

CULTURAL CONTENT ON THE WEBSITES OF DIPLOMATIC SYSTEMS

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Cultural prestige has always followed troops and trade as a measure of a nation's influence.¹

This paper is a comparative examination of the websites of the ministries of foreign affairs of China, India, Germany, France, Chile, Brazil, the US, Canada and several African states and their diplomatic representation abroad. The research is case study oriented. The results are summarised in a comparative assessment table. The objective is to evaluate the websites from the point of view of culture and to analyse their usefulness for the conduct of cultural and public diplomacy. The study also aims to determine the extent to which the official web presence of foreign ministries and their respective missions abroad contributes to intercultural dialogue and understanding. The selection of target countries was not random, but was based on a careful consideration of two factors: geographic representation and choice of countries that traditionally have used culture as a part of their diplomatic strategy.

The Importance of Culture

It has become a cliché to continuously emphasise the impact of culture on the conduct of modern diplomacy. Nonetheless, culture is a source of immense power capable of shaping, changing and influencing diplomatic community perceptions. From a broader perspective, culture may defuse ethnic and religious prejudices, and create a climate of tolerance, respect and understanding among nations and religions around the globe. Therefore, it is an essential medium for peaceful and tolerant interaction. From a narrower point of view, culture is the indispensable bridge that helps diplomats walk into the hearts and minds of their respective audiences. Culture helps diplomacy do its job at various diplomatic receptions. If properly introduced (in the form of appropriate cultural events such as musical and theatrical evenings, art exhibits and film showings), the use of culture dispels the sense of officialdom overshadowing a great number of diplomatic gatherings. Cultural settings become a favourable place for diplomats to exchange precious ideas, to acquire vital information, to pass essential messages and, in general, to provide a channel of unofficial diplomatic nego-

tiation. A growing number of governments acknowledge the influence of culture on the conduct of diplomatic relations and refer to it as a vital venue for the better positioning of their countries in the international arena.

Before discussing case studies, I would like to offer working definitions of two of the terms used in this paper:

Diplomatic system: The institutional and organisational framework for execution of a country's foreign policy. The framework encompasses the ministry of foreign affairs (MFA) and its diplomatic missions abroad.

Cultural content: Culturally oriented information embedded in the form of text, hyperlinks, pictures, audio and video within websites of MFAs and their diplomatic representation abroad.

Case Studies: Latin America

Brazil

The website of the Brazilian MFA is modest in terms of cultural content. However, a useful definition of Brazilian cultural diplomacy² can be found in the "Ministry/Services" folder. This concise one-page report focuses on the organisation of cultural work in the ministry and on areas of responsibility of the cultural department (such as the negotiation and implementation of agreements and cultural programmes, maintenance of contacts with local and foreign partners, and overall managerial and budgetary supervision of cultural events staged under the auspices of Brazil's embassies abroad). Brazil's multifaceted relationship with UNESCO is mentioned as well.

The Portuguese language³ is the common cultural and historical bond uniting Portugal with its former colonies, providing an essential channel of communication. The website offers a short description of the organisational structure, mission, objectives and activities of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP). The latter is the analogue of the British Commonwealth and Francophone communities.

Brazilian art⁴ is featured on a separate page indirectly linked to the Brazilian MFA site. The well-structured content on this site offers an insightful glance at the multicultural and diverse way of life in Brazil, its traditions and customs, as well as various forms of artistic and cultural expression and accomplishments. A wealth of information with some degree of multimedia application and many hyperlinks facilitates a cultural excursion through the largest Latin American country. Brazil's multicultural identity results from a lasting ethnic and racial co-existence of different cultural traditions.

The cultural content of the Brazilian Embassy in London⁵ is orderly, functionally presented and regularly updated. Culture-related information is well integrated into the context of the entire webpage. It is uncomplicated and easily accessible. Various facets of Brazilian culture such as architecture, cinema, dance, fine arts, fashion, literature, music, photography, theatre, religion and sports appear in a compact informational whole supported by photo images. The site also furnishes interested experts with the text of the cultural convention⁶, the legal instrument for Brazilian-British cultural relations. The content is a helpful informational and promotional tool for Brazilian diplomats in the host country.

Chile

The website of the Ministry of Chilean External Relations⁷ offers a special section related to cultural issues. The centrally positioned content is easily noticed. It mainly introduces the principal organ of cultural diplomacy - the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) - its place, role, mission and areas of supervisory activities. Being an integral part of the country's diplomatic machinery, the department is considered and presented as a main tool for designing and implementing Chilean cultural diplomacy. It works in close contact with the country's cultural institutions and 160 Chilean diplomatic missions abroad. The department acts as a principal negotiator and concluder of cultural conventions with other countries. The content underscores the importance of the DCA within the framework of other foreign and cultural policy instruments. The webpage provides methodical guidelines for holding events (festivals, biennales of arts, exhibitions, fairs), explains cultural project participation, mechanisms of sponsorships and grants offered to Chilean cinematographers, painters, dancers and other artists. However, it is not exclusively the propagation and diffusion of Chilean artistic and cultural pursuits and products that the DCA promotes. Through its net of associations, universities, and private and public foreign agencies, the department jointly manages the coordination of cultural projects of regional scope (Middle East, EU, Asia Pacific). Such initiatives contribute to cross-cultural exchanges and facilitate the networking activities conducted by Chilean diplomatic missions.

Chilean web diplomatic representation abroad: Within a limited number of available webpages, cultural content is traceable in cases where Chilean diplomats pursue traditionally active cultural relations with receiving states. Such is the case with Italy and Australia. The Chilean mission in Rome⁸, for example, uses the web actively as a window to project the nation's identity, to convey the artistic and literary spirit to a highly inquisitive Italian public. On the other

hand, the website of the Chilean embassy in Canberra⁹ focuses on cultural events in the most general terms, offering some narrative content and photos. The content is embedded in the mission's overall activities.

Case Studies: Europe

France

In Europe, France is among the leading nations to use culture to promote their national interests. Paris succeeded in making French the dominant academic and diplomatic language of 18th and 19th century Europe. The 20th century gave birth to the first French educational institutions abroad, which further projected Paris's cultural influence. The example was later successfully emulated by Germany, Britain and Italy. As one of the former principal European colonial powers, France has preserved its influence in various corners of Africa, Asia and Latin America by the spread of its language, artistic and architectural achievements and way of life.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France¹⁰ maintains a special cultural section. The cultural content is placed in a separate thematic folder and is rich in substance and form. The content is best approachable via the multilingual page of the FMA website. The page smartly integrates cultural issues into the context of other topics, providing a helpful asset in the conduct of France's cultural and public diplomacy.

Language: Information is presented mainly in French, targeting the French-speaking community. The extent of the francophone community worldwide is ample testament to the French cultural legacy and its sustained influence.

Organs of cultural diplomacy: The site features valuable information concerning the activities of the General Administration for International Cooperation and Development Department of the MFA, responsible for implementation of the country's cultural policy and cultural exchange programmes. A definition of France's international cultural policy is provided as well. Principal bodies responsible for France's cultural work abroad are introduced in line with their place and rank in the framework of France's bilateral relations under the "Cultural Action and Cooperation Network." A searchable database facilitates the discovery of information related to French cultural centres.

Intercultural communication: Bridges of intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation are developed through virtual web demonstrations of (a) French scientific and artistic achievements, aimed at foreign audiences

and (b) the artistic accomplishments of foreign cultures (e.g., diverse African cultures), aimed at the French public. Multimedia is moderately utilised.

The cultural section on the joint French embassy website for Zambia and Malawi¹¹ brings French methods of education and culture closer to these African nations. The content is well-delivered, including an outline of cultural and linguistic cooperation and full texts of bilateral agreements. It also presents the opportunities the French cultural centre offers to the local publics. The site reinforces the French cultural presence and is an example of dynamic web cultural diplomacy.

Germany

The official webpage of the German MFA offers unproblematic and relatively good visibility of cultural content. Culture-related information appears under the “Foreign Policy” branch, titled, “Cultural Relations and Education Policy.” The content is organised in a one-page overview. The main topics are initially introduced by succinct and informative summaries. A number link below each theme sheds further light on the nature of Berlin’s cultural diplomacy, its types and actors. A full-text PDF format for documents, authentic interviews and speeches reinforces that perception.

Cultural policy framework:¹² The cultural factor has played a lasting role in shaping Berlin’s external relations. Accordingly, the cultural policy which underscores the cultural dimension of those relations is thoroughly explained starting from concept, areas of cooperation, to budget and legal issues.

Culture is frequently perceived as a process of intellectual mastering and accomplishment via research or training. The website pays special attention to exchange programmes¹³ in the field of secondary and university education. Here, cultural content is used as enticement for promising foreign students and academics to carry out their specialisation on German soil. However, the content gives very little clue concerning the nature of cooperation programmes with foreign countries except for some valuable information on German-American and Franco-German forms of cooperation initiatives.

Language learning:¹⁴ German language studies abroad are integrated into the Foreign Office’s cultural agenda. Study of the German language is encouraged in regions where Berlin maintains a traditional cultural presence (The Commonwealth of Independent States, Eastern and Central Europe). The content related to German language studies offers practical information to potential students and introduces the Goethe Institute, an organ of cultural diplomacy, and other agencies that oversee the education process. A full address list of German cultural societies serves as a helpful guide. The organisation and

functioning of official and private organisations involved in the formulation and execution of German cultural diplomacy are reviewed briefly.

Diplomatic efforts to reclaim Germany's works of art¹⁹ are also reflected on the website. Here, the content alerts the international community of an unresolved problem relating to the repatriation of German cultural heritage and property.

At the core of European affairs, Berlin actively uses its MFA website to publicise major Euro-based cultural events. One example is the Cultural Capitals programme, which offers the opportunity for a number of European cities (including 10 German cities) to apply to become one of two Europe Cultural Capitals for 2010. Cultural cooperation remains an essential tool of the European integration process.¹⁵

German Embassy in Sofia, Bulgaria:¹⁶ This website illustrates the extent to which the content is empowered to help the conduct of German cultural diplomacy in missions abroad. The functional layout is practically identical with that of the MFA webpage. A separate section, not yet fully operational, is dedicated to cultural issues. A substantial drawback is that information is still offered in English and German only and not in Bulgarian. The content explains exclusively German cultural objectives. In comparison, the web presence of the Dutch embassy in Sofia¹⁷ seeks a more effective balance between promotion of Holland's cultural accomplishments and offering visible web space for the recognition of the culture of the host country. A German citizen who wants to pay a visit to a foreign country may be interested in the way of life, social rules and customs of the people with whom he or she is about to get acquainted. The website of the German embassy, therefore, should perform this function. Websites are expected to encourage intercultural understanding and dialogue through appreciation and balanced presentation of different cultural patterns.

Case Studies: Asia

China

On the official MFA website of China, cultural content is hidden within the context of many other topics.¹⁸ Relevant information can nonetheless be found.

China's bilateral relations: Cultural relations are perceived as an integral part of overall bilateral relations. The "Countries and Regions" section features information about China's relations with other countries. It also provides valuable insight on cultural and educational exchange programmes and coop-

eration agreements. An example is the illustration of Sino-Indian¹⁹ and Sino-Iranian²⁰ relations.

The cultural content addresses the sensitive issues of Taiwan and Tibet. The international community occasionally casts a critical eye on China's human rights policy in its autonomous region. In response, Beijing's diplomatic strategy is to treat Tibetan Buddhism, the mysticism of Tibetan folklore and Tibetan artistic achievements in the context of Chinese historical heritage (see: Tibetan Art Exhibition in Estonia²¹ and About China/Tibet²²). The website reflects the official Chinese position of respect for the unique Tibetan cultural tradition, creating the impression of openness towards Tibet. Regarding Taiwan, the MFA uses the website as a tool of cultural diplomacy to publicise China's position. In addition, information about Taiwan presented on the website is used as a channel for public diplomacy to convey important foreign policy messages to the outside world.²³

China's partnership with specialised UN organs is highlighted as well. Particular importance is attached to relations between China and UNESCO.²⁴

China has not yet developed an extensive web presence for its diplomatic missions abroad. An examination the websites of the Chinese diplomatic missions in Russia²⁵, South Africa²⁶ and Beijing's UN mission in Geneva²⁷ shows a certain amount of cultural information, mainly consisting of announcements of various cultural events and exchanges. China's mission in Jakarta, Indonesia²⁸ is an exception. This site is one of the best and exhaustive attempts to utilise cultural content for the realisation of China's foreign policy objectives. It provides a natural bridge between a sizable Chinese population living in Indonesia and the Chinese motherland. The special section, "Culture and Education," is particularly intended to serve that purpose but is still under construction.

India

General introduction to Indian culture: The Indian Ministry of External Affairs²⁹ website guides the reader into a special cultural portal with an appealing title, "Discover India."³⁰ This portal offers a concise but highly informative guide to Indian arts, clothing, cuisine, dance, literature, education, festivals, films, history, languages, monuments, music, religion, theatre and galleries. The site is easy to navigate, with hyperlinks to supplementary sites containing a wealth of culturally and educationally-oriented information. (This cultural portal was operational until 2002. The updated version of the Indian MFA website³¹ does not refer to this page and cultural content is harder to locate.)

Legal framework for India's cultural cooperation with other countries: Full-text bilateral cultural agreements are available on the MFA website, pro-

viding guidelines for cultural cooperation and very useful reference materials for practicing diplomats, cultural and arts workers and researchers. However, finding needed information can be difficult because full-text treaties are not accessed in alphabetical country-by-country indexed order, but in a periodical and chronological way and are listed in volumes.

Information about bilateral cultural ties can be accessed via both the foreign policy/foreign relations³² section and the bilateral treaties and agreements section.³³ For example, the Republic of Korea and India's cultural exchanges³⁴ are examined succinctly in the bilateral relations review, where the 1972 cultural agreement is mentioned. The full text of the same bilateral agreement³⁵ is reachable in the treaties section. Likewise, a short review of Indian-Syrian cultural relations³⁶ is available in the bilateral relations section where there is also mention of the bilateral cultural agreement. The full text of the same agreement can be read in the treaties section.³⁷

The bilateral treaties section provides access to a number of other full-text cultural conventions which India has signed with, for example, Yemen, Senegal, Mexico, Argentina, and Zambia. Unfortunately, these texts are not linked directly to the sections where Delhi's bilateral relations with those states are reviewed.

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)³⁸ is a vital instrument of Indian cultural diplomacy at home and abroad. The ICCR website is directly linked to the Ministry of External Affairs homepage and offers the reader a concise profile of the ICCR, including cultural policies, goals and mission. The information is presented in a simple narrative format with numerous hyperlinks to services offered by the Council as well as information about various branches of the organisation. A sample of cultural content produced on the basis of a random search includes: CICA Declaration on Eliminating Terrorism and Promoting Dialogue among Civilizations.³⁹

The Indian MFA web cultural content is a useful promotional tool for intercultural understanding and dialogue. First, it reaches the hearts and minds of foreign audiences by conveying the richness of Indian cultural diversity. This is an important feature of the country's national identity. The content illustrates the importance of culture in the implementation of Indian foreign policy objectives. A good combination of photos and descriptions⁴⁰ enhances the meaning of historic, linguistic and artistic images that India wishes to project onto the international scene. Second, the content stimulates cultural curiosity regarding why and in what ways nations differ culturally, and demonstrates respect for cultural otherness. Third, the content emphasises cultural commonalities as an example of the unity of modern civilisation.

Indian Diplomatic Mission in Cairo:⁴¹ Indian cultural insight is offered to the Egyptian public through easy access to an “Indian Culture” section. The cultural accomplishments, customs and traditions are introduced in storyline format with information on crafts, paintings, arts, cuisine and costumes. The content is spread throughout various parts of the page. The “India-Egypt Bilateral Relations” section gives a chronological account of the cultural aspects of bilateral cooperation. The impact of the Islamic heritage on the formation of Indian national character is skilfully presented in a separate section with a number of informative articles. The content is available both in Arabic and English. The differences and the commonalities between the cradles of two unique and ancient civilisations are underscored. The page sets a good example of how to employ cultural web content to foster relations with a key Arab and Muslim country.

Case Studies: North America

Canada

The official website of the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade⁴² contains a special section entitled “Culture, Education and Youth.” For the sake of clarity, cultural and educational programmes are presented separately. The website makes a good introduction to cultural programmes and project funding mechanisms.⁴³ The MFA, in particular its various divisions and bureaus, is the coordination centre that ensures support for unceasing cultural expression in the field of arts, literature, music and theatre. For example, it offers financial and organisational backing to artists and cultural performers through grants and business development programmes. The MFA identifies cultural and educational priorities and its success in promotion of culture depends immensely on the coordination of a wide network of cultural communities. Canadian cultural communities are the Canadian organs of cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy is performed by a successful mixture of public and business sponsored initiatives.

The content is also aimed at facilitating the efforts of Canada’s educational institutions⁴⁴ to invite foreign students to study in Canada. Educational exchanges are an important way of fostering understanding and appreciation of the Canadian way of life and creating future ambassadors of Canadian culture.

The Canada-Mexico Creative Artists Programme⁴⁵ is a good example of a bilateral exchange in the sphere of contemporary art, which fosters mutual appreciation in a cross-cultural environment.

Canadian cultural diplomacy is conducted in a completely transparent environment. The site provides an exhaustive list of the country's cultural representatives⁴⁶ accompanied by full contact details. Canadian diplomatic staff abroad (commissioners and cultural attaches) constitute the nuts and bolts of the Canadian image making and culture projection machinery.

A quick scan of Canada's relations with the outside world reveals additional cultural content. Well-presented graphically, the content, among many other things, focuses on cultural exchanges between Canada and the South Pacific region. Cultural activities fall under the realm of public diplomacy.⁴⁷

Canadian diplomatic missions abroad: Cultural content is visibly, coherently and graphically well delivered. In that respect, the official Canadian diplomatic overseas web presence is one of the best examples among the examined countries. For instance, the websites for Canadian embassies in Berlin⁴⁸, Athens⁴⁹, Ankara⁵⁰, London⁵¹ and Kiev⁵² all maintain special sections dedicated to cultural affairs with finely chosen information located in dynamic settings. This cultural content is surely a very useful promotional tool in the hands of Canadian diplomats involved in outreach activities in the respective host countries.

United States

The US Department of State administers a solid cultural and public diplomacy web-presence. The bulk of the content is located in the easily accessible "Press and Public Affairs"⁵³ and "History, Education and Culture"⁵⁴ sections. Both the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (BECA) and the Bureau of Public Affairs (BPA) stand at the heart of Departmental efforts to cultivate mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue with the outside world. The observed content illustrates the willingness of America to rely on its "soft" power, not to coerce, but to attract foreign nations. The content has been conveniently and succinctly highlighted in a one-page summary.⁵⁵ The web is used as a suitable platform for publicising a considerable number of important scholastic, training and cultural programmes run by the BECA. Thus, the content is instructive and promotional in character. The information is comprehensively presented and offers regular updates in highlighted boxes. Each programme is reviewed in detail, from various angles. Of particular note are "Art in the Embassies,"⁵⁶ which has been in operation since 1964 and the "Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation."⁵⁷ The first handles the decoration of representational rooms of American ambassadors with masterpieces of American painters. It therefore puts art at the centre of US diplomacy. The second reiterates America's respect for the cultural heritage of developing countries through

granting funds for cultural preservation. The principal objectives of US cultural diplomacy can be read in BECA's profile: "... promoting personal, professional, and institutional ties between private citizens and organizations in the United States and abroad, as well as by presenting U.S. history, society, art and culture in all of its diversity to overseas audiences."

The webpages of the US diplomatic missions in Denmark⁵⁸, the Netherlands⁵⁹, Japan⁶⁰ and Malaysia⁶¹ illustrate good organisation of cultural content. The functionality of cultural content varies from country to country. Most of the sites provide different online resources promoting multiple aspects of American culture, science and education abroad, offer useful links, ambassadorial speeches at cultural symposiums, profiles of public affairs offices and practical examples of State Department programme implementation.⁶² The content highlights various aspects of American values, ways of life and traditions. Academic and training exchange programmes are covered as well. The US embassies endeavour to create a perception of a hospitable and welcoming America. The information sections underline various aspects of contemporary American culture and art. The US embassy website in The Hague, for instance, offers highly relevant information about the role of education in a cross-cultural context to prevent wars. In her year 2000 address to the "Educating in Paradise" Symposium in Florence, US Ambassador Cynthia Schneider emphasised that "education across national borders is not with the expectation that knowledge would make us love each other but foster the emergence of leaders whose sense of other nations and cultures would enable them to share specific policies based on tolerance and rational restraint... [T]he dangers of wars are significantly reduced by producing generations of leaders who have acquired some feeling of understanding for other people's cultures."⁶³

Case Studies: Africa

Nigeria, Lesotho, Egypt, South Africa

Apart from sketchy and very general insights into this nation's cultural features and tourist information, the Nigerian MFA website⁶⁴ makes no serious attempt to present the most populous and culturally diverse African state in the manner it deserves. The governmental portal of the tiny kingdom of Lesotho⁶⁵ includes an MFA section. Its still relatively limited cultural content⁶⁶ tells us about the impact of theatrical performances and art festivals in fostering the spirit of neighbourly relations in the South African region.

The Egyptian MFA⁶⁷ has no flag of “culture” on the first page of its website. However, a search for “culture” produces some valuable information: the country’s top ranking official speeches and statements used as public diplomacy channels to advocate the official Egyptian position on inter-civilisational and inter-religious dialogue. An address by H. E. Amre Moussa, at the time the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt, at the Center for Muslim Christian Understanding, Georgetown University, Washington DC, June 29, 1999, is one such example.

The South African Department of Foreign Affairs⁶⁸ website furnishes the interested reader with a considerable amount of diligently archived documents (e.g., the Cultural Charter of Africa⁶⁹, media reports on significant cultural events, and bilateral agreements with reference to cultural arrangements).

South African embassy web presence: While cultural content is practically absent on the website of the diplomatic mission in Switzerland⁷⁰, the South African embassy in Greece website⁷¹ provides a good introduction to the work of the South African Information Centre. In this particular case, the web content is used assertively as an instrument of cultural and public diplomacy outreach.

Although the analysed web content represents just a small fraction of the culture-related information found on the websites of diplomatic systems, it is sufficient to summarise the empirical results in a comparative assessment table. This table is based on information found on the MFA websites during or before August 2004.

Comparative Assessment of Websites

Country	Content Description	Conclusions	Recommendations
Brazil	Instructive but not very promotional. Content is delivered in a narrative format accompanied by maps and photos.	Content of MFA website is not sufficient to serve as a convincing tool for Brazilian public and cultural outreach abroad. However the supplementary cultural page as well as the example from the content review of Brazilian diplomatic missions abroad demonstrates better results.	Some segments may be helpful promotional material for Brazilian diplomats to plan public and cultural activities in the missions overseas. This is particularly important in countries where Brazilian diplomacy wishes to extend its influence through means of its language, culture and art.
Chile	Informative, but not very promotional. Content is purpose-oriented.	Ministerial website focuses on the role of the cultural department and provides guidelines for organising culture-focused activities.	The website needs to offer some examples to foreign audiences of the country's cultural heritage and achievements. These assets should be better utilised in the official website. Mission websites do provide examples, but need to be culturally enriched to facilitate cultural outreach. Content should be provided in languages other than Spanish.
France	The information is presented in a transparent and easily accessible way. Content is conveniently split into subtopics (cinema, science, books, music, art policy). Subtopics are not reviewed in isolation but in the context of the country's cultural diplomacy. The information is delivered through a good mix of narration, video clips and photos.	On one hand, topics handled on the site are meant to produce a positive perception of a friendly and culturally rich French nation and, on the other hand, the site materials facilitate meaningful cultural cooperation with other countries through recognition and respect for cultural diversity.	The web platform should be used consistently as France's cultural image-maker. More materials should be made available in languages other than French.
Germany	The information is thematically structured and purpose-oriented. Narration is the main form of content delivery.	The website provides helpful information for German diplomats and cultural workers responsible for the projection of German culture abroad.	More emphasis might be laid on what foreign cultures could offer to an art-loving German public. That means offering content which sets the parameters for intercultural exchange, not focusing exclusively on one's own cultural objectives: cultural diplomacy is a two-way street.

Country	Content Description	Conclusions	Recommendations
China	Cultural information is given in a narrative format and is succinctly and dryly presented, but is not very interactive.	Content is tackled in a limited way and with brief summaries. There is no link dedicated to a cultural department within the MFA, the principal organ of cultural diplomacy. The same could be said about the embassy web pages. Visitors find mainly brief summaries and listings of forthcoming cultural events.	Greater use of text, as well as video and audio effects to make foreign audiences aware of China's unique civilizational and cultural heritage is needed. The web platform needs to be better utilised as an instrument of cultural outreach in missions abroad.
India	The cultural dimension is richly presented. The best way to approach the cultural information is via the site-map and through the search facility. The content is delivered in a non-intrusive and intelligent manner.	The content conveys the richness and vibrancy of Indian culture to foreign audiences. Indian diplomacy seeks to project the country's power through means of the country's cultural heritage and achievements. Content builds up an important perception: an image of a hospitable and friendly nation open to intercultural dialogue and understanding.	Direct accessibility to cultural information should be provided because content cannot be spotted at first glance. Much substantive material is available, yet not presented in a visible and easily traceable manner. The site has the undiscovered potential to assist Indian diplomats in promoting the country's cultural image abroad.
Canada	The content makes good reading since it has been neatly organised. The narration follows smoothly through conveniently placed hyperlinks and purpose-oriented summaries. Content is abundant, supported with multi-faceted sources of information, photos, and additional net resources.	A user-friendly website where cultural content is meaningfully and exhaustively presented. The website ushers the reader into the operational mechanisms of the country's cultural and public diplomacy activities.	The content could also incorporate documentation on MFA-sponsored conferences and workshops on culture related affairs.
US	The cultural content is easily identifiable. It is thematically well structured, very informative and purpose driven. Browsing is assisted by consistently arranged links.	The website provides an extensive overview of the US cultural and training programmes, with a wealth of additional information as to how they function. The content would be useful to US Department efforts to project America's influence abroad and create lasting bridges for intercultural communication.	Searchable content available in the archive site could be improved. Information on past major events in the field of culture sponsored by the US State Department such as "Conference on Culture and Diplomacy" 2001, could be highlighted in the current site as well.
Nigeria, Lesotho, Egypt, South Africa	Informational, at times promotional, occasionally purpose-oriented. Information seems to be insufficient and dispersed, with some exceptions.	Cultural content is, at best, humbly touched upon in the observed websites. Culture-related web information tools still await employment by the African diplomacy and policy-making community as a whole and by respective countries in particular. Websites provide no clue as to how cultural policy is shaped and executed.	Culture-related information needs to be more consistently and systematically presented on the official MFA and embassy webpages so it can assist African diplomats to convey the magnetism of the continent's diverse and wealthy cultures and serve as a venue for intercultural dialogue. The web content should offer greater coverage of culture-related issues.

Additional Cultural Content Bibliography

The study of cultural content on MFA websites illustrates the general trend for the national diplomatic systems to utilise the web:

- for presentation of the structure and organisation of the main organs of cultural diplomacy;
- for familiarisation with the countries' international cultural agendas.

Austrian MFA⁷²

The site promotes a distinguished Alpine nation, whose cultural achievements, especially in the field of classical music and visual arts, have helped its influence worldwide. The website emphasises the organisation and work of Austrian cultural centres abroad. Web links to those forums are provided as well. The Austrian international cultural policy is introduced at length.

Croatian MFA⁷³

The site provides a good selection of materials related to the country's cultural heritage. It could be a useful promotional tool for Zagreb's conduct of cultural diplomacy. The organisational structure of the MFA features the Division for International Cultural Cooperation within the cabinet of the State Secretary for Political Affairs.

Danish MFA⁷⁴

The Danish Secretariat for International Cultural Affairs (DSICA) is a good example of an organ of cultural diplomacy placed outside the MFA structure. The department, which falls under the administrative umbrella of the Ministry of Culture, is a coordination centre for exchange programmes. The site makes the reader familiar with the functions and priorities of the DSICA.

Greek MFA⁷⁵

A one page concise summary makes a good introduction of the responsibilities and priorities of the country's principal organ of cultural diplomacy, the Department of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The place and role of Greek cultural centres is briefly illuminated as well.

Hungarian MFA⁷⁶

The archived section of the website furnishes information both about Hungarian cultural institutes abroad and foreign cultural institutes operating in Hungary. An article features Hungarian cultural achievement in the context of world cultural developments.

Irish MFA⁷⁷

The website presents a one-page review of the role of the Cultural Division in pursuit of cultural foreign policy objectives in tandem with other national institutions.

Israeli MFA⁷⁸

The site offers a detailed review of the structure and activities of the ministry's "Division for Scientific and Cultural Affairs" and its respective subdivisions. The objectives of Israeli cultural, academic and scientific activities are listed as well.

Italian MFA⁷⁹

The cultural content is summarised in one page of well selected hyperlinks that lead to comprehensive information on Italian language studies, Italian institutes, relevant documents, cultural activities and archaeological missions. The organisational structure and functions of the Directorate General for Cultural Promotion and Cooperation are thoroughly examined.

Japanese MFA⁸⁰

The comprehensive content promotes Japanese language learning, cultural, scientific and sports programmes. A succinct articulation of MFA priorities in the field of cultural diplomacy can be read in the PDF report "International Exchange and Public Relations Activities" in the Diplomatic Bluebook 2003. The report focuses on international exchanges, cooperation with UNESCO, youth exchange and education and Tokyo's support for culture-building efforts in developing countries.

Peruvian MFA⁸¹

The Cultural Affairs section presents Peruvian arts and cultural activities carried out with the help of the Cultural Promotion Office and Peruvian diplomatic missions abroad. The site offers a well-organised database with the full text of bilateral and multilateral cultural conventions. The content is available in Spanish only.

Romanian MFA⁸²

A special section presents a summary on how Romania's cultural diplomacy is conducted, and explains the levels of subordination and coordination among various institutional structures involved in endorsing Romanian language and culture abroad.

Slovak MFA⁸³

The website offers short summaries of bilateral agreements in the field of cultural, educational, scientific, healthcare and sporting activities. The competencies of Slovak cultural institutes are highlighted concisely.

Slovenian MFA⁸⁴

Functions of the Department for International Cultural Relations are briefly described.

Turkish MFA⁸⁵

The cultural section of the website presents various aspects of Turkish culture, arts and national character in a storyline format accompanied by photo images. It is aimed at showing the richness of the Turkish cultural heritage to foreign audiences. A link to the Ministry of Culture is provided.

MFA of Serbia and Montenegro⁸⁶

The website provides information with some details about bilateral agreements signed by the MFA with foreign counterparts in the sphere of culture and education. Current news and events in the field are covered briefly as well.

Endnotes

- 1 Michael Z. Wise, "How Nations Wave the Flag of Culture," *International Herald Tribune*, 16 April 2002. Available online at <http://www.iht.com/articles/54766.html>.
- 2 Brazilian MFA website: http://www.mre.gov.br/ingles/structure/foreing_relations/services/cultural.asp.
- 3 Ibid., http://www.mre.gov.br/ingles/procura_detalhada/politica_externa/cplp.asp.
- 4 Brazilian government website: http://www.mre.gov.br/ingles/resultado_detalhada.asp?assunto=1&p_chave=109.
- 5 Brazilian Embassy in UK website: <http://www.brazil.org.uk>.
- 6 Ibid., <http://www.brazil.org.uk/page.php?pid=2086>.
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