

Cultural Diplomacy's Role in Vietnamese Foreign Policy in the 21st Century

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21世紀のベトナムの外交政策における文化外交の役割

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Abstract

The contemporary politics and international relations are experiencing many changes. In this context, the role of cultural diplomacy has increasingly strengthened and emphasized in all countries. While cultural diplomacy is considered as a tool to increase the influence by major countries, the small countries, like Vietnam, consider it as an important factor in promoting their economic development, tourism, and investment. In recent years, Vietnamese government and people have gradually raised their awareness of cultural diplomacy in the current direction, which creates an opportunity to invest and diversify the activities of cultural diplomacy systematically. These changes have brought about positive results that affirm the importance and the role of cultural diplomacy in national foreign policy and contributed effectively to a comprehensive diplomatic strategy (i.e. Strategy on Cultural Diplomacy through 2020 ratified by the Prime Minister in 2011). Cultural diplomatic activities of Vietnam will “open the opportunities to the relations with countries and regions having weak relationship, deepen the understanding with other nations, promote the images of the Vietnamese country and people in the international arena, contribute to the campaign of more heritage reorganization by the UNESCO, and absorb the quintessence of human culture to enrich national cultural identity.” Their achievements are not only limited to sustainable and stable international relations by making the world better understand Vietnam and creating favourable conditions for socio-economic development but also help preserving and reviving the traditional cultural values along with absorbing the quintessence of human culture. However, such activities have certain limitations that make cultural diplomacy fail to promote its full potential and performance.

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1. Introduction

The end of the World War II was not only the beginning of more than four decades of the Cold War but also the start and development of the cultural diplomacy from both sides. The role of cultural diplomacy in this period was emphasized by its important contribution in bringing the world closer together and the end to the Cold War era. This role in post-Cold War and in the modern international relations did not decline but increasingly promoted instead.

The concept of cultural diplomacy bases on the two components of diplomacy and culture. Traditional diplomacy focuses on three basic functions of representation, communication, and conflict management (Magalhães 1988). Meanwhile, the modern diplomacy emphasizes the role of the actors participating in and implementing diplomatic activities. It is extended to the advisers, the representatives and the officials of the local departments working with foreign partners, the officials of the international organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the IMF, etc., the multinational enterprises, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and even civil individuals. Moreover, the changes and expansion of diplomatic activities are remarked by the emergence of new terms such as oil diplomacy, economic diplomacy, global governance, knowledge diplomacy, and cultural diplomacy. Alike diplomacy, the concept of culture is extensive with hundreds of different concepts derived from the different angles and perspectives. Among those, the most general concept considers culture “is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society (Tylor 1986). In this study, the concept of culture involves the wider value of culture including habits, behaviours, and customs that were formed and gathered into a society which includes “a people’s past history, religion, philosophy, law, interest, language, and all other capabilities acquired by man as member of a society (Anand 1981, p.16). Notably, culture plays an important role in the international relations. As Samuel Huntington (2007) stated, in the post-Cold War world, the culture, neither the ideal nor politics nor economics, is the distinction and the originality to distinguish a person to the others. The reactions of national governments are shaped not only by the pursuit of power and wealth but also by the priority, the similarities, and differences of culture. Therefore, the vast, serious and dangerous potential conflicts could occur among the groups of people belonging to different cultural entities. Sharing the importance of culture in the international relations, Joseph Nye is well known for the term of “soft power” as the capacity of a country to affect other ones through culture, political ideas, and policies. In such, culture is seen “as a source of soft power (in places where it is attractive to others) (Nye 2009). Moreover, due to the drastic change in attitude and thinking about culture, the recent years have frequently witnessed the increasing affirmation of the unique cultural values and languages of the independent countries and nations. Therefore, culture and cultural diversity is a tool in the new mode of political operation to improve the relations between the institutions, countries, regions and continents.

The researches on cultural diplomacy in the twentieth century generalize three main directions of the cultural diplomacy as follows: (i) “the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of

culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding (Milton, Cummings 2003, p.1) (ii) “the use of various elements of culture to influence foreign publics, opinion makers and even foreign leaders, (Waller 2007, p. 196) and (iii) “a multi-dimensional process of international cultural politics underpinned by varying national objectives and sociopolitical contexts. Cultural diplomacy is a long-term process involving a range of policies, initiatives, and activities for the purpose of advancing national interests (Kang 2013, p.1). Therefore, cultural diplomacy is defined as a specialized field of diplomatic activities in which culture is both the actor and the means to achieve the fundamental objectives of the national foreign policy by building good images of the country and promoting unique cultural values and languages to the world. Cultural diplomacy is designed to achieve not only a common understanding but also the ultimate goal of strengthening security, consolidating and enhancing the international position of the country, and protecting and improving the other vital national interests. Also, it helps anticipate future changes to deploy effective measures of prevention and resolution to international conflicts beforehand. However, the goal of cultural diplomacy is different in the various countries. While the major countries like the U.S., Japan, and EU emphasize on the substantial increase, the medium countries want to improve their position in the international arena. The small countries, such as Vietnam, apply the strategy of cultural diplomacy as a springboard to promote their economic development and national building.

In Vietnam, the role of culture in economics, politics, society, and diplomacy in general and in cultural diplomacy, in particular, was soon recognized in diplomatic strategy and policy. It has received the serious attention and become one of the three pillars of Vietnamese diplomacy since the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century by recognizing the 2009 as *The Year of Diplomacy* (VGP News 2010). Accordingly, it raised several research questions. *How has the cultural diplomacy of Vietnam in the twenty-first century changed? What are the causes and results of the changes? How does it contribute to strengthening ties with other countries and national position in the region?* Answers to these questions will provide a major document on generalizing and systematizing the cultural, diplomatic activities in Vietnam and their changes in the twenty-first century and material for proposals to enhance the efficiency of operation and Vietnam’s role in regional and international cooperation. In fact, the strategy and activities of cultural diplomacy have been widely implemented with positive results in recent years; however, there are current limitations because of the lack of uniformity, unclear and overlapping mechanism of management and implementation, and the lack of long-term strategy. The efficiency of the activities does not meet the potential of a long-lasting and diverse culture having 54 ethnic groups in the country.

The qualitative research methods including interview, observation, discussion and historical analysis are applied in this study. They focus on the meaning and the understanding of the processes, phenomena, and activities in international relations in general and cultural diplomacy in particular.

Apart from the introduction and conclusion, this paper has three main parts including: Bases of Vietnamese cultural diplomacy, Concepts and Features of Vietnamese cultural diplomacy, and Cultural diplomacy’s role in foreign policy of Vietnam.

2. Bases of Vietnamese cultural diplomacy

2.1 National identity and cultural features

In the interview with the author, Tran Thi Hoang Mai, Deputy Director of Department of Foreign Culture and UNESCO, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam said that: "Cultural diplomacy is a wider cultural nuance and brings humanistic spirit and cultural spirit of the Vietnamese abroad" to introduce the unique cultural values of the nation. The Former Deputy Prime Minister, Vu Khoan, (Vu 2016) asserted, "the depth of diplomacy is the culture." It requires understanding the culture of each country to take the appropriate, efficient, and beneficial behaviors for the country and nation and build sustainable relations. In other words, Vietnamese cultural diplomacy is initially established on the thousand-year-old cultural identity of the Vietnamese nation.

Vietnam is a country originated from agriculture and characterized by community and emotional-sensitivity. Vietnamese culture was born in the particular environment of the tropical climate with various rivers. Its location was at the meeting point of many great civilizations. Natural conditions such as temperature, humidity, wind, water, have a significant impact on the physical and spiritual life as well as the personalities of the Vietnamese people while social and historical conditions greatly influence the national culture and psychology. In history, Vietnamese culture has three overlapping layers: the local culture, the culture exchanged with China and the neighborhood, and the culture exchanged with the West.

Vietnamese scholars have differing views on national identity. Professor Dao Duy Anh indicated that Vietnamese identities include seven characteristics: good memory, art loving; studious and favoring literature; practical; hard working; enduring and patient; peace-loving; and good at imitating, adapting and harmonizing (Dao Duy Anh, 1978). Author Tran Van Giau generalized seven traditional values of patriotism, hard work, heroism, creativeness, optimism, mercy, and justice (Tran Van Giau, 1980). Author Phan Ngoc generalized these values as caring, solidarity, family harmony, mercy, humanity (Phan Ngoc, 1998).

Claude Palazzoli, an Italian scholar on Vietnamese culture, said that Vietnam's cultural identity is remarked with the sense of keeping dignity regardless of circumstances; being so hard-working; being so courteous and delicate; being so elegant that could split hair in four; being so hesitant that prolonged the balance, judgment and decision; being realistic, well adaptable and wise in every situation; and being especially romantic and sentimental (cited in Pham Cao Phong et. al., 2012). The Resolution of the fifth Meeting of the eighth Party Central Committee on Building and Developing the Culture of an Advanced Vietnam, Rich in National Identity in 1998 suggested that the cultural identity of Vietnam had sustainable values that are formed in the nation's history. They are deep patriotism, a sense of self-reliant nation, solidarity, a sense of community, compassion, tolerance, affection, ethnicity, diligence, creativeness, elegant conduct, and simple lifestyle (cited in Pham Cao Phong et. al., 2012).

In sum, Vietnamese culture reflects community culture of agricultural residents because of the combination of geography, nature, history, culture and society. This is the foundation for

the development of internationalism in modern era. Vietnamese traditional diplomacy has such identities as being peaceful and friendly, comforting overseas people, respect to the outsiders (Nguyen Dy Nien, 2008). Cultural/national identity has contributed to the forming of a clear policy and the orientation of cultural diplomacy. It is not only a soft and open policy in conduct, and responsible and community policy in international cooperation but also a reflection of cultural diplomacy's goal to introduce the image of Vietnam with kindness, tolerance, morality, peace loving and spiritual and diplomatic strategy of being "firm in objectives, flexible in strategies and tactics" for national independence.

The values of the traditional cultural identity have an important contribution in building and forming the orientation, objectives and methods of implementing Vietnamese cultural diplomacy. Firstly, patriotism is the mainstream ideology and orientation for cultural diplomatic activities. Adaptability, studiousness, open-minded thinking, and gentleness help create the diplomatic ideology and strategy by keeping the firm and uncompromising stance in principle without influencing the national independence and maintaining soft and flexible to avoid serious consequences. Secondly, the objective of cultural diplomacy is to build the images of country, culture and people of Vietnam in the international community with kindness, tolerance, morality and peace loving. Applying the softness, the solidarity and the spirit of creativity, cultural diplomacy has the general strength to promote the other relationships such as political diplomacy and economic diplomacy. Thirdly, the flexible and open behaviors, the sense of community and solidarity, and the hard-working and creative spirit are three basic personalities of the Vietnamese as well as three important factors supporting the deployment of cultural diplomatic activities. Cultural identity plays an important role in the development of the diplomacy in general and in cultural diplomacy in particular. These noble values formed through thousands of years of history have created a modern diplomacy imbued with national identity.

2.2 Doi Moi's foreign policy

Being a small country among large and aggressive countries, Vietnamese diplomacy, since ancient days, has kept an important role and been significantly utilized to turn danger into safety, turn weaknesses into strength, and turn war into peace. Vietnam diplomatic history has always shown the humility, the search for peace and the search for peaceful diplomatic solutions and war prevention. After the second Vietnam War ended in 1975 and especially after the Cambodian issues, Vietnam fell into a socio-economic crisis and diplomatic isolation. Under this circumstance, the Politburo held the Fifth Meeting on 7 May 1986 and issued Resolution 32 to define the country's foreign policy and find solutions to Cambodian issues. The goals are to build a stable environment for economic development, actively move to a new stage of development, and peacefully coexist with China, ASEAN and America. These goals were expressed through five key issues in external relations: interaction with Cambodia, normalization of relationship with China, opening relations with ASEAN countries, improving relations with America, and adjusting and renewing ties with

the Soviet Union and the socialist countries of Eastern Europe (Online *journal of Vietnamese Communist Party*, 19 January 2005).

The renovated foreign policy was developed and continually affirmed from May 1988. In addition, The 7th Plenum Midterm Meeting of National Committee (Jan 1994) and the eighth Congress (Jun 1996) of Vietnamese Communist Party officially asserted a foreign policy that emphasized independence, openness, multi-lateralization and diversification of relations. The famous quote was that "Vietnam wants to be friend to all countries in the world community, strive for peace, independence and development". This marks an important step in the strategy of foreign policy in the late 1990s when the socialist system collapsed in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. It shows the desire to expand diplomatic cooperation with all countries in the world and the claims of the following important events such as the normalization of relations with America and joining ASEAN. It is noted that Vietnam at that moment was processing the positive diplomatic activities to connect with the international community after a long period of isolation. The 9th Party Congress (April 2001) affirmed that the Party and the State continue to consistently implement the foreign policy with a stronger spirit and a more active position by declaring that "Vietnam is willing to be a friend and a reliable partner to all countries in the international community, strive for peace, independence and development" (Online *journal of Vietnamese Communist Party*, 16 September 2006).

After 20 years of implementing the policy of renovation, Vietnam has shown a flexible mind-set in order to integrate actively into the world community to build a new image and position to support stability and development of the country. Despite its limitations, external innovation is one of the great achievements in the renewal process that changed the face of the country.

Vietnamese foreign policy in modern society became more and more rich and diverse. It aimed at protecting independent and unified territory as well as building and developing the country and its integration into the region and the world in a deeply globalized environment. To accomplish this goal, Vietnamese foreign policy must combine the target of independence, autonomy with multi-lateralization and diversification of external relations, grasp both sides of cooperation and struggle, promote regional cooperation and expand relations with countries around the world, combine Party diplomacy with state diplomacy and public diplomacy, political diplomacy with economic diplomacy and cultural diplomacy, and promote the study of theory and practice in diplomacy.

3. Concepts and Features of Vietnamese Cultural Diplomacy

3.1 Historical overview:

Vietnamese cultural diplomacy has a long history, starting from the relationship of Dai Viet nation with major neighbors in the form of tribute and selecting representatives to create relations. Ambassador meeting, negotiation and trading with northern countries were important activities to preserve peace and prevent wars and domination. Cultural diplomacy in this period was mainly expressed in the mode of peace- and hospitality-favored diplomacy: hospitality in both peacetime and wartime, and "justice to defeat brutality, humanity to defeat violence." There was

fight-negotiation experience by sending interpreters of Ly Thuong Kiet¹, and psychology-targeted diplomacy and harmony as a direction in governing the country and managing military of Nguyen Trai².

Modern cultural diplomacy of Vietnam is a legacy of the ancient culture, which highlights the diplomatic idea of “more friends and less enemies”, well behaving to the foreign friends and communicating culture characterized of humanities (Pham Sanh Chau et al, 2010). After Democratic Republic of Vietnam was born in the context of various difficulties and dangers in 1945, cultural diplomatic activities took place in many forms such as cultural exchanges, participation in the youth fora, interviews with the media, letter exchanges with international friends, humanitarian activities, etc. in order to gradually gain the support and help of the revolutionary and advanced forces in the world. In modern history, Vietnamese cultural diplomacy in the 20th century is divided into three phases corresponding to 3 major changes in foreign policy including:

Cultural diplomacy serving wartime (1945-1975) in order to attract the support of world public opinion against the Vietnam War for national liberation and national unity. The Commission, an agency of the Council of Ministers was established to be in charge of managing the cultural exchanges with foreign countries in accordance with guidelines and policies of the Party and the State. It ensures completion of tasks and implements plans on developing cultural exchanges, international propaganda to introduce Vietnamese culture abroad.

Cultural diplomacy in the context of crisis and isolation (1975-1990) focused on socialist countries and aimed at “more friends, less enemies”, and “multi-lateralization and diversification”. In this period, the participation into UNESCO was considered as one of the important achievements of cultural diplomacy. Thanks to UNESCO and its members support and cooperation, Vietnam overcame the difficulties of the embargo period and reconstruction (Pham Cao Phong et. al., 2012). The period 1986-1990 was marked by an initiative of organizing a “cocktail party” - a form of polite and gentle cultural communication - for the parties to meet, exchange and discuss in order to solve the Cambodian issues.

Renewing and focusing the activities of cultural diplomacy (1990-2000) was a turning point marked by the Resolution of the fifth Meeting of the eighth Party Central Committee on Building and Developing the Culture of an Advanced Vietnam, Rich in National Identity in 1998. This serves as a cultural guideline in the renewal era which is the preparation for Vietnam to fulfill the target of developing culture and people in the coming future. This is considered to be the cultural strategy of the Party in the new period. Cultural diplomacy is now an important content tied

¹ Ly Thuong Kiet (1019-1105) was a Vietnamese general in the Ly Dynasty (1009-1225)

² Nguyen Trai (1380-1442) was a Vietnamese Confucian scholar, a poet, a politician and a tactician

with political and economic diplomacy to meet the goal of socio-economic development and enrich national culture (Pham Sanh Chau et al, 2010).

In short, cultural diplomacy of Vietnam is one of the diplomatic contents and activities that contribute significantly in achieving the objectives of political diplomacy. The activities of cultural diplomacy helped Vietnam not only attract the support of the international community during the two wars but also overcome the tough and challenging period of crisis and isolation. It was the cause to further focus on developing cultural diplomacy in the twenty-first century. However, the main characteristic of the cultural diplomacy during this period is to support the activities of political diplomacy rather than being an independent form of diplomacy without a long-term strategy. With major changes in the world, the region, and the country, the ad-hoc side activities are greatly wasteful and cannot compete with other countries. Besides inheriting the unique cultural treasure collected over many generations, the cultural diplomacy is also a result of promoting the achievements of more than twenty years of renovation, the clever combination between the traditional values and modern diplomacy, and is the expansion of absorbing the quintessence of human culture in the integration era.

3.2 Cultural diplomacy in the 21st century

As mentioned above, changes in the foreign policy have led to increasingly important role of cultural diplomacy. Although there has been no consensus on the definition of cultural diplomacy, Vietnamese researchers and policy makers agree on its role in opening a door for external activities, promoting country image, recognizing cultural values, and absorbing the quintessence of world culture. The changes in cultural diplomatic strategy in the twenty-first century strongly started the year of cultural diplomacy in Vietnam in 2009 with three important landmarks: (i) the change in terms of perception and action at all levels, sectors, and localities about the importance of cultural diplomacy, (ii) building a legal framework for cultural diplomacy as a pillar of diplomacy, and (iii) building a base and outlines of operation. These were clearly expressed in the Strategy on Cultural Diplomacy of Vietnam through 2020.

At the 10th National Congress of Vietnamese Communist Party and the 25th Diplomatic Conference (2006), cultural diplomacy was officially regarded as one of the three key pillars of the Vietnamese foreign affairs along with political and economic diplomacy. At the 11th National Congress of the Party, cultural diplomacy was officially recognized in party documents. In 2008, Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a Directive of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pham Gia Khiem, on strengthening the work of cultural diplomacy to create a new momentum for foreign affairs in the international integration process. In 2011, the Prime Minister issued the Strategy on Cultural Diplomacy through 2020 and the Regulation on the Organization of overseas Vietnamese Week/Day. These are important legal documents that help increase the awareness of cultural diplomacy by defining goals, tasks and key measures to develop cultural diplomacy in the comprehensive and modern foreign policy, maintain a peaceful environment,

create favourable international conditions for the innovation, and promote socio-economic development, industrialization and modernization of the country (Pham Cao Phong et al., 2012).

Among several documents, the Strategy on cultural diplomacy through 2020 signed by the Prime Minister in 2011 is the formal text to implement the modern cultural diplomacy of Vietnam. It is considered as a guideline for activities of cultural diplomacy with the view to boosting cultural diplomatic activities to gain the world's better understanding, increasing the trust with countries around the world, strengthening relations between Vietnam and other partners, thereby improving Vietnam's position in the international arena and facilitating socio-economic development. Thanks to this document, it is the first time for Vietnam to have a formal definition of cultural diplomacy as the implementation of cultural activities led by the state to achieve political, economic, and cultural goals meeting the general requirements of foreign affairs. Cultural diplomacy consists of five main activities: (i) opening the way to the relations with other countries and regions having weak connection, (ii) promoting, strengthening and deepening the understanding with other countries, (iii) promoting the image of the country and people of Vietnam in the international arena, (iv) doing campaign for more heritages recognized by the UNESCO, and (v) absorbing the quintessence of human culture to enrich national cultural identity. Specific measures are used to increase awareness of and theory of cultural diplomacy, build mechanisms and construct policies on cultural diplomacy. They include: promoting the training and retraining of human resources for cultural diplomacy, ensuring resources for cultural diplomacy including funds of cultural diplomacy managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, connecting diplomatic activities with the work of the overseas Vietnamese, linking cultural diplomacy with political and economic diplomacy, promoting the image of Vietnam, and diversifying the campaigns for recognition of international titles.

The changes in perception of promoting cultural diplomacy as a concrete diplomatic strategy have created specific transmission in the nature of cultural diplomacy with the clear guidelines. This is a significant step forward by the government. Accordingly, the mission of cultural diplomacy focuses on professionally introducing and creating the brand of Vietnamese culture. It follows the principles of serving the national interests, avoiding cultural conflicts, closely collaborating with other ministries, branches and localities, and strengthening policy of socialization. Its methods are different and detailed as such: opening, assisting and advising the local authorities, together solving the occurring problems and promoting public relations, supporting enterprises and other sectors in accessing the international community.

4. Cultural diplomacy's role in foreign policy of Vietnam

4.1 Contents of Cultural Diplomacy:

In recent years, the cultural diplomatic activities of Vietnam have been conducted widely with different forms both in and outside the country.

Promoting the operation and enhancing Vietnam's role in the international organizations:

Vietnam is increasingly active in participating in activities of multilateral organizations and fora in general such as the UN, ASEAN, APEC, ASEM, Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation FEALAC (initiating the establishment of "FEALAC network of cultural cities"), La Francophonie, etc. and cultural organizations and fora in particular such as UNESCO, the UN Alliance of Civilization, etc.

Promoting information

In recent years, Vietnam has paid special attention to introducing and spreading national culture via publications, books, documents, traditional and digital media. Popular channels are The Gioi Publishers, Vietnamese Studies, VTV4 channel, VOV Radio Channel, trailers on Vietnamese landscape, culture, cuisine, and people made by Ministry of Information and Communication, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, and especially Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The most recent video named "Welcome to Vietnam" was made and introduced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015 in nine languages. It is aimed at promoting the famous scenic spots of the country, the unique cultural features of many regions and people of Vietnam, and the achievements in all aspects of 30 years of Doi Moi. Thanks to the increase of information and documentation both in quantity and quality, Vietnam's images have appeared on the popular and worldwide-broadcasted TV channels like CNN and BBC.

Cultural exchanges and art performances

Exchange programs, performances and cultural/art exchange not only bring Vietnamese images closer to the international community, but also enhance friendship and strengthen bilateral and multilateral relations with other countries through the process of interaction. Typical performances are Hue's Royal Court Music on the occasion of President Nguyen Minh Triet's visit to Japan (Nov 2007), the 20th Charming Vietnam program and the ceramic exhibition named "East-West Integration" on the occasion of Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung's visits to the UK and Republic of Ireland (Mar 2008), Vietnam Cultural Programs in Sweden, Finland and Denmark on the occasion of Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Sinh Hung's visits to the 3 Nordic countries (Jun 2008), Vietnam's Cultural Day on the occasion of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Gia Khiem's visit to Singapore (May 2008), cultural exchange programs to celebrate the 10th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Vietnam and America, exhibitions and cultural performances at the 30th anniversary of signing Paris Peace Accord, and activities to celebrate the 35th anniversary of Vietnam-Japan relations such as Japan-Vietnam Friendship Music Festival (Hanoi, May 2008).

Furthermore, important cultural activities abroad are overseas Vietnam's Week/Day organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with other ministries, departments and localities and representative organizations such as: Cultural Week in Belgium, Hungary, Rumania, France,

and Canada (2005), Vietnam days in Japan and Vietnam Week in Italy in 2013, Vietnam Week in the Netherlands and Vietnam Day in Qatar and the UAE in 2014, Vietnam Day in America in 2015.

Co-organizing cultural events and participating in international cultural cooperation

Vietnam has organized many cultural diplomatic activities in various forms such as jointly organizing periodic and annual major festivals and cultural events such as international festival of Thai Nguyen tea, Hung Kings' festival in Phu Tho, Hue festival, Ben Tre Coconut festival, Da Lat Flower festival, buckwheat flower festival in Ha Giang, culinary festivals, bike races for peace, etc. and diplomatic representatives and international friends visits to many localities of Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Bac Ninh, Bac Giang, Ha Giang, Nam Dinh, Can Tho, Dien Bien, Lam Dong.

4.2 Cultural diplomacy's important role in Vietnamese diplomacy

Deputy Prime Minister – Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Gia Khiem stressed that: “Cultural diplomacy has an important role both as a spiritual foundation and a measure as well as an objective Vietnamese foreign policy, effectively supports the other pillars to create a comprehensive foreign policy and best promotes the national power and combines with modern power.”³ By spreading Vietnam's unique cultural value, cultural diplomacy delivers to international friends a message that Vietnam is peaceful, stable, friendly, open, successfully transforming, rapidly and sustainably developing, and plays an increasing role in the region and the world.

Promoting the images of Vietnam

The cultural diplomatic activities mentioned above have contributed to build an image of a new Vietnam, change the views of the world about Vietnam, and created a positive recognition as well as interest in Vietnam. Starting as a country associated with war, Vietnam now is the image of a youthful, stable and rapidly developing nation. These results are shown through the involvement of the world community in a series of international exchanges and festivals such as the Flower Festival in Dalat, Fireworks Festival in Danang, the Gong Festival in the Central Highlands, the Film Festival, Water Puppet Show and International Circus Festivals, etc. The impression by the international community change is most evident through the increase in the number of tourists to Vietnam. According to data from the National Administration of Tourism (Vietnamtourism, 27 December 2016), in 2016 there were more than 10 million international visitors, 26.0% higher than in 2015.

³ Pham Gia Khiem's speech at the opening ceremony of national conference “Ngoại giao văn hóa vì một bản sắc Việt Nam trên trường quốc tế, phục vụ hòa bình, hội nhập và phát triển bền vững” (Cultural diplomacy for Vietnamese identity in the international arena, peace serving, integration and sustainable development) organized by Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 15-6 Oct 2008 in Hanoi, sponsored by UNESCO

Support and cooperation with political diplomacy

As the key feature and main objective, cultural diplomacy has played an important role in supporting and implementing the objectives of political diplomacy. In the previous time, cultural diplomacy was an indispensable element to help Vietnam obtain the support of the international community in the two wars and overcome the isolated situation. In the twenty-first century, it helps boost the ties with the nations of the world and enhance the position of Vietnam in the international arena. Firstly, in an interview with the author, Pham Sanh Chau affirmed the cultural diplomacy's essential role in promoting relations with the developing countries into strategic and comprehensive partners such as Russia (2001), Japan (2006), India (2007), China (2008), South Korea, Spain (2009), United Kingdom (2010), and Germany (2011). Secondly, the activities of cultural diplomacy has helped Vietnam to interact with the countries and areas that previously were little well-known and had few exchange activities such as Myanmar, South Africa, South America, Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela, etc. Thirdly, Vietnam's position in international organizations as well as regional cooperation is promoted. For example, Vietnam was elected to the UNESCO Executive Council at the 2009 -2013 term. The UNESCO passed a resolution to participate in the celebration of 1,000 years of Thang Long. Last but not least, it succeeded in the chairmanship of ASEAN.

Support and cooperation with economic diplomacy

In the relationship with economic diplomacy, cultural diplomacy helps introduce Vietnam image and heritages to the world to develop tourism, increases national income and improves people's lives. In addition, along with political diplomacy, cultural diplomacy deepens existing relations between Vietnam and other countries while creating opportunity for international cooperation in new areas and markets. Programs and activities of cultural diplomacy have created a solid foundation for Vietnamese products famous worldwide such as Pho 24, Trung Nguyen Coffee, and Ao Dai dress. This shapes other countries' perception of Vietnamese cultural products. Cultural diplomacy serves as a multi-dimensional information channel for foreign businesses. International events including Hue Festival, Da Lat Flower Festival, and Gong Festival have introduced Vietnam's new areas and markets. The influence of cultural diplomatic activities on the economy has become tangible and specified through the development of the economy at national and local levels, especially of the areas having heritages.

4.3 Limitations

Cultural diplomacy activities in recent years have certain limitations. For example, the efficiency is not high and does not meet the requirements of the new situation. The content and form of the activities do not meet the specific requirements of each target and locality. Cultural products being introduced abroad are few in number and limited in quality. The facilities and technical means serving for the work of cultural diplomacy are shorted and outdated. Coordination among involved sectors and agencies is not tight. In-charge staffs are limited in number and quality. The

professionalism is low. The awareness of the role, the position and the importance of cultural diplomacy in the social classes is not high despite the fact that it is a type of operation requiring the close collaboration between the public sector and the private sector, especially the participation of the majority of the masses. That is evident in the actors participating in the activities of cultural diplomacy. They are still limited to the government and state agencies without the strong participation of non-governmental private and organizations as well as individuals.

In addition, Vietnam has neither successfully built up a unique communication message of cultural diplomacy nor created the innovative programs in order to attract a larger attention of the international community. The program of cultural exchanges for each country and group of countries in different regions is similar and lacks thorough research investment to introduce the programs dedicated to the specific audiences. The cultural exchanges are still happening in the short term and lack an overall strategy to be able to assess their effects and a follow-up to improve and upgrade the quality. The cultural weeks, exhibitions, or exchanges in each country usually take place only once in one or several cities of a country so that the efficiency is limited and even wasted by failing to attract enough people of those countries. In other words, Vietnam has not created the cultural products that are competitive in the international markets.

In order to overcome these existing limitations and improve the operational effectiveness of cultural diplomacy, Vietnam should focus on some key points in terms of policy and personnel, as well as the management methods. Firstly, Vietnam needs to develop a unified mechanism for management of cultural diplomatic activities in replacement of the current overlapping management of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism. Secondly, it is necessary to continuously raise the awareness of cultural diplomacy in order to mobilize the general powers, forces, and resources and focus on training the human resources who are proficient in foreign languages and understand deeply about the unique cultural values of Vietnam as the professional “culture agency”. Thirdly, the government should seriously invest to the cultural products having pervasive and international features in different fields such as cinema, music, painting, literature, folk festivals, etc. to create a breakthrough in the promotion of culture. Fourthly, it is essential to develop the program packages of cultural diplomacy for each country and region. Fifthly, socialization of cultural diplomacy should be developed such as efficiently exploiting the potential of the Vietnamese communities overseas.

Conclusion

Vietnamese cultural diplomacy can be defined as using culture as a tool and a target for diplomacy and using diplomacy to develop national culture. It is based on the values of national identity with the key features of patriotism, the sense of community, the emotional-favored sense in social behaviors, the openness, and the easily-adaptable and integrated spirit. Its important role is expressed in promoting the construction and development of the country. At the same time, it consolidates and strengthens the relations with the countries in the region and the world

through the introduction and promotion images of the country, people, and culture of Vietnam. In accordance, the soft power based on the unique culture is formed and help Vietnam achieve new status in the region.

The major transformation of the world, region, and itself has made Vietnam stronger focus on cultural diplomacy through a series of changes in the twenty-first century. They are the official guidelines and policy defining cultural diplomacy as one of the three pillars of diplomacy. Thus, the cultural diplomatic activities have taken place more professionally and widely and brought Vietnam's images to the international community further. The recent years has witnessed the emphasis of the government of Vietnam on cultural diplomacy. As a result, such activities have favorable conditions to increase in size and stature, and strongly attract the attention and participation of the whole society. Basically, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Culture are currently in charge of organizing and carrying out most of the diplomatic activities inside and outside the country. Besides, it is notably the participation of all the sectors along with local authorities in the country in actively implementing the activities of cultural diplomacy.

Nevertheless, Vietnamese cultural diplomacy are facing several restrictions due to the lack of unification, unclear and overlapping management and implementation, and the lack of long-term strategy. Hence, the effectiveness of its operation is low and does not match the potential of a long-standing and diverse culture. Stemming from the current context and the long-term strategic goal of foreign affairs in the region as well as on the international stage, it is necessary to focus on improving the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy as one of the key and practical objectives for Vietnamese diplomacy. The first urgent requirement is to build a strategy of cultural diplomacy, which is long-term and unified in management to serve as a guideline for the activities in all types and scales. More than that, diversifying the content of activities and actors, strengthening the direct exchanges between people and people, and identifying the unique cultural values having the ability of communication and high competitiveness are also the measures to enhance the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy activities of Vietnam

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