

CULTURAL LINKAGES AS A DETERMINING FACTOR IN THE FOREIGN  
POLICIES OF FRANCE AND UZBEKISTAN

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**Abstract:** The article examines the role of cultural ties in shaping and implementing the foreign policy of France and Uzbekistan. It addresses the historical, diplomatic, and educational aspects of cultural interaction between the two countries, spanning from the era of Amir Timur and Charles VI to contemporary relations between the Presidents of Uzbekistan and France. Particular attention is given to mechanisms for promoting national culture and language, such as international cultural organizations, Francophone networks, educational programs, and media projects. The author analyzes how cultural diplomacy contributes to strengthening political, economic, and social cooperation, shaping a positive international image, and enhancing the strategic significance of countries on the global stage. The study demonstrates that cultural factors are an integral component of foreign policy and play a key role in sustaining long-term bilateral relations.

**Keywords:** France, Uzbekistan, foreign policy, cultural diplomacy, Francophonie, international cooperation, Alliance Française, cultural ties, educational programs, media diplomacy.

**Introduction.**

In the twenty-first century, it has become increasingly evident that the development of humanity largely depends on the strengthening of mutual ties among states, peoples, and their cultures. This process has encompassed all spheres of social life across different countries of the world. At present, it is difficult to identify any ethnic group that does not interact, in one way or another, with the cultural values of a particular people, region, or humanity as a whole.

This process has emerged as a result of the intensive expansion of cultural influence and direct contacts among state institutions and social groups, public associations, and individual actors characteristic of diverse states and cultures. The development of relations among cultures and peoples, in turn, has brought issues of cultural self-awareness and cultural differences to the forefront.

In the contemporary world, the cultural diversity of humanity continues to expand, while peoples acquire new means for preserving the integrity and development of their cultural identities. The aspiration to maintain cultural distinctiveness represents a universal characteristic of humanity and reflects a broader pattern whereby the development of mutual relations requires an awareness of cultural specificities that ensure the preservation of diversity.

**Research Methodology.** This study is based on a comprehensive approach that integrates historical-diplomatic, comparative political, and interdisciplinary analyses. The primary objective of the research is to identify the role of cultural ties in the formulation and implementation of the foreign policies of France and Uzbekistan, as well as to assess their impact on political, economic, and social cooperation between the two states.

Taken together, these methods make it possible to identify both the historical roots and contemporary mechanisms of cultural diplomacy, to assess its influence on the political, economic, and social dimensions of international cooperation, and to formulate recommendations for the further strengthening of bilateral relations between France and Uzbekistan.

### Results.

As is well known, France—one of the first states to recognize the independence of Uzbekistan—plays a significant role in international relations due to its political, economic, and military potential. In terms of territory (551,500 km<sup>2</sup>), France occupies a leading position in Western Europe, while its population amounts to 66.68 million people (as of 2024). In terms of gross domestic product, the country ranks fourth globally, and it also holds fourth place worldwide in the export of goods and services. France is the largest producer and exporter of agricultural products in Europe.

From a geopolitical perspective, France's highly advantageous location—with access to the Atlantic Ocean on the one hand and the Mediterranean Sea on the other, as well as a developed modern transport and communications infrastructure—expands its opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation with European, American, and African states. As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, a nuclear power, and a country pursuing an independent policy on issues of global significance, France represents a strategic partner for the development of mutually advantageous cooperation with Uzbekistan.

Close cooperation with France can contribute not only to the inflow of French investment and the introduction of advanced technologies in Uzbekistan, but also to the strengthening of the country's position as a full-fledged member of the international community, as well as to supporting Uzbekistan's participation in international political and economic organizations.

Each state possesses distinctive features in its foreign policy. For instance, developed countries such as the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Japan, alongside political cooperation, place primary emphasis on economic interaction in their foreign policy strategies. France, by contrast, has traditionally prioritized the development of cultural ties. Accordingly, diplomatic contacts with the political elite of a foreign state often serve as a starting point for subsequent cooperation in other spheres. In political and diplomatic relations, cultural and scientific-technological ties occupy a priority position.

This phenomenon has deep historical roots. Particular attention to the cultural sphere on the part of the French central authorities can be observed as early as the Middle Ages. The mandatory use of the French language in judicial decisions and notarial acts was first established by royal ordinance in 1539. Responsibility for overseeing the proper use of the French language was assigned in 1635 to the Académie Française, an institution specifically created for this purpose.

In the seventeenth century, particularly during the reign of Louis XIV, the state assumed the role of a protector of the arts, effectively becoming a patron by creating broad opportunities for the work of artists and writers. During this period, the construction of the Palace of Versailles began, and the Comédie-Française was founded. In 1793, with the establishment of the Louvre, the state demonstrated not only its role as a patron but also its status as a guardian of art and national heritage. Many French diplomats of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries were also prominent figures in the fields of art and culture.

By the mid-twentieth century, in addition to supporting artists and preserving national heritage, the state began to actively promote national culture. Following the end of the Second World War, conditions were created to ensure broad public access to national cultural assets.

To the present day, the state continues to fulfill these functions. Accordingly, public funding for the cultural sector has increased steadily from year to year. In 2022, cultural expenditure amounted to approximately €11 billion (an increase of 7.5 percent compared to 2021); in 2023, it reached around €11.2 billion (a 7 percent increase compared to 2022); and in 2024, funding totaled €11 billion, of which €4.4 billion was allocated to culture and €4 billion to the media sector (a 6 percent increase compared to 2023). Expenditure on culture accounts for approximately 0.8 percent of France's total state budget. When additional programs – such as

*France 2030*, as well as innovation-driven and regional projects – are taken into account, total public spending on culture reaches €16 billion. The allocated funds are primarily directed toward the support of theaters, cinema, museums, education, the preservation of cultural heritage, television, and radio.

In 2022, France allocated €3.6 billion to education, representing a 7.5 percent increase compared to 2021. In 2023, funding remained at €3.6 billion, corresponding to a 7 percent increase relative to 2022. In 2024, expenditure on the education sector again amounted to €3.6 billion, reflecting a 6 percent increase compared to 2023.

Thus, over the past three years, annual public funding for education in France has consistently totaled €3.6 billion, accounting for approximately 6.7 percent of the expenditures of the country's Ministry of Culture and Education. At the same time, a gradual increase in allocated resources can be observed, indicating the growing importance of education in state policy.

In addition, various associations and private companies act as sponsors in the cultural sphere, channeling substantial financial resources into cultural activities. It should also be noted that a significant segment of the national economy is oriented toward meeting the population's cultural needs.

For example, in France, the share of household budgets devoted to cultural consumption varies from year to year. In 2023, French households spent on average around €1,000 on cultural goods and services, which accounted for approximately 3.8 percent of their total annual expenditures. The largest share of household cultural spending is devoted to audiovisual services, including television, radio, and video content, such as subscriptions to Netflix, Spotify, video-on-demand platforms, and other digital services. In 2022, French households spent €10.4 billion on audiovisual content, representing approximately 60 percent of their total cultural expenditures. Expenditure on books and newspapers has declined over time. Between 2011 and 2017, it decreased by 11 percent.

Regarding cinema and theater, in 2023, 181 million cinema tickets were sold in France, indicating that, on average, each French citizen attended the cinema 2.7 times. In addition, in 2022, live performances were attended by 53 million spectators.

The data presented allow us to conclude that French household spending on culture varies from year to year. Expenditure on audiovisual services is increasing, while spending on books and printed publications is declining. Interest in cinema and theater remains, although the share of these expenses in total cultural spending remains relatively small.

In the context of globalization and the intensifying process of integration within the European Union, France's political and economic circles increasingly raise the question of whether the country will be able to preserve its uniqueness and position in the world in the twenty-first century. Their answer is as follows: in the economic sphere, other countries may surpass France in the future; however, the country can maintain its distinctiveness and secure one of the leading positions in the world only through the continued development of its national culture and science.

As noted by Emmanuel Bonne, Adviser to the President of France on diplomatic affairs, in the context of the widespread use of English, "the preservation of the French language as a language of international communication and the increase in its number of speakers is as important a task as maintaining France's permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council and is considered a political issue. These objectives are interconnected."

There is also an economic dimension, as France is regarded as a country of high culture, and there is currently strong demand for high-quality French products in the U.S. and Japanese markets.

The location of the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris is also no coincidence, as it underscores France's status as one of the world's cultural centers.

Established on May 16, 1945, UNESCO has for decades pursued the goal of maintaining peace on the planet. The organization's primary mission is to disseminate the achievements of human intellect in the fields of education, science, and culture worldwide.

A central and long-term objective of French diplomacy is the promotion of the French language and culture globally. This, in turn, contributes to strengthening France's political and economic position on the international stage.

In addition to promoting the French language and culture, French diplomacy, in cooperation with foreign countries, focuses primarily on the following areas:

- establishing cooperation between French and foreign educational institutions;
- deepening technical cooperation in leading sectors where France holds a competitive advantage;
- expanding the distribution of various materials in the French language through audiovisual networks;
- assisting in the training of personnel for developing countries, that is, in the formation of a local elite.

To achieve these objectives, French diplomacy relies on a broad network of cultural institutions abroad. Among developed countries, France ranks first in terms of the number of cultural institutions operating overseas.

For the promotion of the French language and culture abroad, France deploys 28,000 French language teachers, 1,200 language attachés, and 800 cultural advisors or attachés working in French embassies around the world.

In pursuing its objectives, France relies extensively on Francophone communities. Currently, more than 80 million people worldwide consider French their native language. This group includes citizens of countries and regions where French is used as an official or regional language, notably France, Canada (including Quebec), Belgium, Switzerland, several African countries, and other regions.

As of 2023, the number of people using French as a foreign language is estimated at approximately 141 million. This figure includes residents of African countries and other regions where French functions as a second or official language, as well as students learning French. In addition, the total number of French language learners is estimated at around 120 million.

The Francophone organization—the International Organization of La Francophonie (Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, OIF)—currently unites 54 states and territories. The organization's primary objectives are the preservation and promotion of the French language and Francophone culture, as well as the strengthening of cooperation among Francophone countries. At the same time, the OIF facilitates collaboration in the fields of linguistics, culture, economy, and politics.

On November 14–15, 1997, the seventh summit of heads of state was held in Hanoi, demonstrating France's intention to use the organization as an instrument of political influence. During the summit, former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali was elected Secretary-General of the organization. The headquarters of the Francophonie Agency is located in Paris. Within the framework of the organization's activities, joint programs are developed in the areas of culture, education, environmental protection, communications, and justice.

Regarding the Internet, the pioneering Minitel system in France, revolutionary for its time, had a significant impact on the widespread adoption of internet technologies in the country. In 1997, the accession of the Socialist government defined new directions for the use of audiovisual information networks with the aim of strengthening France's position in the world.

In accordance with the cultural and diplomatic programs of the French government, multimillion-euro subsidies are allocated annually for the development of Francophone audiovisual networks and their international distribution, including TV5 Monde, Canal France International (CFI), and Radio France Internationale. For example, CFI receives annual subsidies of €10–15 million, provided by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

The TV5 Monde network is funded by France, Belgium, Switzerland, and Canada, with more than €30 million spent annually on its operations. Thus, tens of millions of euros are invested each year in the promotion and development of Francophone audiovisual programs abroad. These funds represent a strategic investment by France in the international promotion of its culture and language.

TV5 Monde is an international television channel broadcasting French-language programs to foreign countries via satellite. It was established in 1984 and brings together the state channels France 2 and France 3, as well as television channels from Switzerland, Belgium, Canada, and Quebec. The channel reaches over 80 million households across Europe, the Americas, and Asia. In 2024, its total “communal” budget—covering broadcasting, transmission, and related expenses—amounted to €97 million, with special expenditures reaching €17 million, bringing the overall budget to €114 million. The channel broadcasts news, feature films, and the most popular programs from the aforementioned channels around the clock.

Canal France International (CFI) primarily produces and broadcasts programs for countries on the African continent.

Radio France Internationale (RFI) is France’s international radio service, founded in 1931, which disseminates global news from a French perspective in the French language. The station broadcasts in French and 18 additional languages, reaching an audience of 45 million listeners. In addition to news, RFI covers cultural, economic, and social aspects of French society. Its annual budget amounts to €130 million, funded through subsidies from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and audiovisual fees.

In all these areas, France seeks to distinguish itself from other countries, a strategy that is also reflected in its foreign policy. While developed states such as the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Japan primarily focus on economic cooperation alongside political collaboration in their foreign policies, France has traditionally given priority to cultural ties. Through these ties, it establishes contacts with the political elite of foreign countries and uses them as a springboard for further cooperation in other areas, particularly in the economy. In recent years, there has been a noticeable trend toward giving greater priority to economic and scientific-technical cooperation in France’s foreign policy.

To coordinate cultural, scientific, and technical cooperation with foreign countries, in 1945 the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs established the Main Department of Cultural, Scientific, and Technical Relations, as well as an association for the promotion of artistic activities within the ministry. As a result of the 1998 reform, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs merged with the Ministry of Cooperation, which dealt with interactions with African countries, and the former Main Department of Cultural, Scientific, and Technical Relations was replaced by the Main Department of International Cooperation and Development, which includes the Department of Strategy, Planning, and Evaluation. The primary objective of this reform was to ensure a more rational use of France’s resources allocated to international cooperation.

A special role in promoting the French language and culture is played by the public organization Alliance Française, established in Paris in 1883. The main purpose of the organization is the dissemination of the French language and culture. Despite its status as a public association, Alliance Française receives support from the French state, and the President of the French Republic serves as the organization’s honorary chair.

The organization conducts French language courses, provides educational institutions – schools and universities with textbooks, organizes French language competitions, establishes libraries and study rooms, distributes books in French, holds conferences and lectures on literature and science, promotes French cinema and music, and organizes various exhibitions, concerts, and festivals. According to the latest data, the Alliance Française network comprises over 850 organizations in 132 countries, where approximately 500,000 people study French annually. This figure reflects the number of students enrolled in the organization’s courses, which serves as an important bridge between French and local cultures, disseminating the French language and Francophone cultural heritage.

The organization’s financial resources are generated through membership fees, donations from organizations and individuals, as well as income from its own activities – such as French courses, film clubs, and libraries. In addition, it receives financial support from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The amount of membership fees is determined by each individual organization.

#### **Conclusion.**

Thus, it can be concluded that in the era of globalization, French diplomacy actively works to preserve and strengthen France’s role as a major global power, effectively utilizing cultural diplomacy to achieve its strategic objectives.

As the first President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, I. Karimov, noted: “We are addressing the strategic task of building a modern democratic state, broadly integrated into the world community, while fully understanding that the global community today is becoming increasingly multifaceted.”

In light of the above, the uniqueness of the foreign policy of the French Republic represents one of the multifaceted aspects of international relations highlighted by President I. Karimov. Interaction with France should be primarily based on cultural ties.

Considering that the peoples living in the territory of Uzbekistan have historically contributed to the flourishing of culture in Central Asia, it is necessary to make maximum use of the cultural factor in international relations, as well as the rich experience of the French Republic.

Based on the above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The established relations between Uzbekistan and France represent a significant historical, cultural, spiritual, and social phenomenon, grounded in long-standing historical, political, and economic ties, and closely linked to the global development of the Great Silk Road.

2. Historical examples of cooperation—from the correspondence between the military leader Amir Timur and King Charles VI of France, through the diplomatic missions of Clavijo, to contemporary contacts between Presidents François Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac with I. A. Karimov, as well as Emmanuel Macron with Shavkat Mirziyoyev—demonstrate a profound historical experience of political and cultural interaction that warrants further detailed study.

3. The role of cultural ties in shaping the foreign policy of France and Uzbekistan serves as an indicator of the sincerity, consistency, and effectiveness of bilateral cooperation, and provides an important model for study and implementation in international practice, requiring deeper scientific and theoretical analysis.

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