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Mongolian Public Diplomacy: Where It Stands And What Can Be Done? ^[1]

Mongolia's foreign policy has historically been shaped by the influence of its two large neighbors, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. After Mongolia adopted a democratic system in 1989, its foreign relations widened. The Foreign Policy Concept (most recently amended in 2011) states that Mongolia will seek a policy of non-alignment and pursue relations with "third neighbor" countries, referring to South Korea, Japan, Turkey, the European Union, India and other Western nations.

Mongolia's expanded foreign affairs efforts are now paying off. For instance, Mongolia recently fulfilled its goal to establish diplomatic relations with every United Nations member.

Mongolia also welcomed numerous high-profile world leaders in 2023, including Pope Francis, as well as the Presidents of France and Poland. Mongolia's Prime Minister also visited the US, and its Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted a Female Foreign Ministers' Meeting in

Ulaanbaatar — a demonstration of feminist foreign policy, according to international relations scholar, D.Bayarkhuu.

These 2023 highlights showcased Mongolia's "third neighbor" foreign policy and, in contrast, a weaker influence from its two large neighboring countries.

In terms of public diplomacy — especially through art, music, movies and other soft power tools — Mongolia has been highly successful in recent years. Take, for instance, the popular Mongolian folk metal band, the HU. The band's recent notable achievements include an invitation to the famous music festival Coachella, sold-out world tours in Europe and the US and millions of views and streams on YouTube and Spotify. (I explored the HU phenomenon in a 2022 article for PDSyracuse).

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Other key influencers helping to spread Mongolia's culture abroad include ARTGER, a YouTube channel that highlights Mongolian food with almost 600 thousand of subscribers; the Mongolian Nomadic Family, a social media influencer that promotes a nomadic lifestyle; and other social media figures that promote a positive image of Mongolia to global audiences.

Last year, Mongolia also garnered global attention with its famous play, "The Mongol Khan," that was performed in London on the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the UK and Mongolia.

Despite its small population, around 3.4 million, Mongolia also actively participates in the United Nations Peacekeeping. It is among the 24 countries that send the largest number of forces to the United Nations.

The "Agenda for Promoting Mongolia Abroad" was adopted by the second resolution of Mongolia's Parliament in 2016. However, there have been no progress reports, outcome assessments, nor official websites about Mongolia's public diplomacy efforts, resulting in scanty public knowledge. From my own review of Mongolia's official releases, I've found the country tends to promote its political and economic relations over cultural, educational or people-to-people diplomacy efforts.

While Mongolia has an excellent track record in diplomacy efforts, the country would be wise to prioritize public diplomacy. A dedicated office, council or committee within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should be created; no such organization currently exists. In addition to wider promotion of its public diplomacy efforts and a dedicated office, Mongolia would benefit from adopting international exchange programs, bringing foreign citizens to Mongolia for either short or extended periods. A first step would be learning from other countries' exchange programs and modeling these practices in partnership with relevant agencies. Funding, collaboration and a deeper understanding of the benefits of public diplomacy are also essential.
