural diplomacy gives sustainability to foreign policy approaches, and this is especially pertinent and stressed by Blair's words, pronounced eleven years ago: "Colombia has a successful history to tell [...] it is time for the country to develop and place a different issue [...] as international reference" (as quoted by the Foreign Policy Mission in Colombia, 2010, p. IV). As the Foreign Policy Mission in Colombia asserted eleven years ago:

The richness and cultural diversity of Colombia represent enormous opportunities for creating relationships in the international context [...] promoting Colombian culture brings prestige, symbolic value, and also communication channels, which have an impact on the State's efforts in the political, economic, and commercial arenas [...]. Culture helps to both, improving international understandings about the country's reality and spreading networks. (Foreign Policy of Colombia's Mission, 2010, IV)¹

Although this cultural Colombian richness has been nurtured and resisted war logic during more than 60 years of armed conflict, its strength is currently being additionally challenged by the deep impact of the pandemic in the cultural sector (Castellanos, 2020). The public health isolation policies for infection prevention not only interrupt social interactions in which the continuity of cultural expressions and appreciation by the society take place, but also decrease dramatically the income for people working in the cultural sector during the pandemic. Despite this complex scenario, brave artists, people in academia, indigenous and Afro-American communities, peasants, students, doctors, and other nonviolent agents have been working tooth and nail trying not to face the pandemic effects themselves -including mental health impacts and threats to their survival-, but also to deal with the ongoing violence at homes, at the countryside, in the streets. The chains of solidarity are being built every day in the shadows of the mass media cameras. In fact, those agents are building, healing, sewing the

¹ Original passage: "La riqueza y diversidad cultural de Colombia representa un enorme potencial para la generación de espacios de relación en el contexto internacional [...] la promoción de la cultura colombiana genera prestigio, valoración simbólica y puentes de comunicación que tienen impacto en las gestiones que el Estado adelanta en los ámbitos político, económico y comercial [...] la cultura ayuda a mejorar la comprensión de la realidad del país y a extender redes de relacionamiento".

damaged social fabric, using music², theater³, cinema⁴, audiovisuals⁵, academic meetings, handcrafts -and other cultural expressions-, and while they do so, they are nurturing the backbone of cultural diplomacy.

These other realities are part of what is also currently happening in Colombia. Their invisibility gave life to this paper, to both encourage reflections on some substantive elements and the results of my research⁶ and promote the inclusion of cultural diplomacy to contribute to how people cope with the lack of trust in the Colombian polarized society, frightened to death by the COVID-19 virus. The Colombian society needs different tools to be able to face the most striking shared issues imposed by global, regional, and national contexts, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic challenges. To this aim, the paper initially describes the reference framework and the conceptual framework. Then, it shares and dialogues with key results and conclusions of my research from three starting points: a. the definition of deep cultural diplomacy; b. the role of cultural diplomacy in the Colombian foreign policy between 1991 and 2014, and c. accuracies and

² Numerous musical projects for peace have been working in different regions of Colombia. One of them, the Guadalupana Band (Rueda, 2019), links music as a path towards the true essence of art in the consolidation of upright human beings in Catambuco (south of Colombia). Another peace initiative is *The First international virtual concert for nonviolence*. It took place in 2019, was led by the *Colombia Noviolenta* NGO, and brought together musicians from Colombia and other 75 countries calling for nonviolence and the importance of arts as a means of nonviolence during the pandemic (Colombia Noviolenta, 2019). Also, the musical-social programs of the Fundación Batuta de Colombia show that the education in music for peace can be considered as a process of cultural democratization, in which creativity, group dynamics, and territorial social inclusion are developed, and where planning and pedagogical innovation are essential for building peace (Cobo, 2021).

³ Among the numerous theater festivals, the XXX Women on Stage for Peace Festival has been celebrated for 30 consecutive years, being the first women's festival in Latin America. The festival aims to make visible and recognize women's artistic creations in the performing arts, theater, artistic dance, and performance and to encourage reflections between women artists and women from the Social Movement of Women for Peace (Corporación Colombiana de Teatro, 2021).

⁴ One of the cinema initiatives is the International Film Festival for Human Rights, which has been taking place from 2013 aiming to contribute training audiences, strengthening the film and cultural industries, opening spaces for dialogues on life, reconciliation, promotion and defense of human rights, and encouraging new ideas for peace (Cine por los derechos humanos, 2021).

⁵ Vesga (2019) examines three media literacy and production processes that contribute to peacebuilding in Colombia. One of them is carried out by the Bertrand Russell school (Chia town). It uses the audiovisual productions of the students to let them be aware that war does not overshadow the beauty, aesthetics, and richness of the Colombian territory, its biodiversity, the resilience of its people, creativity, and generosity.

⁶ The qualitative research identified constitutive variables of deep cultural diplomacy and built its definition after analyzing: i. successful experiences of Indonesia, Turkey, Mexico, and The Republic of Korea, which have consolidated cultural diplomacy as a pillar of their foreign policy; ii. multiple definitions of cultural diplomacy, among them those proposed by UNESCO, OEI, and the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy; iii. interviews with diplomats working at said studied state and civil servants of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of the Republic of Colombia, revising the role of cultural diplomacy in the Colombian foreign policies between 1991 and 2014 (Montoya, 2017).

challenges derived from identified relations between cultural diplomacy and the UN system perceptions on human rights performances at a national level. These three starting points are useful for elaborating on a postconflict scenario in Colombia in the middle of the pandemic and moving forward.

Reference Framework or State of the Art

Since the Second World War, States have made international cultural relations, which have been outspread by the system (Montoya, 2012). Also, alliances between culture and foreign policy have been blossoming within policies on the management of information and States propaganda, while military cooperation and deployment have increased. As Elodie (2012) notes, initiatives for recognizing the importance of culture at an international level and from foreign policies took place in the 1940s through both *intercultural communication* at the US Foreign Service Institute and *cultural advisers* in France. Likewise, cultural cooperation initiatives were outspread by the creation of educational and cultural institutions responsible for the international teaching of national languages and culture at the end of the XIX century. Among these institutions we have the Alliance Française (1883), the Società Dante Alighieri (1889), and the Deutsche Akademie (1925, created during Weimar's Republic). All of them were paralyzed during the Second World War, and after that, they retook their momentum while others emerged: the British Council (1946), the Swiss Confederation's Pro Helvetia (1949), the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (1950), the Goethe-Institut (1951), and the Instituto México (1970s). In the 21st century, China founded the Confucius Institutes (2004), Peru created the Garcilaso de la Vega Inca Centers, while The Republics of Korea, Turkey, and Indonesia established the Korean Cultural Centers and the Sejong Institute, the Yunus Emre Institutes, and the Cultural Centers, respectively.

It should be noted that cultural diplomacy has been increasingly attracting scholars' attention since the 1990s, while its deployment has been promoting training programs in the field worldwide. Indeed, an increase in cultural diplomacy has occurred in Western and non-Western countries, by retaking the power of culture. Paraphrasing the Basque Culture Observatory (sf), all political systems have used culture and arts to show themselves abroad, even to impose themselves, but the current international scenario and the course of history have added complexity, diversity, and versatility.

The outstanding experiences of those States previously seen as "defeated" and devastated by the end of the Second World War are inspiring. As emphasized by Montiel (2010), those States chose alternative paths composed of technological innovation, scientific creativity, education development, and research growth; those States have emerged as economic and technological global powers, after three decades of having chosen an alternative path. It is particularly important to observe that those States have been building cultural, educational, and scientific models to reach high levels of socio-economic development, while they have been placing themselves as successful cultural diplomacy referents, and as a result of working together from their foreign policies. Their experiences are illustrative for elaborating on the Colombian postconflict and re-signifying Colombia's role in the international system.

Conceptual Framework

A lack of consensus on the meaning of cultural diplomacy prevails. The controversial institutionalized birth of International Relations embraced *traditional diplomacy*, while in the 1960s Gullion Edmund proposed the *public diplomacy* concept. Those two concepts were debated in the battle of ideas and values between the US and the USSR during the Cold War; however, their approaches are still relevant. Misunderstandings persist and confuse the meanings of traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy; for this reason, and to elaborate on the difference between those concepts, it is convenient to emphasize Melissen's approach, summarized in the table 1.

On a more strident note, cultural diplomacy, international cultural relations, and public diplomacy are frequently been mixed up. In facing this, Rodríguez states that:

International cultural relations [include] activities supported by the State in order to achieve objectives in the cultural field [while...] cultural diplomacy refers to activities that support the foreign policy's objectives, [and...] public diplomacy takes into account technological changes and public opinion [... therefore it is referred to] all efforts in information lead by the government, within the diplomatic arenas, that go beyond traditional diplomacy.⁷ (2008, p. 45)

⁷ Original passage: "Las relaciones internacionales culturales [incluyen] actividades con el apoyo del Estado con el fin de lograr diversos objetivos en el ámbito cultural [mientras que la]

Table 1. Comparing Public Diplomacy and Traditional Diplomacy

Diplomacy	Public Diplomacy	Traditional Diplomacy
Main purpose The art of resolving international difficulties peacefully	Main purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aimed to a general audience, foreign societies, and specific, nongovernmental groups, organizations, and individuals. • postmodern transnational relations 	Main purpose Relationships between the representatives of states, or other international actors.
Principal agents The conduct of relations between sovereign states through the intervention of accredited representatives.	Principal agents Interlocutors of today's foreign service officers = not necessarily their counterparts, but a wide variety of people that are either involved in a diplomatic activity or are at the receiving end of international politics.	Principal agents Representatives of states, or other international actors.
Chief function The management of international relations by negotiation.	Chief function The requirements of diplomacy have been transformed	Chief function Game where the roles and responsibilities of actors are clearly delineated.
Success in diplomacy (Cooper) Openness + transnational cooperation Openness + multi-level cooperation = active pursuit of more collaborative diplomatic relations with various types of actors <i>Public diplomacy is an indispensable ingredient for such a collaborative model of diplomacy.</i>		

Source: Self-made from the article *Evolution of cultural diplomacy* (Melisen, 2005).

Utilizing the benefits of cultural diplomacy, international cultural relations, and public diplomacy seems to enable transparency and transnational cooperation between international actors and guide foreign policy objectives. From this framework, in 2017 I proposed the concept of *deep cultural diplomacy*, in which cultural diplomacy is understood simultaneously as a process and a result of regional, national, and global contexts, which facilitates the transition towards possible scenarios and cross-cultural communication. Thus, by deep cultural diplomacy I meant:

A complex set of operations, activities, programs, and initiatives coordinated by the State⁸ [and with nonstate actors], for foreign policy purposes and with the

diplomacia cultural hace referencia a las actividades que apoyan los objetivos de la política exterior [y] el término de diplomacia pública toma en cuenta los cambios tecnológicos y la opinión pública [...] [son] todos los esfuerzos informativos gubernamentales del ámbito diplomático que trasciende la diplomacia tradicional”.

⁸ Marginal literature argues that diaspora, artists, writers, intellectuals, universities, and think tanks, enterprises, or corporations are also cultural diplomacy agents (Grincheva, 2013; Donfried, 2015; Senkić, 2017; Montoya, 2019, 2021).

support of diverse actors [...] It seeks to: facilitate relationships between countries; build and consolidate linkages in order to exchange ideas, information, values, systems, traditions, and beliefs; achieve mutual understandings between actors; and identify common goals and joint strategies. Deep cultural diplomacy [...] [a] is the responsible and coherent management of the country's image abroad by promoting and preserving cultural heritage, arts in their numerous disciplines, and historical moments [...]; [b] includes cultural expressions from folk art (folkloric) to cultural industries, visual and scenic arts, literature, gastronomy, cinema, and audio-visual media to creative industries; [c] leads bilateral, multilateral, and global programs or initiatives on education exchanges, but also for art creation; [d] involves receiving populations of national diplomatic missions abroad, co-nationals abroad, and returnees at homeland; [e] includes teaching programs on national languages and national history; and [f] promotes interreligious and intercultural dialogues.⁹ (Montoya, 2017)

From the foreign policy perspective, embracing and working towards a postconflict scenario for Colombia requires accomplishing the constructive international insertion of the country attached to peace-building challenges. Before moving forward, it is primarily necessary to clarify, as I did in 2017, the concept of postconflict as its different meanings imply diverse political positions concerning possible consequences not only of applying the signed peace agreement between the FARC guerrilla and the Colombian government but also of the peace-building stage in Colombia. Consequently, in order to provide a responsible usage of the "postconflict" concept and to prevent it from including everything and nothing at the same time and promoting unconscious participation of citizens, it is important to note Murillo's approach to postconflict, which is defined as:

⁹ Original passage: "Un complejo conjunto de operaciones, actividades, programas e iniciativas orquestadas por el Estado con ayuda de diversos actores para fines de la política exterior [...] con el propósito de tejer relaciones entre los países, construir y consolidar los nexos [para:] el intercambio de ideas, información, valores, sistemas, tradiciones y creencias, [e identificar] puntos de encuentro y estrategias conjuntas [...] Diplomacia cultural profunda es:] el manejo responsable y coherente de la(s) imagen(es) de país en el exterior, la promoción y preservación del patrimonio cultural, las artes en sus diversas disciplinas y momentos [...] expresiones desde el arte popular (folclórico) hasta las industrias culturales, atravesando por artes visuales, escénicas, literatura, gastronomía, cine y medios audiovisuales [...] las industrias creativas [...] programas e iniciativas de intercambio y cooperación educativa bilateral, multilateral y global, hasta el intercambio a través de la creación artística; [involucra] a la población receptora de las misiones diplomáticas nacionales en el exterior [...], connacionales en el exterior y retornados, [incluye], la enseñanza del lenguaje e historia nacional; [promueve] el diálogo interreligioso e intercultural".

Stage or period just after situations of confrontation or collision in which two or more parties have developed times and contexts of mutual extermination [...]. Therefore postconflict requires a) Planning strategies to reestablish coexistence in diversity, by avoiding the prevalence of destruction; [...b] reasonability to understand what others do and the reason behind their actions, but also to know what they can learn from those with whom they build what is seen as public; [c] considering that... policymaking allows to understand and evaluate how we can work together [...and include] the right of peaceful coexistence [...].d) Openness to diversity [...] and to what is seen as different, but also to a rebuilt forecast on what human groups might pursue, after a fragmentation caused by conflict and violence.¹⁰ (2017, pp. 91, 94-97)

Thus, postconflict in Colombia refers to the post-internal armed conflict phase, “the after stage” of signing peace agreements between the Government and the active insurgent armed groups; consequently, it denotes the post-armed violence stage. Certainly, postconflict recognizes the presence, continuity, and even deepening of security challenges¹¹, which resulted from violent logic, rooted during the long-lasting internal armed conflict, but also those associated with various types of violence. Having said that, the postconflict concept is aware of its differences with peacebuilding, as long as peace processes or the end of the armed conflict by peace agreements are not equivalent to peace-building processes. Peacebuilding involves complex long-term processes, which demand the construction of joint peace networks composed of relationships and activities for making peace in Colombia (Hernández, 2006).

Results and Conclusions on Cultural Diplomacy Research

Significant relations emerged from the comparative analysis of the cultural diplomacy experiences of Mexico, Turkey, Indonesia, and South Korea in their

¹⁰ Original passage: “etapa o periodo posterior a situaciones de enfrentamiento o choque, en el que dos o más partes han desarrollado tiempos y contextos de aniquilamiento mutuo por diversas circunstancias [... Resulta necesario en el posconflicto:] a) Plantear estrategias de gestión de lo común para reestablecer la coexistencia y convivencia en medio de la diferencia, sin que la destrucción prime [...b] extender la razonabilidad para acercarse a la comprensión de qué hacen los otros y por qué hacen lo que hacen y qué conocen y qué pueden aprender de esos otros con quienes configuran lo público, [c] en tanto] la dimensión del *policy making* brinda las posibilidades de comprender y evaluar cómo se puede trabajar mancomunadamente [...] la labor de *policy making* [no puede] desconocer el derecho social a la convivencia pacífica basada en principios de justicia, verdad y reparación y restitución efectivas [... ni que] lo posconflictivo requiere una apertura a la diversidad [...] a la diferencia según contextos y a la proyección de reestructuración que los grupos humanos busquen después de la fragmentación ocasionada por el conflicto y la violencia”.

¹¹ Niño (2016) provides an interesting overview of one of the dimensions in which Colombia is exporting knowledge, particularly in the security field.

foreign policy, among them between a. the States' performance on human rights protection, b. UN System's perception of human rights protection in the four States studied and Colombia, and c. the perceived effectiveness of cultural diplomacy strategies. By analyzing these relations, my research reflections and findings encourage the construction of proposals around Colombian postconflict, from foreign policy and utilizing deep cultural diplomacy to peacebuilding. Those results and conclusions can be managed from three main sources: the inter-theories bridge, Colombian foreign policy (1991-2014), and the link between cultural diplomacy, human rights, and postconflict.

The Inter-theories Bridge

The inter-theory bridge between Wendt's constructivism (1999) and Nye's soft power (2004) built during the research process recognizes the possibility of International Relations to contribute to facing together, as humankind, current and unavoidable challenges at local, regional, and global levels. From this bridge we can state the following:

- As long as the distribution of ideas and knowledge is closer to the image that others construct of themselves and want to offer to the world, but also as that knowledge is effectively offered, it seems to be possible to guide States' behavior towards friendship (Wendt, 1999). Soft power is effective in this process, and culture as a source of soft power (Nye, 2004) allows to attract others. Indeed, culture is the basis of the interests and identities from which international side actors play (Wendt, 1999).
- Building identity occurs during interactions between what an international system is believed to be and what is believed to do (Wendt, 1999). This suggests that excluding what happens in the international system, disassembling foreign policy from domestic States/societies' challenges at a local level, or forgetting identities involved in this process are inadvisable when defining States' behavior.
- Cultural diplomacy does not pursue to synchronize or homogenize cultures but to allow cultures to shine between States and/or international actors, and among peoples. In the same way, cultural diplomacy facilitates the understanding of cultural diversity.
- Deep cultural diplomacy contains a triple power of soft power (Nye, 2004). If it is well understood and promoted by the State: a. is an integral part of foreign policy while it is being integrated with the foreign policy objectives; b. seeks to build relationships between states and linkages between world perspectives,

while it exchanges ideas, information, values, traditions, and beliefs, and also fosters mutual understandings, meeting points, and joint strategies; and c. is legitimized by including and recognizing diverse actors in domestic and international scenarios.

- Cultural diplomacy requires domestically connecting between cultural practices and policies but also States cultural cooperation and cultural promotion abroad. Focusing on the Colombian postconflict challenges might imply avoiding exclusion as fundamental to legitimizing peacebuilding processes. In other words, giving place to promoting diverse cultural views in Colombia but also balancing stories on peace and conflict at micro and macro levels would be required.
- Protecting self-esteem is one of the main national interests (Wendt, 1999) pursued by foreign policies. This interest is protected and nurtured through cultural diplomacy.

Colombian Foreign Policy (1991-2014)

After analyzing the role of cultural diplomacy in Colombian foreign policy between 1991 and 2014, various elements of cultural diplomacy were identified, from its early stage to its technical takeoff, and its peaks and setbacks in each of the analyzed presidential administrations (Foreign Affairs Ministry of the Republic of Colombia, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014). These findings show that cultural diplomacy has mainly played a minor and discontinued role in Colombian foreign policy, during the analyzed period. Also, they showed:

- The marginal role of cultural diplomacy in Colombian foreign policy has been accompanied by an alarming situation on human rights in the country. This situation was temporally transformed under Santos' foreign policy approach (2010-2018), while the peace agreement with the FARC was pursued and achieved.
- After the signature of the peace agreement, the postconflict stage seemed to be closer than before. This finding is supported by analyzing 23 years of Colombian foreign policies (1991 to 2014).

- To promote the diverse Colombian culture abroad,¹² it is required to domestically strengthen the cultural processes and their protagonists, but also create national symbolic assessments and bridges for communication. This remarkable goal needs to be connected with the foreign policy objectives.
- By analyzing the outstanding deployment of cultural diplomacy during Uribe's administration (Foreign Affairs Ministry of the Republic of Colombia, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010), factors were identified that hindered its performance, among them: an alarming situation on human rights¹³ and its broadcasting by NGOs and international organizations, destabilized relationships with neighboring countries, and negative perceptions in the Latin American States of democratic security policy and Plan Colombia. Cultural diplomacy, at its deepest level, requires communicating coherence between domestic reality and images promoted abroad.

After four years, it should be added to those findings that the opportunity of decidedly advancing in the postconflict construction from where it was in 2018, as it was to include cultural diplomacy as a priority in the foreign policy, has been dismissed by the Colombian government.

Colombian Postconflict: Cultural Diplomacy and Human Rights

Relations between the UN Human Rights System's perceptions and the States' performance on human rights protection were identified, as well as relations between the latter and deep cultural diplomacy. Certainly, by analyzing these relationships, it should be said:

- National and regional security dynamics are continually defying State's goals and strategies on human rights. Indeed, security challenges in the Republics of Korea and Turkey are shaped by particular dynamics in the Indochina peninsula or the surrounding area of the Anatolian peninsula. By the same token, security challenges in Mexico, Turkey, Indonesia, and Colombia are

¹² Promoting the diverse Colombian culture abroad is the hearth of the plan for the promotion of Colombia issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Colombia. Indeed, this plan "is an instrument of cultural diplomacy that has the goal of 'developing current cultural and scientific agreements and disseminating and promoting an integral image of the country abroad' (Trujillo, 2018, p. 62).

¹³ A reflexive and critical human rights performance, from sociology of law, also required to take into the account the main routes through which corruption enables human rights violations, but also other debates in Latin American legal sociology's singular path (Silva, Llano, Velasco & Vizcaino, 2019; Silva, 2020).

traced by transnational criminal organizations networks, but also, by inequality.

- By analyzing the UN Human Rights System's perceptions, particularly those expressed by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia and the UN Human Rights Council, included in their reports of 1997, 2000, and 2010-2014, it was notorious that the UN Human Rights System's perceptions contrast or complement images promoted by the Colombian State abroad, from 1991 to 2014. It should be noted that the alarming situation of human rights perceived by the UN Human Rights System from 1997 through 2010 intensely contrasts with a perceived improvement in Colombia's human rights policies from 2010 to 2014. At this point, it should be added that the alarming situation on human rights has been repeating during Duque's administration, as it has been pointed out by Human Rights Council (2020). Over again, the government discourses on human rights protection and its compromise with the peace agreement do not easily fit with the alarming number of murders of human rights defenders and former combatants and with the lack of social state presence in conflict-affected and/or historically abandoned areas. This mixture has been deeply damaging the Colombian international image.
- Peacebuilding will imply a redefinition of understanding Colombia as it is today; therefore, it is necessary to critically analyze the national interests that have guided Colombian foreign policies during the armed conflict.
- It is of critical importance to strengthen mechanisms for attaching efforts and initiatives in deep cultural diplomacy between the State, international agencies, and civil society in its diversity. It is particularly imperative to connect the initiatives: a) led by civil society organizations¹⁴ in liaison with international agencies, b) promoted by public institutions at local, regional, and national levels, and c) on corporate social responsibility, specifically those in favor of strengthening human rights protection.

In addition, the research identified various postconflict challenges for Colombian foreign policy (Murillo, 2016; Betancourt, 2016; Cancelado, 2016; Pastrana and Vela, 2016; Dangond, 2016; Castro and Gonzalez, 2016), among them, in the frame of the 2021 Colombia, the following should be highlighted and complemented:

¹⁴ Among them the political, functional, and symbolic/cultural dimensions of the indigenous diplomacy of the Colombian communities (Cruz & Chavarro, 2021)

- Agricultural development and agro-industrial cooperation
- South-south cooperation
- Effective management of the Multi-donor Peace and Post-Conflict Fund
- Assertive management in bilateral relations with Venezuela and other Colombian neighboring countries.
- Team working between Chancellery, the legal system and the cultural sector, and academia
- Regional and global leadership to reach a consensus toward a renewed global drug policy and its effects¹⁵
- Jointly work with the UN and highlight its role in a Colombian postconflict stage.

To them, it should be added: “complying with the principle of equitable redistribution of wealth and reviewing the national participation plan and the development plan is a task for all the political decision-making bodies of the State” (Cortes, 2016, p. 143), but also monitoring the interaction between business activities and human rights violations (Botero, 2019) and strengthening the cultural and education sectors.

Conclusion

It is clear from my research findings that there is a lack of coherence between the pursued image of Colombia abroad and the Colombian domestic reality, in terms of human rights, which dilutes cultural diplomacy effectivity, as it is revealed in the 1991 to 2010¹⁶ period. The story was different from 2010 to 2014 when simultaneous progress was done on cultural diplomacy and human rights. Unfortunately, since 2018, the lack of coherence has been again shown in national and international arenas, while the international image of Colombia is being deeply damaged.

Despite of being afraid of dying from the COVID-19 virus, and of the ubiquity of the topic in the public debate in Colombia –and in the world-, cultural agents and nonviolent agents are still working hand in hand using art to face the complex realities throughout Colombian territory. All of them are working peacefully and courageously while contributing also to maintaining the backbone of cultural

¹⁵ This proposal demands to (re)evaluate the Defense and Security policy in Colombia (Borbón, 2019, Tickner, 2020).

¹⁶ This performance has an early stage from 1988 to 1994, as I’ve recently discussed (Montoya, 2021)

diplomacy: culture. Their experiences, voices, and challenges should be promoted and supported by the State.

Finally, and on the verge of the 2022 presidential elections in Colombia, not only the future of peacebuilding is at stake, but also the possibility of taking the opportunity of facilitating cooperation and mutual understanding and defending renewed state positions within the international system in line with domestic challenges traced by the scars of war and pandemic. Deep cultural diplomacy is a handy opportunity to be taken, as it could be a tool to face challenges in both re-framing the role of the Colombian State in building a postconflict scenario and achieving a renewed performance in the contemporary international system.

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