

**Unfinished Bridges between Eastern Europe and
Latin America:
Mexico- Romania Cultural Diplomacy and Nation
Branding Experiences.**

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Despre țara din care venim¹

Hai să vorbim
Despre țara din care venim.
Eu vin din vară,
E o patrie fragilă
Pe care orice frunză,
Căzând, o poate stinge,
Dar cerul e atât de greu de stele
C-atâră uneori pân' la pământ
Și dacă te apropii-auzi cum iarba
Gâdilă stelele răsând,
Și florile-s atât de multe
Că te dor
Orbitele uscate ca de soare,
Și sori rotunzi atâră
Din fiecare pom;
De unde vin eu
Nu lipsește decât moartea,
E-atâta fericire
C-aproape că ți-e somn.

Ana Blandiana

¹ Let us talk/ About the country we come from. / I come from summer/ A fragile homeland /That can easily be extinguished/ By a mere falling leaf,/ But the sky is so heavy with stars / That it sometimes bends to earth / And if you get close, you can hear the grass/ Tickling the laughing stars,/ And there are so many flowers / That they hurt/ The orbits dried up as by the sun/ And suns hang around/ From of every tree;/ Where I come from/ The only thing missing is death,/ And there is so much happiness/ It almost makes you sleepy.

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Introduction

This year Mexico and Romania commemorate 80 years of diplomatic relations. In light of this important event, it is time to reassess the relationship, recognize the limitations and move forward. In this regard, several activities have been taking place in a context framed by the lack of awareness between their political elite, their business elite and their societies. Mexico and Romania represent two examples of traditionally distant countries that share common concerns as a result of the historical subjugation and democratic transition experiences of their regions: Latin America and Eastern Europe. This led to the development of bonds between them, which have not been successfully utilized. As a Mexican, the origin of this concern is that even though the relationships between Mexico and Eastern European countries were formally established two decades ago, the geographical distance, their internal political processes and the lack of a strategic focus have limited a more vigorous development.

Romania became a member of the European Union (EU) in 2007. Since that time the relationship between Mexico and Romania has mostly been framed within the EU-Mexico Economic Partnership, Political Coordination and Cooperation Agreement. Despite this, there is a whole previous bilateral framework constructed over the past 80 years that has not yet developed all its potentialities. In this regard, the research questions that will be addressed in this work are: to what extent cultural diplomacy can help strengthen the relationship between these countries? And how cultural diplomacy, along with nation branding strategies, could be used to counteract the negative images of Mexico and Romania in the world? This dissertation will evidence its arguments using interviews with Mexican and Romanian public officers conducted specifically for this research project, with the previous Ethics Approval from Glasgow University. This will be supported with files from the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, along with books, articles, videos and websites consulted in English, Spanish and Romanian.

This author chose Romania from among the Eastern European countries since it shares more cultural and linguistic similarities with Latin America due to its Latin heritage, it is a member state of the EU and a Mexican Embassy is established within its territory. The Latin American country chosen was Mexico since this author is a recipient of a Mexican public officials' scholarship and as such, it is her intention to propose recommendations for a new strategic relationship between Mexico and Eastern Europe, starting with Romania, under the premise that countries should know more about each other in order to move towards more sophisticated types of cooperation. The objective is to encourage the

diversification of Mexican foreign policy and to promote one of the principles of the National Developing Plan of the current administration (2012-2018); to position Mexico as an actor with global responsibility.¹ In order to persuade the role of Mexico as an actor with global responsibility and to revert its negative image due to the wave of violence, Mexico needs to diversify its foreign policy. Eastern Europe represents a perfect opportunity to do so as it gathers a variety of countries that in recent decades have transitioned to democracy. Targeting Eastern Europe might also tend to other bridges of dialogue and consultation. Particular attention should be given to Eastern European countries with EU membership, which could help de-monopolize Mexico's relationship with Spain as the traditional gateway to this integration organization; that is also why Romania, as a EU memberstate has been chosen.

To achieve these aims, the first chapter will present the theoretical framework used to analyze the study cases: Mexico and Romania. It will discuss the concepts of public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, soft power, and nation branding and how do they relate with each other. Public diplomacy will be understood as the process of international information and cultural relations,² therefore it is the umbrella under which cultural diplomacy and nation branding activities develop. This in a context that considers the existence of open societies as part of the process of transition to democracy, referring to people's ability to significantly influence public policies as political democratization is strongly related to the democratization of information. Linked to this, Peter van Ham asks "why would we invest in a country we don't know, and why would we pay attention to its political and strategic demands if we have no clue what the country is all about and why should we care?"³ The dissertation will address this question by seeking to demonstrate how culture plays a determinant role attracting foreign audiences, as well as how it forms a strong component of public diplomacy and a tool of nation branding. The main argument of this research, as mentioned, is that Mexico and Romania, particularly their societies, should know more about each other in order to accomplish a more fruitful relationship; this is where culture works as a gateway.

The second chapter will provide an outline of the bilateral relationship between Mexico and Romania. This will discuss the historical ties and the political contacts between the two countries. The

¹ Presidency of Mexico. 'National Development Plan of Mexico 2013- 2018' (2013) in <http://pnd.gob.mx/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/PND.pdf> consulted on 02. 03.2014.

² Nicholas J. Cull. 'Public Diplomacy: Theoretical Considerations.' *Mexican Magazine of Foreign Policy*, No 85, (Mexico City, February 2009). P. 63. (Original in Spanish)

³ Peter van Ham. 'Place Branding: The state of the Art'. *Annals of the American Academy o Political and Social Science*, Vol 616, Public Diplomacy in a Changing World (March, 2008) P. 131

chapter will also analyze some of the convergent characteristics between these countries: 1) the role of geography in foreign audiences' perceptions of each country, for example, that Mexico belongs to North America and Romania to the Balkan Peninsula; 2) their common Latin origins and Romania's historical emphasis on its Latin heritage, which has been to the detriment of its Slavic background; and 3) the inheritance of Mexico and Romania's paradigmatic authoritarian regimes during the Cold War, which have significantly shaped their modalities of transition. Finally, the chapter will discuss current topics on the foreign policy agenda, the pending issues of the bilateral relationship and the obstacles against developing a more dynamic relationship.

The final chapter will focus on the cultural exchange between these countries, the cultural institutes that exist abroad, the way cultural institutions operate, and the challenges these countries face in terms of public and cultural diplomacy. It will also analyze the origins of the negative images of Mexico and Romania, and the role of each country's most strategic partnerships for their nation branding attempts, namely the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) for Mexico and the EU for Romania. As a result of these attempts, this chapter will also focus on the experiences and knowledge these countries could share with each other, emphasizing the components of Simon Anholt's Nation Brands Index. These include culture and heritage, tourism, and people. Finally, this author will present a list of recommendations to start tracing the path of rapprochement between Latin America and Eastern Europe through a cultural diplomacy strategy that could begin with Mexico and Romania. Hopefully this could develop beyond the academic sphere and contribute to the construction of solid bridges between these countries and these regions, in order for them to position themselves as more relevant actors in the world today.

“It is perhaps the fact that art provides a manifestation of what is unnecessary that makes us think that art is unnecessary. But if this fact means something, it is that man has not fulfilled his needs unless he fulfills them by fulfilling his need for them to be unnecessary. The unnecessary is a compelling need of man: the one that encompasses all the rest.”

Poetic Effectiveness, Gabriel Zaid

1. Theoretical Approach

1.1 Public Diplomacy and Cultural Diplomacy

To start this discussion it is important to contextualize the concept of diplomacy. Traditionally, it was considered to be an exclusive activity among states that set the rules and methods to administer their international relations. Today, this activity is not exclusive to states and new actors, such as non-governmental organizations, corporations, or civil society, participate in the managing of this international environment. With that said, we can define public and cultural diplomacy. There is an ongoing debate to distinguish both concepts as they are sometimes considered to be two sides of a coin, i.e. diplomacy, and sometimes one is considered to be part of another, i.e. cultural diplomacy as a type of public diplomacy. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze them both in order to have a more comprehensive approach.

The term *public diplomacy* was first used by Edmund Guillon in 1965 to name the process of international information and cultural relations,⁴ a term that would support the second consideration of culture as a component of public diplomacy. Guillon defined public diplomacy as “The means by which governments, private groups and individuals influence the attitudes and opinions of other peoples and governments in such a way as to exercise influence on their foreign policy decisions.”⁵ In this regard, Benno Signitzer and Timothy Coombs also define public diplomacy as the way individuals and private groups directly or indirectly influence public opinion, producing certain attitudes that affect foreign policy decisions.⁶ These definitions make evident a schism wherein traditional diplomacy is surpassed by the presence of new actors in a context where the speed of communication has increased due to technological advances. Nevertheless, Simon Anholt states that public diplomacy is a limited discipline unless it develops a certain power to affect the reputation of a country that is willing to

⁴ Nicholas J. Cull. ‘Public Diplomacy: Theoretical Considerations.’ *Mexican Magazine of Foreign Policy*. *Op. Cit.* P. 63

⁵ Fletcher School website <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/Murrow/Diplomacy/Definitions>. Consulted on 10.01. 2015

⁶ Benno Signitzer and Timothy Coombs, ‘Public relations and public diplomacy: conceptual divergence’, *Public Relations Review*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (1992), P. 138

represent its policies; that reputation can only be modified by means of policies and not communications. Therefore the key of its success is its tight connection with the formulation and definition of those policies.⁷

There have been serious discussions about the legitimacy of the term public diplomacy because Guillion admitted that the actual word he was looking for was *propaganda* but due to its negative connotation and the antagonist role of the United States of America (USA) during the Cold War, it was considered an unacceptable concept.⁸ The term propaganda also needs to be carefully analyzed as some scholars, like Nicolas J. Cull, state that public diplomacy and propaganda are not necessarily synonyms:⁹ “Public diplomacy can clearly *turn into* propaganda if it is used with an immoral purpose.”¹⁰ He also says that propaganda is a type of communication with foreign audiences, particularly in war times, wherein states try to rest legitimacy to enemy states, pursuing, at the time, their own interests.¹¹ This second idea will be analyzed with Cull’s taxonomy of public diplomacy, but it is important to note that, when created, the term public diplomacy was quickly embraced as it was very convenient for the US to generate a positive alternative to distinguish its own propaganda from that of the Soviet Union. It gave the extinct United States Information Agency (USIA) a diplomatic status for its functions, and, finally, it implied that a country gave a unique focus to managing international opinion which helped to legitimize the centralization of the mechanisms of propaganda, so called public diplomacy.¹² Therefore, the use of public diplomacy as opposed to propaganda determined the flexibility with which the term was originally used, how it has been filled with meaning, and how it has positioned itself through time.¹³

Joseph Nye associates public diplomacy with soft power; this is under the assumption that public diplomacy is not only information, but also persuasion. Nye coined this concept in the 1980s to mean the ability of a country to persuade others to do what it wants without force or coercion. This is an expression of the capacity that an actor possesses to achieve what it aims for in the international

⁷ Simon Anholt. *Places: Identity, Image and Reputation*, (Hampshire UK: Palgrave, 2010), P. 98.

⁸ Richard T. Arndt. ‘Culture or Propaganda? Thoughts on Half a Century of Cultural Diplomacy in the United States.’ *Mexican Magazine of Foreign Policy. Op.Cit.* P. 31 (Original in Spanish)

⁹ Nicholas J. Cull. *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945–1989*. (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁰ Nicholas J. Cull. ‘Public Diplomacy: theoretical considerations’. *Op. Cit.* P.72

¹¹ Idem.

¹² Ibid. Pp. 63-64.

¹³ Richard T. Arndt. *Op.Cit.* P. 31. Arndt says that from the very moment of its creation, the term has turned into a *passe-partout* that means what the users want it to signify.

arena due to the attractiveness of its culture more than its economic or military influence.¹⁴ In this regard, Cull states that public diplomacy can be “The *mechanism* to display soft power but it is not, in itself, *soft power*”¹⁵. He gives North Korea as an example of how an international actor can have public diplomacy and not soft power, understanding that the construction of the concept of soft power inevitably requires an international component; that is, who to attract, who to persuade.¹⁶ He also studies the advantages that the use of soft power has, as a political term, above the exclusive reference to public diplomacy, as it has moved the discussions to the field of national security, which is always a relevant topic on the agenda.

On the other hand, the semantics of Nye’s definition, by enforcing the idea of a country obtaining what it wants, give a negative connotation to the concept, turning it into a new archetype: negative soft power.¹⁷ This is why some politicians have been reluctant to use the term openly, because referring to soft power could invalidate soft power by the only by the assumption of threaten. All in all the spread of the term has promoted its historic legitimation and has also reinforced the preponderance of Political Realism above the rest of the paradigms of international relations.¹⁸ The concept of soft power is important for this research as it is present in every country in three main components: culture, values, and policies. More than defining them, Nye characterizes them as soft power when *culture* is pleasing to other countries; *values* are attractive and consistently practiced; and *policies* are inclusive and legitimate.¹⁹ These three components nourish public diplomacy, giving it a frame of coherence. However, it is important to note that their presence in national contexts does not necessarily mean that they will automatically transform into soft power. It is the use of public diplomacy to spread these components, enforced by international mechanisms and networks that will project soft power.

¹⁴ Cfr. Joseph Nye, *Soft Power*, (New York: Public Affairs Press, 2004)

¹⁵ Nicholas J. Cull. ‘Public Diplomacy: theoretical considerations.’ *Op. Cit.* P. 60

¹⁶ This would mean that even if North Korea has an internal apparatus of propaganda it is within its borders and not outside them.

¹⁷ Nicholas J. Cull. ‘Public Diplomacy: theoretical considerations.’ *Op. Cit.* P. 60

¹⁸ Political Realism places security as a means of achieving and maintaining power, and encourages States to seek their own interests. The promoters of this paradigm are considered as a-moralists which suits the statement of Nicholas J. Cull of negative soft power and propaganda.

¹⁹ Joseph Nye. ‘Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power.’ *Foreign Affairs*. (July/ August 2009). In <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65163/joseph-s-nye-jr/get-smart>. Consulted on 10.01.2015

Nye developed another concept noting soft power's complexity. He coined the term *smart power* in 2003 in order to understand the current state of international relations. In an article published in *Foreign Affairs* he explains that he did so to fight the misconception that only the use of soft power can create effective foreign policy:

Power is one's ability to affect the behavior of others to get what one wants. There are three basic ways to do this: coercion, payment, and attraction. Hard power is the use of coercion and payment. Soft power is the ability to obtain preferred outcomes through attraction. If a state can set the agenda for others or shape their preferences, it can save a lot on carrots and sticks. But rarely can it totally replace either. Thus the need for smart strategies that combine the tools of both hard and soft power.²⁰

As Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton used the term smart power. According to Nye, the use of soft, hard and smart power is possible due to the use of contextual intelligence.²¹ For means of this research we will focus on the component of soft power's attraction, as Romania and Mexico are not military or economic powers but instead middle-income countries.²²

1.1.1 Taxonomy of Public Diplomacy

In moving to the taxonomy of public diplomacy, it must be clarified that continuous references to the USA are due to the role that this country has had in the debates and the origins of the concept. However, to deconstruct and understand the concept, we will use Cull's framework as he places cultural diplomacy as one of its components.

²⁰ Idem.

²¹ Cfr. Joseph Nye. *The Powers to Lead*. (Oxford University Press, 2008)

²² Upper middle-income countries according to the World Bank's considerations for 2015. "For the current 2015 fiscal year, low-income economies are defined as those with a GNI per capita, calculated using the World Bank Atlas method, of \$1,045 or less in 2013; middle-income economies are those with a GNI per capita of more than \$1,045 but less than \$12,746; high-income economies are those with a GNI per capita of \$12,746 or more. Lower-middle-income and upper-middle-income economies are separated at a GNI per capita of \$4,125." World Bank website http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-and-lending-groups#Europe_and_Central_Asia. Consulted on 25.02.2015

Basic Taxonomy of Public Diplomacy and Psychological Warfare²³

Type of diplomacy	Time Frame	Flow Information	Typical Infrastructure	Sample activities	Source of credibility	State in which this type of diplomacy has been salient
Listening	Short and long- term	Inward to analysts and policy makers	Monitoring technology and language trained staff	Targeted polling	Validity of the used methods	Switzerland
Advocacy	Short-term	Outward	Embassy press office, foreign ministry strategy office	Embassy press relations	Proximity with the government	USA
Cultural Diplomacy	Long- term	Outward	Cultural center and/or library	State-funded international art Tour	Proximity with the cultural authorities	France
Exchange Diplomacy	Very long-term	Inward and outward	Exchange administrator, Educational office	Two way academic exchange	Perception of mutuality	Japan
International Broadcasting	Medium-term	Outward but from a news bureaucracy	News bureaus, production studios, editorial offices and transmitter facilities	Foreign language-short wave	Evidence of good journalist practice	Great Britain
Psychological Warfare	Short-term	Outward	Printing cover. Broadcasting facilities, covert network	Disinformation	Proximity with the government and with the fantasies of the audiences	Former USSR

As mentioned, within this table Cull presents different types of public diplomacy amongst which he includes cultural diplomacy. Along with it, he places the following types: listening, advocacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting. All these types of public diplomacy have the same goal: to influence a foreign audience differing in time frame, flow information, the type of infrastructure required, the type of activities, and the source of their credibility. Psychological warfare, or propaganda, is presented as a parallel activity that shares some key features with public diplomacy but nevertheless is not contained by it.

²³ Table obtained from Nicholas J. Cull. 'Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories.' *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol 616, (March 2008), Pp. 31-54 and Nicolas J. Cull. *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past*. (Center on Public Diplomacy at Annenberg School, University of South California. Figueroa Press. 2009)

Propaganda is conceived as a short term tool that focuses on the moment and not on the creation of solid relations of will among countries.²⁴ Nye states that a smart public diplomacy necessarily has to understand the role of credibility, self-criticism, and civil society to generate soft power, because public diplomacy that becomes propaganda not only does not convince the targeted audience but reduces soft power.²⁵ In this regard, the propaganda maker seeks to monopolize communication by not listening the other and silencing him, and he does so by taking advantage of a range of emotions; meanwhile public diplomacy makers listen in order to transform the environment promoting a feedback exercise.

Beginning the definitions of public diplomacy types contained in the table, *Listening* is the act of collecting overseas' data in order to process and determine the creation of targeted foreign policy actions. This is the first step of every type of public diplomacy. *Advocacy* refers to the act of promoting a particular policy or idea for an international audience related to the national interest. *Cultural Diplomacy* is defined as the act of promoting cultural contents and achievements abroad. *Exchange Diplomacy* is understood as the act of reciprocity in which a country sends nationals overseas and receives, as well, foreigners. And finally, *International Broadcasting* refers to the engagement with foreign audiences by technologies of radio, television and Internet.²⁶

Public diplomacy is a recent field of academic study and its fundamental problem is the lack of a solid theoretical framework. This is where this writer would partially disagree with Cull's typology by objecting Cull's inclusion of listening, as well as advocacy, as types of public diplomacy. Even though he does consider both of them to be attributions of the rest of public diplomacy's types, he places them as a goals, components of a conceptual umbrella, and not necessarily as means. Diplomacy includes foreign public opinion as part of its intelligence work, and this is not only done through discourse but by the act of listening and gathering information. On the other hand, advocacy can also be understood as a promotion activity and it is only when there is a long term strategy behind it, encompassing bigger audiences, that this writer would understand it as a pillar of public diplomacy. To summarize, public diplomacy is not just about communicating policies, but about listening to different types of audiences and having the sufficient contextual intelligence to use this in the definition of policies, transform them, and make them part of a foreign policy strategy.

²⁴ Karl Popper mentions that this emotional and absolute type of propaganda is particularly efficient in closed environments where sources of information are limited or highly controlled, but is less persuasive in open societies. Karl Popper. Open Society and its enemies. (Routledge, 1994)

²⁵ Joseph Nye, 'Public Diplomacy and Soft Power.' The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, vol. 616 (March 2008), P. 108.

²⁶ Nicolas J. Cull. Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past. *Op. Cit.* P. 10-21

1.1.2 New Public Diplomacy

Considering the existence of open societies as part of the process of transition to democracy, citizens and civil society have the ability to significantly influence the definition of public policies. The democratization of information has made citizens participate in foreign policy, making this a challenge to traditional diplomats. In this regard, Anthony Pratkanis defines public diplomacy as the promotion of national interest by informing and influencing citizens of other countries.²⁷ Along with this definition, most of the definitions mentioned earlier coincide with public diplomacy's capacity to influence and not just to communicate, as there also must be considered the abilities to change beliefs, opinions, perspectives, behaviors and expectations, as stated with soft power's analysis. This is fundamental as one of the premises of this work is not only to strengthen bonds between Latin America and Eastern Europe, starting with the Mexico-Romania relationship, but also to change the negative image of these regions in the world and empower them by means of cooperation.

One of the important elements to consider in this new wave of academic approach towards public diplomacy is that it breaks with the monopoly of traditional diplomats: even though it cannot be controlled by them it can widen their sphere of action. For example, when the government identifies an actor with the ability to influence the country's foreign policy it can start lobby actions to place that message and give it credibility; the actor could be a foreign Congress but it could also be a media enterprise or a circle of intellectuals. There have also been some examples of this which extrapolate the role of public affairs into public diplomacy, such as the use of social networks like Facebook or Twitter for political campaigns or the release of political statements.

To clarify, the role of public affairs in a given society is to inform the audience, the mass media, and other institutions about the goals, policies, and governmental activities within a national context. This is possible due to the act of listening for the purpose of evaluating and reformulating such activities. This is the way it works in democracies where the government is questioned in terms of accountability; therefore the role of public affairs is to inform and the goal of public diplomacy is to influence the audience. Nevertheless, it is the strengthening of the role of public affairs which makes public diplomacy useful and possible. In this regard, Heller and Persson affirm that public diplomacy is

²⁷ Anthony Pratkanis 'Public diplomacy in international conflicts; a social influence analysis' in Nancy Snow and Philip Taylor (eds.), Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy, (NY: Routledge, 2009) P. 112

a type of strategic communication while the role of public affairs is not, emphasizing that the first can modify contents and targets more than the second without violating its purpose.²⁸

According to Cull, these are the characteristics of new public diplomacy. Some of them have been discussed during the historical review of the concept, but they are presented here in a list as they are useful in understanding the environment in which current cultural diplomacy, as a component of public diplomacy, is framed. They are the following:²⁹

- 1) The presence of non-traditional actors;
- 2) The evolution of communication mechanisms into new real-time and global technologies;
- 3) The blurred of the lines between domestic and international news spheres due to this new global technologies;
- 4) The use of marketing to substitute propaganda techniques, such as nation branding, as well as concepts from network communication theory;
- 5) The evolution of Public Diplomacy as a language of prestige that has given way to talk about “soft power” and “branding”;
- 6) The departure from actor- to- people Cold War-era communication to a new emphasis on people-to-people contact with the international actor playing the role of facilitator, and
- 7) The top down messaging is replaced by the “relationship building”

The concept of diplomacy has evolved through time and even though Political Realism is still the prevailing paradigm, today the participation of new actors in the network of international relations has led to Neorealism. The latter paradigm, which updates Political Realism, was launched by Kenneth Waltz at the end of the 1970s with his book *The Theory of International Politics*. Neorealism is under the idea of anarchy in which the world is structured, this is the assumption of no unique global authority and the different distribution of capacities among the actors. These predominant actors are no longer states. On the other hand, new public diplomacy emphasizes how Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have conditioned this discipline. Cull and Nye warn that technology forces us to consider the line between internal and external communication as artificial and even the line between traditional and public diplomacy, because there are no precedents for the actual speed of communication reaching, sometimes in real time, audiences all over the world. This has

²⁸ Ken S. Heller and Liza M. Persson. ‘The Distinction Between Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy’ in Nancy Snow and Phillip M. Taylor ed. *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*. *Op. Cit.* Pp. 225-232

²⁹ Nicolas J. Cull. ‘Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past’. *Op. Cit.* P. 13

questioned confidentiality controls of state and interstate communication, such as the WikiLeaks and Snowden scandals, proving that the environment where diplomacy operates today is shaped by a tendency of horizontal networks, as Melissen argues.³⁰ This is why there is no longer a unique top down message, but instead an overall relationship to be constructed from all directions. This is made upon trust and credibility in a long term horizon if the intention is to make the relationship effective.³¹

Nye also characterizes New Public Diplomacy with communicating everyday government's decisions, including regular procedures and crisis solving; strategic communication for certain topics including marketing and campaigns; and long term relationships with key actors. In this regard he analyzes the role of attracting audiences' attention in a context of information saturation: "Attention rather than information becomes the scarce resource and those who can distinguish valuable information from background clutter get power."³² Returning to Cull's list, one of the newest approaches to public diplomacy is the possibility of foreign audiences communicating with each other in a context of person-to-person exchange, with the state as a facilitator of the channel or the content; for example, by means of international broadcasting, academic exchange or cultural diplomacy.

To finalize, there are two major challenges present in new public diplomacy: the ability to operate at the same time nationally and internationally with audiences finding a convergent and coherent point, and the legitimacy of a state's message in a context of skepticism. This will be analyzed through the negative image of our study cases. Therefore, as Nye has stated, there is a continuous need to find speakers that work along with the state. These could be private companies, commercial chambers, trade unions or other organizations to seek for credibility and safety.

1.1.3 Cultural Diplomacy

Milton Cummings defines cultural diplomacy as "the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding."³³ On the other hand, Cull defines it as "an actor's attempt to manage the international environment through making its

³⁰ Jan Melissen. 'The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice' in Jan Melissen (ed.) The New Public Diplomacy; Soft Power in International Relations, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). P. 12.

³¹ Ibid. P. 15

³² Joseph Nye, 'Public Diplomacy and Soft Power.' *Op. Cit.* Pp. 99- 100

³³ Milton C. Cummings, Jr. Ph.D., Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: a Survey. (Center for Arts and Culture, 2003), P.1

cultural resources and achievements known overseas and/or facilitating cultural transmission abroad.”³⁴ The difference between these definitions is Cull's emphasis on the managing of the international environment against the ideas exchange, as a unique interest, defined by Cummings. This could be translated as a (neo) realistic approach versus an idealistic one and, as mentioned, we understand public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy's umbrella, in a neorealist context where more and more actors are involved in managing and influencing the international environment.

Richard T Arndt distinguishes cultural relations from cultural diplomacy, highlighting the component of institutionalized exchange. Cultural relations can be understood as any human exchange that exists beside the government's presence, such as tourism, cinema, sports, and even international marriages. On the other hand, cultural diplomacy implies the participation of the government in tracing and defining cultural goals serving the national interest. In addition to this, there has also been an historical overlap between cultural diplomacy's and exchange diplomacy's activities. Sometimes this has been due to the nature of academic exchange. The British Council is an example of this convergence, presented as an agency of cultural relations. Another example of the latter is the Fulbright program of scholarships in the USA, initially conceived for Latin America.³⁵

Historically, cultural diplomacy has been a powerful tool to strengthen economic liaisons, generate political influence - not only with government officers but also with intellectuals and artists who can influence people - and to establish ties between countries such as former colonies and their former metropolises. In a book edited by Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried, *Searching for Cultural Diplomacy*, the authors deconstruct the term in two fields: concept and structure. The first term (concept) refers to motivations, goals, and program content and the second (structure) refers to the setup of cultural diplomacy, the agents and their relation with the state interests.³⁶ They argue that “The consideration of conceptual and structural variables in the performance and organization of cultural diplomacy is, thus, vital to our understanding of the multifarious functions, actions, visions, and interpretations of what exactly cultural diplomacy is supposed to achieve and how it is to accomplish this task.”³⁷ Several authors give their regional points of view about the concept which is presented in

³⁴ Nicolas J. Cull. *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past*. *Op. Cit.* P. 19

³⁵ Besides Senator J. William Fulbright, some of the founders of cultural diplomacy in the United States were Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles and Secretary Cordell Hull.

³⁶ Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried ‘The Model of Cultural Diplomacy: Power, Distance and the Promise of Civil Society’ in Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried (ed.) *Searching for Cultural Diplomacy* (Berghahn Books: 2010) Pp. 16-21

³⁷ Ibid. P. 21

two extremes. On the one hand is Jean-Francois Fayed³⁸ who characterizes cultural diplomacy as propaganda and state control with his analysis of the Soviet Union, and on the other hand is Yutzo Ota, who argues non-state involvement and the pursuit of personal visions within cultural diplomacy.³⁹ Contextual and historical elements - time and location- are what balance those opposites because, as Gienow-Hecht assertively reflects:

Depending the course of their stories, the more authors perceive state involvement and clear-cut state interests, the more likely they are to link cultural diplomacy to propaganda-like activities. The less visible the state remains the sooner they are willing to move their definition closer to cultural relations and benevolent long-term strategy.⁴⁰

Therefore, the three schools of thought which these authors propose are the following: 1) One that affirms the tension between propaganda and cultural diplomacy 2) One that considers cultural diplomacy as an instrument to work at the exclusion of politics 3) One that sets cultural diplomacy beyond the realm of the state. This research will focus on Richard T Arndt previous definition, which differentiates cultural relations from cultural diplomacy. By highlighting the role of the state in cultural diplomacy he places it in the field of public diplomacy where the state's cultural promotion is a governmental policy that can include private participation. With that said, cultural diplomacy could be understood as the export of representative cultural samples aiming to further objectives of foreign policy and, with the inclusion of new actors in the diplomatic process aiming to gain influence capacity we could frame it in a neorealist context within a subordinated relationship to public diplomacy.

Some countries have considered cultural diplomacy as a strategic source of foreign policy. One such example is the USA, which has been a continuous example of this idea in this work. In 1959, the Department of State defined cultural diplomacy as "The direct and enduring contact between peoples of different nations designed to help create a better climate of international trust and understanding in which official relations can operate."⁴¹ By remarking on the operations of official relationships, cultural diplomacy is considered a pivotal role of diplomacy regardless of the methods used. According to

³⁸ Jean Francois Fayet. 'VOKS the Third Dimension of Soviet Foreign Policy' in Searching for Cultural Diplomacy. *Op. Cit.* P.33

³⁹ Yuzo Ota. "Difficulties faced by Native Japanese Interpreters: Nitobe Inazo (1862- 1933) and his Generation." In Searching for Cultural Diplomacy. *Op. Cit.* P. 189-211

⁴⁰ Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht 'What are we Searching for? Culture, Diplomacy, Agents and the State in Searching for Cultural Diplomacy. *Op.Cit.* P.9

⁴¹ Ibid. P. 10

Gienow-Hecht and Donfried, the Cold War was more a struggle of cultural identity than political identity since the first would feed the second automatically and unconsciously.⁴² This is why propaganda played a determinant role and it is also why the term cultural diplomacy has been historically related to manipulation techniques in the collective imagination. Some academics have even stated that the more state involvement, the more propaganda, as pure state's neutrality is impossible, and the less state involvement, the more cultural relations.

Cultural diplomacy has traditionally been used as vehicle to support political goals. Cynthia P. Schneider, a former Ambassador of the USA in the Netherlands, highlights the musical tours that her country sponsored in the Soviet Union, as well as to other regions of the world, to promote the values of democracy against totalitarian systems. She also mentions how a set of concerts, exhibitions, and publications in Europe directly competed with communism "for the intellectual soul of the continent."⁴³ This is why she defines it as a tool to communicate the intangible⁴⁴, in this case, ideology. To return to the debate of public and cultural diplomacy, Cesar Villanueva, a Mexican specialist in the field, reflects on both as "The will of inclusion and understanding within the diplomatic thought."⁴⁵ Both concepts are related as they represent a process of inclusion, openness, and convergence. Aiming to reduce the differences with the Other(s), they have similar goals and are continuously feeding off of each other, resting upon different foreign policy's styles.⁴⁶ In this regard, Villanueva states that both types of diplomacy should be analyzed in a complementary and constitutive way, understanding that the root of the differences among them are mostly related to the tradition of each country, as Gienow-Hecht and Donfried also stated .

According to Villanueva, public diplomacy is usually delimited by international information, public relations, diplomats' and societies' communication, cultural-touristic promotion, and the boost of a national image to other countries. On the other hand, cultural diplomacy is delimited by the representation of the national-cultural identity to international audiences to promote mutual understanding⁴⁷, this latter in consonance with Cummings' idealistic orientation. Nevertheless, the inclusion of national-cultural identity problematizes the definition, turning it more into a constructivist

⁴² Ibid. P. 16

⁴³ Cynthia P. Schneider, PhD. Diplomacy that Works "Best Practices in Cultural Diplomacy." (Georgetown: Center for Arts and Culture. 2003) P. 2

⁴⁴ Idem.

⁴⁵ César Villanueva. 'Public and Cultural Diplomacies: Strategies of Inclusion and Convergence in the New Millenium'. Mexican Magazine of Foreign Policy. Op. Cit. P. 8 (Original in Spanish)

⁴⁶ Idem.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Pp. 8-9

and cosmopolitan approach and not necessarily to a neorealist approach, which is our theoretical framework. In an attempt to propose a more comprehensive approach, Villanueva states three points of convergence between both concepts, which will be the guiding thread of this dissertation: the modalities of international cooperation, the development of mutual understanding to reduce the differences, and, finally, the attraction or persuasion towards foreign policy topics or agendas.⁴⁸

His analysis reconciles the previous approaches, presenting a comprehensive understanding of the shaping of public and cultural diplomacy in a complex and changing world. On the one hand, he considers how the actors interact internationally, while on the other he considers how, as a result of this interaction, the actors get to know each other better, fighting prejudices, and, finally, how they get to capitalize this through soft power to trace foreign policy actions with impact. It is precisely this latter convergence point that encouraged this research, as this author believes that culture is, coherently administered by a national strategy, the one thing that can induce countries to move towards more sophisticated types of cooperation. This is under the assumption of the existence of shared common problems; in this case Mexico and Romania as middle-income countries whose image has been conditioned by low development rates, migration, violence, corruption, etc., as part of a never-ending transition condition.

But why is cultural diplomacy important? In a world swamped by symbols and technology networks, there is a huge contest to project contents and make meanings last through time. Cultural diplomats have the role of constructing bridges between professionals, intellectuals, politicians, and artists. Therefore, while encouraging cultural diplomacy they are constructing bridges to approach nations through a system of identity- meanings. They are not only key actors in promoting the internationalization of national artists and cultural enterprises, but in promoting cultural tourism and giving nuance to the negative image of the country. They can also affect other components of foreign policy, as cultural diplomacy is tightly related to the national interest that creates, for instance, commercial and political opportunities, achieving a comprehensive strategy of promotion.

To complete this section, Ambassador Schneider emphasizes that to be successful, initiatives in cultural diplomacy should contain one or several of the following characteristics⁴⁹, as have been described throughout this chapter:

- Communicate some values;

⁴⁸ Ibid. P. 9

⁴⁹ Cynthia P. Schneider. *Op.Cit.* P. 3

- Cater to the interests of the host country or region;
- Offer pleasure, information or expertise in the spirit of exchange and mutual respect;
- Open doors between diplomats and their host country;
- Provide another dimension or alternative to the official presence of a country in the country;
- Form part of a long-term relationship and the cultivation of ties; and
- Be creative, flexible, and opportunistic.

All of this catalog will be used while analyzing our case study. This author decided to include them in this section to keep the methodological coherence. The premise from which this author departs is that there is a lot of cultural ignorance among countries despite having political and economic bonds, and here is where cultural diplomacy could work as a gate opener policy, creating spiritual links and generating empathy among countries, nations, and societies.

1.1.4 Nation Branding

To complete with this chapter, we will introduce the concept of nation branding coined by Simon Anholt to clarify to what extent the concept is related to the framework of public diplomacy. As mentioned on countless occasions, public diplomacy has as one of its goals constructing the prestige of a country, taking into consideration characteristics such as trust and credibility which generate the perfect conditions for public diplomacy to flourish; this is keeping and promoting a country's good reputation. Within nation branding, Anholt emphasizes the idea of the world as one market in a context where countries are more aware of their image asset. On that regard, he points out that:

All responsible governments, on behalf of their people, their institutions and their companies, need to discover what the world's perception of their country is, and to develop a strategy for managing it. It is a key part of their job to try to build a reputation that is fair, true, powerful, attractive, genuinely useful to their economic, political and social aims, and honestly reflects the spirit, the genius and the will of the people.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Simon Anholt 'Competitive Identity: A new model for the brand management of nations, cities and regions' in Policy & Practice', Development Education Review, Vol. 4 (2007) In <http://www.developmenteducationreview.com/issue4-focus1>. Consulted on 10.03.2015

With that said, he means fighting against clichés and stereotypes in order to seek a complete, balanced, and informed image of a country in terms of self-representation. But this does not rest upon illusions and good intentions, Lee Hudson Teslik affirms that it takes corporate branding techniques to countries⁵¹ to do so and that is how he defines nation branding. On the other hand, and more in consonance with public diplomacy, Keith Dinnie emphasizes that nation branding is dedicated to the promotion and maintenance of national image and national communication⁵². The blurring of the lines between domestic and international spheres is a characteristic of new public diplomacy, as mentioned above, which is why nation branding messages are considered as global and not sectorial.

Nevertheless, there is a problem when discussing a concept such as nation branding. The most difficult part of the definition is to extrapolate the concept of a brand from a product to a country; for example, the American Marketing Association (AMA) defines a brand as a “name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition.”⁵³ In this regard, the brand exists as a social construction generating its own realities. The problem, Anholt points out, is when so-and-so tries to manipulate this image through an enterprise know-how scheme, as we are talking about countries, nations, and not corporations. He emphasizes that the brand of a nation or a country makes evident the international rivalry for markets, investments, visitors, human resources, and influence, recognizing that this panorama has reduced the concept into basic market strategies that are properly more enterprise-oriented. Public opinion has played an important role in the mystification of the term. This is where governments should fight against its simplification, just as they are willing to fight clichés by different means, to position themselves with a positive and comprehensive image internationally.⁵⁴

Another element of complexity is perception. Javier Noya and Fernando Prado analysis shows that nation branding strategies have usually failed when they are too ambitious and try to modify the perception of a country in huge geographical regions or even globally.⁵⁵ Changing perceptions is

⁵¹ Lee Hudson Teslik. (2007) Nation Branding Explained in Council of Foreign Relations <http://www.cfr.org/diplomacy-and-statecraft/nation-branding-explained/p14776>. Consulted on 10.03.2015

⁵² Cfr. Keith Dinnie ed. Nation Branding: concept, issues, practice (Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, 2009)

⁵³ Philip Kotler, Donald H. Haider and Irving Rein (eds.), Marketing Places: Attracting Investment, Industry, and Tourism to Cities, States and Nations (Oxford, Macmillan, 2002) P.249

⁵⁴ Simon Anholt. ‘Competitive Identity: A new model for the brand management of nations, cities and regions’. *Op. Cit.*

⁵⁵ Javier Noya and Fernando Prado. (2012) ‘Marcas-país: éxitos y fracasos en la gestión de la imagen exterior’. Real Instituto Elcan in http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/723519804d04736c8ed6cff2157e2fd8/DT13-2012_Noya-Prado_Marca_pais_exitos_fracasos_gestion.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=723519804d04736c8ed6cff2157e2fd8 consulted on 10.03.2015

difficult and working with public opinion is equally complex because, as Robert Jervis states, perceptions are more stable when people do not have much contact with the object they refer to or when these perceptions have been internalized for a long time.⁵⁶

Now, in regards to the differences and similarities of nation branding and public diplomacy, Noya and Prado also analyze that generally the strategies of nation branding are more oriented to poor and developed countries, as they are trying to get a place in the mental map of the citizens of developed countries. They are trying to increase their exports or attract tourism, as they aim for a more competitive position to win more international presence and they are willing to solve the problems as a result of their negative image.⁵⁷ We can use as an example Mexico when negotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Romania with its membership to the European Union, as we will discuss further in the next chapters. On the other hand, the strategies of public diplomacy are more oriented to countries that want to influence other countries' public opinion to achieve their foreign policy objectives. These same authors affirm that there are more and more emergent countries or middle powers, such as Brazil or China, willing to do this competing in the same court just as the USA and the United Kingdom.⁵⁸ According to them, the nodal difference between nation branding and public diplomacy is the long term impact and marketing orientation, as the first is purely economic marketing and the second is political.

Therefore, Anholt says that while nation branding can have a more acceptable homogenized definition, public diplomacy does not, highlighting that a government's involvement in the process works as the convergent point of both. Public diplomacy strategies will be superfluous if the country has no good reputation, which is why the government needs to have a good image asset. In this regard, he has defined brand image as the context in which messages are received, not the messages themselves.⁵⁹

Public diplomacy is virtually useless unless it has some power to affect the background reputation of the country whose policies it attempts to represent; and as that background reputation can be altered only by policies, not by communications, the critical success factor for public diplomacy is whether its connection to policy making is one-way or two-way. If there is a two-way mechanism that allows the public diplomacy function to pass back recommendations for policy making, and these

⁵⁶ *Cfr.* Robert Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics. (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976)

⁵⁷ Javier Noya and Fernando Prado. *Op. Cit.*

⁵⁸ *Idem.*

⁵⁹ Simon Anholt. 'Competitive Identity: A new model for the brand management of nations, cities and regions' *Op.Cit.*

recommendations are taken seriously and properly valued by government as critical ‘market feedback’, then public diplomacy has a chance of enhancing the good name of the country, thus ensuring that future policy decisions are received in a more favorable light. It is a virtuous circle, because of course under these circumstances the policies need far less ‘selling’.⁶⁰

For Anholt, countries have to work in a nation branding strategy to support a foreign policy strategy of public diplomacy. He emphasizes that this can only be done through a strong internal coordination avoiding contradictory messages. For example, if the Ministries of Culture, Tourism and Foreign Affairs are not in the same line of promotion, the message will lack credibility. To analyze the convergence of these concepts, Anholt created the term Competitive Identity (CI) where he describes the synthesis of brand management with public diplomacy and trade, investment, tourism, and export promotion.⁶¹ He has also launched a Nation Brand Index to evaluate a country’s competitiveness in the field, which includes the following components: exports, governance, culture and heritage, people, tourism, investment and migration.⁶²

But why would some countries prefer a nation branding strategy more than public diplomacy strategy? To reflect on this, we must take into consideration that “Unlike the United States, which aimed to correct what it perceived as a false image, many countries in the twentieth century set out to establish an image abroad for the first time.”⁶³ To this latter idea it must be added that in terms of marketing, it is easier to position a product for the first time than to reposition it. With that said, the advantage of poor and developing countries in pushing a nation branding strategy as opposed to public diplomacy is that they have counted on the institutional support of international actors and organizations that have historically provided them with funding, such as the United Nations specialized agencies. African and Central American countries are a good example of this. Let us take the example of South Africa, which in a short amount of time changed its negative image of Apartheid and hosted a World Football Cup in 2010. Noya and Prado call this the trap of institutional resources of the richer countries which, due to their size and complexity, cannot react fast enough to their image problems. The opposite happens with the poorest countries that have no institutional resources but face the tramp

⁶⁰ Idem.

⁶¹ Idem.

⁶² Nation Brand Index in Simon Anholt’s website <http://www.simonanholt.com/Research/research-introduction.aspx> consulted 02.02.2015.

⁶³ Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried (ed.) *Searching for Cultural Diplomacy*. *Op. Cit.* Pp. 18 y 19

of natural resources, the only available tool they have to hook international audiences: touristic landscapes or quality raw materials.⁶⁴

Though these ideas may sound quite reductionist, it is interesting to note the possibilities of changing perception in countries such as those in our study case, Mexico and Romania. These are middle income countries which are in perfect conditions to construct themselves internationally after a period of transition to democracy, as opposed to the consolidated images of high income countries and super powers such as the USA, Germany, or France. To conclude, many countries promote their products and services which need to work coherently in many spheres at the same time. In this regard, the aim of this research is to study how culture can be a promoter of this structural framework wherein nation branding, public diplomacy, and soft power coexist in everyday international relations.

⁶⁴ Fernando Noya and Prado. *Op. Cit.*

2 Mexico and Romania: Bilateral Relations

This year Mexico and Romania are commemorating 80 years of diplomatic relations. Even though a complete legal framework (appendix 1) has been constructed during these years to enhance the political dialogue, this dissertation has identified several obstacles preventing the two countries developing a more dynamic relationship. In this regard, this chapter's aim is to examine the historical foundations of the relationship between Mexico and Romania and detail the current topics on the foreign policy agenda to analyze where the relationship stands today. This chapter will also assess how these traditionally distant countries share common concerns as a result of their historical subjugation, democratic transition experiences, geographical paradoxes and Latin heritage. These points of convergence will be used to demonstrate in the next chapter how cultural diplomacy, assisted by these similarities, can help strengthen the relationship between Mexico and Romania.

2.1 Historical Relationship

Even though Romania's independence from the Ottoman Empire was consolidated in 1878 by means of the Berlin Treaty, Mexico did not recognize Romania until 1880, when the former President of Mexico, Porfirio Diaz, congratulated Prince Carol I, establishing the first official contact between these countries. During that time, greater than any eagerness to know about Romania was the great interest Mexico generated in very distant countries due to the exoticism of the myth of its physical greatness and natural resources. According to the files of the Mexican Embassy in Romania, great descriptions of geography helped the latter, as in the description of Mexico City: "built in a big island in the middle of a lake, it is the biggest fortress of the New World (...)." ⁶⁵ Particular interest was awakened in the region of the Pre-Columbian American and the Inca and Aztec empires due to the publication of several archeological articles after 1841. ⁶⁶ It would be worth saying that one of the biggest legacies to the world from these great empires is agriculture in the form of the universalization of the potato (Incas) and the domestication of maize (Aztecs and Mayans). Maize, for example, first entered Romania through the Principality of Wallachia, then spread to Moldavia and Transylvania, ⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Mexico Diplomático. Mexican Embassy in Rumania in <http://www.mexicodiplomatico.org/embajadas/rumania.pdf> consulted on 10.12.2014

⁶⁶ Idem.

⁶⁷ Idem.

and has since then been part of Romania's national gastronomy, making the country nowadays one of the most important producers of this crop in the EU.⁶⁸

The first attempt to establish consular relations between these countries was in 1921 when engineer Scarlat Tottu, a Romanian citizen, asked Mexico to accredit him as the Honorary Consul of Mexico in Romania. Graciela Arroyo Pichardo, the writer of the only existing book in Spanish so far about the diplomatic relationship between Mexico and Romania, researched the Mexican Historical Diplomatic files and found the following anecdote regarding the establishment of this first Honorary Consulate in Bucharest.⁶⁹

Mexico considered Tottu's proposal by consulting its Hamburg and Vienna Consulates. With their recommendation, Mexico denied Tottu's petition but he misunderstood⁷⁰ and started the procedure with the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, receiving the pertinent authorization. There was a crossing of diplomatic correspondence due to the conditions of the time and with the approval of Romania, Mexico decided to name Tottu Honorary Consul, allowing him to start commercial relations between the countries. Arroyo Pichardo believes that along with this misunderstanding, Mexico decided to accept the latter outcome due to a lack of relations under the rule of General Alvaro Obregón and overall because of the little knowledge of Eastern Europe in a period of rearrangements and reorganization after the First World War.⁷¹

Romania held the *exequatur*⁷² from Tottu until 1923. During that period Tottu developed the idea of promoting the participation of Romanian investors in the installation of a petroleum refinery in Constantinople supplied by Mexican petroleum for neighboring markets. Having not yet received Romania's *exequatur*, he asked Mexico to accredit him as Honorary Consul of Mexico in Constantinople along with granting him Mexican citizenship. Mexico granted Tottu with the latter and in 1925 he traveled to Mexico to solve the situation with the Consulate in Bucharest. He was finally named Honorary Consul in Romania that year but stayed in Constantinople, and therefore was removed from his position in 1926 when he was accused of granting fake passports. In 1927, Engineer Nicolae I.

⁶⁸ Act Media- Romania News Agency. 'Romania, 1st in EU for the area cultivated with maize' (2015) <http://actmedia.eu/economic/romania-1st-in-eu-for-the-area-cultivated-with-maize/57340> consulted on 13.04. 2015

⁶⁹ Graciela Arroyo Pichardo. *La evolución de las relaciones entre México y Rumanía en el contexto internacional del siglo XX* (México D.F: UNAM, 1981) Pp.69-90

⁷⁰ Arroyo Pichardo says this could be a grammar mistake because the word for "yes" in Spanish "sí" equals the word "and" in Romanian which allows a more ambiguous interpretation.

⁷¹ Graciela Arroyo Pichardo. *Op. Cit.* P. 72

⁷² A document issued to a consul by the host country government authorizing him to carry out his consular duties.

Martinescu replaced Tottu but he was also removed in 1928 for not sending correspondent reports to Mexico.

The first contacts between Mexico and Romania under a multilateral framework were within the League of Nations Union (LNU), the international organization created in 1918 and considered the predecessor of the United Nations (UN). In this context Romania, guided by Minister of Foreign Affairs Nicolae Titulescu, promoted a rapprochement with Latin America and established the first Romanian diplomatic mission in the region to Brazil in 1927, Argentina in 1928, Mexico, Chili, and Uruguay in 1935, and finally to Venezuela in 1936.⁷³ But Mexico and Romania also coincided in the works of the International Organization of the Intellectual Cooperation, a special Committee of the LNU and considered UNESCO's predecessor, where Titulescu and Romanian-French writer Elena Vacarescu represented Romania in several meetings and diplomat writers Alfonso Reyes and Genaro Estrada represented Mexico.⁷⁴ The Organization's purpose was to generate a space of dialogue and reflections around culture and its intrinsic importance in the construction of peace; this, let us not forget, was in a postwar context. Maybe all the latter, in addition to the establishment of Romania and Mexico's first consulates in each country, is one of the reasons for the granting of Titulescu's "Order of the Aztec Eagle" in 1935, the most important decoration that Mexico gives to foreigners.⁷⁵

Mexico and Romania opened Diplomatic Missions⁷⁶ and the first instructions to follow from the Mexican side were to investigate Romania's agricultural reform of 1921 and the petroleum issue.⁷⁷ On the other hand, Romania asked Mexico to share some information regarding the legal regulations of civil and commercial aviation. Due to the course of the Second World War, in 1940 the Romanian Government suspended its Diplomatic Missions in Mexico, Brazil, Denmark, Iran and Finland.⁷⁸ Mexico responded with the same measure, emphasizing that it would not maintain diplomatic relations with governments imposed by Axis Rome-Berlin-Tokyo, acknowledging the Pan-American commitments acquired by the Chancellors' Meeting in Havana in 1940.⁷⁹

⁷³ The diplomatic relations among this countries strengthened when Romania signed the Pact Saavedra Lamas, an anti-war treaty promoted by Argentina between Latin America and Europe and signed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1933. For more information Doru Bratu, Istoria relațiilor României cu țările Americii Latine (1866-2000), (Bucharest: Editura Fundației România de Măine, 2004.)

⁷⁴ Alexandra Pita González. *Educar para la Paz. México y la Cooperación Intelectual Internacional 1922-1948*. (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores: México, 2014) P.45

⁷⁵ Information obtained from the Protocol office of the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁷⁶ Romanian Diplomats were Dimitri Draghicescu and Vintila Peleta and Mexican Diplomats Vicente Veloz González and Francisco Vázquez Treserra.

⁷⁷ President Lázaro Cardenas was the President in charge of the nationalization of Mexican Petroleum in 1938.

⁷⁸ Graciela Arroyo Pichardo. *Op. Cit.* P. 155

⁷⁹ Ibid. Pp. 156-158.

In 1968 a new attempt was made. The vice-president of the Romanian Council of Ministers, Georghe Radulescu, visited Mexico to set the foundations for commercial exchange. During his visit to Mexico, he signed an Interbank Agreement of Commercial Exchange.⁸⁰ It is worth mentioning that the relationship between these two countries persisted in the cultural field due to the creation of the Mexican Society of Friendship and Cultural Exchange with Romania during the period of 1950-1960. This was as a result of the interest of popular sectors and the Worker University to maintain contact with the socialist countries that emerged from the Second World War.⁸¹ In 1970, Romania opened a commercial representation in Mexico which organized a tour in 1972 to Romania for officers of the Mexican Ministry of Industry and Commerce.⁸² One of the most important results of this visit was that both countries reflected on the urgent need to know each other better in order to establish better foundations for a bilateral relation. To continue with this work a Romanian delegation travelled to Mexico, headed by the Secretary General of the Ministry of External Trade. This latter delegation led to the determination of the reestablishment of diplomatic relations on 20 March, 1973, which was formalized with an Embassy opening. Unlike other countries, during the era of peaceful coexistence, Mexico established relations with various countries regardless of their ideology since self-determination of nations and judicial equality of states are some of the historic principles of Mexican Foreign Policy.

The first symbolic meeting materialized with the visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, George Macovescu, to Mexico in 1974, resulting in the signing of the first Agreement of Cultural Cooperation between The United States of Mexico (Mexico's official name) and the Socialist Republic of Romania, along with the first Commercial Agreement. We must note that the number of scholarships offered by the Romanian government was quite considerable due to its intention to promote the idea of the so-called "Multilaterally Developed Socialist Society." According to the Romanian Embassy in Mexico, currently the country offers 85 scholarships to study in Romania regardless of country of origin.⁸³ Therefore it is this writer's opinion that this clashes with the significant offer launched under the Communist regime which aimed to obtain more international legitimation.

⁸⁰ Banco Nacional de Comercio Exterior. 'Esfuerzos recientes en la promoción del comercio exterior.' (1968) in http://revistas.bancomext.gob.mx/rce/magazines/742/13/CE_SEPTIEMBRE_1968_.pdf consulted on 12.02.2015

⁸¹ Idem.

⁸² Idem.

⁸³ Interview number 2 with a Diplomat from the Romanian Embassy in Mexico.

The first high-level contact was made in 1974, with the visit of the former Romanian President Nicolae Ceausescu to Mexico. Subsequently, the former Foreign Secretary Jorge Castañeda y Álvarez de la Rosa visited Bucharest in 1979. Mexico had to close its Embassy in Bucharest due to budget restrictions in September of 1989, before Romania's December Revolution, and reopen it in December of 1995. In 1999, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rosario Green, made an official visit to Romania. In July 2000 the former President of Romania, Emil Constantinescu, visited Mexico, and in March 2002 President Ion Iliescu did as well. The latest visit to Mexico was a commercial one from the former Minister of Economy of Romania, Varujan Vosganian, in 2013. At this point it is important to highlight that no Mexican President has visited Romania in an official visit, which would be very significant in proving the will to move towards a more strategic relationship.

2.2 Actual Context and Convergent Characteristics

2.2.1 Beyond Geography and Latin Heritage

The Romanian Embassy in Mexico defines its country priorities as the full integration of Romania to the communitarian institutions of the EU, and the strengthening of its relationship(s) with the West through its strategic partnership with the USA within North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Currently I would include the membership to the Schengen Zone⁸⁴, and President Iohannis' campaign against corruption to project a more credible and coherent image of Romania's transition.

On the other hand, Mexico's National Plan of Development for this administration has as one of its principles positioning itself as an actor with global responsibility.⁸⁵ This in a context where, due to its contiguity with a world power, the relationship with the USA represents its more strategic and demanding one. In addition to this, it could be argued that despite its ups and downs, Mexico has fulfilled a role of leadership for Latin American integration along with Brazil, for example with the creation of the Community of Latin America and the Caribbean States (CELAC by its acronym in Spanish) in 2010.⁸⁶ Regarding its relationship with Europe, the country has focused on its historical links with Spain, not only through the Ibero-American Summits as an interregional space of dialogue but also as Latin America's interlocutor with the EU.

⁸⁴ The port of Constanza represents an access point of the EU to the Black Sea.

⁸⁵ Presidency of Mexico. 'National Development Plan of Mexico 2013- 2018'. *Op. Cit.*

⁸⁶ Successor of Rio Group it is a flexible architecture integration organization that includes all and only Latin American States, as opposed to the Organization of the American States (OAS) which excludes Cuba and includes the USA and Canada.

With that said, Mexico has a historical and geographical relation with the USA which has found an instrument to position itself as an equal partner of the USA and Canada in NAFTA, valid since 1994, more in legal than in practical terms. This is similar to Romania with the EU, a member since 2007, where the country is still working to achieve the standards of the other members. NAFTA achieved one of Mexico's aims, which was to legitimize its geographic and political belonging to North America, though in cultural terms it finds its closest roots in Latin America. This constitutes a geographical paradox in identity terms, just as happens to Romania within the EU and Balkans, a situation which I will try to explain further, including the component of Latin heritage.

Romania belongs to the Balkan Peninsula along with Greece, Turkey, Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, and Croatia. The Balkans have been considered a historical land of backwardness due to their role as a transit area, war zone, raw material and workforce supplier.⁸⁷ Within this context, the countries belonging to the region have undergone a historical process of adjustments and readjustments because they constitute a transit territory from the Middle East to the West, representing a fertile land for various Empires' territorial disputes (the Ottoman, the Austro-Hungarian and the Russian, etc.). Along with this, three major conflicts have shaped international public opinion on the region: the First and Second Balkan Wars (1912-1913), but particularly the Yugoslav Wars, comprised of several wars from 1991 to 1999. These later wars represent the first large scale conflicts in Europe after the Second World War. All this has nourished the pejorative term *Balkanization* as a political concept to roughly describe the dismemberment of multinational countries or regions into more ethnic and homogeneous ones.⁸⁸

Sanja Lazarević Radak from the Institute for Balkan Studies says that for Western countries "The specific form of fragmentation, impossibility to form solid political unions, incapacity of cooperation and achieving diplomatic solutions, mutual national hatred and horrific crimes, or a specific attitude towards separatism could all be recognized as Balkanization."⁸⁹ The association of Romania with the region results in the following paradox: it physically belongs to a region which tends to be conceptualized politically and not geographically. This situation has affected the way the Romanian context is comprehended, because talking about Romania means mixing both geographical

⁸⁷ Graciela Arroyo Pichardo. *Op. Cit.* P. 31

⁸⁸ Cfr. Vesna Goldsworthy. 'Invention and in(ter)vention: the rhetoric of Balkanization.' In Bjelić, Dušan I. and Savić, Obrad, (eds.) Balkan as metaphor: between globalization and fragmentation. (Cambridge MA, USA : MIT Press 2002) Pp. 25-38

⁸⁹ Sanja Lazarević-Radak. Impery, Text And Shifting Balkanization. (From 19th Century to the present day). Empires and Nations' Conference paper, Rome 2013 in https://www.academia.edu/7530653/Empire_Text_and_Shifting_Balkanization consulted 17.04.2015

and political characteristics, locating this country in a political archetype far from its reality. In addition to this we find another geographical paradox within the Balkans, as Slobodan Pajovic affirms: “The East thought we were the West, and the West thought that we were the East. But we were predestined to be the East in the West and West in the East.”⁹⁰ Due to this ideological connotation, along with this geographical ambiguity, many of the Western countries carry out all the reluctance with which the countries from the former ex-Yugoslavia are often associated, along with the countries that form the Balkan Peninsula. This lack of knowledge about Romania and the predominance of this prototypical construction could be considered, for example, one of the reasons for the distant relationship with faraway regions such as Latin America.

Now, in talking about Latin heritage as a point of convergence between Mexico and Romania it must be stated that there are two perspectives regarding Romania’s situation. Even though some academics have traced the debate upon the authenticity or artificiality of this background, it is my intention to highlight the idea of the Latin exclusiveness which represents the core of the debate. Beginning with the facts, it should be said that despite the fact that the name of the country honors the former Roman Empire (initially meaning “the land of Romans” and developing into *România*, “the homeland of Romanians”), searching the country's remote past will show that it was Dacian naturally, the language that Romania should have assumed in their conformation as a State. This identity, sacrificed as a result of Dacia’s conquer by the Romans, symbolized a schism⁹¹ that would lead Romania to conform to one of the farthest wings of the Latin world. To this must be added the religious factors. Linguist Camelia Firica highlights the role of religion in the formation of the language before the split of the Western and Eastern Roman Empires, traduced in the historical rivalry between Rome and Constantinople:

Before getting into contact with the Slavs, Romanian had known Christianity in Latin so, most words related to religion are of Latin origin. Starting the IXth century Romanians witnessed the emergence of the Slav church founded by Methodius and Cyril and their disciples, embraced it and, consequently, Romanian vocabulary enriched itself with religious terms of Paleoslavonic origin.⁹²

⁹⁰ Slobodan Pajovic, *Los Balcanes: una aproximación geográfico-histórica», Los Balcanes: entre el pasado y el presente. Una introducción histórica a los estudios balcánicos*. (CIDE: México, 2000) P. 8.

⁹¹ An interesting datum is that Romania’s national anthem makes reference to Roman Emperor Trajan.

⁹² Camelia Firica. ‘Slav Influence upon the Romanian Language-Direct References to Croatian.’ In *Društvena Istraživanja, Journal for General Social Issues*, Croatia, Vol:19 No. 3, 107 (2010) P. 520

All this would make Romanians the only Latin-speaking people under the influence of the Slav-Byzantine orthodox spirituality, and nowadays, along with Moldova, the only country in Eastern Europe with an official Romance language.⁹³ Due to its geographical localization, as discussed previously, “Among the lexical loans that Romanian borrowed from other languages, those of Slav origin play an important part not only by their number but, also, by their wide circulation, as a consequence of their belonging to the main lexical stock.”⁹⁴ Therefore it can be said that Romania and Moldova represent Latin islands surrounded by a Slavic context, just as the Romanian writer Nicolae Iorga stated. Lucian Blaga, an outstanding Romanian poet, reflected on this:

We speak of the spirit of our culture, we only want to be Latin – clear, rational, moderate, lovers of the form, classic – but, like it or not, we are more than that. The significant percentage of Slavic and Thracian blood still boiling in our veins, is the pretext of an issue which ought to be worded more audaciously.⁹⁵

Given the above as a continuous element of distinction within the region, it is said that Romania has oversized its Latin background to the detriment of its Slavic one. This can also be understood in terms of the implicit association to the Balkans and its negative connotation; therefore the praise of its Latin heritage is an element of exceptionalism in the region.

2.2.2 Two Blocks, Two Paradigmatic Actors

It is not the purpose of this section to analyze in depth the path of transition of these countries, but instead to identify some common patterns that differentiated them from the Eastern and Western blocks. Both countries lived under authoritarian regimes during the last century: during the Cold War, Romania was part of the soviet sphere of influence while Mexico was part of the American one. Nevertheless, both countries played a particular role that distinguished them from the rest of their fellow blocks. For example, as opposed to the majority of Latin American countries, Mexico did not

⁹³ In 2013 the Constitutional Court ruled that Romanian is the official language of the country. During the Communist rule the language was named Moldovan to distinguish it from Romania under the premise of two states, two people.

⁹⁴ Camelia Firica. *Op. Cit.* P. 512. This author also mentions the use of both Latin and Slavic patterns for numbers, the reflexive forms of Slavic influence and I would add the declinations of nouns such as in Latin.

⁹⁵ Lucian Blaga. ‘The Revolt Of Our Non-Latin Heritage ’ in *Plural Magazine, Identity and Destiny: Ideas And Ideology In Interwar Romania*, Cultural Institute of Romania, Bucharest, N 29 (2007) (First published in Gândirea- 15 of September of 1921)

experience a military dictatorship such as those in Chili, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and others. Instead a unique party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI by its acronym in Spanish) ruled uninterruptedly for 71 years in a political game that Peruvian Literature Nobel Prize winner Mario Vargas Llosa called “The perfect dictatorship.” He did so to affirm that there was no real party system, though there was an illusion of it which legitimated the regime for many years in a context of right-wing military dictatorships in the region.

In 1990, a debate on Mexican television took place to discuss the situation in Eastern Europe. Mexican intellectuals such as Octavio Paz and Enrique Krauze participated and Vargas Llosa took that opportunity to go into detail about his previous argument, highlighting the role of intellectuals to legitimate these unique party dictatorships:

I don't think Mexico can be exonerated of that tradition of Latin American dictatorships (...) The perfect dictatorship is not Communism or the Soviet Union or Fidel Castro, is Mexico. It is the camouflaged dictatorship that might seem not to be a dictatorship but it has, if you search, all the characteristics of it, for example permanence; not of a man but of an immovable party that grants enough space for criticism to the extent that it serves to confirm how democratic the party is but it suppresses criticism by all means even in the worst ways when it puts in danger its permanence. A dictatorship that has created a rhetoric, a left rhetoric that justifies it for which it has efficiently recruited intellectuals, the intelligence. I do not think there is in Latin America a dictatorship system that has done it so efficiently by suborning them in a very subtle way through jobs, designations and public positions without requiring them a systematic duration as vulgar dictators do. On the contrary, by asking them a critic attitude because that was the way to ensure the permanence on power of that party.⁹⁶

The importance of the use of intellectuals during this authoritarian period lies in the creation of power mechanisms in terms of legitimacy creation and diffusion of the image and representation of Mexico through a credible and respectable elite. ⁹⁷ Alexandra Pita González calls the use of intellectuals to modify the barbarian images of the Mexican Revolution that took place in 1910 as the “Diplomacy of Letters” with writers and intellectuals such Alfonso Reyes and Genaro Estrada. What is

⁹⁶ Translation from Spanish by the writer. The debate took part in Televisa. *El siglo XX: la experiencia de la libertad* (1990) available in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iu60OuWuZtg> consulted on 5.02.2015. Vargas Llosa refers to intellectuals such as Octavio Paz who also participated in the recorded debate.

⁹⁷ Alexandra Pita González. *Op. Cit.* P. 25

important to consider as well is that PRI emerged from this political schism, Mexican Revolution, and strategically institutionalized this image in terms of one party-one country's self-representation. And one of the ways it found to do this externally was through the deployment of intellectuals.

On the other hand, what differentiated Romania from the rest of the European communist countries was Western support. Nicolae Ceausescu managed to achieve this through a formula: De-stalinization of the political regime in the exterior and implementation of authoritarian Stalinist policies inside the country. This meant more autonomous foreign policy from the Soviet center with a strong Orwellian control apparatus inside. For the West, it was a matter of generating links with a country that, despite its communist regime, practiced an independent foreign policy. This was tolerated in the measure that there was not a proficient relationship between these societies, but only between national leaders, who supported the construction of an artificial relationship due to short-term interests.⁹⁸

Ceausescu frequently used the phrase "the multilaterally developed socialist society" in his speeches to explain the project that differentiated Romania from the communist prototype, which gave the country some autonomy towards the soviet center.⁹⁹ One of the first challenges for soviet control was the refusal to participate in the Czechoslovak invasion in 1968, despite Romanian membership in the Warsaw Pact,¹⁰⁰ followed by the signing of an agreement with the European Community, Romania's membership to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) since in 1972, cooperative relations with France and the USA, the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany, and Romania's participation in the Olympic Games of 1984 in Los Angeles, California.¹⁰¹

With that said, both countries experienced different types of transition but with a common paradigmatic authoritarian past. On the one hand, Romania had a violent revolution in 1989 that signified the execution of the Ceausescu couple and the permanence of old communist structures in key position; former President Ion Iliescu's background is an example of this. On the other hand, Mexico experienced transition in 2000 when the unique party system of PRI was defeated by a new political force, the National Action Party (PAN by its acronym in Spanish) - but this only lasted for twelve years

⁹⁸ A parallelism could be traced with Chili, for example, which managed to legitimate itself externally through economic diplomacy during the period of Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship.

⁹⁹ The concept was used in the following program of the Communist Party "Programul Partidului Comunist Român de făurire a societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate și înaintare a României spre comunism: adoptat de Congresul al XI-lea al P. C."

¹⁰⁰ Cfr. Robert R. King. 'Romania's Struggle for an Autonomous Foreign Policy.' *The World Today*, Vol. 35, No. 8 (Aug., 1979), Pp. 340-348

¹⁰¹ Cfr. Rosario de Mateo. 'Interés nacional y socialismo. La política exterior de Rumania.' *Nueva Sociedad*. No 80, (noviembre-diciembre 1985). PP. 70-77.

since in 2013 PRI came back into power with the current administration of President Enrique Peña Nieto. In both cases, transition to democracy has not signified the overcoming of inequality as a result of the lack of income redistribution and the achievement of social justice. In addition to this, the backwardness experienced in terms of political influence towards centers of power such as the EU, NAFTA, and other integration initiatives is still evident.

Within transition, Romania had to work on the depoliticization of the communist regime and Mexico had to work on the depoliticization of the unique party authoritarian regime, both inheriting strong corruption structures that are still present in international reports¹⁰² and weak civil societies. This is a fundamental figure in the era of democratization, and a target for public diplomacy to display and spread information. Given the above, it could be said that the authoritarian background of Mexico and Romania is another point of convergence between these countries and their actual political context.

2.2.3 The Current Relationship and Topics of the Foreign Policy Agenda

The relationship between these countries is mostly framed within the EU-Mexico Economic Partnership, Political Coordination and Cooperation Agreement,¹⁰³ in addition to the agreements contained in the legal framework appendix. According to the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the membership of Romania to the European Union in 2007, commerce between these countries increased, taking advantage of this instrument which has caused trade exchange to grow sustainably. In 2012 alone, Romania was the seventeenth commercial partner of Mexico among the countries of the EU.¹⁰⁴

As the relationship is mostly focused on its economic component, there have been several attempts to facilitate exchange such as different conferences or seminars, on the Mexican side organized by ProMéxico (Component of the Ministry of Economy that promotes the participation of Mexico in international trade and investment) and on the Romanian one by the Ministry of Economy. In 2013, the former Minister of Economy, Varujan Vosganian, visited Mexico to give a commercial impulse to the relation and participate in a conference on the business opportunities offered by

¹⁰² Transparency International puts Romania in place 69 (Last of the EU members) and Mexico in place 103 of 174 countries and territories. Corruption Perception Index 2014 <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014> consulted on 15.04.2015

¹⁰³ Mexico was the first Latin American country to sign a partnership agreement with the EU in 1997. This type of partnership overpasses a free trade agreement as it includes cooperation initiatives on different topics.

¹⁰⁴ Mexico exports to Romania automobile parts and telephone components and Romania exports to Mexico intermediate products of iron or non-alloy steel.

Romania to Mexican enterprises as an entrance to the EU.¹⁰⁵ In this regard, both countries seem to understand the potentialities of their geographical location and their role as a gateway to bigger markets such as the EU and NAFTA. The creation of the High Level Group of Economic Cooperation between Mexico and Romania in 2007 had this aim and it has gathered four times since its creation (2007, 2010, 2011, and 2014). Nevertheless, this assumption has not been traduced in the consolidation of a strategic partnership outside the EU's framework and there is still a lack of awareness between their business elite and their societies; that is why this author has focused on the importance of cultural diplomacy as the first pillar to move towards other types of cooperation, such as economic and political.

On the other hand, the Consultation Mechanism between Mexico and Romania created in 1996 has had five meetings (1999, 2000, 2002, 2009, and 2014). This is where the Cooperation Program on Culture, Education, Youth and Sports is negotiated along with discussion of topics of interest for both countries. During the last meeting, Romania and Mexico agreed to work together to increase the political dialogue on Human Rights, gender equality and the protection of persons with disabilities. On the multilateral agenda, the topics were the Global agreement Mexico-EU, the reform of the UN's Security Council, the situation in Ukraine, global warming, disarmament, and the development agenda beyond 2015.¹⁰⁶

Tourism has also been an ongoing topic on the agenda.¹⁰⁷ According to Mexican authorities, Romania asked Mexico to share some experiences on the topic through the consolidation of a Memorandum of Understanding. There are approximately 10 thousand Romanians travelling to Mexico each year to touristic destinations such as Cancun, and though the process is in standby due to the change of administration in Romania, there are some problems that affect the flow of Romanian visitors to Mexico, such as the USA's migration alerts. With the membership of Romania to the EU the visa requirements for Mexico stopped, but due to the border collaboration with the USA there is still a "black list" which has included several Romanian citizens who have tried to travel to Mexico. This situation has made the Romanian Government to start the establishment of an Honorary Consulate in Cancun.¹⁰⁸

This year both countries will accomplish 80 years of diplomatic relations and there is still a lot to be done. Several activities, mostly cultural, will take place but because of budget restrictions, they

¹⁰⁵ Information obtained from the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

¹⁰⁶ Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Communique of the results on the Consultation Mechanism between Mexico and Romania (2014) in <http://saladeprensa.sre.gob.mx/index.php/comunicados/3880-109> consulted on the 12.04.2015

¹⁰⁷ See appendix.

¹⁰⁸ Information from the Mexican and Romanian Embassies in each country.

are not planned to be as spectacular as the Mexican cultural event that will last all 2015: the year of Mexico in the United Kingdom.¹⁰⁹ But beyond all the information gathered from both governments in this section, it is important to end with the following consideration. The Romanian Embassy in Mexico is concurrently accredited to Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala while the Mexican Embassy in Romania is only accredited for this country. In a conversation with some Mexican diplomats,¹¹⁰ several attempts to get the Republic of Moldova as a concurrence of this Embassy were mentioned, but due to the internal rivalry of the political forces in Mexico (political parties and legislative branch), it has not been a priority to present this initiative in the Senate.¹¹¹ This is interesting as it seems that the Mexican Embassy in Romania is practical if we analyze it in budgetary terms. Resources can be obtained because of its constitutive character, but its workload cannot be put on the same level as other Mexican Representations abroad. For example, the Mexican Embassy in Hungary is concurrent with Bulgaria and Croatia and the Mexican Embassy in Greece is concurrent with Moldova and Cyprus. The interviewees believed this might be an inheritance from the Cold War.

One of Romania's priorities within the EU is supporting Moldova's membership. Mexico needs to start sending signs of the importance of its relationship with the region and, along with a coherent restructure of Mexico's diplomatic missions, the strategic location of Romania could facilitate a dialogue with the ex-former soviet countries in Eastern Europe.

¹⁰⁹ The Dual year includes the year of the UK in Mexico. This type of initiative has proven to be very rewarding, for example Brazil's cultural strategy has led to the international projection of this country which helped it host 2014 FIFA World Cup and to get the 2016 Olympics.

¹¹⁰ Interviews number 3 and 4 to Mexican Diplomats.

¹¹¹ Mexico has two legislative branches: the deputy chamber and the senate chamber. The senate is in charge of ratifying the foreign policy guidelines, and supporting the appointment of Ambassadors and General Consuls.

3 New Paths for a New Image in Mexico and Romania

3.1 Cultural Diplomacy Mexico-Romania: a Bridge to be Constructed

Mexico and Romania represent two countries with asymmetrical images. They are middle income countries that have cultural and historical wealth but face poverty as part of a never-ending story of transition and underdevelopment. This section will try to present how cultural institutions operate in both countries, the cultural exchange between them, and their challenges in terms of public and cultural diplomacy. Along with nation branding experiences, this chapter will try to analyze the origins of these countries' negative images and, through a list of recommendations, how they can exchange experiences and consolidate a new strategic relationship.

Mexico is a cultural power as it is the country in the American continent with the largest number of sites declared World Heritage by UNESCO, like the Pre-Hispanic city Chichen Itza, one of the New Seven Wonders, and it is the country with the sixth highest number of World Heritage sites, just behind Italy, Spain, China, France, and Germany.¹¹² In addition, it has eight living expressions in the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, such as Mariachi traditional music, the festival of the Day of the Dead and Mexican traditional cuisine. It is worth saying that only Mexico, Japan and France have placed their national cuisines in this list, capitalizing this soft power achievement with an excellent gastronomy reputation that also works as a tourist attraction. On the other hand, Romania has seven sites declared World Heritage, including the villages with fortified churches in Transylvania, and four living expressions in the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage, like Doina, a lyrical, solemn, and improvised chant.¹¹³ All of these represent a gate of opportunities for cultural tourism.

Outside the official channels, more than Romania has in Latin America, Mexico has penetrated the Eastern European market through media content like “telenovelas” or soap operas. Even though this has not been a governmental strategy, it has definitively opened a window “by presenting on one hand a multifaceted, vibrant, yet conservative Mexican cultural community, while on the other hand modernizing its national identity to that of a more open, up-to-date, liberal and ever-changing

¹¹²UNESCO's office in Mexico website <http://www.unesco.org/new/es/mexico/work-areas/culture/world-heritage/> consulted on 1.03.2015

¹¹³ UNESCO'S website <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00311&topic=mp&cp=RO> consulted on 1.03.2015

society.”¹¹⁴ Romania’s channel “Acasa” broadcasts Latin soap operas in the original language with Romanian subtitles. There is also a radio station called “Romantic” that broadcasts Latin-American music, which is one of the reasons of why so many Romanians with no formal education in Spanish are able to speak the language, in addition to the Latin roots of both languages. All in all, this has helped to construct an image of Mexico in Romania’s imaginary as opposed to the image of Romania in Mexico, which is still unclear and covered by mysticism. It is important to note that cultural diplomacy is mainly practiced by governments and cultural commerce is practiced by enterprises or private institutions.¹¹⁵ Although these market dynamics can be helpful in terms of spreading cultural contents, they do not represent cultural diplomacy activities themselves.

Moving forward to the institutional framework, the governmental offices in Romania which are in charge of promoting the country’s culture are the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Romanian Cultural Institute (ICR by its acronym in Romanian). In Mexico, there is no Ministry of Culture but there is a National Council for Culture (CONACULTA by its acronym in Spanish) which coordinates the domestic cultural institutions and has an area of international relations. CONACULTA works closely with the Mexican Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AMEXCID by its acronym in Spanish), allocated in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a General Direction of Education and Cultural Cooperation. This particularity has an impact on the attributions of the Ministry because having a higher hierarchy than the Council’s makes this institution the one in charge of administering the promotion of Mexican cultural contents abroad. In an interview with an officer of AMEXCID, he explained that the countries without a Ministry of Culture regularly create cultural departments in their Ministries of Foreign Affairs to realize this external promotion role.¹¹⁶

The Mexican and Romanian Embassies in both countries are rather small, in terms of employees’ numbers and functions, and there is not a specific officer to fulfill the role of cultural attaché. In the Romanian Embassy, the officer in charge of economic and political affairs is also the cultural attaché, and today in the Mexican Embassy Ambassador Agustín Gutiérrez Canet has decided

¹¹⁴ Marina Guajardo Villar. Master Thesis: How is Mexico implementing its soft power by means of its public diplomacy to influence its international image? (Leiden University: The Netherlands, 2012) in <http://www.abstract.xlibx.com/a-history/79708-7-marina-guajardo-villar-s1031449-master-thesis-leiden-university.php> consulted on 20. 04.2015

¹¹⁵ Ambassador Agustín Gutiérrez Canet. The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Mexico’s Foreign Policy. Conference paper for the 70th Anniversary of Ibero- American University, Mexico City. (7 of November of 2013)

¹¹⁶ Interview number 1 with an officer of the General Direction of Education and Cultural Cooperation of the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs (May 2015)

to fulfill that role as “*a firm supporter of cultural diplomacy.*”¹¹⁷ In the interviews held with officers of both Embassies they affirmed that this is the result of budget restrictions as there are no big Mexican and Romanian communities in each country.¹¹⁸

According to the materials which both Embassies shared for this research, most of the activities have been framed with the support of local governments. The Romanian Embassy in Mexico, for example, has had the support of Mexico’s City boroughs or municipalities to realize cultural activities, which have borrowed some spaces for exhibitions, concerts, presentations, etc. Most of these activities have been encouraged by the Romanian community or civil society and not necessarily by the government.¹¹⁹ The National Autonomous University of Mexico, the biggest in Latin America, has a lecture on Romania and several times a year organizes cultural activities related to the country in which the Embassy has participated. As a result, this year the Embassy has promoted the launch of a lecture at the University of Guadalajara with a Romanian academic from Bucharest.¹²⁰

On the other hand, today Mexico’s Embassy in Romania has relied more on the support of Mexican states to promote cultural activities in Romania than on the Federal government. The General Direction of Education and Cultural Cooperation receives the work plan of each Embassy suggesting certain activities grouped in the following pillars: performing arts, gastronomy, visual arts, literature, and others. Once the work plan is presented, the General Direction allocates the budget for the cultural activities but does not interfere with the selection of them as there is not a unique cultural strategy to follow or a group of strategies to support regional foreign policy initiatives.¹²¹ In this regard, obtaining financed national contents has been more of a struggle rather than finding spaces to present them. That is why the cultural section of Mexico’s Embassy in Romania has been encouraging these types of partnerships. According to a Romanian officer “*Because Mexico is a Federal State it is easier to deal with its bureaucracy whereas in Romania it is more complicated, these (local) initiatives necessarily have to go through Bucharest.*”¹²²

¹¹⁷ Interview number 5 with Mexican Ambassador in Romania, Agustín Gutiérrez Canet (May 2015) Ambassador Gutiérrez Canet was the former coordinator of the course culture and international relations at University of Vaxjo in Sweden.

¹¹⁸ Interview number 2, Interview number 3 with a Diplomat from the Romanian Embassy in Mexico and Interview number 4 with a Mexican Diplomat (May 2015). According to Romanian Embassy in Mexico, there are about 500 registered Romanians in Mexico and according to Mexican Embassy in Romania there are about 120 Mexicans registered in Romania.

¹¹⁹ On the legal framework appendix it is mentioned the ongoing negotiation of the collaboration agreement between Miguel Hidalgo (a borough of Mexico City) and Sector 3 of Bucharest.

¹²⁰ Interview number 2. *Op. Cit.*

¹²¹ Interview number 1. *Op. Cit.*

¹²² Interview number 2. *Op. Cit.*

An example of these partnerships with states is “Mexico’s week in Romania: Cultural Presence of Oaxaca” (22-29 October 2014), with more than 20 activities and 1000 attendants.¹²³ What is interesting about this activity sponsored by the government of Oaxaca is that it was backed by a public diplomacy strategy as it was highly promoted on the national media. For example, the assistance of former First Lady Maria Basescu helped with it. As a cultural diplomacy initiative, it was also successful because it was held outside Bucharest, meaning migration from the traditional urban circles of culture, which are usually composed of the same academics, artists, and people eager for cocktails.¹²⁴ The continuous presence of Mexico in other parts of Romania could represent a break with the stereotypes which are encouraged by the spread of negative news and the clichés of soap operas. In addition, this could help to emphasize the similarities between these countries as both have an important rural heritage that feeds their national spirits; Romanian and Mexican ceramics are an example of this.

In these conditions, i.e. the lack of strategic focus and budget restrictions, the role of a cultural attaché is to be creative, as Mexico’s Week in Romania initiative has proven. This year’s budget for the Mexican Embassy is just 6 thousand dollars¹²⁵ even though it will hold activities to commemorate 80 years of diplomatic relations. It was mentioned previously that the Mexican Society of Friendship and Cultural Exchange with Romania was the gateway between these countries before diplomatic relations were reestablished in 1973 and that it was also the reason for it. This proves how culture can accomplish other types of cooperation by strengthening the links between nations through the continuous presence of cultural contents during difficult times. This initiative, born from the working class, organized conferences and expositions in both countries and even encouraged outstanding accomplishments such as translations of Mexican authors like Vicente Leñero and Carlos Fuentes into Romanian.¹²⁶

To celebrate this year, one of the events that will take place in Romania is an exposition of Emil Cioran’s portraits by a Mexican photographer, who met him in Paris, and in Mexico there will be a tour of a group of children from the National Opera of Romania. The fundamental problem of the isolated activities of both governments is that they will have no further effect because there is no cultural diplomacy strategy behind them. Therefore their cost will not be traduced in a profitable investment.

¹²³ Information obtained from the Mexican Embassy in Romania.

¹²⁴ Interview number 5. *Op. Cit.*

¹²⁵ Information obtained from the Mexican Embassy in Romania.

¹²⁶ Graciela Arroyo Pichardo. *Op. Cit.* P.228

To make it clearer, if the Embassies are not backed up by a cultural diplomacy strategy from their national authorities, it will be hard to achieve long term foreign policy actions.

Luz Elena Baños says that “Mexico has as a pending duty the design of a national policy to take advantage of its cultural wealth as the foundation of its dialogue with the world.”¹²⁷ She also analyses the fact that as part of the NAFTA negotiations, Mexico launched a public diplomacy campaign without precedent which included a strong cultural diplomacy strategy. With the exhibition “Mexico, Splendors of Thirty Centuries” (1990-1992) the goal was to familiarize American public opinion with the society with which they were signing a Free Trade Agreement,¹²⁸ counting on the Presidential support of Carlos Salinas de Gortari. Mexican Painter Frida Kahlo was used as an image in the campaign, capitalizing on an achievement of cultural commerce. This achievement was the painter's catapult to fame as a result of art historian Hayden Herrera's English biography in 1982 at a moment when feminism in the USA was at its peak.¹²⁹ Villanueva says that “The political and diplomatic relevance of the show (...) can be seen as a pivotal cultural diplomacy action that helped the Mexican government to construct the ‘cultural prestige’ -in Soft Power terms- which further eased the negotiations towards the NAFTA.”¹³⁰ In Romania, this has been done in terms of nation branding, as will be analyzed in the next section. For example, during the campaign for its membership to the EU in 2006 former President Traian Basescu hired a German consultant company to promote a positive image in Germany as a gateway to the EU. One of the measures in doing so was increasing the budget of the Romanian Cultural Institute.¹³¹ The importance given to this institution in terms of cultural diplomacy leads us to an analysis of the cultural institutes.

3.1.1 Mexican and Romanian Cultural Institutes

It has been continuously mentioned that a new process of communication has been reconfigured as politics have taken a more international and public-oriented approach, and this is where public diplomacy, as cultural diplomacy's umbrella, operates. In this regard, governments have created

¹²⁷ Luz Elena Baños. “Reflections on Public Diplomacy in Mexico. A prospective sight”. In Mexican Magazine of Foreign Policy. *Op. Cit.* P. 160 (Original in Spanish)

¹²⁸ Ambassador José Alberto Lozoya's interview by César Villanueva. “Cooperation and Cultural Diplomacy: experiences and voyages” In Mexican Magazine of Foreign Policy. *Op. Cit.* P. 262 (Original in Spanish)

¹²⁹ Ambassador Agustín Gutiérrez Canet. *Op. Cit.*

¹³⁰ César Villanueva Rivas. PhD thesis: Representing Cultural Diplomacy. Soft Power, Cosmopolitan Constructivism and Nation Branding in Sweden and Mexico. (Sweden: Vaxjo University Press. 2007) P. 132

¹³¹ S Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried ‘The Model of Cultural Diplomacy: Power, Distance and the Promise of Civil Society’ *Op. Cit.* P. 24

institutions with this communication goal, such as The British Council in the UK or the Goethe Institute in Germany. Most of the time these institutions are culture-oriented although they fulfill a role of communication in the strictest sense of the word. For example, France's Alliance Francaise dates back to 1883 and although it did not start as a governmental institution, but instead as an initiative to promote affinity with the country through French learning,¹³² it has helped to attract foreign audiences to French values. Countries that do not have with this specific institutional backup can use their Embassies or media (TV channels and broadcasting) to do so. Freeman M. Tovell compares cultural policies and institutional organizations of several countries, finding that the French and German emphasize language (the French with the universalism of their culture), the British emphasize education, Russians equal reciprocity, and Canadians emphasize the diversity of their cultural development;¹³³ these are just some examples to contrast our study cases.

The Romanian Cultural Institute was born in 2003 as a result of the legacy of the Romanian Institute for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, established in 1962. During Ceausescu's regime it was used as a propaganda tool, particularly for Western countries. Its goal was to show Romania's artistic potential and cultural offerings as part of its economic and political power to differentiate itself from the Warsaw Treaty members.¹³⁴ With transition, in 1990 the government created the Romanian Cultural Foundation and the Romanian Cultural Foundation Publishing House in with a two-fold agenda: to promote Romanian culture abroad and to promote foreign contents in Romania. This could be understood as an opening measure for civil societies to get in touch with each other as part of a transition process which not only opened the country politically, but also democratized information, a condition of new public diplomacy. In this regard, this cultural diplomacy strategy prepared the field for other types of political strategies, such as Romania's process of admission to the EU and NATO.¹³⁵

In 2012, the Institute moved from Presidential control to Senate control. Several protestations against this were raised globally and even the Institute's former President Horia Roman Parapievici told the New York Times that the Institution he headed at the time was not consulted and that "Even more surprising was the shift in focus. Our strategy since I took over the presidency in 2005, has been

¹³² Ibid. P. 18

¹³³ Freeman M. Tovell "A Comparison of Canadian, French British and German International Cultural Policies" in Andrew Fenton Cooper. Canadian Culture: International Dimensions. (Waterloo: Center of Foreign Policy and Federalism. University of Waterloo-Wilfried Laurier University 1995). Pp. 69-82

¹³⁴ Emilia Delia Dragulescu. The Romanian Cultural Institute. A Need for Consistency (2013) Institute for Cultural Diplomacy in http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/pdf/case-studies/Emilia-Delia-Dragulescu_-_The-Romanian-Cultural-Institute-_A-Need-for-Consistency.pdf consulted on 20.03.2015

¹³⁵ Idem.

that we should open to the outside world. Our aim is to relink the Romanian cultural market, cut off from the West, with the western cultural market.”¹³⁶ Along with this, Emilia Delia Dragulescu considers that the Institute has made more visible the Romanian diaspora and, particularly in the USA, has added political pressure to achieve other political and economic goals, such as the current lobby for a visa waiver.¹³⁷

Even though the Institute works autonomously and generates income, it is under parliamentary control. The debate towards neutrality seems to be pointless as cultural institutions with governmental budget have never and will never be politically independent. The budget allocation negotiations can prove this argument. The Romanian Cultural Institute has foreign branches in Berlin, Brussels, Budapest (with a subsidiary in Szeged), Istanbul, Lisbon, London, Madrid, New York, Paris, Prague, Rome, Stockholm, Tel Aviv, Venice, Vienna, and Warsaw. There was some discussion on opening branches in Kiev and Moscow, but due to the Crimea’s crisis this remains uncertain; in addition to this, three other cities have been considered: Beijing, Sao Paolo, and Alexandria.¹³⁸ If this is accomplished, Brazil would host Romania’s first Institute in Latin America. The thematic areas of the Institute are literature, music, visual arts, sciences, architecture, philosophy, and theology.¹³⁹ Some of its key programs include the translation of and publication support program for Romanian authors; Romania’s participation in book fairs; a cultural program to support diaspora activities; and programs to learn Romanian.

A fundamental difference between Mexico and Romania is that the latter has a unique institution to export cultural contents and the former has several dispersed “Mexican Cultural Institutes” which lack a central figure. This means that there are no cultural guidelines but the ones that the institutes or the Embassies trace with the suggestion of AMEXCID’s cultural branch, except when there is a major cultural event that has a direct link with foreign policy initiatives, such as the Dual Year of Mexico and the UK or Expo Milano this year. Mexico has cultural institutes in: NY, Washington, Guatemala, Costa Rica, San Antonio, Spain, Paris, Los Angeles, Vienna, Miami and Denmark. All of them are accredited in their host countries, have different boards, control their own

¹³⁶ Larry Lohter. Romanian Cultural Institute’s New Mandate Draws Protests in Europe and United States. NY Times (2012) http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/06/26/romanian-cultural-institutes-new-mandate-draws-protests-in-europe-and-u-s/?_r=2 consulted on 20.03.2015

¹³⁷ Emilia Delia Dragulescu. *Op. Cit.*

¹³⁸ Idem.

¹³⁹ Romanian Cultural Institute website <http://www.icr.ro/bucharest/> consulted on 5.04.2015

content and have their own websites.¹⁴⁰ In an interview with an officer of the Mexican Institute in New York, he affirmed that it is easier to operate due to the philanthropy culture in the USA because budget restrictions from Mexico do not become an obstacle.¹⁴¹ Along with this, the Institutes in the USA have been more prolific due to the Mexican Diaspora that is continuously organizing and sponsoring events as a measure of cultural sustainability.

Several attempts to create a unique institute and make a coherent cultural promotion have been made but they have not been successful. During Jorge Castañeda's period as Minister of Foreign Affairs (200-2003), Mexico created the Institute of Mexico, which aimed for a new cultural diplomacy trying to follow the cultural organization model of countries such as England, France, Spain, or Germany.¹⁴² This project failed because of budget restrictions along with the necessary political tie ups to ensure its continuation.¹⁴³ Recently, another initiative from the Congress has been launched to group all the Mexican Cultural Institutes abroad into a single one called "Institute Octavio Paz", named to commemorate one of the most universal writers of Mexico. Unfortunately, the debate has been reduced due to budget restrictions, though the Cultural Commission has been arguing that the Embassies could hold the different Institutes.¹⁴⁴ Today the discussions have reached an impasse as cultural initiatives are not a priority for Mexico due to the current wave of violence. Therefore, because there is no central institution designed to trace the cultural guidelines but instead they are administering a different group of cultural initiatives, Mexico has developed other isolated initiatives such as some academic centers or seminars to study the country, for example the Institute of Mexican Studies in the University of Perpignan, France and the Study Center of Mexico in the European Union.¹⁴⁵

There is a bigger and more striking challenge inherited by countries which suffered from any former authoritarian regimes, which is the use of solid public diplomacy measures to face the democratization of contents. Mexico and Romania have struggled not only to encourage the diffusion of critical contents, but also to create a strategy to face this criticism. For example, by making all the

¹⁴⁰ Interview number 1. *Op. Cit.*

¹⁴¹ Interview number 6 with an officer from the Mexican Cultural Institute of NY, Roberto Campos (May 2015).

¹⁴² César Villanueva Rivas. PhD thesis: Representing Cultural Diplomacy. Soft Power, Cosmopolitan Constructivism and Nation Branding in Sweden and Mexico. *Op. Cit.* P. 130

¹⁴³ Ambassador José Alberto Lozoya's interview by César Villanueva. *Op. Cit.* P. 247

¹⁴⁴ Notimex. Detenida, propuesta para Instituto Octavio Paz en el exterior. El Universal (2014) in <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/cultura/2014/propuesta-detenida-instituto-octavio-paz-exterior-989969.html> consulted on 20.03.2015

¹⁴⁵ Fabiola Rodríguez Barba. La diplomacia cultural de México. Instituto Elcano (2008) in http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_es/zonas_e/s/lengua+y+cultura/ari78-2008 consulted in 20.03.2015

necessary internal reforms to prove they are moving forward and by letting the public know that they are doing so. Cinema has been one of the major contemporary exports of Romania. The so-called Romanian New Wave of Cinema, which started in 2005 at the Cannes Festival,¹⁴⁶ has presented the everyday struggles of transition or life under communism with movies like “Death of Mr. Lazarescu” or “4 Months, 3 weeks and 2 Days”. This does not necessarily represent the most positive image of the country, especially if it wants to project a competitive image, breaking with the prejudices of the former regime, as will be analyzed in the next section. On the other hand, Mexico has had the same experience with the Mexican New Wave of Cinema which started in 2000 immediately with transition as former President Vicente Fox (2000-2006) opened the Pandora's box of freedom of speech. Mexican cinema was represented by movies such as “Love’s a Bitch” by Academy winner Mexican director Alejandro González Iñárritu and “And your Mother too” of another Mexican Academy winner, director Alfonso Cuarón. Most of these movies have highlighted the decomposition of social fabric and the violence in the country, but at the same time they have showed Mexico with all of its contrasts. To prove the impact of this cultural industry on a country’s public diplomacy, González Iñárritu closed his 2015 Oscar acceptance speech by saying “I pray that we can find and build the government we deserve”¹⁴⁷ at an event watched by 36 million people.¹⁴⁸ The government was challenged to react in real time on social networks with a damage control strategy in a context where the level of prestige of Mexican creators was raised but which also affected Mexico’s image of governability. This moment gave Mexicans a voice in a worldwide forum, as Mexican intellectual Sergio Aguayo affirmed¹⁴⁹ proving the impact of real time information, which is currently challenging countries’ public and cultural diplomacy techniques.

One of the challenges of cultural diplomacy has been how to make a country positively visible abroad with cultural contents in order to generate likeability and trust. This is not possible if countries do not count on a parallel campaign of public relations and reputation management traduced in a comprehensive strategy of public diplomacy. This is why the next section will analyze nation branding, a component of new public diplomacy, as cultural prestige is not enough to change a country’s image if

¹⁴⁶ A. O. Scott. *New Wave on the Black Sea*. NY Times (2008) in http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/20/magazine/20Romanian-t.html?_r=0 consulted on 20. 03.2015

¹⁴⁷ David Agren. *Iñárritu's comments on Mexico, the latest black eye for country's government*. Fox Latino News (2015) in <http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/entertainment/2015/02/24/inarritu-comments-on-mexico-is-latest-black-eye-for-country-government/> consulted on 4.04.2015

¹⁴⁸ International Business Times (2015) in <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/oscars-flop-lowest-number-viewers-recorded-since-2009-1489329> consulted on 4.04.2015

¹⁴⁹ David Agren. *Op. Cit.*

it is not accompanied by a number of initiatives to make this image coherent. All in all, I place cultural diplomacy as the foundation for any other strategy because the spiritual dialogue that culture offers is the key to open any other door.

3.2 Nation Branding Attempts

Peter van Ham highlights that “The emerging brand state is not a brand new state, but a political player that promotes itself more assertively than before.”¹⁵⁰ Countries are in a constant competition to position themselves as political and economic leaders and, although public and cultural diplomacy can support this aim, it is not possible without a strong nation branding strategy. We have previously covered the appropriateness of using or not using corporation techniques to administer states and project them internationally. Nevertheless, public diplomacy’s component of promotion works as the liaison point between these two realities as states and enterprises face the same challenges: globalization, identity, values, and power.¹⁵¹ Philip Cerny specifies that regardless of this panorama, the state is still the main actor in this globalization process and that its mayor concern is to remain relevant to its people.¹⁵² Along with this affirmation, it is important to remember that marketing itself is nothing else but “the conscious and planned practice of signification and representation”¹⁵³ and states have traditionally used diplomacy to represent themselves externally, though the interesting thing about today’s context is that they are not only doing this by traditional means but also by branding their personality.

The idea of developing a strong and coherent framework in this field is to better portray a country’s image in the world or to maintain its positive image in it by means of soft power, as stated in the first chapter. This technique has been useful for younger or smaller countries which do not get sufficient media and global attention or which have limited resources to raise the level of awareness and their international prestige.¹⁵⁴ We could also place middle income countries here, such as our case studies. Madalina Monica Lambrea affirms that in transitional countries such as Romania, national

¹⁵⁰ Peter van Ham. ‘Place Branding: The state of the Art’. Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol 616, Public Diplomacy in a Changing World (March, 2008) P. 128

¹⁵¹ Ibid. P. 127

¹⁵² Philip G. Cerny. ‘Paradoxes of the competition state: The dynamics of political globalization.’ Government and Opposition 32 (2). P. 251

¹⁵³ A.F Firat and A. Venkatesh. ‘Posmodernity; The Age of Marketing’ International Journal of Research in Marketing, 10, 1993. P. 246

¹⁵⁴ S. Budnitsky. Masters Dissertation Lost tribes of nation branding? Representation of Russian minority in Estonia’s nation branding efforts (Central European University etd Collection: Budapest. 2012)P. 64

identity is useful as the starting point in developing a nation brand within a new political reality to (re) insert globally.¹⁵⁵

The importance of problematizing market strategies within a state context, such as branding, is that branding has an emotional component since it creates bonds between products and consumers. From this point of view, Anholt's extrapolation from a corporation to a state approach is not only valid, but also useful. At this point it is worth remembering how the author highlights the risk of reproducing simplistic market strategies, along with stereotypes and clichés, if the state forgets that it is only borrowing some corporation tools to make its international policy making more effective. Van Ham says that "products, services and locations have become so alike that they can no longer differentiate themselves (...) Branding adds emotion and trust to these 'products', thereby offering clues that make consumer's choices somewhat easier (...) this emotional relationship between brand and consumer ensures loyalty."¹⁵⁶ It is precisely this field, the emotional linkage, which is the one that helps the most in making a real impact on international public opinion. The goal is to make it a long term one, traduced in public diplomacy, and not a short term one, traduced in a simple marketing campaign, as Noya and Prado stated before.¹⁵⁷

Mexico and Romania are two examples of high middle income countries that share some similarities and could share, as well, some experiences of nation branding attempts, particularly because both face negative image problems. The raise of violence in Mexico due to the war on drugs under the administration of former president Felipe Calderón Hinojosa (2006-2012) has put the country on the spot as a land of violence and no state of law. Today the crisis of corruption and freedom of speech that involves the current President of Mexico, Enrique Peña Nieto (2012-2018), has also been spread in the imaginary of international public opinion due to mass media,¹⁵⁸ TV series, and soap operas that praise the drug dealer's way of life,¹⁵⁹ and artistic works that have been nationally and

¹⁵⁵ Madalina Monica Lambrea. Master's Thesis: Nation Branding in Transitional Romania. (Aalborg University: Denmark. 2014) Pp.1-4

¹⁵⁶ Peter van Ham. 'Branding Territory: Inside the Wonderful Worlds of PR and IR Theory, Millenium' in Journal of International Studies 31,2002. P. 251

¹⁵⁷ See first nation branding section in the first chapter.

¹⁵⁸ International sources published the "White house scandal." A house presumably owned by Mexican First Lady, Angelica Rivera, a former soap opera actress, that was built and still legally owned in 2014 by a construction firm that won lucrative public works contracts when Enrique Peña Nieto was governor of the State of Mexico. The journalists involved in this special investigation were leaded by popular journalist Carmen Aristegui. Political pressure led to her dismissal. This latter has turned into an international media scandal to denounce the lack of freedom of speech in Mexico, one of the most dangerous countries to be a journalist according to Reporters without Borders.

¹⁵⁹ Breaking bad, The Lord of the Skies, The Queen of the South, etc.

internationally recognized¹⁶⁰ denouncing the decomposition of the social fabric. This is a result of the war on drugs and now the return of PRI to power,¹⁶¹ which still represents a fragmented vision of Mexico because a country is not only its government, but also its people.

On the other hand, Romania has faced a bad reputation, particularly within Europe, due to the implicit association of the Roma (pejoratively called gypsies) with Romanians. This has carried the general prejudices and constant discrimination against this community, considered in the collective imaginary as thieves, beggars, and uneducated people among other shallow and historical misconceptions. Let us not forget that the Roma represent the largest population of a nation without a country, even though a considerable part of them are located in Central and Eastern Europe. With its membership to the EU and the free mobility of its citizens as a direct consequence, many Romanians left the country and immigrated to affinity countries with cultural or language links like Italy, Spain, or France. Nevertheless, this right was also extended to Roma Romanians, who are not separated in the collective imaginary from Roma Hungarians, Bulgarians, and Czechs. Therefore the reproduction of Roma stereotypes has anchored in social constructions, producing a stigmatization of Romanians¹⁶² to the detriment of the rest of the population; for example, high skilled professional Romanians are known for their skills in software engineering and telecommunications.

It would be worth contrasting this with Mexico as NAFTA does not include free mobility of people. As opposed to the permissiveness of movement in the EU, many Mexicans living in the USA have immigrated there illegally. They are considered hard workers but disgracefully cheap labor due to this illegal condition. What is interesting is that new generations are born in the USA with citizen rights and due to their cultural values they have been feeding the demographic pyramid. This is why they are also feared by nationalists; because Mexicans, as part of the Hispanic and Latino community, are an important majority in the most important minority in the country.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ The Perfect Dictatorship, Presumed Guilty, Herod's law, etc.

¹⁶¹ Within transition to democracy PAN won the elections in 2000, first with Vicente Fox Quezada and then with Felipe Calderón Hinojosa.

¹⁶² In February 2015 Ambassador of Romania in the UK addressed a letter to the producer of channel's 4 documentary "Romanians are coming" which trailer caused the indignation of the Romanian community abroad. This after the UK removed its restrictions for Romanians and Bulgarians starting 2014. On 2013 a previous letter from Romanian's Ambassador was published in the same tone as part of the country's diplomatic reaction "Guilty of being Romanian." In parallel, Romania's newspaper Gandul reacted with a popular campaign called "We May Not Like Britain, But You'll Love Romania" with advertisements such as "We speak better English than anywhere you've been in France" or "We serve more food groups than pie, sausage, fish and chips: Why don't you come over?"

¹⁶³ Hispanic refers to Spanish speaking people and Latino to Latin Americans, including Brazilians, Haitians, and Jamaicans etc. According to the US. Census Bureau population estimates, in 2013, there were are about 54 million Hispanics living in

As mentioned previously, Romania has also projected an image of instability due to its chaotic transition process. In its recent history three different Prime Ministers were appointed in one year (2012)¹⁶⁴ and two national recall referendums (2007 and 2012) were filed against former President Traian Basescu. Recently elected president Klaus Iohannis (2014-2019), whose campaign focused on an anti-corruption platform, has been reinforcing the job that Romania's National Anti-Corruption Directorate has been pushing since 2002. The scandal even touched ex-president Traian Basescu's brother and former ministers and parliament members to send an international message regarding the transformation and breakdown with the old structures.

What is important about this comparison is that with the presumption that both countries are considered second class members within their most strategic partnerships, NAFTA and the EU, Mexico and Romania need to work to consolidate new spaces where they can portray a better image and a better reputation. This is why the rapprochement between these countries, symbolizing two regions that have had low levels of contact, could signify a new strategic relation with partners that share many similarities due to their transition processes and historical position of backwardness in relation to the traditional centers of power. In this context, nation branding presents itself as one of the elements to work on to achieve this goal, taking into consideration the fact that the message is global and though it might not completely change the perception of traditional targets it will, at least, create an image for those countries which will become new targets of public and cultural diplomacy. It is worth considering that “Until quite recently, it was the *lack* of information that shaped people’s image of other places, rather than information overload.”¹⁶⁵

It has been mentioned that Anholt’s index of nation branding includes: exports, governance, culture and heritage, people, tourism, investment, and immigration.¹⁶⁶ The following section will be used to show the importance of balancing all these elements and how public and cultural diplomacy can work as facilitators to promote nation branding if this is developed under a solid and comprehensive basis. Let us start with Romania, whose challenge has been to redefine its image after Communism, just as with the rest of the countries of the former Soviet space. What makes nation branding in the region so interesting is the fact that any type of political or economic practices are “nested in the conditions of unique post-communist political cultures, where governments generally have limited

the United States, representing approximately 17% of the U.S. total population. Information available in <http://www.cdc.gov/minorityhealth/populations/REMP/hispanic.html> consulted on 27.04.2015

¹⁶⁴ In 2012 Emil Boc, Mihai Unguraanu and Victor Ponta, the current Prime Minister of Romania.

¹⁶⁵ Peter van Ham. ‘Place Branding: The state of the Art’. *Op. Cit.* P. 133

¹⁶⁶ See nation branding section in the first chapter.

credibility and where nationalist sentiments are often used to mobilize apathetic electorates.”¹⁶⁷ In this regard, after the 1989 Revolution Romania not only had the challenge of rebranding its national image but at the same time of experiencing a process of transition to democracy.

As opposed to other former communist countries, Romania’s communist dictatorship was paradigmatic, as mentioned in the previous chapter, and so was its transition. The overthrow of the communist leader, Nicolae Ceausescu, was possible due to real time broadcasting. The last speech of Ceausescu was abruptly interrupted by a riot and Radio Free Europe had a determinant role in informing the international audience.¹⁶⁸ In addition to this, the trial and the symbolic execution of the Ceausescu couple were surrounded by chaos, and no political program to follow, allowing the old structures of the Nomenklatura to remain in power. We have already mentioned that one of the most important particularities of Romania during the Cold War was its relative autonomy from Moscow. The country’s image was not only manipulated externally but also internally by propaganda means and, with transition, Romanians faced a conflict of dissonance: their country was not as it was portrayed.

With that said, it is important to highlight that nation branding has two components, external and internal, and to be successful both components have to be addressed. Externally, a country’s goal is to get politically and economically empowered by getting consumers for their products and services and internally it is by “making their citizens feel better and more confident about themselves by giving them a sense of belonging and clear self-concept.”¹⁶⁹ In this regard, van Ham says that branding implies power and identity and this is why the conception of a country’s population is so important in projecting that country’s image internationally. With transition, one of the challenges faced by Romania was to create a new country not only politically, but also spiritually. All this “intertwined with post-communist identity struggles (and) what kinds of identities were marked as ‘shameful’ or as ‘desired’ became a central area of contestation in nation branding initiatives.”¹⁷⁰

Along with this came the wave of privatization, which provided a fertile land for corruption and uncertainty due to the free market model that in turn left the population without the benefits of a centralized economy. This situation resulted in worse living conditions, which forced a lot of people to migrate causing, as a result, serious problems with “brain drain”. This was in a moment where the

¹⁶⁷ L. Kulcsar and Young-ok Yum. ‘One Nation, One Brand? Nation Branding and Identity Reconstruction in Post-Communist Hungary’ in Nadia Kaneva (ed) Branding Post Communist Nations: Marketizing National Identities in the ‘New’ Europe, (NY: Routledge 2012) P. 194

¹⁶⁸ Of course there are other causes that include the USA’s participation, the role of the Orthodox Church, the imminent fall of the Berlin Wall and Gorbachev’s Glasnost and Perestroika.

¹⁶⁹ Peter van Ham. ‘Place Branding: The state of the Art’. *Op. Cit.* P. 131

¹⁷⁰ Madalina Monica Lambrea. *Op. Cit.* P. 20

country needed more than ever professionals and intellectuals to trace its future. This led, among other collateral effects, to restrictive visa measures against Romanians, which started to shape a negative image of them in the world. With all of this, Romania decided to launch different strategies to amend the situation. According to Adina Dolea and Adriana Tarus, the period of Romania's nation branding can be grouped into two periods:¹⁷¹

- ✓ 1996-2006- Attempt to distance itself from negative background of communism and lack of democracy, although this period passes without improving the country's mark on the world.
- ✓ 2007-2014- Following its accession to NATO (2004) and the EU (2007) where the issue of nation branding is brought more often into discussion.

The first campaign launched in 1995 by Romania's first President after transition, Ion Iliescu, was called "Eternal and Fascinating Romania". The project consisted of a photography book with Romanian landscapes. The project was involved in a corruption scandal: the contract's cost was 5.97 million dollars and of the 97,000 copies that were supposed to be produced, less than 10,000 were printed.¹⁷² Lambrea refers to this as "Romania's business card" and Andreea Sepi analyzes it as the first attempt of Romania's agenda "to attract foreigners to our natural beauties and to introduce our potential (...) counterbalancing the barbaric images most people still held about Romania as a dark place of Orphanages and miners, with that of an unspoilt 'vibrant and unique' place."¹⁷³

The second major attempt was made in 2000. With the campaign "Made in Romania", the country tried to encourage the consumption of national products in a context where the manufacturing industry was going through difficult times. This was an interesting example of constructing an internal image for Romanian consumers to trust and believe in their products since the legacy of Communism was still influencing, and is still influencing today, the prejudice for local products. Credibility is one of the sources that makes effective public diplomacy and the message of coherence between the internal

¹⁷¹ Adina Dolea and Adriana Tarus. Branding Romania. Cum (ne) promovam imaginea de tara, (Bucharest. Curtea Veche Publishing, 2009) Pp. 85-86.

¹⁷² Andreea Sepi. Nation Branding: The Case of Romania. Brief History and Possible Reasons for Failure. (Institute for Cultural Diplomacy. E/IR&CD, 2013) available in http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/pdf/case-studies/Andreea_Sepi_-_Nation_Branding_-_The_Case_of_Romania.pdf consulted on 20.03.2015

¹⁷³ Idem.

and external image that Romania wanted to project was starting to be drawn with this initiative, which went bankrupt in 2005.¹⁷⁴

In 2001 one of the most known and intermittent campaigns, Dracula Park, was conceived, aiming to capitalize the myth of Vlad Tepes', the Impaler. Inspired by this historical character, Irish writer Bram Stoker had created his novel Dracula and located it in Transylvania. The new amusement park would offer a variety of entertainment activities and was planned to be constructed near Sighisoara (Europe's capital of culture in 2007), where Tepes was born, and then moved near Bucharest where he was buried. Even though there were more than 13 000 investors,¹⁷⁵ the plan had no local support as many inhabitants of the region do not relate to these kinds of stereotypes and are strongly against "vampire tourism." It has been studied that a common national representation method in post-communist countries is to persist with stereotypical and exotic representation for audiences, especially from the West, who have traced this in their collective imaginary and feel more comfortable with it.¹⁷⁶ This has also happened with former colonies, like Mexico, as we will see below since exoticism has proven to be a hook, a shortcut, and an effortless mean of attraction.

In this regard it would be important to consider not what the West wants to see but what it really is. Otherwise, it is important to think strategically and consider potential relations with countries or regions that will receive an image for the first time. At this point it would also be counterproductive for Mexico to promote a campaign reproducing negative stereotypes of lost towns in the middle of the desert, surrounded by cacti where people just drink tequila, such as cartoon character "Speedy González" does. It is important not to confuse national identity with nation branding. Anholt does not put them on the same level as he argues that nation branding is the most robust, communicable, and useful version of the first, but by no means does it have to be based in prejudices. Therefore Romania's problem is not using Transylvania as a hook to attract tourism but in creating a solid brand that overpasses the shallowness and the stereotypes of Dracula, showing a real and congruent image. For example, it could promote rural tourism considering that it is the EU country with the most rural population. This could help to reduce rural poverty as, according to the World Bank, the country also has one of the largest gaps in living and social standards between rural and urban areas.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Madalina Monica Lambrea. *Op. Cit.* P. 24

¹⁷⁵ Andrea Sepi. *Op. Cit.*

¹⁷⁶ Madalina Monica Lambrea. *Op. Cit.* P. 32

¹⁷⁷ According to World Bank statistics 45% of Romania's population is rural and the incidence of rural poverty is 70%. World Bank website <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/romania/overview> consulted on 23.03. 2015

To continue with the list of initiatives, the first branding destination project was “Romania, Always Surprising”, launched in 2004. Before presenting this it is worth making a conceptual distinction between nation and place branding, though it may appear obvious for some readers: “nation branding focuses on defining or (...) redefining countries along well-defined concepts and messages (...) Its distinction from destination branding emerges from the promotion of its image as a whole, more than just a group of various places.”¹⁷⁸ Place branding is the use of soft power of a geographical location adding value to the relationship between territorial entities, pieces of a country, and individuals.¹⁷⁹ Several spots were released in a public diplomacy strategy on international media networks as Euronews, BBC, and CNN, aiming to present a new Romania, a Romania that had undergone a process of transition ready to surprise visitors.¹⁸⁰ The cost of the campaign was around 2 million euros and it was severely criticized by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) for just creating a prefabricated image.¹⁸¹

Addressing this criticism, in 2006 the “Romania, fabulouspirit” campaign focused for the first time on the country’s people: “defined by inner wealth and fabulous spirit, which has much to offer to the great European family. On the medium and long term, it was desirable for Romania that the word ‘spirit’ became what is ‘conservative’ for the British and ‘engineer’ for the Germans.”¹⁸² This campaign was promoted in the context of Romania’s EU accession. It showed successful Romanian stories like Henri Coanda, an aviation pioneer, Constantin Brancusi, one of the world’s most important sculptors, and Nadia Comaneci, the gymnastics legend. The campaign was abandoned when the Minister of Foreign Affairs resigned and it was hardly criticized because there were no distinctive elements to project a nation brand but just a short term strategy to change the country’s image.¹⁸³

Following the focus on promoting Romania’s people, in 2008 the campaign “Romanians in Europe” was released. According to Lambrea, this public diplomacy campaign for Italian and Spanish public opinion had the purpose of highlighting their shared Latin heritage to prove there were more similarities than differences between them.¹⁸⁴ Though some experts consider it as the most coherent

¹⁷⁸ Madalina Monica Lambrea. *Op. Cit.* P. 17

¹⁷⁹ Peter van Ham. ‘Place Branding: The state of the Art’. *Op. Cit.* Pp. 127 - 128

¹⁸⁰ Ruxandra-Irina Popescu and Razvan-Andrei Corbos ‘A Review of Strategic Options for Achieving a Country Brand for Romania’ in Review of International Coparative Managment Volume 11, Issue 5, December 2010. P.884

¹⁸¹ Andrea Sepi. *Op. Cit.*

¹⁸² Ruxandra-Irina Popescu and Razvan-Andrei Corbos. *Op. Cit.* P.885

¹⁸³ Ibid. P. 886

¹⁸⁴ Madalina Monica Lambrea. *Op. Cit.* P. 27

campaign since 1990,¹⁸⁵ it was embroiled in scandal when it was unveiled that actors were used on it instead of real immigrants. There is a space of convergence with Mexico with this particular type of campaigns aiming to promote a country's population's virtues. If Romania's attempt is to show its people as hard workers who contribute to the development and wealth of host countries, then both countries could share some experiences. Romania has a Minister Delegate for Romanians Abroad (created in 2012) working within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Mexico has the Institute for Mexicans Abroad which is located in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This institute is in charge of revalorizing the migration phenomenon and promoting dignified treatment for Mexicans abroad. Therefore by working with organized communities of Mexicans, particularly in the USA where its work is most concentrated, it has helped to show the positive side of migration and empowered the community abroad. This has been possible by promoting the improvement of migrants' living standards and their integration into their host society, along with a cultural diplomacy strategy to cultivate ties, even with second or third generation Mexicans, which materialized in festivals, contests, concerts and a wide variety of activities.¹⁸⁶ The prime objective of the Institute has been "To position the Mexican experience in the care of its Diaspora as a key instrument of international cooperation policy."¹⁸⁷ Therefore, with the everyday work of public diplomacy which includes dialoguing with leading actors (politicians, entrepreneurs and civilians) of the host countries, this Institute has done a remarkable job transmitting a positive message of Mexican migrants in various channels: government, media and society. Because of this, I consider it as possible cooperation initiative between these countries.

Finally, the current tourism brand "Romania, explore the Carpathian Garden", released at the Shanghai World Expo of 2010 and funded with 75 million EU funds from the Regional Operational Program until the end of 2013,¹⁸⁸ aimed to target the most important sources of visitors (Italians, Russians, Americans, French, etc.). The initiative focused on the promotion of a geographical brand such as the Carpathian Mountains, which are mostly in Romanian territory but also cross Ukraine, Slovakia, Poland, Serbia, Austria, Hungary, and Czech Republic. The idea highlighting the wild side of

¹⁸⁵ Ruxandra-Irina Popescu and Razvan-Andrei Corbos. *Op. Cit.* P.888

¹⁸⁶ This has also been promoted by Romania within its Cultural Institutes abroad, nevertheless focusing more on the cultural offer rather than in the links between migrants and their impact in host countries in a comprehensive public diplomacy strategy.

¹⁸⁷ Ambassador Carlos García de Alba. "The Institute for Mexicans Abroad: the past, the present and the future in Mexico's relation with its communities abroad." *Migration Policy* (2010) in http://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/powerpoints/2010.1.28_Powerpoint_de_Alba.pdf consulted on 25.03.2015

¹⁸⁸ Adina Dolea and Adriana Tarus. *Op. Cit.* P. 890

the Carpathians was to create an image of adventure, a promising land of natural resources with an open window to the past. This campaign was followed by a series of documentaries that included the support of Prince Charles of Wales, who is a spokesman for causes such as the traditional lifestyle in Transylvania and protected ecosystems. It is this writer's opinion that this campaign has finally captured a true element of Romania's reality, but still has to be translated into a sustainable strategy of public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and nation branding, as all these elements feedback to each other. Romania's tourism office has described the spots on this as "The countryside is the heart and soul of Romania, where peasant culture remains a strong force and medieval ways prevail, as they do nowhere else in Europe."¹⁸⁹

Mexico, on the other hand, has been distinguished by recognizable symbols abroad. This is mentioned this because, as opposed to other countries which the world knows nothing about, one can at least recognize Mexico by the typical stereotypes: tequila, mariachi, fiesta, tortillas etc. Due to this, and contrary to Romania, Mexico has launched few but consistent campaigns to attract investment and tourism. Mexico belongs to the MINT countries (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey) which, according to Jim O'Neill, former Goldman Sachs economist and creator of the term BRIC's,¹⁹⁰ are frontier markets, geo-strategically positioned commodity producers that have young populations.¹⁹¹ With the market-friendly reforms undergone in the country that started with the end of PRI's administration, Mexico joining NAFTA, and currently with President Enrique Peña Nieto's last impulse, Mexico has positioned itself as a competitive market, although the wave of violence and historical corruption has lessened its attractiveness and shadowed its economic possibilities.

During former President Felipe Calderón's administration, Simon Anholt was hired to create Mexico's nation branding. In an interview for the Council of International Affairs in Mexico, Anholt said that he had never before seen such marked difference between perceptions and reality in a country; that the country had lived with the inability to emerge from under the USA and present itself to the rest of the world and that "Mexico needed to prove the world that it is not a victim of its own problems but a leader willing to solve them."¹⁹² During this process, a campaign of public relations with international media was released, which included events such as the London Olympics in 2012, Green Solutions, the

¹⁸⁹ Romanian Tourism website <http://romaniatourism.com/> consulted on 1.04.2015

¹⁹⁰ Brasil, Russia, India and China.

¹⁹¹ Chris Wright. 'After The BRICS Are The MINTs, But Can You Make Any Money From Them?' *Forbes Magazine* (2014) in <http://www.forbes.com/sites/chriswright/2014/01/06/after-the-brics-the-mints-catchy-acronym-but-can-you-make-any-money-from-it/> consulted on 1.04.2015

¹⁹² Juan Ernesto Trejo. 'Simon Anholt's interview' *Revista del Consejo Mexicano de Asuntos Internacionales: La Imagen de México en el mundo*. México, No 6, 2014. P.35

hosting of COP 16 (United Nations Climate Change Conference) in Cancun and the English program The Royal Tour, co-hosted by former President Calderon, to show the country. Several public figures joined this attempt at promoting Mexico's positive image such as actress Salma Hayek, 2010 Miss Universe Ximena Navarrete, singer Alejandro Fernandez, football player Javier "Chicharito" Hernández, and different entrepreneurs such as the owners of the most important media enterprises in Latin America, Emilio Azcárraga and Ricardo Salinas.¹⁹³ We have already talked about ProMéxico, which has been the external face of all this interinstitutional economic promotion. According to Mexico's Presidency Office, after this campaign the ranking of Mexico in the World Economic Forum, Doing Business Index, and the Institute for Management Development's report improved considerably.¹⁹⁴ On the other hand, the national component included the relaunch of the previous 1994 campaign "Made in Mexico." The idea was most probably conceived due to the entry into NAFTA to strengthen the internal market, with a logo designed back in 1978 to label national products.¹⁹⁵ This campaign was relaunched in 2008 due to the global economic crisis with the slogan "For your job, for my job, consume what is done in Mexico."

Three of the most important components of Anholt's nation branding index for Mexico are: culture and heritage, people, and tourism. Tourism has become, to a certain extent, the container of the rest of the elements as, regardless of Mexico's negative image, it is still positioned as one of the most important tourist destinations; in 2014 the WTO placed it as number 15 in the rank of tourist destinations. To achieve that, the National Council of Touristic Promotion has launched important campaigns that, of course, have been focused on the tourism brand but nevertheless affect the rest of the nation brand index components, as it will be explained. In a conference in 2013, former General Director of this Council, Gerardo Llanes, said that in 2010 Mexico was internationally considered as a friendly, welcoming and energetic country so, along with protecting this image, the Council had to strengthen the idea of authenticity and excellence of its tourist services.¹⁹⁶ All this in a context where international media was highlighting the insecurity conditions in the country. Llanes mentioned that despite this, tourism had not been severely affected; it was road tourism that had decreased, but not tourism by airplane.

¹⁹³ Mexico's Presidential Office website in <http://calderon.presidencia.gob.mx/2012/11/presentan-gobierno-federal-y-empresarios-avances-del-programa-marca-pais/> consulted on 30. 03.2015

¹⁹⁴ Idem.

¹⁹⁵ Secretaria de Trabajo y Previsión Social. 'Hecho en México'. *Revista Mundo del Trabajo*. Año 5, No 38, 2009. In <http://www.revista.conampros.gob.mx/documentos/mdt38.pdf> consulted on 30. 03.2015

¹⁹⁶ Gerardo Llanes Álvarez. *La Marca México*. Video del Simposio Líderes Anáhuac en Turismo. Universidad Anáhuac (2013) in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sz78BWojAU> consulted on 30.03.2015

With the release of the campaign “Mexico, live it to believe it” in 2013, there was an attempt to challenge the imagination of the status quo, as Llanes said, affirming that it is difficult for someone that has not visited the country to understand how exoticism, diversity, and modernity can coexist in one place.¹⁹⁷ With Romania, Mexico shares an exotic condition in the eyes of developed countries that can be taken advantage of if it is not used to feed clichés. As a former colony that shares a border with the most powerful country in the world, Mexico has struggled to manage the idea of tradition and modernity, which is actually a convergent point with Eastern European countries. These countries have also tried to show their traditions along with a competitive and modern image in order to break with their communist past.

Mexico could share some public diplomacy experiences with this region; for example, by sharing how it has managed to make visitors spread a positive message about the country to other potential visitors. The most important targets for Mexico are visitors from the USA and Canada. A digital campaign was launched, along with a taxi hidden camera, to make people talk about their experiences in Mexico. In this context, the aim has been to penetrate into the public opinion's perception through a strategy of people talking to people, and this seems to be the most successful part of Mexico's nation-touristic branding. This means taking advantage of person to person contact as a source of new public diplomacy. This strategy has been possible by fostering the components of culture, heritage, and people. It is people that make a nation and, as opposed to Romania, Mexico has been more successful in projecting the positive aspects of this.

Anholt previously said that a nation brand works as an insurance policy against longer term reputational damage. Mexico's image is greatly related to what the USA's media says.¹⁹⁸ Understanding this, the new administration launched a strategy that included President Peña Nieto on the cover of Time Magazine in 2014. This was severely criticized because the goal was to promote internal reforms to diminish inheritances from the past administration, problems that have not disappeared in reality but which the government has decided to stop talking about. Overall, the problem is that Mexico did not construct a solid nation brand that went beyond its good tourist reputation before the war on drugs in 2006 and Romania has not been able to distance itself from clichés and promote the virtues of its people. Therefore, with the spread of negative images and editorials, these governments have faced a communication problem but the communication failure has not been a problem of form

¹⁹⁷ Idem.

¹⁹⁸ José Antonio Bramblia Ramírez. ‘Imagen de México y Medios de Comunicación’. Revista del Consejo Mexicano de Asuntos Internacionales: La Imagen de México en el mundo. *Op. Cit.* P. 16

but of content¹⁹⁹ because “a person or a country cannot sell what they do not have or what they are not.”²⁰⁰ In this regard, both countries have to work internally in order to project a truthful and credible external image. Because it is difficult to work with targets that have a preconceived image, it is important to find new ones to construct a solid and trustful relationship. Therefore, cultural diplomacy represents an opportunity to start constructing bridges with regions who are traditionally distanced, but that still share more similarities than the traditional targets of foreign policy. This is why this author has chosen these two countries as a model to start, because it is by the spiritual dialogue which culture provides that all the other spheres can develop in better and more sustainable conditions.

3.3 Recommendations

This section will try to summarize this writer's proposals as a result of everything that has been discussed. This is done to promote a cultural diplomacy strategy, along with nation branding techniques, between Mexico and Romania. This can be considered an initial point to construct a sustainable dialogue between Latin America and Eastern Europe, promote a more positive image in the world, and achieve joint initiatives in the international arena.

- ✓ Exchange experiences between the Romanian Cultural Institute and the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs to:
 - Analyze the viability of creating a unique Mexican Cultural Institute using some of the ideas of Romania's model.
 - Coordinate joint activities with the existing Mexican Cultural Institutes, starting with the ones that have fewer budget restrictions such as the ones in the USA, as an initial measure of friendship and trust.
 - Promote the translation of Mexican and Romanian authors and keep these contents present, for example in book fairs such as Mexico's Guadalajara International Book Fair, the most important in Latin America. This Book Fair could also have Eastern European authors as special guests.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. P. 17

²⁰⁰ Desirée Colomé Méndez. ‘El concepto de una marca país: una reputación que no se compra ni se vende.’ Revista del Consejo Mexicano de Asuntos Internacionales: La Imagen de México en el mundo. *Op. Cit.* P. 11

- ✓ Consider giving the Mexican Embassy in Romania more attributions:
 - To concurrently accredit to the Republic of Moldova.
 - To administer a long term strategy to make Mexico more present in the region, starting by the promotion of cultural contents; therefore, increasing its cultural budget, which should be considered as a long term investment and not an isolated expense.
- ✓ To realize cultural activities to be more present in both regions in order to achieve future foreign policy initiatives.
 - Mexico could prepare an itinerant exposition such as it did with “Mexico, Splendors of Thirty Centuries” to become more present in Eastern Europe.
 - Romania could join other Eastern European countries to prepare an exhibition in Latin America, helped by Mexican expertise.
 - The above could prepare the path for a presidential tour in the region, both in Mexico and Romania, meaning the first Mexican Presidential visit to Romania.
- ✓ Exchange experiences on how to manage a positive image of Mexico and Romania’s diaspora.
 - Share the expertise of the Institute of Mexicans Abroad.
- ✓ Experience exchange in tourism
 - Encourage cultural and rural tourism.

Conclusions

The principal motivation to write this dissertation has been to encourage the development of a dynamic relationship between Mexico and Romania. This is based on the recognition that the two countries share a similar heritage, and a political framework for bilateral relations already exists, but these have not been taken advantage of. Mexico and Romania could utilize common concerns, cultural similarities and the existing framework to develop their relationship. The starting point would involve using culture as a foundation. This could be done by means of cultural diplomacy. This dissertation has provided a coherent explanation on how to do this including recommendations.

To establish a relationship based on cultural diplomacy would be significant as the relationship between these two countries represents two regions traditionally distanced, which also have the potential to develop relationships similarly based on common concerns; Latin America and Eastern Europe. A strategic partnership between Mexico and Romania would also provide a bigger voice and impact in international forums. This would involve working together, rather than taking an isolated approach or relying on traditional partnerships such as NAFTA and EU. Working together would provide these countries with more weight when speaking up among the whole international community. Mexico and Romania provide the first step towards a bigger regional strategy that could give Latin America and Eastern Europe more of a say in international affairs.

Consequently, this research has focused on the strengthening of the relationship between Mexico and Romania. The purpose of this is to use the dissertation to stimulate the Mexican government to consolidate a long term foreign policy strategy regarding Eastern Europe. This seeks to project Mexico as an actor with global responsibility, which supports the aim stated in Mexico's current National Plan of Development. The dissertation has demonstrated how culture can work as a gateway between countries that share common characteristics, including their transition experiences to democracy; geographical paradoxes shaping political misperceptions of them abroad; as well as negative images due to the inheritance of their authoritarian regimes and the reproduction of historical stereotypes. In this regard, the research questions have addressed to what extent cultural diplomacy can help strengthen the relationship between these countries and how cultural diplomacy, along with nation branding strategies, can be used to counteract the negative images of Mexico and Romania in the world.

To answer the research questions, the theoretical framework included the concepts of public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, soft power and nation branding. Public diplomacy was analyzed as the umbrella under which cultural diplomacy and nation branding activities develop. New public diplomacy was also discussed, a concept developed due to the increasing speed of information following technological advances and the democratization of contents; the blurring of the line between international and domestic affairs; the presence of non-traditional actors; and, finally, the focus on relationship building rather than the use of propaganda. Public diplomacy was differentiated from propaganda, as the latter is conceived to be a short term tool that focuses on the moment and not on the creation of solid relations of will among countries, which is the aim of public diplomacy. Linked to this, the importance of cultural diplomacy in this new public diplomacy era was highlighted. In a world swamped by symbols and technology networks there is a huge contest to project contents and make meanings last through time.

The relationship between public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy was framed under Cull's taxonomy of public diplomacy, which included cultural diplomacy as a type of public diplomacy along with listening, advocacy, exchange diplomacy and international broadcasting types. All of these types of public diplomacy were explained and presented in a table, which differentiated them by time frame, flow information, type of infrastructure required, type of activities and source of credibility. It was also mentioned that public diplomacy is a recent field of academic study and thus it lacks a unique solid theoretical framework. That is why this dissertation has partially disagreed with Cull's taxonomy of public diplomacy and argued that *listening* (collecting data in order to process and determine foreign policy actions) and *advocacy* (promoting a particular national interest policy for an international audience) types are not only attributions of the rest of his public diplomacy's typology but pillars of traditional diplomacy.

This dissertation has used Richard T Arndt's work to differentiate cultural diplomacy from cultural relations, which emphasizes the participation of the government in tracing and defining cultural goals serving the national interest, as opposed to mere cultural exchange such as those promoted by media enterprises. The presence of Mexican soap operas in Eastern Europe and the internationalization of Mexican painter, Frida Kahlo, was concluded to be a result of cultural commerce, which nevertheless has opened a window to construct an image of Mexico abroad. For example, the presence of these cultural works has led to the construction of an image of Mexico in Romania as opposed to the image of Romania in Mexico, which is still unclear and covered by mysticism.

The relationship between public diplomacy and soft power was discussed by highlighting public diplomacy's ability to influence public opinion. This follows the assumption that public diplomacy is not only about information but about persuasion. In this case persuasion was considered by means of cultural attractiveness since Romania and Mexico are not military or economic powers but middle-income countries with cultural potentialities. Mexico ranks higher than Romania on UNESCO's list of World Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Notwithstanding that both countries could share experiences on cultural tourism.

Following this conceptual relationship, the links between public diplomacy and nation branding exist since any public diplomacy strategy will be superfluous if the country that is encouraging it lacks a good reputation. This is why Anholt affirmed that governments need to have a good image, which will work as an insurance policy against longer term reputational damage. Second, nation branding is related to soft power because reputation can only be modified by means of policies, not only communications. Nye included policies as one of the soft power components when these policies are inclusive and legitimate. All in all, Noya and Prado stated that the nodal difference between nation branding and public diplomacy was the long term impact and marketing orientation: the first was economic marketing and the second was political. This is why public diplomacy was considered nation branding's umbrella. It referred to the use of nation branding corporation techniques, backed up by foreign policy techniques, to create a long term political impact.

To give this research methodological coherence, this author used Villanueva's points of convergence among public and cultural diplomacy to analyze the viability of a rapprochement strategy between Mexico and Romania. These elements consisted of the modalities of international cooperation; the development of mutual understanding to reduce the differences; and the attraction or persuasion towards foreign policy topics or agendas. The first point refers to *how actors interact internationally*. To address this, the dissertation included the legal framework of the relationship between Mexico and Romania, examined the historical bonds and the ongoing topics on the foreign policy agenda. One of the common points between these countries is their Latin heritage, therefore the second chapter analyzed the idea of Romania's Latin exclusiveness, in detriment of its Slavic background, as a means of differentiating it from other Eastern European and Balkan countries.

The second chapter also emphasized that although the relationship between Mexico and Romania is mainly framed within the EU-Mexico Economic Partnership, Political Coordination and Cooperation Agreement, there is a whole previous bilateral framework that could be used successfully

if these countries develop the interest to work together; this could be successful by encouraging the countries to learn more about each other through cultural diplomacy. As part of the pending issues of the bilateral relationship, and the obstacles against developing a more dynamic relationship, there was a lack of a strategic focus. This was seen with the restructuring of Mexico's Embassy in Romania as a pending issue and the continuous budget restrictions preventing the development of high impact cultural initiatives, even constraining the commemoration of 80 years of diplomatic relations.

The second point noted *how, as a result of the international interaction between these actors, they could get to know more about each other, which could help fight prejudice*, and a section of nation branding attempts was presented. The importance of fighting against clichés and stereotypes was stressed in order to seek a complete, balanced, and informed image of a country in terms of self-representation. With the blurring of the line between domestic and international spheres, nation branding messages are considered as global and not sectorial. That is why nation branding strategies have to work with two components: the external and internal. Externally, a country's goal is to be politically and economically significant by attracting consumers to purchase their goods and services. Internally, the country seeks to work on the necessary policies to become trusted and giving its population a clear self-concept in terms of confidence. The development of internal and external strategies coherently articulated will create a credible message.

Linked to this, and regarding Mexico and Romania's negative image: both countries have asymmetrical images within their top strategic partnerships. This applies to Mexico's relationship with the NAFTA and Romania's relationship with the EU. This is partially a result of their previous authoritarian regimes, which made them inherit strong corruption structures and immersed each country in a never ending cycle of underdevelopment. On the other hand, Mexico has been characterized by a wave of violence that started with Felipe Calderón's war on drugs; and within Europe, Romania has been associated with the Roma, a group that is prejudiced against within Europe, and the Balkan region, which consists of a political archetype far from that of Romania.

Simon Anholt's components of the Nation Brands Index were also discussed: exports, governance, culture and heritage, people, tourism, investment and migration. In terms of nation branding, Mexico and Romania have focused more on tourism and culture and heritage. Regarding the people and migration elements, Mexico has some successful experience that could be shared with Romania as it has used the people to people component of new public diplomacy to capitalize on the promotion of its touristic services. This has also promoted a positive image of its diaspora. However,

both countries have fallen into what Noya and Prado call ‘the trap of natural resources’. Mexico and Romania have used the exoticism surrounding them as a means to get international attention and have failed to project a competitive image to break with their past. Therefore, tradition and modernity are two of the elements that still need to be worked on for coherency.

Finally, the third point refers to *how these actors get to capitalize on this knowledge through soft power in order to trace foreign policy actions with impact*. To address this it must be said that even though changing existing perceptions is difficult, particularly when people do not have much contact with the object they refer to, it is possible to create credible images by cultivating solid bridges of dialogue among countries. Within the cultural exchange section of Mexico and Romania what has been done recently in terms of cultural diplomacy was analyzed. This consisted of mostly isolated initiatives with no higher impact. A long term strategy to position Mexico in Eastern Europe by means of cultural initiatives could be more significant. This type of initiative can also be used to show respect for other countries’ traditions and history, which is the foundation of intercultural dialogue and solid political relations.

It was precisely Villanueva’s last point of convergence that encouraged this research, as this author believes that culture, coherently administered by a national strategy, is an element that can encourage countries to move towards more sophisticated types of cooperation. There is much cultural ignorance among countries despite having political and economic bonds, and this is where cultural diplomacy could work as a policy to open doors; create a climate of trust; cultivate spiritual links and generate empathy among countries, nations, and societies. In this regard, the list of recommendations presented aim to start tracing the path of rapprochement between Latin America and Eastern Europe through a cultural diplomacy strategy that could begin with Mexico and Romania. This would give both countries and both regions bigger weight in international affairs.

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Interviews

- Interview number 1 with an officer of the General Direction of Education and Cultural Cooperation of the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Interview number 2 with a Diplomat from the Romanian Embassy in Mexico.
- Interview number 3 with a Mexican Diplomat,
- Interview number 4 with a Mexican Diplomat.
- Interview number 5 with Mexican Ambassador in Romania, Agustín Gutiérrez Canet.
- Interview number 6 with an officer from the Mexican Cultural Institute of NY, Roberto Campos

Appendix

Mexico and Romania's Legal Framework

The following documents form the legal framework of the relationship between the two countries:¹

- EU-Mexico Economic Partnership, Political Coordination and Cooperation Agreement (1997)²
- High Level Group of Economic Cooperation between Mexico and Romania (December 2007 with four meetings on 2007, 2010, 2011 and 2014)
- Consultation Mechanism between Mexico and Romania (1996 with five meetings 1999, 2000, 2002, 2009 and 2014)
- Basic Agreement on Technical and Scientific Cooperation.
- Agreement on Touristic Cooperation.
- Cooperation Agreement for Combating Illicit Traffic of Narcotics, Psychotropic Substances and Related Crimes.
- Cooperation Agreement EximBank- Bancomext³
- Cooperation Agreement to Avoid Double Taxation and Tax Evasion.
- Cooperation Agreement on Mining.
- Cooperation Agreement on Energy Equipment.
- Cooperation Agreement on Petroleum and Petrochemistry.
- Cooperation Agreement on the Construction Sector, Agricultural and Forestry Machinery.
- Cooperation Agreement on Animal Health between the Ministries of Agriculture
- Cooperation Agreement on Economy and Industry.
- Cooperation Agreement between the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Romania and the National Association of Importers and Exporters of Mexico.
- Cooperation Agreement between the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Romania and the Mexican Businessmen Council for International Business.
- Cooperation Agreement between the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Romania and the National Chamber of Mexico City.

¹ Data obtained from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Mexico and Romania.

² Free trade agreement entered into force in 2000 in goods and 2001 in services.

³ Banks of commercial trade.

- Cooperation Agreement with the Mexican Foreign Trade Council.

Cultural Agreements

- Agreement of Cinematographic Exchange and Co-production.
- Agreement to Collaborate on the Fields of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports.
- Cooperation Agreement between the Ministries of Education to Recognize Academic Degrees.
- Cooperation Program on Culture, Education, Youth and Sports for the years 2014-2016.

Others

Mexico's Deputy Chamber installed a Group of Friends Mexico-Romania (2013) and currently there are the following sister cities: Tlaxcala-Baile Herculane and Targoviste; Iasi-Monterrey; Veracruz-Constanta; Guanajuato-Shigisoara, and according to the Romanian Embassy in Mexico there is a current proposal for Querétaro and Craiova. In addition to this, there is an ongoing negotiated collaboration agreement between Miguel Hidalgo (a borough of Mexico City) and Sector 3 of Bucharest.