



Uzbekistan and UNESCO: Heritage Diplomacy in Practice

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Abstract

The diplomacy of Uzbekistan within UNESCO consists of heritage preservation as one of the directions and it is evident that it takes the main part of multilateral cooperation. With this article, we want to discuss the action of heritage diplomacy in the context of the UNESCO and Uzbekistan relationship. The main purpose is to investigate the contemporary practice of Uzbek heritage preservation and get an analytical summary of conducting heritage diplomacy in the young Central Asian State. Although diplomacy itself can be interpreted as a modern and comparatively young scientific sphere – Heritage diplomacy is the newest direction for Uzbekistan’s international relations and diplomacy theory and practice. Using a qualitative method of primary and secondary data, the article compares two different and broad periods of Uzbekistan in the field of UNESCO heritage diplomacy and will contribute to the academic relevance of this topic.

Keywords: *Uzbekistan; UNESCO; Diplomacy; Multilateral Diplomacy; Heritage Diplomacy; Heritage Preservation*

Introduction

Modern international relations show that the multilateral diplomatic relations of countries in various fields are naturally expanding. The fact that cultural and historical heritage has become a unique component of the diplomatic relations of states and organizations is a new trend, especially in the field of international cooperation of young states that have begun independent activities (Sayfullayev 2016). The Republic of Uzbekistan is a unique historical country in terms of the size and value of its cultural and spiritual heritage. Therefore, safeguarding them is a big duty not only to the next generation but also to mankind. Studying the world experience of preserving cultural heritage within the framework of international organizations and finding effective solutions to the problems of nature, climate change, increasing tourist flows and other problems, cooperation between Uzbekistan and UNESCO in the field of preserving cultural heritage occupies a key place in multilateral diplomatic relations within the organization.

UNESCO is the world's largest intergovernmental forum on humanitarian cooperation and offers an alternative way of maintaining bonds among nations (Belekova, 31 March 2021). Protection of the national heritage is one of the main means to achieve this goal (Sabine von Schorlemer, 2020). Although extensive academic research has explored cooperation in this field with different countries (Imber, 1989; Petitjean 2008; Varmer & Isar 2009; Gray & Alberg, 2010; Kassymzhanova & Dutta 2016; Belyekova, 2021; Pilkevych, 2022) much less research has investigated the field of Uzbekistan – UNESCO multilateral cooperation (Rakhimov 2000; Egamberdieva & Siddikov, 2019; Sayfullayev, 2019&2021; Alisherkhojaeva, 2022). By studying and analyzing many problematic and unresolved issues observed in these relations in certain periods, it is possible to show the achievements and transformation of heritage diplomacy more clearly in contemporary relations between Uzbekistan and UNESCO.

Past research on UNESCO multilateral cooperation was conducted with different regions and states rather than with Uzbekistan. Moreover, Uzbekistan heritage diplomacy within the organization was not investigated narrowly. As mentioned above the heritage direction of diplomacy is the newest diplomacy trend in Uzbekistan and thus it is essential to study it deeply. In this regard, exploring is important for understanding the value of heritage diplomacy in the foreign policy of the country and in the involvement of further academic research.

Literature Review

To get an in-depth analysis of conducting heritage diplomacy there is literature containing a big number of approaches to evaluate the protection practice of cultural heritage within UNESCO. First, it is vital to know as Hassan (2011) mentioned, safeguarding heritage will contribute to studies of the cultural, economic, and social history of nations and give an opportunity to learn essential and detailed readings of events neglected by history books and other forms of written documentation. As a result, it will lead to strengthening links between the young generation and their ancestors. Naturally, the very truth is our heritage belongs to us and we belong to our heritage at the same time.

First, heritage policy is surely a part of the cultural policy of the states. Tangible or intangible heritage is a historical result or maybe even a phenomenon of culture and territory where it had developed for years. So, the heritage of a nation is preserved – the history and uniqueness of the nation are preserved. And from this point of view, it is essential to understand and implicate the right heritage policy. For instance, Laura Adams (2013) observed more about the intangible cultural heritage of two Central Asian States. Emphasizing that UNESCO's global aim is to bind nations first. The task of heritage policy is to be judged as delicately uniting nations, but not at all in discrimination or simply in glorifying their uniqueness. So, she identified that it would be better to understand that heritage is – a common value of the world (particularly, intangible cultural heritage) and therefore ethnic diversity and unity can not be unrespected by the heritage policy of the country. But the very truth is (as she also observed) – the Uzbek side had invited the other side to give nominations commonly. On the other hand, it is highly enlightened by a range of academic research that governmental attention to heritage is always proper way from economic, social, and even from environmental points. Thus, the Heritage Game book is a forceful exploration of the various arguments that can be made for public investment in cultural heritage from an economist's point of view. The focus was the value of economic analysis for the formulation and implementation of heritage policy. Moreover, the heritage profession is often too emphasized as the basis for rationalizing the need for public investment and argued that this carries no favor amongst policymakers and politicians and only makes the profession look elitist according to the book (Peacock & Rizzo, 2008). To find out exactly to what extent policymakers contributed pointing to the value of heritage for sustainable development Auwera & Schramme (2014) note that based on research cultural heritage can also oppose development. Since heritage is not valued for its intrinsic values explored - heritage discourse altered from a conservation oriented-approach to a value-oriented approach. For

instance, BORIN & DONATO (2020) investigated the European Year of Cultural Heritage (EYCH) in 2018 as a rethinking and redevelopment of the value of cultural heritage policy. Using EYCH as a model for the analysis of cultural heritage management, this article highlights the importance of finding ways to do to create stronger links between policy, governance, and management.

Results and Discussion

Studying the world experience of cultural heritage preservation within the framework of international organizations, finding effective solutions to nature, climate change, and the increase in the flow of tourism and several other problems, the cooperation between Uzbekistan and UNESCO on the preservation of cultural heritage occupies a key place among multilateral diplomatic relations within the organization. By studying and analyzing many problematic and unsolved issues observed in these relations in certain periods, it is possible to show the achievements and transformation of diplomatic relations more clearly regarding the preservation of cultural heritage in today's relations between Uzbekistan and UNESCO. First, cultural heritage is a witness to the history of states, a unique narrator of history. Keeping it means learning it. The study of cultural heritage opens the way to study the centuries-old history, culture, religion, language, and values, as well as the formation and development of statecraft and diplomacy of any country. In a Doctor of Philosophy thesis completed at the University of Birmingham, the following diagram is presented:

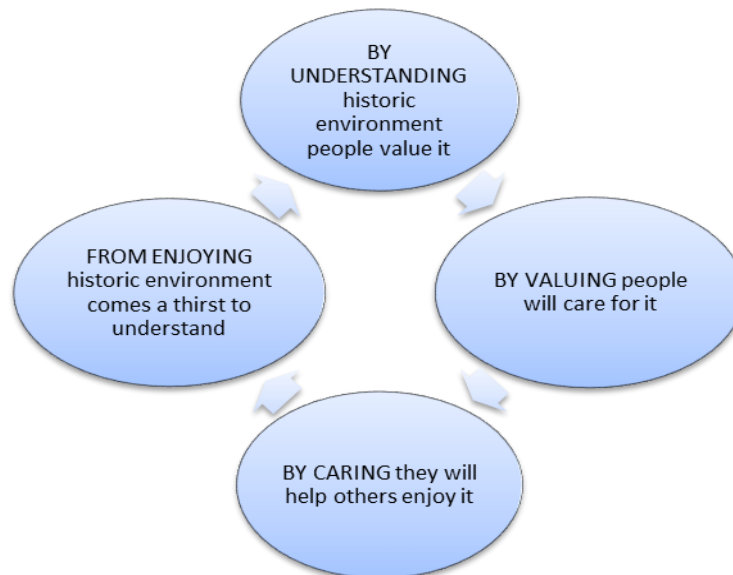


Diagram 1. In James Gared Davies' Ph.D thesis(2019), a diagram called The Circle of Values

According to this diagram, the preservation of the historical heritage of any nation is primarily carried out at the local level, and the protection of the historical-cultural heritage becomes a continuous circle above. Probably, the primary role is to increase interest in increasing the existing knowledge of the people on historical heritage and culture. This can also be achieved by involving young people in this process. That's when this chart begins to show its power. That is, it is possible to strengthen people's interest in cultural and historical heritage and its study only by making the right actions. As a result, heritage conservation works are improved both in terms of quality and time.

The importance of preserving the world's historical and cultural heritage became evident during and after World War I. Accordingly, the world's first international conference dedicated to the protection of cultural monuments was held in Athens in 1931 by the "International Commission on Intellectual Cooperation" established in 1922 under the UN. As stated by Russian scientist Balmatova(2022), during

the war, the international community developed specific requirements for the protection and preservation of cultural property only by creating the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural organization. In addition to this opinion, it can be said that the requirements for preserving the tangible and intangible heritage of the peoples of the world have been clarified precisely with the structure of UNESCO. That is, immaterial-spiritual forms of inheritance are also being considered, and it is assumed that the importance of this form is the same as material inheritance, but no less. As much as it is important to protect tangible and intangible cultural heritage, it is a tragedy of the same scale to not pay enough attention to its preservation, or to approach it coldly (criminally such as intentional damage to historical heritage is also observed). According to the words of former Director-General Irina Bokova, "culture is an important category that represents the statehood of states, and the "cultural cleansing" observed in our time is a movement aimed at destroying the society by erasing its history and memory." From this point of view, UNESCO is an organization of great importance in establishing diplomatic relations in the field of protection and promotion of cultural heritage, which is one of the most pressing issues today. Currently, 193 countries are members of the Organization, and 11 more countries have observer status. The motto of UNESCO is - "Protection of peace must be established in the minds of people", therefore cooperation in all areas that reflect the values of peoples and states is the most important in this regard.

Relations between UNESCO and Uzbekistan were established on October 26, 1993. According to the memorandum signed in 1995 (primarily in the field of culture, by attracting extra-budgetary resources), UNESCO should have helped Uzbekistan in:

- reconstruction and preservation of architectural monuments located in Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and other places.
- to improve the legislation related to the field of culture.
- in accordance with the request of the Uzbek government, train museum and library workers, cultural lawyers, managers, authors, and interdisciplinary legal experts by sending them to internships, organizing seminars, and providing information.
- publicly introduce the cultural and historical heritage of the people living in the territory of Uzbekistan by holding exhibitions in the Headquarters apartment buildings.
- in the development of tourism and cultural tourism in Uzbekistan together with the World Tourism Organization (WTO).

Thus, 2 years after the signing of the Memorandum, in 1997, one of the first events under the auspices of UNESCO, the 2500th anniversary of the famous cities with historical architecture - the city of Bukhara, as well as the 2500th anniversary of the city of Khiva - were held in very these cities and at the headquarters of UNESCO in Paris. According to the reports of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 50 artists from Uzbekistan participated in the anniversary events of Khiva and Bukhara held in Paris. These events showed that the implementation of the cultural and heritage diplomacy of Uzbekistan is taking shape in practice. Also, the celebration of the anniversaries of the cities of Bukhara and Khiva at the international level has caused several architectural complexes and monuments located in these areas to be overhauled and beautification of their surroundings.

In the following years, under the auspices of UNESCO, the celebration of the anniversaries of the ancient cities of Uzbekistan and because of the renovation work caused their appearance to be completely changed and revived. In 2002, the 2500th anniversary of Termez city and the 2700th anniversary of the city of Shakhrisabz were celebrated internationally. Among them are the 2700th anniversary of the city of Kharshi city in 2005 and the 1000th anniversary of the Khorezm Maamun Academy, the 2750th anniversary of the city of Samarkand and the 2000th anniversary of the city of Margilan in 2007, and the 2200th anniversary of the city of Tashkent in 2009. The specific importance of these years is that they show the stages of formation of this aspect of cooperation with UNESCO, which includes the important

task of protecting and promoting the cultural heritage of Uzbekistan, and the process of the simultaneous implementation of the goals set by the parties.

Among the above-mentioned goals set by the parties, it is necessary to mention the creation of a national legal system for the protection of cultural heritage, and at the same time, the implementation of accession to international legal norms. The Republic of Uzbekistan has ratified a total of 7 international documents of UNESCO. As a result of the analysis of the given data, it is shown that the first two decades of the first period of the diplomatic sphere of Uzbekistan - the UNESCO vector - developed very actively. During this period, active cooperation was carried out in the field of preservation of cultural heritage, science, and education. If this period is mainly associated with the first President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov's work, it can be observed that a unique relationship was formed with UNESCO. For example, in 1998, President I. Karimov was awarded the "Avicenna" gold medal by UNESCO. The fact that this award was given during the formation of relations shows that it is the result of active efforts of both parties in establishing relations between UNESCO and Uzbekistan. Other recognitions and medals of UNESCO are expressed recognition of our country's invaluable contribution to world culture, historical importance, and ongoing reforms. Among the awards, UNESCO's "2750th anniversary of Samarkand" gold and silver medals, UNESCO's "Borobudur" gold medal, UNESCO "Silk Road" silver medal, UNESCO's "Aristotle" medal, UNESCO's Fes (Morocco) gold and silver medals which are recognized for the contribution of Uzbekistan to the culture, history, and science of Uzbekistan, and finally, the medal dedicated to the anniversaries and commemorative dates of the cities of Istanbul (Turkey) is one of them.

The beginning of the "New era" of Uzbek diplomacy and the real flourishing of multilateral cultural and heritage diplomacy within UNESCO can be called the "development period" in close relations. It should be noted that cooperation between Uzbekistan and UNESCO in the field of heritage protection, as indicated above, in another specific area, preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage, was also actively carried out. The accession of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (adopted on October 17, 2003) has opened wide opportunities for the global promotion of all our intangible cultural heritage, which is the spiritual wealth formed over the centuries. Today, 180 countries have joined the convention, and Uzbekistan became a party to it in December 2007. Historically, Uzbekistan has a great culture that includes tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Further development of cooperation between Uzbekistan and UNESCO in this field, its study, and promotion are of urgent importance today. There are many cultural masterpieces that should be included in the UNESCO World Heritage and Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of Uzbekistan, and they include the tasks indicated at the beginning of the article.

Another aspect of Uzbekistan's cooperation with the United Nations Organization for Science, Education and Culture in the field of cultural heritage preservation is the inclusion of the following unique written monuments in the international list of UNESCO's Memory of the World program:

- Holy Koran Muskhaf of Othman kept in Uzbekistan.
- Manuscripts collection of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan.
- "Chancellery of the Khanate of Khiva" stored in the Central State Archives of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Conclusion

Uzbekistan is the richest country of tangible and intangible heritage of mankind, and to introduce and learn about it means to learn and introduce the most important invention and culture of history. In fact, this research and analysis shows that the most important characteristic of cultural heritage is exactly

that it is used to achieve the benefits of the present day with a deep study of historical significance. In conclusion, *first*, it can be emphasized that cultural heritage serves not only as a speaker of history, culture, religion, science, and many other areas but also as the most important tool of diplomacy. The same important tasks on a global scale, UNESCO has been protecting the cultural, historical, and natural heritage of the countries of the world for almost 80 years. It is this organization that applied "heritage diplomacy" in science to life and proved the effectiveness of this concept. *Secondly*, cultural heritage is such an important category that it belongs to the people, and at the same time, the people belong to the cultural and historical heritage, because these monuments preserved through the centuries incorporate the searches of the ancestors and the great science left. If it is the duty of humanity to protect it, it is also the right of all humanity to know, learn and enjoy it. The trends of Uzbekistan launched various cooperation with UNESCO over the past five years, and as a result, UNESCO initiatives to defend the great interest and cultural heritage in Uzbekistan. At the same time, the development of cooperation with the start of a new period in Uzbekistan, and the support of the initiatives of UNESCO in introducing and promoting the culture of Uzbekistan will provide the probability of future relationships with this organization only expanding, even closer. *Thirdly*, because a big amount of work carried out since the first years of cooperation with UNESCO, it is vital to speed up the work of restoration and beautification of the objects around, as well as the recognition of historical cities. It has been observed that these lands, which have needed attention for years, seem to have been given a new lease of life. As well as Uzbekistan's recognition of the practical cooperation with UNESCO so far.

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