



GIEDRĖ PRANAITYTĖ

French Cultural Diplomacy in Lithuania: More Than Two Decades of Success

France has traditionally been regarded as one of the countries that possess enough potential to propose effective strategies for the successful implementation of cultural diplomacy. Such a positive reputation stems from active endeavors of French diplomats and officials to display best examples of their national culture abroad, encourage the promotion and development of French art, cinema as well as music, finance timely translations of important pieces of the French literary heritage into foreign languages, support the widespread usage of the French language, increase its popularity among foreigners via the global movement

known as la Francophonie and develop a network of institutions which would encourage strong partnerships between French intellectuals as well as artists and their colleagues working in other parts of the world. Each of above-mentioned spheres of activity often increases the political weight of France on the international stage. In addition to that, a deep awareness of its subtle cultural particularities sometimes serves as an impulse for a fruitful exchange of ideas which might be of vital importance when one aspires to reach important compromises and work out acceptable political solutions. The model of the French cultural diplomacy and its attractiveness in the 21st century can be explained as resulting from the willingness of governmental officials to set long-

term cultural goals that sometimes seem to have a limited connection with concrete but temporary political tasks and their readiness to skillfully incorporate them into political strategies, rapidly react to the changing international situation and draw great diplomatic benefits from a more efficient intercultural communication. Simultaneously, the French pattern of cultural diplomacy also attracts some arrows of criticism and remains to be considered controversial because of its overt and unchallenged dependence on the smooth functioning of the state apparatus and the diplomatic corps. This presentation aims to find reliable answers to the following research questions: What determines the success of French cultural diplomacy in Lithuania? How does it contribute to a deeper and harmonious understanding between both countries? Theoretical framework of the presentation is constructed on the basis of ideas about different types of power developed by outstanding American scholars Joseph S. Nye Jr. and the leading theoretician from the Netherlands Peter van Ham. The practical part of the presentation will be focused on the inter-cultural coopera-

tion between Lithuania and France. Much attention will be paid to the role of Lithuanian diaspora and diplomats working in Paris as well as the activity of French cultural centers operating in Vilnius and Kaunas.