CHAPTER 9

The Impact of African Cultural Diplomacy in Shaping Socio-political Relations within the Global South

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Introduction

Cultural diplomacy is a subject that has recently received a lot of attention across the world. The subject is becoming increasingly topical in Africa and the Global South. The African continent is home to various ethnic groups and cultures, thus there is a need to understand the role of cultural diplomacy in shaping the socio-political relations of the different African countries, and as a means of engaging in international discourse in relation to the Global South. Recently, Africa has achieved a number of milestones when it comes to practising cultural diplomacy, which has hugely influenced social, economic and political changes within the continent.

The phrase 'cultural diplomacy' refers to a set of activities, programmes or initiatives designed by countries or states, with the help of various actors, as a way of improving the country's or region's foreign policy and international relations. It includes cultural events like language exchange programmes – established at a local, national and continental level with the aim of creating and building relations between different countries or regions – and strengthening ties across the globe through exchanging ideas, values, beliefs and traditions as a way of developing a mutual understanding between them (Njiru 2016). The key objective of cultural diplomacy is to improve international relations and the foreign policies of the country or region. By practicing cultural diplomacy, the continent or state seeks to promote a positive image to other countries or regions as a way of obtaining favourable public opinion in order to achieve its specific

policy goals.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, culture has played a vital role in developing relations between different countries and continents, and it has hence been adopted into foreign policy structures (Pine 2020). This has led to the emergence of the term 'soft power', which highlights the ability of a state to use its 'beliefs, attractiveness, diversity and language' as a key tool for persuasion towards achievement of set foreign policy goals. Soft power is the opposite of the term 'hard power', which refers to the ability to change what other countries do or operate (Nye 2008). Therefore, soft power involves the use of intangible resources or features like ideologies and culture to attract other foreign powers. A country's soft power operates on different pillars that include its political system and values, culture and overall foreign policy. It is important to understand that soft power is not something new, but rather a development of imperialism. Soft power means that a country should turn its culture into a collective social practice that is increasingly important and influential in the international relations (IR) arena. According to the concept of soft power, when efficiently explored, culture can be a strategic resource in terms of political governance, development and global diplomacy. Therefore, culture emerges as an indispensable factor in social cohesion, peace, development and dialogue between people of different nationalities.

This chapter provides an overview of the importance of cultural diplomacy in international relations, and establishes the background for an examination of African cultural diplomacy within the Global South paradigm. The chapter also provides an overview of goals, and the organisational framework of the analysis.

A subsequent section on historical context explores the origins of African cultural diplomacy historically, following its development from precolonial exchanges to modern methods. The chapter draws attention to significant academic pursuits, artistic movements and cultural exchanges that have influenced African identity and changed sociopolitical dynamics in the Global South.

Leveraging African arts and media for cultural soft power: The researcher examined how African nations use their rich cultural heritage

– which includes music, literature, film and visual arts – as instruments of soft power in the Global South. The research discusses the complexities of the binaries reflected in how other actors perceive the location of Africa vis-à-vis how Africa desires to, or actually does, locate itself in the power shifts and fixes within the Global South. The chapter looks at successful cultural projects and evaluates how they promote mutual understanding, solidarity and cooperation among the countries of the Global South. Examples of these initiatives include film festivals, literary exchanges and music collaborations.

A later section on diaspora engagement and cultural bridges examines the role of diasporic communities in promoting African culture and values within the Global South, with a focus on the African diaspora. It looks at topics such as community outreach programmes, cultural festivals and heritage preservation projects and evaluates how they help different diasporic people build shared identities and stronger sociopolitical relationships.

The researcher examines the use of cultural diplomacy by African regional organisations, such as the African Union (AU) and regional economic communities, to further the goals of regional integration in the Global South. The section discusses programmes that support language variety, cross-cultural understanding and cultural interchange among Member States and evaluates how well they contribute to regional solidarity and collaboration.

Opportunities and obstacles: The last section addresses the opportunities and obstacles that African cultural diplomacy faces in influencing sociopolitical ties in the Global South. The section lists challenges like linguistic hurdles, financial limitations and cultural preconceptions, but also identifies ways to innovate, work together and form strategic alliances to get past these issues and push African cultural diplomacy abroad.

The chapter ends with a conclusion which also highlights the importance of African cultural diplomacy as a catalyst for developing sociopolitical ties within the Global South. It emphasises how crucial it is to keep funding cultural exchange programmes and spreading African cultural values in order to strengthen the unity, respect and collaboration of the nations of the Global South.

Approaches of Studying Global South

Case studies

The researcher selected multiple case studies of African cultural diplomacy initiatives within the Global South. These case studies represent diverse geographical regions, cultural contexts and types of cultural exchange activities. Examples include cultural festivals, artistic collaborations, diaspora engagement programmes and regional integration initiatives. In addition, the scholar conducted in-depth qualitative analysis of each case study, employing methods such as content analysis, thematic coding and comparative analysis to identify patterns, trends and factors influencing the impact of African cultural diplomacy on socio-political relations.

Interviews and surveys

The scholar conducted semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders involved in African cultural diplomacy initiatives, including government officials, cultural policymakers, artists, cultural diplomats and members of diasporic communities. Additionally, the researcher administered surveys to participants and audiences of cultural events to gather quantitative data on perceptions, attitudes and experiences related to African cultural diplomacy and its impact on socio-political relations within the Global South.

Documentary analysis

The author analyses official documents, policy statements, speeches and media coverage related to African cultural diplomacy initiatives and their reception within the Global South. This involves examining primary sources of information to understand the objectives, strategies and outcomes of cultural diplomacy efforts, as well as public discourse surrounding these initiatives.

Quantitative data analysis

This chapter utilised statistical analysis techniques to analyse survey data and identify correlations, trends and patterns related to the impact of African cultural diplomacy on socio-political relations within the Global South. This may involve employing descriptive statistics, regression analysis and factor analysis to explore relationships between variables such as cultural exchange activities, public perceptions and policy outcomes.

Ethical considerations

The researcher adhered to ethical guidelines throughout the research process, including obtaining informed consent from participants, protecting confidentiality and respecting cultural sensitivities, as well as remaining sensitive to the potential impact of the research on stakeholders and communities involved in African cultural diplomacy initiatives. The necessary measures were taken to mitigate any potential risks or harms.

Historical analysis of African diplomacy

In order to understand the concept of cultural diplomacy in Africa, it is vital to explore and acknowledge the historical perspective on diplomacy in Africa. Current diplomacy in Africa revolves around the idea of equality, justice and democracy as the key towards strengthening international relations (Akokpari 2016). Cultural diplomacy includes the imperative need for socio-economic development and peace encapsulated in the ideas of solidarity, unity and integration of the various African countries. According to Eiguedo-Okoeguale (2022), the perspective of diplomacy in Africa is based on the history of colonisation and marginalisation of the African people by the rest of the world, especially former colonisers. Moreover, the concept of African diplomacy, not only characterised by the colonial history and other negative encounters, and relationship with the western world, but it also incorporates the traditional values and beliefs of the African people. This includes respect for African beliefs, authority and traditions, where the key emphasis is on African communities and not

individuals. For example, the *ubuntu* culture of Southern Africa and the *harambee* ('coming together') culture of East Africa (Chege 2021).

Precolonial and colonial African diplomacy

It is quite difficult to trace the origin of African diplomacy, despite the continent being known as the 'Original home of humankind'. However, ancient history suggests that modern trade relations between various countries and regions in Africa continued to mirror diplomatic practices before the colonial era. Ancient Egypt's practices are an example of precolonial African diplomacy (Sagheer 2022). Through political alliances, peaceful conflict resolutions and trade agreements, Egypt remains connected with the neighbouring countries. Additionally, migration and trade alliances in Central and Southern Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth century are further examples of precolonial practices that represent African diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy scholars need to understand that precolonial African diplomacy was important to the continent's growing relations with traders from other parts of the world, such as Asia.

The first instances of colonialism in Africa occurred in North Africa. Around 1500 BCE, maritime exploration of the northern part of Africa by the Greeks and Romans led to the first foreign occupations of Africa. This led to the emergence of the longest-running known diplomatic relations of the modern world: those between Greece and North Africa countries like Tunisia. Thereafter, the penetration of the region by the Ottoman Empire led to the emergence of a Muslim culture in Africa. During the seventeenth century, Arabs had occupied a huge part of North Africa and East Africa. This was done using a more organised structure, which led to the imprinting of Islamic cultural ties and diplomatic ties between Africa and the Far West. The collective cultural and religious jurisprudence has so far aided in the development of diplomatic ties between the Sahel and Sahara regions and the Arab World countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar, which has continued even in the contemporary era.

European colonisation in Africa left a profound and permanent impact on the continent's diplomacy and political development. The scramble

for and partition of Africa by the Europeans led to the division of Africa and the creation of illogical boundaries. This led to the destruction of the social, cultural and political cohesion of Africa, interfering with the diplomatic structure of the continent. The inter-state relations of African countries thus became an extension of the diplomatic relations of the European colonial powers.

Colonisation in Africa lasted for a long period compared to other continents, with the result that European diplomatic policy continues to exert powerful influence across the continent, despite most of its countries gaining sovereignty. Most African countries adopted the colonial language after gaining independence, which has hugely affected the continent's overall diplomatic and international relations. During the postcolonial period, African states had little or limited experience in matters of foreign policy and infrastructure development, and inadequate resources and bureaucratic understanding to venture into the world of diplomacy. Ethnicity and association with the top elites influenced the appointment of the first batch of diplomats by the new African governments. It is important to understand that most African states were characterised by dictatorial and militarised governments, which were not naturally inclined towards the art of international diplomacy. Matters of efficacy in international relations in Africa faced several difficulties due to authoritarian states. Therefore, most democratic governments on the continent focused on maximising diplomatic relations by engaging in multilateral diplomatic opportunities, including adopting cultural diplomacy as a key to maximising socio-economic and political development in the region.

African cultural diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy plays a huge role in the scope of contemporary international relations, as it acts as a bridge between different regions or countries characterised by diverse and complex cultural beliefs, values and traditions. The concept of cultural diplomacy has emerged in recent years due to the expansion of cultural boundaries across the globe, which has made the topic indispensable to the conveying of overall cultural values

and creation of understanding of global cultural dynamics. Therefore, African cultural diplomacy is based on the ideology of facilitating cross-cultural dialogues and relations beyond the African continent. AU Member States have orchestrated several policies and ideas based on using culture as a form of attraction, especially in the Global South (Ballestrin 2020). The use of cultural diplomacy in Africa is said to be as old as ancient civilisation (Taylor 2018). The existence of cultural diplomacy in ancient Africa is evidenced by interactions between ancient traders, missionaries, explorers, artists and scholars specifically known to foster relationships through cultural exchanges. According to researchers, cultural diplomacy functions by interacting through expressions of life within the foreign policy of a nation or continent (Enaifoghe and Makhutla 2020). This leads to substantial investment and development in the region (Taylor 2018). Huda and Muchatuta (2022) state that African cultural diplomacy is, however, associated with various challenges, such as imbalanced soft power dynamics between Africa and developed countries across the world. However, cultural diplomacy in Africa contributes to vast socio-economic and political development, including boosting educational capacity and development and improving the living conditions of the people of Africa.

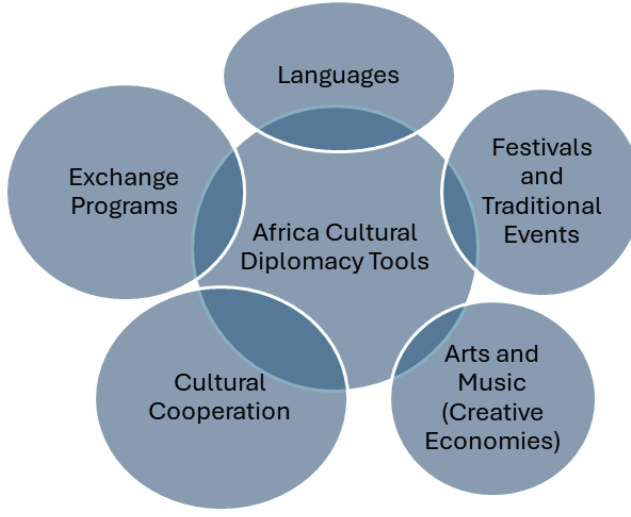


Figure 9.1: Tools of African Cultural Diplomacy.

Africa possesses a long and deep-rooted cultural heritage, which provides a strong foundation for attaining sustainable continental socio-economic development and prosperity. In the past few years, development in African nations has been immense and has shown success due to the varied efforts of governments and non-government institutions to create strong foreign relations as a way of attracting investors. Africa has achieved this by creating cultural exchange programmes and initiatives that aids successful cooperation within and beyond the region. Increased cooperation is the key to Africa's economic growth and development.

Countries in the Global North continue to dominate the international relations space by using cultural diplomacy. In a globalised world economy, most countries focus on the battle of who has what and gets what, how and when. This means that most countries or continents struggle to gain a better position as a way of achieving social, economic and political development. Therefore, African cultural diplomacy is a vital dimension of the overall geopolitics of the continent and positioning in the Global South. Studies suggest that Global North countries have been able to sell themselves to the rest of the world using cultural diplomacy initiatives like education exchange programmes. Therefore, African cultural diplomacy embrace the art of encouraging cultural appreciation to enhance Africa's visibility across the world.

To understand the impact of cultural diplomacy in Africa, it is vital to explore the concept from a philosophical perspective rather than as a multi-disciplinary tool. Currently, cultural diplomacy in Africa remains a political tool in most cases used to create political division across countries. This has led to a question surrounding how Africa plans to leverage its diverse and rich heritage as a tool for selling its image to the world.

Another limitation affecting African cultural diplomacy initiatives is that the West has long and successfully dominated the art of propaganda in cultural diplomacy. The Europeans succeeded in presenting their languages and values to be the standard for any civilised nation, while projecting African culture as representing the opposite. Europeans, through colonisation and the use of cultural diplomacy, hugely influence the people of Africa, leading to most African rejecting their indigenous

cultural practices and beliefs. This has created a situation in which African countries and people tend to become agents used in promoting Western culture, a system that has permeated every facet of African life, including religion, language, food, education and dress code. For instance, according to Western culture, some traditional African ways of worship translate to the use of magic and witchcraft. On the other hand, Western culture holds Christianity in high esteem. Cultural diplomacy is about informing others with an aim of changing their perspective, which scholars view as impression management. This began during the era of colonisation and continues today.

At a continental level, culture has been a tool used to deepen cooperation and collaboration among the diverse peoples of Africa. It has also helped strengthen cooperation in other policy areas of the various AU Member States. *Ubuntu* and *harambee* inspired the concept of African unity. The AU recognises culture as a critical element for mobilising its people around common values, such as thus the ideology of Pan-Africanism. The 2006 Charter of African Cultural Renaissance, which the AU developed, recognises culture as a key tool in enhancing diplomatic ties within and beyond the region. The organisation has adopted several initiatives, such as the AU Year of Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want in 2021, as a manifestation of the use of African cultural diplomacy to strengthen cooperation in the Global South.

Within the continent, the AU increasingly and strategically adopts cultural diplomacy policies as part of foreign policy measures. The organisation has focused on enhancing cultural diplomacy as a key for promoting peace and fighting ethnic differences within the continent. The continent pursues these goals through open intracultural dialogue, thus strengthening the AU's foreign and security policies.

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2022), African cultural diplomacy is a field that is increasingly attracting scholars across the world, as it involves the use of culture in promoting sustainable economic and socio-political development, peace, security and dialogue on the African continent. In Africa, cultural diplomacy is a tool for enhanced social inclusion, education and environmental sustainability. The AU's cultural diplomacy

strategy focuses on both promotion of the diverse African cultures beyond its borders and their use as drivers of policy change. This helps in valorising the continent's cultural assets through capacity building, research and sharing knowledge – which are the beacons of cooperation between Africa and the world.

African cultural diplomacy is known to help in the forming of strategic alliances, an added advantage given contemporary multicultural societies. This practice has fostered a stronger recognition of culture as a soft power, as most countries have shifted from public relations to value promotion as a way of positioning and attracting other key players in the international relations arena (Chatin 2019). Adoption of African cultural diplomacy has led to increased recognition of the diverse culture of AU Member States, as well as recognition of the historical and social legacies linked with the practices and beliefs of the people and communities within the African continent, thus leading to increased global recognition (Tran 2024).

However, despite the fact that African cultural diplomacy plays a vital role in the positioning and development of Africa across the globe, the ideology of cultural diplomacy polices is still in need of clear articulation across the overall foreign policy spectrum. Most African countries still do not have specific cultural diplomacy policies that highlight the responsibilities of the key institutions concerned with matters of cultural diplomacy, which are more likely to be beneficial to the national interests and enhance international cooperation. Therefore, most African countries must focus on fostering cultural diplomacy policies that explore and highlight the various challenges and opportunities associated with the incorporation of culture into diplomatic matters.

Social, political and economic relations in the Global South

In the recent past, the socio-economic and geopolitical upheavals of the Global South have been characterised by the general international relations across the world, including systemic geopolitical, social and economic issues among several countries, such as the relations between China and the United States. Examples such as the recent coups d'état in

West African countries, including Mali and Burkina Faso, and the ongoing civil conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), illustrate the extent to which international cooperation has become strained and highlight the need to rethink foreign relations in the Global South (Ezeogu 2022). The Global South is composed of developing countries, which are characterised as rife with conflicts and lacking economic advantage compared to the Global North (Benabdallah, Murillo-Zamora and Adetula 2017). However, recently the Global South has emerged as a key player in international relations, due to the emergence of various policies enhancing the positioning of the region across the globe (Grovogu 2011). For instance, countries like Brazil, Russia, China, India and South Africa (BRICS) have revolutionised the position of the Global South in various ways, which has led to increased socio-economic and political development of the region.

How socio-political initiatives are shaped by cultural diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy acts as a way of using a nation's values and traditions in its foreign policy as a way of attracting investment and improving the country's foreign relations. According to Schoeman (2011), socio-political initiatives such as public diplomacy shape the cultural diplomatic policies of a country. Research indicates that culture is a vital tool in establishing and improving international relations, especially when incorporated into the socio-political and economic diplomacy of a country or continent (Saaida 2023). Therefore, there is a need to understand how socio-political initiatives shape the overall cultural diplomacy of a country or region. Various aspects of socio-politics, such as soft power, play a huge role in shaping a country's cultural diplomacy approach. Cultural diplomacy contributes to socio-political dimensions, as there exists an implicit motive of adding value and improving how others view the country or region. Cultural diplomacy is a tool known to assert the interests of various elites in the global political landscape. In the global world, socio-politics influences which country – and when and how each of these countries – gets what, and thus acts as an instrument for dominating foreign relations and diplomatic matters, especially between

the Global North and Global South. Thus, cultural diplomacy is just another dimension of socio-political matters, especially when it comes to the various countries' struggles to position themselves in the global world (Tella 2021).

The case study of Morocco is a strong example of the connection between socio-political initiatives and cultural diplomacy efforts in Africa. In recent years, Morocco's foreign policy has shifted beyond African borders but also focused on deepening its relationship with its continental neighbours within the Sahara region (Wüst and Nicolai 2022). This has been associated with the country's desire to widen and strengthen its overall social, political and economic influence beyond the African continent as a way of enhancing its overall foreign policy objectives and initiatives. In 2017, the Moroccan government strengthened its overall foreign policy by re-joining the African Union. This served as a way of repositioning itself as a key player or representative of the Western Sahara region. It also acted as a way of expanding knowledge about the country's cultural values and communities in the Global South arena. Morocco's updated strategy related to its cultural and public diplomacy has led to massive positive outcomes, such as enhanced investment opportunities and trade, stronger diplomatic relations and increased regional integration. Key principles guide Morocco's cultural diplomacy policy: solidarity, neighbourliness, and partnership within Africa and the Global South. The need to enhance and promote cooperation with its neighbours and establish its position in terms of development, security and peace matters drives Morocco's primary aim of enacting cultural diplomacy as part of its foreign affairs. The country's cultural diplomacy is geared towards positioning itself as a monarch within its territory.

Morocco's cultural diplomacy focuses on its history, traditions, education and religion.The Moroccan government has developed various socio-political initiatives, such as cultural centres, exhibitions and fairs, and sponsored activities abroad as a way of enhancing its influence across the globe. This highlights Morocco as a unique country with a rich and diverse cultural identity. Its political institutions have invested in religious diplomacy as a key to establishing strong economic and political relations across the globe. By embracing religious diplomacy, the country has been

able to enhance its profile across the Sahara and Sahel regions. These socio-political initiatives by Moroccan's government have enhanced its cultural diplomatic efforts by promoting Islam and using religion to enhance its positioning in the region.

Morocco uses socio-political initiatives such as festivals and other events to promote its cultural diplomacy. This has helped the country boost its diplomatic efforts by promoting its culture as a key to enhancing its overall visibility (Boutabssil et al. 2021). The Marrakech International Film Festival is a strong example of how festivals and events have enhanced Morocco's overall visibility. Moreover, the country has invested hugely in scientific and educational cooperation as part of its overall cultural diplomatic tactics. Most Moroccan universities practice educational cooperation with universities from abroad. The institutions' positioning helps attract other African scholars and establish Morocco's universities as leading institutions for scientific research on the African continent. Its cultural diplomacy strategy has helped the country boost its international reputation and ties, which helps create favourable policies that encourage international students to study in Morocco.

Cultural diplomacy in Morocco has been successful, since the country has also hugely invested in cultural infrastructure that promotes the capital city, Rabat, as a cultural hub. These efforts contributed to Rabat being designated the African Capital of Culture by United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (Zamorano 2016). The use of cultural diplomacy as a soft power has been beneficial for Morocco, as it has helped enhanced the country's visibility and reputation within and beyond Africa. The Moroccan monarchy and the government have worked hand in hand to strengthen the country's African identity, including through Morocco's return to the AU, which has facilitated the establishment of about 20 consulates of African states in the country.

Another example of how socio-political initiatives have led to successful cultural diplomacy is the case of China in Africa. Over the past few decades, Chinese lawmakers promoted China through the use of cultural diplomacy to increase its image and influence in Africa. Caruso (2020) justifies China's use of cultural diplomacy as a soft power towards developing countries in the Global South by saying it makes the country

shine culturally. The use of cultural diplomacy is evident in the several initiatives under way in Africa, including infrastructure development and free aid to African countries while respecting each one's sovereignty. China has hugely invested in the use of cultural power to gain influence, by raising awareness of its own cultures as well as what the other regions of the world mean to China and its people (Zhou, Barnes and Gustafsson 2022). China's use of cultural diplomacy in Africa has helped build positive sentiment about China's overall political and economic attractiveness. Cultural diplomacy in China–Africa relations has therefore helped strengthen cooperation between China and various African countries.

Cultural diplomacy and soft power

Cultural diplomacy has emerged as a vital component of foreign policy, especially in the Global South (Korir 2023). Most countries seek to develop and strengthen their soft power across the world and extend their overall influence across their borders. In Africa, cultural diplomacy has become a key tool for the continent to projects its ability and capacity when it comes to creating influence beyond its borders. Culture and cultural exchange programmes in Africa help establish and develop working relations between the AU Member States and beyond, thus subordinating the hard power aspects of politics, such as dictatorship and economic capability.

Cultural diplomacy as a soft power explores the use of exchanges to promote language, point of view and policies – in a way akin to narrating a story to the rest of the world (Wheeler 2013). Tsuprykova (2020) writes that culture as a soft power initiative used by countries to promote their national interests in the international arena has gained increasing attention in recent years. Most countries, especially in the Global South, have awakened to the idea that cultural diplomacy is a powerful tool that can be effective in advancing the national interest. Some countries, including Russia and China, have invested greatly in cultural diplomacy as an element of gaining soft power (Wamuya 2015). States achieve the soft power effect of cultural diplomacy through massive investment in international broadcasts and the establishing of cultural institutions in

different parts of the world, as a way of expanding their global influence. During the current global age, in which information remains powerful, states conduct cultural diplomacy through massive investment in international broadcasts and the establishing of cultural institutions in different parts of the world, influence and security beyond their borders, alongside the use of hard power strategies like military propaganda.

Cultural diplomacy tactics have enabled several countries to maintain traditional relations, by providing alternate forums where they are able to coordinate and shape their agendas and activities in the international system. Policy-makers acknowledge culture is a soft power tool when it comes to dominating the international relations arena more effectively when compared to economic and political powers. Most governments have acknowledged that their international image and perceptions remain the sole responsibility of the country itself, and cultural diplomatic initiatives are a vital part of maintaining and improving their global standing.

Overall, cultural relations between countries have proven to be a powerful factor in international relations, especially when countries seek to gain mutual benefit through cooperation and understanding. Cultural diplomacy is a critical component that fosters soft power, based on the ideology that mutual understanding is vital for building trust and tolerance. This allows governments to move forward and interact based on respect, with new collaboration grounded in interdependence and a clear understanding of the future challenges and threats that are likely to emerge.

Recommendations and conclusion

Secure policy consensus at regional level

Regional or continental-level consensus is the first step in establishing an overall diplomatic policy for Africa. This means that, for cultural diplomacy to be effective, African states must develop a policy consensus that promotes cultural diplomacy and soft power when it comes to building relations in and between Global South. Achieving such consensus requires

creating public institutions and designing business practices that reflect substantiated value, influence and impact in representing African cultural diplomacy and the continent's role in the socio-economic development of the Global South. Public and private institutions invest in cultural diplomacy through developing a portfolio for people to understand how it positively influences international relations. It is important to understand that most developing countries and regions often rely on cultural diplomacy initiatives and policies as a way of shaping or aligning their relations with other countries and attracting partners and investors – which should be the case for Africa. A critical example includes developing consensus policies, such as education exchange programmes, as an effective instrument that supports the implementation of a country's cultural diplomacy. Examples of effective cultural diplomacy initiatives include their use in developing the foreign relations between the United States and other continents. Through use of educational scholarships, the US has been able to create advantage and win favour among people across the world. Therefore, it is evident that Africa, for a long time, missed a powerful opportunity to embrace cultural diplomacy as key to supporting long-term foreign diplomatic interest.

Formalise states and interdepartmental cooperation

Cultural diplomacy is a foreign policy tool that is multi-faceted, which means it involves different institutions and departments, and both government and non-governmental agencies. This means that the core policy issues are cross-cutting with other diplomatic policies that might affect the overall foreign diplomacy of the region (Tamunomiegbam et al. 2023). Therefore, the African continent should work towards normalising and formalising intergovernmental and interdepartmental cooperation when it comes to cultural diplomacy, as a way of fostering a deep connection between the different institutions and the relevant foreign affairs departments. Cultural diplomacy in Africa is already being used effectively in countries like South Africa and Kenya. However, many African countries' foreign affairs departments remain wary of pursuing it as a major component of their overall foreign policy. This indicates a

need for such African countries to focus on developing a Memorandum of Understanding or local laws that would result in the formal integration of cultural diplomatic policies into the overall diplomatic policies of the state or continent. To begin with, cultural diplomacy policies should be designed in a way that they are handled by experts guided by each country's constitution. This will promote cooperate governance when it comes to developing intergovernmental relations between Africa and the Global South. By doing this, different countries will be able to direct their cultural diplomacy policy between the different foreign diplomacy departments.

The continent should focus on promoting African cultural diplomatic initiatives beyond Africa. Developing Africa's cultural diplomacy reach could enable the various countries to use that influence to promote their overall foreign policies and international relations. This can be achieved by establishing an African cultural diplomatic framework for the AU, which would then spearhead the overall efforts to developing the continent's foreign policies and ensure they align with overall Global South policies.

Develop a new or revised African cultural diplomacy policy

In order to extend the benefits of cultural diplomacy beyond intra-African relationships and boost the continent's position in the Global South, African countries must work towards developing a unique policy framework that enhances the concept of cultural diplomacy. This includes a high-level analysis of current foreign policies and legislation. According to the research, the concept of cultural diplomacy remains unfocused within most African countries' foreign policy, which has made it difficult to table issues regarding the promotion of African cultures beyond the continents' borders as a way of supporting Africa's diplomatic interests. Therefore, relevant policy is lacking within the overall African diplomatic corps. This suggests that the continent should re-think and re-explore existing foreign policy as a way of maximising Africa's soft power and potential in the IR field. The new or revised cultural diplomacy policies should be geared towards developing a commonly defined African identity based on national or continental interest. These policies must be designed

in a way that promotes a clear understanding of the past and present experiences of Africa as a continent in relation to cultural diplomacy, as well as the experience of the other countries in the Global South. This can be achieved through a collaborative process among the various African institutions, tasked with using culture as a tool for promoting the attractiveness of the various African countries. New or reformed policies must be developed in a way that they provide an alternative approach to 'business as usual' diplomatic strategy. The resulting African cultural diplomacy policies must focus on the promotion of the diverse African cultures, values and ideals in a way that will enhance Africa's influence and overall image abroad, and promote the continent's socio-economic development.

Create an appropriate institutional platform

Africa should develop an appropriate institutional platform that tackles matters of cultural diplomacy. Currently, there is no governmental or non-governmental body that is designed to handle cultural diplomacy and diplomatic matters in Africa. This has made it difficult to formulate and implement African cultural diplomacy policies and initiatives. The continent has invested significant amounts in developing international relations with other countries. However, there is limited information available on cultural diplomacy approaches. Therefore, there is a need to develop an appropriate institutional platform to promote and handle matters related to cultural diplomacy in Africa.

Develop cultural diplomacy policy objectives and instruments

Africa's cultural diplomacy approaches are aimed at attaining a wide range of objectives, in line with the overall foreign policy goals of the continent, especially when it comes to positioning itself in the Global South. These primary objectives include advancing trade and economic development, developing mutually beneficial relationships and understanding through the use of cultural features such as art and music, and advancing the interests of Africa's people abroad. Its cultural diplomacy objectives are

pursued through initiatives such as educational and cultural exchange programmes, government scholarships, art festivals that support African exhibitions and cultural performances, and seminars and conferences that highlight African culture abroad. Cultural diplomacy also entails initiatives such as establishing cultural libraries and language centres, investing in publication and distribution of journal articles on African cultural diplomacy, and the use of digital and mass media like international TV programmes to promote African culture both within and beyond continental borders.

The use of the strategies and activities above will help Africa achieve its foreign policy goals, as they would help highlight a peaceful and prosperous Africa, thus aiding in the overall goals of public diplomacy in the IR arena. The AU should thus work to encourage long-term and sustainable relations between Member States and other countries through an array of both bilateral and multilateral cultural initiatives. This would attract foreign investment, boost the continent's creative economy and enhance its influence and international standing.

Conclusion

Cultural diplomacy is key to boosting Africa's socio-economic and political development in the Global South. Many countries across the globe have successfully adopted cultural diplomacy as part of their foreign diplomacy, leading to effective socio-economic and political development. Observably, cultural diplomacy has helped shape the complexities of the binaries reflected in how other actors perceive the location of Africa vis-à-vis how Africa desires to, or actually does, locate itself in the power shifts and fixes within the Global South. Cultural diplomacy helps in building strong and long-lasting relationships between the different countries and continents, as it is based on common beliefs, values and traditions. This has helped enhance overall diplomatic relations between the various stakeholders, which has in turn stimulated socio-economic growth with a key focus on the arts and creative economies of the continent.

Most African countries view their cultural values, beliefs, arts, music and language as their national heritage, which invokes a valuable public

good – but most in turn fail to invoke culture as an integrated tool for enhancing diplomatic relations. It is thus evident that the African continent lacks a clear and coherent policy on matters of cultural diplomacy. This has led to overdependence on government-sponsored foreign relations like public diplomacy actions as a way of portraying a more positive public image of African countries beyond the continent. However, this approach is not enough to deal with the issues affecting the positioning of the African continent in the Global South. Africa's soft power footprint in the region faces issues such as authoritative or military rule and massive corruption. Therefore, there is a need to incorporate cultural diplomacy as part of public diplomacy in Africa.

African cultural diplomacy policy that is sponsored by African governments is an important tool for enhancing the overall diplomatic efforts of the continent. It should thus be designed to focus on growing the reach of African culture, as a way of encouraging the trading of cultural products within the Global South and beyond. The chapter has shown that an enhanced continental approach to cultural diplomacy holds huge potential to enable Africa to support and widen its foreign policy objectives. Ultimately, cultural diplomacy is more than a strategic tool for socio-economic and political development of the continent and application of soft power – it is increasingly a vital part of any country's diplomatic strategies and tactics.

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