

The most challenging essay of the collection is Wayne Parsons' (pp. 12-38) since it sets the collection's theoretical tone. Parsons describes the current world as one in which

there is no such thing as objective truth and in which the role of the expert is fiercely contested, grand narratives are dismissed and in which we just bring and show each other our truth, rather than laying claims to anything called 'the truth' or 'the facts' (p. 33).

Parsons seeks a new link between knowledge arrived at by the social sciences and the natural sciences, and he maintains his trust in technology to give humanity the ability to gather knowledge about the world which is too complex to be intentionally directed, steered, planned or controlled.

The notion that holism in public policy is dangerously lacking in perspective permeates through the whole set of essays. This common theme, however, seems to neglect the distinction which Karl Popper made when he observed two kinds of holism in his *Poverty of Historicism*. Popper maintained (when citing Friedrich Hayek) that centralized power could not easily centralize the knowledge of individuals to make wise decisions. The incorrect belief that this can be done is only one kind of holism, and this kind of holism is referred to and rightfully criticized by Parsons, Fenwick and McMillan in the collection. Popper further argued that there was another kind of holism, one which sought to describe relations characteristic to a system made from particular agents; this view allows making prediction and managing some of the system's characteristics. Overtly, neither Parsons nor the rest of the authors seem to make such a distinction. But perhaps the common ambition of these essays is different: charting new waters and introducing challenging observations.

Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried (eds.), *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010)

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Cultural diplomacy is usually limited spatially to the European and American areas and is mostly investigated for the period of the Cold War. What the two editors intend to do is extend both the geographical and temporal limits to African and Asian continents as well as back to the middle of the 19th century, as is the Japanese case. What Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried attempt in this work is to offer a comprehensive view of the term "cultural diplomacy" not only by looking at its multiple aspects, but also by offering throughout time and space various

examples of such a practice. As "cultural diplomacy" is not only a term, but also a valuable practice employed by both state and non-state actors.

The book is structured in four parts, comprising altogether 8 chapters and benefiting from a generous introduction by the two editors on this topic. It is in fact a collection of various articles and essays regarding what cultural diplomacy means in different areas and political regimes. For instance, two articles focus on Soviet cultural policy both at home and abroad, another one on Hungarian cultural diplomacy in the 1960's, a fourth one on the attempts performed by the German and Polish societies during the Cold War to find a channel of communication, involving religion and then culture, another two center on Syria, Lebanon and the Middle East and French and American cultural approaches there in the 1950's and 1960's and finally two essays draw on the Japanese case during the Meiji era and the first half of the 20th century.

The introduction specifies from the very beginning the intentions of the authors, the purpose of the book and its desired public. "Our goal is to find a usable definition for cultural diplomacy and, also, establish teleology for the term beyond the parameters of the Cold War. As such, this book is designed for academics, students, public officials and laymen interested in the field of cultural diplomacy" (p. 3). However, what remains of this goal in the final product is hardly the same.

Indeed, the editors set their minds to develop a definition of "cultural diplomacy", by looking into the examples provided by heterogeneous essays on the matter; up to a certain point they achieved laudable results. The two chapters of the introduction provide the reader with all the technical tools necessary to evaluate what cultural diplomacy is, how it can be differentiated from propaganda, its life-long adversary (as demonstrated in the essays concerning Soviet cultural policy and the French variant of cultural spreading in Syria and Lebanon). What is more, the editors clearly state what the characteristics of cultural diplomacy are and why it is called that. However, the editors refrain from drawing any conclusions from all the material they lay ahead of the reader. All the case studies are different and therefore, the perspectives are different also. Consequently, one would expect conclusion summing up all that has been presented throughout the book. Sadly, this does not happen and the entire skeleton put up together in the introduction is blown to dust in the end by the absence of such a conclusion. This would be a major drawback of the book: despite its highly academic documentation it appears unfinished to the naked eye.

A positive aspect of the endeavor of the two editors is the idea of gathering up studies concerning different spaces and times in which cultural diplomacy or any kind of cultural policy similar to it has been performed. Each of these studies is perfectly structured and stress out its purpose precisely, without useless details.

Another asset of this work, and this time the praises go to the editors, is that fact that nothing is repetitive, although the American, German and Japanese cases are mentioned several times. Even though the space is the same, new aspects are constantly brought into discussion without forcing the reader ponder for a minute whether he read it before or not. Moreover, each event, person or place benefits from its specific frame, which makes the work appreciable even to laymen. Endnotes are rich in detail and references are more than sufficient for those who seek further reading.

As far as drawbacks are concerned, only two are significant: the lack of an overall conclusion able to summarize the findings of the research and the fact that the intention specifically mentioned by the authors to go beyond the meanings of cultural diplomacy during the Cold War is not accomplished. All the studies refer either to the Cold War period or to pre-Cold War times (as is the case with Japanese cultural policy/diplomacy). Taking into account the conflicting nature of today's international community an overview of what cultural diplomacy means and how it manifests itself in the 21st century is highly recommended.

The articles of the book are all very well written; the lines of reasoning are fluid and are easily perceived. The tone is a neutral one: as the aim is to investigate and corroborate the information, the authors contributing to this volume refrained from becoming judgmental towards any of the practices and policies described. They all show an incredible knowledge on the topic discussed and, as a result, their handling of the topic is done in a most professional manner: the vocabulary is simple and well-chosen and the line of ideas presented at the beginning of each chapter is followed thoroughly.

Overall, this volume indulges the reader with a delightful analysis of the term of "cultural diplomacy" which has nowadays become quite a phenomenon. Apart from the drawbacks that will be easily overcome in future editions of the book, this work represents a considerable effort of all the academics involved to clarify this concept and present the way it has been used during the past centuries. For both academics and laymen, this is useful reading concerning the topic and highly recommended for all those looking forward not only to find basic information, but also, interpretation, analysis and references.