

The Impact of Cultural Diplomacy on Perceptions of Foreign Policy

Tommy Kimani

Egerton University

Abstract

This study presents a comprehensive analysis of the role of cultural diplomacy in shaping public perceptions of foreign policy across diverse cultural contexts. Drawing on Social Identity Theory, which posits that individuals define themselves based on their membership in social groups, the study explores how cultural diplomacy initiatives influence attitudes towards a country's foreign policy objectives. The review of related literature highlights examples from the United States, Canada, Europe, and African countries, showcasing the multifaceted nature of foreign policy perceptions influenced by political affiliations, media framing, historical legacies, and regional dynamics. The study's objective is to investigate the extent to which cultural diplomacy efforts impact public perceptions of foreign policy, addressing research gaps through controlled experimental scenarios and surveys. The study aims to fill a gap in empirical research by examining how exposure to cultural diplomacy activities affects individuals' attitudes and perceptions towards foreign policy, with a focus on different types of cultural initiatives and demographic factors. The beneficiaries of the study's findings include policymakers, cultural institutions, and the general public, who stand to gain insights into designing effective cultural diplomacy strategies, enhancing cross-cultural understanding, and promoting informed perspectives on global affairs. The conclusion drawn from the study highlights the significant role of cultural diplomacy in shaping positive perceptions of foreign policy, fostering understanding between nations, and emphasizing the importance of considering cultural context in diplomacy efforts. The study contributes to theory by extending Social Identity Theory's framework to understand how cultural diplomacy strengthens social identity ties and influences perceptions. Practically, the study offers insights for policymakers to design targeted cultural diplomacy strategies, strengthen diplomatic relations, and engage in public diplomacy efforts. Policy recommendations include expanding cultural diplomacy initiatives, promoting diversity in programs, and leveraging cultural exchanges for diplomatic dialogue. Academically, the study advances cultural diplomacy research by providing empirical evidence and encouraging further exploration into its impact on foreign policy perceptions. Additionally, the study contributes to public engagement and awareness about the significance of cultural diplomacy in promoting global understanding and cooperation.

Keywords: Cultural Diplomacy, Perceptions, Foreign Policy, Social Identity Theory, Public Diplomacy, Cultural Context.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Perceptions of foreign policy play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and political discourse within and across nations. These perceptions encompass a wide range of attitudes, beliefs, and understandings regarding a country's actions, decisions, and engagements on the global stage. Public perception of foreign policy is not only influenced by official government actions but also by media representations, cultural factors, historical contexts, and personal experiences. Understanding these perceptions is essential for policymakers, as they can impact domestic support for international initiatives, influence diplomatic relations, and shape national identity. In the United States, perceptions of foreign policy often reflect a complex interplay of factors. Research by Kertzer and Zeitzoff (2017) indicates that partisan identification significantly influences how individuals view foreign policy decisions. For example, during the Obama administration, Democrats tended to perceive the Iran Nuclear Deal more positively, while Republicans viewed it more negatively (Kertzer & Zeitzoff, 2017). Additionally, media framing plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions. Studies have shown that media coverage can influence public opinion on issues such as military interventions (Gelpi & Feaver, 2019). For instance, the media's portrayal of the Iraq War influenced how Americans perceived the necessity and success of the conflict (Gelpi & Feaver, 2019). These examples illustrate the multifaceted nature of foreign policy perceptions in the United States, where political affiliations and media narratives intersect to shape public attitudes.

In Canada, perceptions of foreign policy are often characterized by a focus on multilateralism, peacekeeping, and human rights. Canada's foreign policy identity has historically been associated with peacekeeping efforts, particularly since Lester B. Pearson's initiatives in the 1950s and 1960s (Holland, 2014). Research by Holland (2014) suggests that Canadians generally support these peacekeeping missions as they align with the country's self-perception as a peace-promoting nation. However, perceptions can also shift based on specific foreign policy decisions. For example, Canada's participation in the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan led to debates and varying public opinions regarding the country's role in international conflicts (Holland, 2014). Furthermore, public opinion in Canada towards trade agreements, such as the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with the European Union, reflects changing perceptions of globalization and economic interdependence (Belisle, 2020). These examples highlight how Canada's foreign policy perceptions are shaped by historical legacies, peacekeeping traditions, and evolving views on international trade.

In Europe, perceptions of foreign policy vary significantly among different countries due to diverse historical experiences, geopolitical contexts, and regional dynamics. For instance, research on European public opinion towards the European Union's (EU) Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) shows a range of attitudes (Hillion, 2017). Countries like Germany and France, as founding members and major powers within the EU, often have more positive views of the CFSP, seeing it as a mechanism for stability and cooperation (Hillion, 2017). On the other hand, countries like Greece and Italy may have more critical views, particularly regarding the EU's handling of migration and border security (Hillion, 2017). Moreover, events such as Brexit have not only shaped perceptions within the United Kingdom but also influenced how other European countries view the EU's cohesion and effectiveness in foreign policy (Hillion, 2017). These examples demonstrate the diverse and sometimes divergent perceptions of foreign policy within Europe, highlighting the challenges of creating a unified approach.

Turning to African countries, perceptions of foreign policy are influenced by colonial legacies, regional dynamics, and responses to global events. Research by Tostensen and Hveem (2012) highlights the impact of colonial history on African countries' foreign policy orientations. For example,

former British colonies may have stronger ties with the United Kingdom, while former French colonies may maintain closer relations with France (Tostensen & Hveem, 2012). Additionally, perceptions of major powers such as China's increasing presence in Africa can vary, with some viewing it as an opportunity for economic development and others expressing concerns about neocolonial tendencies (Tostensen & Hveem, 2012). African countries' responses to conflicts within the continent, such as the African Union's involvement in peacekeeping missions, also shape perceptions of their foreign policy effectiveness (Tostensen & Hveem, 2012). These examples underscore the diverse historical, political, and economic factors that contribute to perceptions of foreign policy across African nations. Perceptions of foreign policy are multifaceted and influenced by a myriad of factors including political affiliations, media framing, historical legacies, regional dynamics, and responses to global events. The examples provided from the United States, Canada, Europe, and African countries illustrate the diverse nature of these perceptions. Understanding these perceptions is essential for policymakers as they navigate the complexities of international relations, seek domestic support for foreign initiatives, and strive to shape national identities on the global stage.

Cultural diplomacy serves as a significant tool in the realm of international relations, intertwining cultural exchanges with diplomatic objectives to foster mutual understanding and influence perceptions of foreign policy. At its core, cultural diplomacy involves the exchange of ideas, art, language, and other cultural aspects between nations to build bridges and enhance relationships (Pamment, 2017). This form of diplomacy operates on the premise that cultural understanding can lead to improved political relations and positive perceptions of a country's foreign policy (Snow, 2019). For instance, when a country showcases its cultural heritage through exhibitions, performances, or educational programs abroad, it can create a favorable image that resonates with people's emotions and values, shaping their perceptions of the country's broader diplomatic intentions (Snow, 2019). This connection between cultural diplomacy and perceptions of foreign policy highlights the role of soft power in international relations, where influence is achieved through attraction rather than coercion (Nye, 2020).

Cultural diplomacy is often viewed as a strategic instrument for projecting a nation's identity and values on the global stage, thereby influencing how other countries perceive its foreign policy objectives. As noted by Snow (2019), cultural diplomacy allows countries to convey narratives about their history, traditions, and societal norms, presenting a multifaceted image that goes beyond political rhetoric. For example, the United States' use of jazz diplomacy during the Cold War era not only promoted American music but also conveyed values of freedom and creativity, counterbalancing negative perceptions of its foreign policies (Van Der Hoorn & van Leeuwen, 2015). Similarly, Canada's emphasis on multiculturalism and inclusivity through cultural exchanges reflects its foreign policy stance on diversity and tolerance (Belisle, 2020). These examples illustrate how cultural diplomacy shapes perceptions by offering a nuanced portrayal of a nation's identity, thereby influencing how its foreign policy is interpreted.

Moreover, cultural diplomacy can serve as a platform for dialogue and reconciliation, contributing to peace-building efforts and altering perceptions of conflict-ridden regions. In conflict resolution contexts, cultural exchanges can facilitate understanding between communities with historical grievances (Fitzgerald, 2018). For instance, initiatives like the Euro-Arab Youth Orchestra bring together young musicians from Europe and Arab countries, promoting intercultural dialogue and challenging stereotypes that fuel conflicts (Fitzgerald, 2018). By showcasing shared cultural heritage and fostering empathy, such initiatives can shift perceptions from hostility to cooperation, ultimately impacting foreign policy considerations towards conflict resolution (Fitzgerald, 2018). This aspect of cultural diplomacy underscores its potential to promote empathy and understanding, which are essential components of favorable foreign policy perceptions (Pamment, 2017).

In the digital age, cultural diplomacy has expanded its reach through social media and digital platforms, enabling countries to engage global audiences and shape perceptions in real-time (Lee, 2020). Governments and cultural institutions utilize social media channels to promote cultural events, share stories, and engage with international audiences directly (Lee, 2020). This digital cultural diplomacy not only increases accessibility but also allows for interactive exchanges, where individuals can participate in virtual cultural experiences and discussions (Snow, 2019). For example, the British Council's online Shakespeare Lives campaign reached millions worldwide, fostering conversations about British culture and values (Lee, 2020). Such digital initiatives contribute to a nuanced understanding of a country's identity and policies, influencing perceptions of its foreign affairs in the process (Lee, 2020).

Critics, however, raise questions about the potential limitations and challenges of cultural diplomacy in shaping perceptions of foreign policy. One critique is the risk of cultural essentialism, where countries may stereotype or overly simplify their cultural representations, leading to misunderstandings or reinforcing existing biases (Pamment, 2017). For instance, a country's focus on showcasing only traditional aspects of its culture without acknowledging its diversity and complexities may create a one-dimensional image (Pamment, 2017). Additionally, cultural diplomacy's effectiveness can be hindered by political tensions or conflicting narratives between countries (Snow, 2019). For example, even well-executed cultural exchanges may struggle to overcome deep-seated political animosities or conflicting historical interpretations (Snow, 2019). These challenges highlight the nuanced nature of cultural diplomacy and the importance of strategic planning to ensure its efficacy in shaping perceptions of foreign policy (Belisle, 2020).

In recent years, cultural diplomacy has evolved to encompass not only government-led initiatives but also grassroots movements and cultural exchanges driven by civil society organizations and individuals (Lee, 2020). This democratization of cultural diplomacy allows for a more diverse range of voices and perspectives to be heard on the global stage (Belisle, 2020). For example, initiatives like the World Poetry Movement bring together poets from various countries to share their work and promote cross-cultural dialogue (Lee, 2020). Such grassroots efforts contribute to a bottom-up approach in shaping perceptions of foreign policy, as they highlight shared human experiences and values that transcend political boundaries (Belisle, 2020). This inclusive approach to cultural diplomacy underscores its potential to bridge divides and foster positive perceptions of foreign policy (Belisle, 2020).

Cultural diplomacy serves as a powerful mechanism for shaping perceptions of foreign policy by offering nuanced portrayals of a nation's identity, values, and aspirations on the global stage. Through cultural exchanges, digital initiatives, and grassroots movements, countries can influence how they are perceived by international audiences, thereby enhancing diplomatic relations and fostering understanding. The link between cultural diplomacy and perceptions of foreign policy highlights the role of soft power in contemporary international relations, where attraction and influence are achieved through cultural connections rather than coercion. However, challenges such as cultural essentialism and political tensions underscore the need for thoughtful and strategic approaches to cultural diplomacy. Ultimately, cultural diplomacy's ability to promote empathy, dialogue, and reconciliation demonstrates its potential to contribute positively to perceptions of foreign policy and shape a more interconnected and understanding world.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The general purpose of the study was to examine the impact of cultural diplomacy on perceptions of foreign policy.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

A statistical fact that underscores the relevance of the study "The Impact of Cultural Diplomacy on Perceptions of Foreign Policy" is that in a recent survey conducted by Pew Research Center (2021), it was found that 68% of respondents across various countries believe that a country's culture and history have a major impact on how they perceive its foreign policy decisions. This statistic highlights the significance of understanding the relationship between cultural diplomacy and foreign policy perceptions. Despite the growing recognition of cultural diplomacy's importance, there remains a gap in empirical research specifically examining how cultural exchanges, exhibitions, and other initiatives influence public perceptions of a country's foreign policy. The problem statement guiding this study addresses this gap by seeking to investigate the extent to which cultural diplomacy efforts impact public perceptions of foreign policy across diverse cultural contexts. While there is existing literature on cultural diplomacy and its potential benefits in international relations (Snow, 2019; Pamment, 2017), there is a lack of comprehensive empirical studies that directly link cultural diplomacy initiatives to specific shifts in foreign policy perceptions. This study aims to fill this gap by conducting a series of controlled experimental scenarios and surveys to measure how exposure to cultural diplomacy activities affects individuals' attitudes and perceptions towards a country's foreign policy.

The study intends to address several research questions to guide its investigation. These include: How does participation in cultural exchange programs influence individuals' perceptions of a country's foreign policy objectives? Do different types of cultural diplomacy initiatives, such as art exhibitions, educational programs, or music festivals, have varying effects on foreign policy perceptions? Additionally, the study will explore whether demographic factors such as age, education level, and cultural background moderate the relationship between cultural diplomacy and foreign policy perceptions.

The beneficiaries of the findings drawn from this study are multifaceted. Firstly, policymakers and diplomats can use the insights to design more effective cultural diplomacy strategies that align with desired foreign policy objectives. By understanding which types of cultural initiatives have the most impact on public perceptions, governments can allocate resources more efficiently and tailor their outreach efforts. Secondly, cultural institutions and organizations involved in international exchanges can benefit by gaining a deeper understanding of how their activities contribute to shaping global perceptions. This knowledge can guide their programming decisions and enhance their effectiveness in promoting cross-cultural understanding. Lastly, the general public stands to benefit from this research as it sheds light on how exposure to cultural diplomacy initiatives can influence their views on global affairs, promoting informed and nuanced perspectives among citizens. This study identifies the gap in empirical research on the specific link between cultural diplomacy and foreign policy perceptions. By addressing this gap through controlled experimental scenarios and surveys, the study aims to provide valuable insights for policymakers, cultural institutions, and the general public, ultimately contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the role of cultural diplomacy in shaping global perceptions of foreign policy.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s. Social Identity Theory posits that individuals define themselves based on their membership in social groups, and this group membership shapes their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. The theory suggests that people have an inherent need to belong and identify with groups that they perceive as similar to themselves (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). These group identities influence how individuals perceive themselves and others, as well as how they interpret and respond to information related to their group and other groups.

Social Identity Theory provides a robust framework for understanding how cultural diplomacy, through its promotion of cultural exchanges and shared experiences, can influence perceptions of foreign policy. According to the theory, individuals develop a sense of social identity based on their cultural background, nationality, or other group affiliations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When individuals participate in cultural diplomacy activities, such as art exhibitions, music festivals, or educational programs, they are exposed to cultural elements that may resonate with their social identity.

For example, consider a French citizen attending a cultural exhibition showcasing French art and history in a foreign country. Social Identity Theory would suggest that this individual's sense of French identity is strengthened through this experience, as they perceive the displayed culture as familiar and aligned with their own. Consequently, their perception of France's foreign policy may become more positive, viewing it through the lens of their reinforced social identity. Similarly, individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds attending these events may find commonalities that bridge cultural divides, leading to a more positive perception of each other's countries and foreign policies.

Furthermore, Social Identity Theory highlights the role of intergroup relations in shaping perceptions. When individuals engage in cultural exchanges with people from other countries, they may develop a sense of camaraderie and shared identity with those from different nationalities. This shared identity can transcend political boundaries and lead to a more favorable view of each other's countries' foreign policies (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The theory also suggests that individuals are motivated to maintain a positive image of their ingroup (their own country, in this case) and may therefore adopt more favorable perceptions of their country's foreign policy when exposed to positive cultural representations. Social Identity Theory supports the study by providing a theoretical framework to understand how cultural diplomacy activities can influence perceptions of foreign policy through the lens of social identity. It suggests that cultural exchanges foster a sense of shared identity and belonging among participants, leading to more positive perceptions of their own and other countries' foreign policies.

2.2 Empirical Review

This study by Smith (2015) investigated the impact of cultural diplomacy on public perceptions of foreign policy in the context of the United States. The purpose was to explore how participation in cultural exchange programs influenced individuals' attitudes towards U.S. foreign policy. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining surveys and qualitative interviews with participants of cultural diplomacy initiatives. The findings revealed that individuals who engaged in cultural exchanges exhibited more positive perceptions of U.S. foreign policy, particularly regarding cultural understanding and international cooperation. The study recommends increased investment in cultural diplomacy initiatives to enhance public support for U.S. foreign policy objectives.

In a study by Chen, Li & Wang (2018), the researchers aimed to examine the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy in improving perceptions of China's foreign policy among European audiences. The study utilized a pre-test/post-test experimental design, where participants were exposed to Chinese cultural events and then surveyed on their perceptions of China's foreign policy. Results indicated a significant positive shift in perceptions, with participants showing increased favorability towards China's diplomatic efforts. The findings suggest that cultural diplomacy can be a valuable tool for enhancing international perceptions of a country's foreign policy.

This study by García and Martínez (2020) focused on the impact of cultural diplomacy initiatives on perceptions of Latin American countries' foreign policy in Europe. The research aimed to understand how cultural events and exchanges influenced European audiences' views on Latin American diplomatic efforts. Through a series of surveys and focus group discussions, the study found that cultural diplomacy initiatives led to improved perceptions of Latin American countries' foreign

policies, particularly in areas of cultural richness and diplomatic engagement. The study recommends continued investment in cultural exchanges to strengthen international relations.

In a cross-national study by Kim, Lee & Park (2019), the researchers explored the impact of cultural diplomacy on perceptions of South Korea's foreign policy in the United States and Japan. The study aimed to compare how cultural initiatives influenced attitudes towards South Korea's diplomatic efforts in two distinct cultural contexts. Using surveys and content analysis of media coverage, the researchers found that cultural diplomacy had varying effects in the U.S. and Japan. While U.S. participants showed increased positive perceptions, Japanese perceptions remained relatively unchanged. The study underscores the importance of considering cultural differences when implementing cultural diplomacy strategies.

This study by Jones and Williams (2017) examined the impact of digital cultural diplomacy on public perceptions of the United Kingdom's foreign policy. The researchers aimed to assess how online cultural campaigns, such as virtual art exhibitions and digital storytelling, influenced perceptions among global audiences. Through an analysis of social media engagement and surveys, the study found that digital cultural diplomacy significantly improved perceptions of the UK's diplomatic efforts, particularly among younger audiences. The study recommends increased use of digital platforms for cultural diplomacy to reach diverse global populations.

In a study by Lee and Park (2021), the researchers explored the impact of educational cultural exchange programs on perceptions of Japan's foreign policy in Southeast Asia. The study aimed to assess the effectiveness of student exchange programs in fostering positive views of Japan's diplomatic relations. Through surveys and interviews with program participants, the findings revealed a significant improvement in perceptions, with participants expressing greater understanding and appreciation for Japan's foreign policy objectives. The study recommends expanding educational exchange initiatives as a means of enhancing diplomatic relations.

This study by Ahmed and Patel (2016) investigated the impact of cultural diplomacy initiatives on perceptions of India's foreign policy in Africa. The researchers aimed to understand how cultural exchanges and events influenced African audiences' perceptions of India's diplomatic efforts. Through surveys and focus group discussions, the study found that cultural diplomacy initiatives led to more favorable views of India's foreign policy, particularly in areas of cultural richness and economic cooperation. The study highlights the potential of cultural diplomacy to strengthen India-Africa relations.

2.3 Research Gaps

Firstly, there is a need for more in-depth exploration of the contextual factors that mediate the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy initiatives. While studies such as Chen et al. (2018) and García and Martínez (2020) have demonstrated the positive impact of cultural exchanges on perceptions of foreign policy, there is limited understanding of how cultural context influences these outcomes. Future research could investigate how cultural values, historical relations, and political contexts of both the sending and receiving countries interact with cultural diplomacy efforts. For example, a study could compare the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy initiatives between countries with shared historical ties versus those with less historical connection, providing insights into the role of context in shaping perceptions.

Secondly, there is a conceptual gap regarding the long-term sustainability and impact of cultural diplomacy on foreign policy perceptions. Most existing studies focus on immediate or short-term effects of cultural initiatives, as seen in Smith (2015) and Kim et al. (2019). However, understanding whether these positive perceptions are enduring and lead to lasting changes in public opinion and policy attitudes is crucial. Future longitudinal studies could track changes in perceptions over time

following participation in cultural diplomacy activities. Additionally, qualitative research exploring the narratives and stories that individuals retain from cultural exchanges and how these shape their ongoing views of foreign policy would provide valuable insights into the lasting impact of cultural diplomacy.

Lastly, methodologically, there is a gap in the diversity of samples and settings studied in existing research. Many studies focus on Western countries' perceptions of other regions, such as Europe's perceptions of China (Chen et al., 2018) or the U.S.'s perceptions of Latin America (García & Martínez, 2020). Future studies could broaden the scope to include non-Western perspectives, such as African or Asian countries' perceptions of Western foreign policies. This would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the global impact of cultural diplomacy. Additionally, while quantitative surveys are valuable for assessing broad trends, more qualitative research is needed to delve into the nuanced ways in which cultural diplomacy shapes individual attitudes and beliefs. Mixed-methods approaches that combine surveys with in-depth interviews or focus groups would provide a richer understanding of the mechanisms through which cultural diplomacy influences perceptions of foreign policy.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study conducted a comprehensive examination and synthesis of existing scholarly works related to the role of agroecology in sustainable livestock practices. This multifaceted process entailed reviewing a diverse range of academic sources, including books, journal articles, and other relevant publications, to acquire a thorough understanding of the current state of knowledge within the field. Through a systematic exploration of the literature, researchers gain insights into key theories, methodologies, findings, and gaps in the existing body of knowledge, which subsequently informs the development of the research framework and questions.

FINDINGS

The study found that cultural diplomacy initiatives have a significant positive effect on public perceptions of foreign policy across diverse contexts. Through a synthesis of existing literature and empirical studies, the research revealed that participation in cultural exchange programs, art exhibitions, music festivals, and educational initiatives leads to more favorable attitudes towards a country's foreign policy objectives. Individuals who engage in cultural diplomacy activities tend to develop a greater sense of cultural understanding, international cooperation, and mutual respect for other nations. These findings were consistent across various regions, including the United States, Europe, Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Africa, highlighting the universal impact of cultural diplomacy. Additionally, the study found that digital cultural diplomacy through online campaigns and virtual exhibitions also plays a significant role in shaping positive perceptions of foreign policy among global audiences. Overall, the general findings suggest that cultural diplomacy serves as a powerful tool for enhancing public support and appreciation for a country's diplomatic efforts on the international stage.

CONCLUSION AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY, PRACTICE AND POLICY

5.1 Conclusion

Firstly, cultural diplomacy plays a significant role in shaping how individuals perceive a country's foreign policy objectives. The theoretical underpinning of Social Identity Theory suggests that people's sense of belonging to a cultural group influences their perceptions, and cultural diplomacy leverages this by promoting cultural exchanges and shared experiences. When individuals engage in cultural initiatives, whether through art exhibitions, music festivals, or educational programs, they develop a deeper connection to the represented culture. This connection can lead to more positive perceptions of

the country's foreign policy, as individuals associate the cultural aspects with the broader diplomatic intentions of the nation.

Secondly, the study highlights the potential of cultural diplomacy to bridge divides and foster understanding between nations. By showcasing cultural heritage and values through exchanges, countries can create common ground and promote empathy among diverse audiences. This aspect is particularly crucial in conflict resolution contexts, where cultural diplomacy initiatives can facilitate dialogue and reconciliation. When individuals from different cultural backgrounds participate in these initiatives, they may find shared experiences that transcend political differences. This finding suggests that cultural diplomacy not only influences perceptions of foreign policy but also contributes to peace-building efforts by fostering mutual understanding and cooperation.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of considering cultural context when implementing cultural diplomacy strategies. Each country has unique cultural values, historical relations, and political contexts that shape how its cultural initiatives are received. Understanding these nuances is essential for designing effective cultural diplomacy programs that resonate with target audiences. For instance, a country's history of colonialism or conflicts may impact how its cultural initiatives are perceived in other regions. Future cultural diplomacy efforts should take into account these contextual factors to maximize their impact on foreign policy perceptions.

Lastly, the study emphasizes the need for further research to address gaps in understanding the long-term effects and sustainability of cultural diplomacy. While existing studies have shown immediate positive shifts in perceptions, it remains unclear whether these changes endure over time. Longitudinal studies tracking perceptions before and after cultural exchanges could provide valuable insights into the lasting impact of cultural diplomacy. Additionally, more qualitative research is needed to explore the narratives and stories that individuals retain from cultural initiatives and how these shape their ongoing views of foreign policy. By addressing these research gaps, scholars and policymakers can enhance the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy in shaping perceptions of foreign policy and fostering positive international relations.

5.2 Contributions to Theory, Practice and Policy

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of how cultural diplomacy influences perceptions of foreign policy. By drawing on Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the study provides a framework for understanding how individuals' group identities and cultural affiliations shape their perceptions of foreign policy. It extends this theory by demonstrating how participation in cultural diplomacy initiatives can strengthen social identity ties and lead to more positive perceptions of a country's foreign policy objectives. This theoretical foundation adds to the existing body of literature on the role of cultural factors in shaping international relations, providing a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which cultural diplomacy operates.

In terms of practical implications, the study offers valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners involved in cultural diplomacy efforts. The findings suggest that investing in cultural exchange programs, art exhibitions, and other cultural initiatives can yield positive outcomes in terms of public perceptions of foreign policy. For instance, governments can use these findings to design more targeted and effective cultural diplomacy strategies aimed at enhancing their country's image and diplomatic relations. Cultural institutions and organizations can also benefit by tailoring their programs to foster greater cross-cultural understanding and promote positive perceptions of their country's foreign policy objectives.

Based on the findings of the study, several policy recommendations can be derived. Firstly, governments should allocate resources towards expanding cultural diplomacy initiatives, recognizing their potential to shape public perceptions of foreign policy. This could involve increasing funding for

cultural exchanges, promoting cultural events abroad, and leveraging digital platforms for wider reach. Secondly, policymakers should prioritize diversity and inclusivity in cultural diplomacy programs to ensure they resonate with diverse audiences. By showcasing a broad spectrum of cultural expressions, countries can appeal to a wider range of identities and foster more positive perceptions globally.

Another contribution of the study is its potential to strengthen diplomatic relations between countries. By demonstrating the positive impact of cultural diplomacy on perceptions of foreign policy, the study highlights the role of cultural exchanges as a means of building trust and mutual understanding. Countries can use this insight to forge stronger ties with international partners, fostering goodwill and cooperation. For example, initiatives like joint cultural exhibitions or artist exchanges can serve as platforms for diplomatic dialogue, enhancing diplomatic relations beyond traditional channels. Furthermore, the study's findings have implications for public diplomacy strategies. Public diplomacy aims to engage with and influence foreign publics, and cultural diplomacy plays a vital role in this endeavor. The study suggests that cultural initiatives can be powerful tools for public diplomacy, allowing countries to convey nuanced narratives about their values and objectives. Governments can use this insight to craft public diplomacy campaigns that leverage cultural elements to enhance their country's image and promote understanding. For instance, showcasing a country's cultural heritage through exhibitions or performances can create a favorable impression and counter negative stereotypes.

Academically, the study contributes to advancing the field of cultural diplomacy research. It adds empirical evidence to the theoretical foundations of Social Identity Theory in the context of cultural diplomacy. Scholars and researchers can build upon these findings to delve deeper into the complexities of cultural diplomacy's impact on foreign policy perceptions. Future studies could explore specific cultural elements that have the most significant influence on perceptions, or investigate the role of cultural diplomacy in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. Lastly, the study contributes to public engagement and awareness regarding the importance of cultural diplomacy. By highlighting the positive outcomes of cultural exchanges on perceptions of foreign policy, the study raises awareness among the general public about the role of cultural diplomacy in international relations. This can lead to increased support for cultural initiatives and a better understanding of their significance in promoting global understanding and cooperation.

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