

Bachelor Thesis Review

Gabriela Marques Garcia de Souza: *Music as a Cultural Diplomacy Instrument: Jazz Diplomacy during the Cold War*

The thesis under review attempts to contribute to the expanding debate about important aspects of the bipolar rivalry during the Cold War, which are, however, understudied comparing to traditional hard-security perspective. Building on the constructivist research about cultural diplomacy, the author analyses jazz as a diplomatic tool during the Cold War era. This topic is certainly uncommon on the bachelor thesis level, but that should be seen as a positive thing, because instead of rehearsing well known facts and tautologies connected to certain topics the author of this thesis ventures into much less “chartered” territory, which could be highly valuable for expanding our knowledge about the Cold War looking at it from new angles.

The thesis first describes the concept of cultural diplomacy and places it as one of results of “cultural turn” in IR theory. Second chapter of the reviewed thesis goes into bigger detail focusing on music as a diplomatic tool, be it part of traditional or public diplomacy in the modern era. Finally, thesis’ third chapter analyses one particular form of music, jazz, and the way it has been utilized in foreign policy since its inception in the United States after WWI. Bulk of the chapter is centered on the Cold War, where we could witness foreign policies and diplomacy of the superpowers strongly oriented ideologically, utilizing (apart from traditional sources of hard power) also cultural resources, such as music.

The thesis has sound structure and follows straightforward research logic. I really have praised the author for the language and style of the thesis, as the English writing is clear, concise and easy to read with minimum of errors. There is quite number of materials used in this work, be it writing on IR theory, history of jazz music or cultural diplomacy during the Cold War. On the other hand, below I list some of the shortcomings of the reviewed work:

- a) There is a lot of theoretical background described in the thesis, however, the work is much sparser in describing the way this theoretical knowledge will be used in the analysis further in the work. Also, there are various strains of constructivism, and the author is mute about these differences and how they might potentially influence research on cultural diplomacy. Another issue with the thesis is that the work’s methodology is never sufficiently explained. The result is that later in the work when we arrive at the

jazz diplomacy during the Cold War the analysis is a bit out of focus, i.e. it deals with a lot of phenomena but not in systematic fashion. Maybe it would be more fruitful if the work focused in more detail on the analyzed paradox of black jazz musicians being US cultural ambassadors, even though their country applied a lot of discriminatory policies.

- b) Whereas the introduction is rather brief, and it is missing more explanations about chosen methodology, the conclusion is simply *too* brief for concluding the whole thesis in sufficient manner. Proper conclusion should also include some thought on what went good but also what went wrong during the research, i.e. acknowledging the limitations of one's own research.
- c) On more than one occasion the narrative really calls for more complex comparative perspective. For example, there are other musical genre outside of jazz or popular music that have been used for diplomatic purposes (classical music in the case of USSR), which we might compare with the US jazz diplomacy and reveal some crucial aspects of using music as diplomatic tool in general. A related issue is the nature of *reception* of jazz diplomacy, especially the communist states of the Easter bloc. We might ask, to what extent was jazz diplomacy efficient, successful, maybe counterproductive etc.
- d) In places the thesis suffers from its relative shortness. There is for example quite extensive discussion on the origins of jazz music, but this space could have been used instead for expanding the core analysis of jazz as diplomatic tool during the Cold War. This analysis spans pages 63 to 77, which is not that much, taking into considerations that there are lot of pictures (however, very nice ones).

Despite some of the shortcoming of the text under review, Gabriela de Souza's thesis is a fine text that proves that she was able to identify an interesting but scholarly important research topic and utilize theoretical knowledge to analyze significant case of the studied phenomenon. For above mentioned reasons I recommend G. de Souza's thesis for the defense.

Hradec Králové, 11th January 2024

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