

1.7 Foreign Policy and Diplomacy

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Europe of the People or Europe of Elites? The Influence of Citizen Discourse on EU Foreign Policy Decision-Making in the Republic of Cyprus

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Abstract

This paper examines how citizen discourse in the decision-making of EU foreign policy is conditioned by the institutional context of individual member states. Institutions condition how open and responsive a polity is to citizen discourse. When institutions constrain citizen discourse, this may impact policy responsiveness which will have a wider effect on the sustainability and legitimacy of policies. While the CFSP has enjoyed relatively high and stable public support, the increasing politicisation of various EU policies necessitates that elite decisions in foreign policy must resonate with citizen discourse. This, however, is conditional upon the institutional parameters in different types of democracies. Therefore, taking a discursive institutionalist perspective, the paper examines citizen-elite interactions within Cyprus' institutional context. It demonstrates that there are currently no access points for citizens to become involved in decision-making which has had important implications for support for the EU's policies and its legitimacy.

Keywords: discourse; institutions; decision-making; foreign policy; participation.

1 Introduction

An inward-looking turn into individual Member States demonstrates that institutional context matters for how open and responsive a polity is to citizen discourse. Institutions structure and condition citizen-elite interactions and determine how influential citizen discourse is in the decision-making process. This may affect policy responsiveness, that is, ‘the ability and willingness of political (and bureaucratic) actors to reflect changes in public opinion in their policy-making behaviour’ which has important implications for the link between opinion and policy (Meijers *et al.* 2019: 1724). This is especially pertinent given that perceptions of national institutions may impact upon citizen support for the EU and its policies (Ares *et al.* 2016). Therefore, examining the institutional context of Member States provides insights into how national institutions enable or constrain citizen influence.

Discourses ‘play an important cognitive role, as they help citizens to make sense of political developments or policies,’ including foreign policy (Diez 2014; Dimitrova and Kortenska 2017: 261). However, foreign policy has traditionally been assumed to be elite-driven which has led to discursive gaps between citizen and elite discourses despite high support for the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Since citizens respond to policy content, ‘retrospective assessments appear to be particularly influential in affecting attitudes’ toward foreign policy (Schoen 2008: 22). In a context of the ‘citizen-turn’ in EU politics as well as activation of public opinion – ‘the process by which individuals move...to a state of actively demanding change and accountability’ (Lee 2011: 262) – it becomes increasingly important to examine policy responsiveness and its implications for diffuse support for EU foreign policy (Ares *et al.* 2017; Olear 2023). This may also be consequential for political efficacy, that is, ‘whether or not voters *feel* that their interests are accounted for in the political process’ (Meevov 2016: 1160).¹

This paper is thus concerned with citizen involvement in the making of foreign policy in EU member states. It draws insights from discursive institutionalism to examine citizen-elite interactions within the policy process in Cyprus and identify the conditions under which citizen discourse can influence the decision-making of EU foreign policy. It demonstrates that there is an incentive for elites to delve deeper into ‘the arguments and emotional responses underpinning citizen attitudes’ when making foreign policy (Dimitrova and Kortenska 2017, 260).

Following the introduction, section 2 develops the analytical framework while section 3 describes the methodological approach, including discourse analysis and elite interviews. Section 4 analyses the substantive content of the different types of discourse in Cyprus and Section 5 uses the performance model to discuss the implications of Cyprus’ institutional context. Section 6 concludes with a discussion on the conditions under which citizen discourse can influence decision-making processes in Cyprus.

2 Analytical Framework

Literature Review

Few scholars have been concerned with a citizen-focused perspective on EU policy-making, let alone one on EU foreign policy (Anderson and Hecht 2018; Boomgaarden *et al.* 2011; Schoen 2008; Sojka and Vázquez-García 2013). These scholars provide evidence that EU foreign

¹ Emphasis added by author.

policy enjoys support from the general public, although it is not a priority for citizens, but it has the potential to develop into activated opinion (Brummer 2007; Peters 2014; Powlick and Katz 1998; Schilde *et al.* 2019). They also illustrate that public opinion is crucial for foreign policy as it can condition, even constrain ‘the prospects for its further development’ (Sojka and Vázquez-García 2013: 55). Additionally, Dimitrova and Kortenska (2017: 261) argue that if elites use citizen *discourse* to make policies, they ‘can ensure that a policy is understood by the public’ which will increase its likelihood of success. Studying discourses, therefore, could provide a more comprehensive approach to understanding the conditions under which policies are supported.

Other citizen-focused studies demonstrate that the extent to which the EU is responsive and accountable determines the likelihood that citizens will support it and find it legitimate (Boomgaarden *et al.* 2011; Bølstad 2015; Mcevoy 2016; Meijers *et al.* 2019). This is determined by political efficacy (Mcevoy 2016), and the responsiveness of the EU (Meijers *et al.* 2019: 1724). These scholars place emphasis on the *input stage* of EU policy-making which demonstrates the importance of studying institutional factors. These concepts are thus essential in this study.

This literature, however, does not engage extensively how citizens make sense of political action. Discourses instead entail an interactive dimension which demonstrates how they deliberate about ideas amongst other citizens and elites and further develop their preferences. Therefore, this research adopts a discourse analysis approach to study these discursive interactions. But these interactions are informed by ‘different procedures, individual actors, venues and informal and formal codes of conduct’ (Carta and Morin 2014: 305). Therefore, this analysis requires a multi-faceted approach that could take these various factors into consideration which has only been done by a few scholars (Dimitrova and Kortenska 2017; Herranz-Surrallés 2012; Rayroux 2014). Adopting a discursive institutionalist perspective, these scholars were able to demonstrate how actors and their interactions could bring about policy change within different institutional contexts. Therefore, this research adopts a discursive institutionalist perspective that promises to provide a much-needed multi-faceted approach to studying discourse within institutions.

Discursive Institutionalism

Discursive institutionalism is a theoretical perspective developed chiefly by US scholar Vivien Schmidt (2008; 2010). It views discourse as an interactive process between different actors that occurs within, and is constrained by, institutional contexts. These contexts refer to ‘formal institutions that affect *where* discourse matters, by establishing who talks to whom about what, where and when’ (Schmidt 2011: 119). While ‘sentient agents’ create and maintain institutions using their ‘background ideational abilities,’ they can also change them using their ‘foreground discursive abilities’ through a logic of communication (Schmidt 2008: 314).

Citizen-elite interactions occur in the coordinative policy sphere and communicative political sphere. These spheres operate differently in different types of democracies since they have different formal and informal rules, laws, norms, and conventions that define, for example, governance structures and policy processes.² Since these ‘set the parameters of what people talk about as well as who talks to whom in the process of policy-making,’ they are referred to as institutional parameters (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004: 197). These parameters are best portrayed by

² This research recognises that policy processes are complex and often unpredictable. However, for ease of discussion, I distinguish between three phases: pre-decision deliberation, policy formation and evaluation and adaptation. This is a useful simplification to help grasp the relationship between citizens and elites and allow for a more concise representation of how these interactions proceed in practice throughout the study (Colebatch 2007).

‘simple’ and ‘compound’ polities, a distinction commonly found in the field of comparative politics (Lijphart 2007; 2012).

In the coordinative policy sphere, policy actors including lobbyists, government officials and members of discursive coalitions, engage in pre-decision coordinative discourse where they coordinate their policy ideas in the lead up to policy decisions. Depending on the type of polity, coordinative discourse here may also involve citizens and, ideally, this is where the process of citizen input should occur whereby citizens engage in genuine deliberation about political action before a decision is made. Here, elites should be inclined to involve citizens because, ‘by making policy decisions consistent with at least some of the arguments, prescriptions and beliefs contained in citizen discourses, politicians can ensure that a policy is understood’ and supported by citizens (Dimitrova and Kortenska 2017: 261).

Communicative discourse occurs in the communicative political sphere where political actors ‘bring the policy ideas developed in the context of the coordinative discourses to the public for deliberation and legitimation’ (Schmidt 2010: 3). These political actors, including political leaders and policymakers, ‘attempt to...engage the public in debates about the policies they favour’ (Schmidt 2010: 10). It also includes members of civil society, social movements and ordinary citizens who engage in the evaluation and legitimation of policies in, for example, elections, polls, and demonstrations.

Coordinative and communicative discourses matter differently in ‘simple’ and ‘compound’ polities. ‘Simple’ polities are single-actor systems, such as the UK and France, often characterised by unitary states and majoritarian politics, where power is concentrated in the executive, and only a small elite is responsible for policy formation. Simple polities have a more prominent communicative discourse since political actors aim at ‘persuading the general public about the necessity and appropriateness of policies developed with little outside input’ (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004: 198). This research problematises, however, that since communicative discourse occurs *after* decisions have been made, it is ultimately inflexible to citizen input. Since policies are created without much (or any) direct citizen engagement, simple polities place emphasis on top-down elite-driven communication.

‘Compound’ polities are multi-actor systems, such as Germany or the Netherlands, in the form of consensus democracies and proportional representation systems, with (elements of) corporatist policy making, and/or federal states, where coordinative discourse is more prominent and penetrable (and likely to involve citizens) because of the variety of actors and interests that must be represented (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004). Compound polities are more likely to have deliberative features to reach consensus about political action (Lijphart 2007: 112). Because of the significance ascribed to pre-decision deliberation in such polities, it seems that citizen discourse will more likely be heard *before* decisions are made and thus policies would more likely resonate with the public given citizen’s initial participation.

Examining the type of polity a member state is, is therefore key to understanding where citizen-elite interactions occur and thus where citizen discourse is genuinely heard in the policy process. It also informs issues of policy responsiveness because ‘policies that do not resonate with any of the perceptions, arguments and responses of voters are unlikely to be sustainable in the longer term’ (Dimitrova and Kortenska 2017: 261). This perspective is thus central to examining gaps between citizen discourse and elite decisions in Cyprus, a simple polity.

3 Methodology and Data Collection

Discourse Analysis

The purpose of this discourse analysis is to conduct an empirical investigation to capture ‘ideas, concepts, categories, and causal relations’ within a broader context in the sources selected (Lynggaard 2012: 89). Discourse analysis entails a textual and contextual analysis (Schiffrin 1994; Halperin and Heath 2017) where ‘text’ refers to the representation of ideas through spoken or written utterances, and this ‘text’ must always be understood in relation to its social (and institutional) ‘context.’

The research adopts the following analytical strategy: the first step examines Cyprus’ constitutional design and whether it affords opportunities for the involvement of citizen discourse in policy-making. This provides insights into where citizen-elite interactions take place which informs our second step which analyses the substantive content of communicative and coordinative discourses using the population of ‘texts’ in Table 1. This includes studying the types of justification (cognitive or normative) used by political actors for policy decisions to gauge the resonance of elite decisions with citizen discourse (Herranz-Surrallés 2012). Opinion polls are coupled with discourses since they ‘represent two complementary ways of understanding citizen perceptions’ of foreign policy (Dimitrova and Kortenska 2017: 265). The sources range from the institutionalisation of the CFSP in 2009 until 2022.

Table 1. Discourses under study *Adapted from Rayroux (2014)*

<i>Coordinative Discourse</i>	Results from elite interviews Foreign Policy Executive General Secretariat for European Affairs Public Consultations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2013, 2014, 2018, 2019)
<i>Communicative Discourse</i>	Press Releases (2009-2022) Political Speeches and Statements (2009-2022) <i>Eurobarometer</i> polls (2009-2022) ‘Reforming Europe: Citizens’ Forum’ (2021-2022) Panels from Conference on the Future of Europe (2021-2022)

The third step uses the performance model which relates to how evaluations of the performance of institutions affects citizens’ support for particular institutions (Karp *et al.* 2003; Karp and Bowler 2006; Rohrschneider 2002; Schoen 2008; Sojka and Vázquez-García 2013). This support comes in two modes: specific and diffuse. *Specific* support refers to ‘the satisfactions that members of a system feel they obtain from the perceived outputs and performance of the political authorities’ (Easton 1975: 437). This relates to domain-specific evaluations, and it may also be used to gauge political efficacy. *Diffuse*, or affective, support refers to ‘a reservoir of favorable attitudes or good will’ (Easton 1975: 446). Specific support may affect diffuse support since ‘consistently high levels of specific support can, over time, foster affective attitudes’ (Mcevoy 2016: 1165). However, ‘if discontent with perceived performance continues over a long enough time, it may gradually erode even the strongest underlying bonds of attachment’ (Easton 1975: 445).

Elite Interviews

Elite interviews are complementary to the discourse analysis and are used as a method of process tracing. They are ‘a key means of obtaining information about’ policy processes and the extent to which elites consider citizen discourse in decision-making (Halperin and Heath 2017: 322). They provide greater insight into the role of policy and political actors in the coordination of ideas in the policy sphere and the translation of these into policy, that may be otherwise difficult to identify or examine (as this case will show). Interviewees have been selected based on their role in foreign policy-making and through the snowball method. Elite interviews have been conducted mostly for exploratory purposes and, therefore, this section will not be elaborated further.

4 Analysis

Institutional Parameters of Foreign Policy-Making

Cyprus’ constitutional design conditions Cypriot politics to towards the majoritarian type of democracy. It is a presidential republic in which the President, both head of state and government, is popularly and directly elected by the voters, and ‘takes precedence over all persons in the Republic’ (Constitute Project 2013: 18). It is also a unitary state with ‘statist’ policy-making. Power is concentrated in the executive which dominates over the unicameral legislative branch, the judiciary is independent, and policy formulation is made by a small governmental elite (Schmidt 2008; 2010).

Importantly, ‘the most important decisions...can be made by the president with or without, and even against, the advice of the cabinet’ (Ker-Lindsay 2006; Lijphart 2012: 107). Under the Cypriot Constitution, the President has the executive right of final veto ‘on any law or decision’ of the Council of Ministers (CoM) or the House of Representatives (HoR) concerning foreign affairs, defence, and security (Constitute Project 2013: 24). The President’s veto power essentially removes the need for final consensus or compromise to satisfy other interests. Moreover, the absence of the Turkish Cypriot Vice-President, a result of the Cyprus conflict, also removes any checks and balances that could counterweight the executive power of the President over foreign affairs using the Vice-President’s veto (Ker-Lindsay 2006).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) still has some room for manoeuvre since it is ‘the main actor responsible for the exercise of the State's foreign policy’ (Koukkides-Procopiou 2022; Republic of Cyprus, Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2023). The Constitution however ‘only refers to the functions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs without any mention to strategy or objectives,’ indicating that its role does not extend to setting and coordinating its own foreign policy objectives or overall strategy (Koukkides-Procopiou 2022; Müller *et al.* 2022: 9). As above, the President retains veto power over foreign affairs. The Foreign Minister (FM) and MFA are instead responsible for carrying out and implementing the goals and priorities approved by the President (Anonymous, 2022. Interviews with EU official and MFA official by author).

While the President and the FM/MFA are directly involved in coordinative discourse on foreign policy, the CoM also has some role in foreign affairs. It is composed of the President and 11 Ministers - appointed by the President and are usually members of the same political party as the President - and is an additional policy actor in coordinative discourse since it ‘exercise[s] executive power’ in matters including foreign affairs, with the exception of the Presidential veto

(Constitute Project 2013: 26). The President also has ‘the right of return’ of CoM decisions for reconsideration (Constitute Project 2013: 27). These three actors thus comprise the Foreign Policy Executive³ (FPE) of Cyprus.

Other actors, including citizens and the national parliament (HoR), do not currently have access to foreign policy decision-making. For example, citizens cannot actively become involved in the pre-decision phase of a policy process unless the competent Ministry initiates public consultations. Moreover, the Constitution does not accord any role to citizens in these processes thereby making the pre-decision phase less penetrable to citizen discourse. Under the Constitution, the HoR, ‘has no binding power over the executive,’ especially in the area of foreign policy (Sepos 2008: 51). Therefore, the coordination of foreign policy falls within the purview of the FPE with no outside influence.

Coordinative Policy Sphere

Given these institutional parameters, only the FPE is directly involved in the process leading up to a policy decision. The constrained nature of the coordinative discourse makes it particularly difficult to identify and access sources and processes of coordination across these actors in the Cyprus case. On the other hand, communicative discourse is more easily accessible and will thus likely be more elaborate.

The interviews carried out by the author reveal similar findings.⁴ When asked about decision-making processes in foreign policy, the interviewees claimed that the responsibility for the coordination of foreign policy falls under the FM and President and that this discourse reflects each government’s set of priorities. Two interviewees also referred to the executive powers and constitutional rights of the President and FM in the Constitution. They also stated that the President gives instructions for such decisions, but they also refer to the necessity to seek the CoM’s approval on decisions that concern all ministries, especially on issues concerning Cyprus’ participation in the EU. Interviewees were also asked if other actors, particularly citizens, are involved in the pre-decision phase to which they responded that there is currently no institutionalised access for citizens to become involved.

Two interviewees referred to the emergence of public consultation processes which the author attempted to study. One was held in 2013 by FM Kasoulides on “Cyprus’ energy perspectives and cooperation with neighbouring countries” (PIO Press Releases 2013b) and another one in 2014 on the role of the diplomatic mission of Cyprus (PIO Press Releases 2014). Such efforts were only resumed in 2018 with FM Christodoulides when he called citizens to a public consultation for a Strategic Action Plan for 2021-2023 (Press and Information Office 2018). This was then followed by another consultation in 2019 by the MFA on economic diplomacy (Press and Information Office 2019).

Conversely, there is currently no access to any documents relating to these consultation processes on the websites of the MFA or the Press and Information Office (PIO) of the government. When asked over interview and phone call at the MFA by the researcher to gain access to these documents, some did not know what was being referred to while others indicated there are no such documents. There is currently no evidence of how these consultations were used

³ References to the ‘executive’ hereby refer to the FPE (which includes the three actors) unless otherwise stated.

⁴ The four interviewees have requested to remain anonymous. All interviewees work for the MFA, at the national level, ambassadorial level or at the Permanent Representation of Cyprus to the EU.

to make decisions and these inconclusive findings raise a suspicion that these consultations did not result in any major changes.

Yet, a welcome development in the coordinative policy sphere in Cyprus has been the creation of the General Secretariat of European Affairs (GSEA) in a CoM decision in 2019 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2021). It was set up for the better coordination of EU affairs in Cyprus and introduced more actors in the pre-decision phase including ‘3 diplomats, an official seconded from the Council of the European Union, two officials from the House of Representatives, an official from Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CYBC), three officials from other ministries and an administrative assistant’ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2022). This variety of actors ensures to some extent that more interests are represented in the coordination of EU affairs. The inclusion of officials from the HoR means that more political viewpoints are shared within the GSEA, thereby introducing a more diverse set of policy ideas. It is, nevertheless, still early to tell whether the GSEA can truly effected changes in providing diverse discourses in the coordinative sphere.

Foreign policy discourse then ‘seems to make its way to the Foreign Ministry via the Presidential Palace and not vice versa’ (Koukkides-Procopiou 2022: 60). Outside actors, including lobbyists and ‘policy entrepreneurs,’ also seem to be absent from this process in such systems (Blavoukos and Bourantonis 2012; Kyriakides *et al.* 2022; Mintrom and Luetjens 2017). This thus depicts a foreign policy-making process which is impenetrable to outside input, and even constraining for insiders. This foreign policy discourse becomes part of official government policy, and it becomes less likely that it will be challenged or changed. For example, writing on fiscal policy in Estonia, a simple polity, Hope and Raudla (2012: 412) argue that ‘the lack of genuine coordinative discourse on fiscal policy has resulted in a situation where there is only one policy narrative or causal story concerning fiscal policy and not a set of competing narratives or stories.’ Similarly, in Cyprus we find that the main actors involved share the same ‘the recipes, guidelines, and maps for political action’ (Schmidt 2008: 306). Indeed, those that do take part in coordinative discourse in Cyprus base their policy ideas on the FPE’s instructions and approach to foreign policy and largely reflect one dominant type of foreign policy discourse which is then communicated and justified to the public in a ‘mass process of public persuasion’ (Schmidt 2008: 310). We turn to this in the next section.

Communicative Political Sphere

This section discusses the communicative efforts of FPE actors to justify the foreign policy decisions and policies made in Cyprus since 2009. To conceptualise and operationalise EU foreign policy, the paper distinguishes between three key themes: *Cyprus in the EU* involves political actors justifying Cyprus’ contribution to the EU and its approach to EU foreign policy; *Cyprus in the World* refers to justifications for using Cyprus’ regional role to contribute to the CFSP; *EU in the World* relates to how political actors convey the role of the EU in the world and its future.

For each theme, the paper also identifies citizen discourse and its response to these policy decisions. *Eurobarometer* data on public support for a common foreign and security policy amongst member states demonstrate that support has been relatively stable and high in Cyprus since 2009, with 83% voting in favour of a CFSP in 2022 (European Commission 2022). Nevertheless, this data does not provide further substance on citizen attitudes toward EU foreign policy. Examining communicative discourse may reveal other indicators of support for foreign policy in citizen discourse as well as the legitimising force of this discourse.

Cyprus in the EU

Political elites' communication since 2009 on decisions related to Cyprus' role and contribution as an EU member state reveals normative, but mostly utilitarian arguments, across all FPE actors. These actors have emphasised the normative benefits of being a member state in their communications, referring to the continued sense of *belonging* of Cypriot citizens in the European family. They refer to Cyprus' European *orientation* and *identity* in an attempt to emphasise the continued importance of the EU for Cyprus as well as of Cyprus for the EU (European Commission 2018b). The FMs also often make references to *values*, *principles*, and *peace* as the guiding norms in exercising EU foreign policy. For example, during Cyprus' EU Presidency in 2012, then FM Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis reiterated the Presidency's aim of working towards 'a better Europe' that 'would be a force of democratization, stability and peace' (PIO Press Releases 2012c). These messages were thus used to justify Cyprus' contribution toward the EU.

Utilitarian arguments featured even more prominently, however, referring to the benefits of *economic prosperity*, *modernization*, and especially *security* that the EU brings to Cyprus. For example, the EU is referred to as 'as a source for stability and prosperity' (European Commission 2018b). This would contribute not only to Cyprus' prosperity and modernity, but to its credibility and effectiveness as a regional and international actor (Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2013; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2022b; PIO Press Releases 2011). Especially pertinent, however, was the *catalyst* argument referring to how the EU would serve as a catalyst for a settlement for the Cyprus problem. In particular, Cypriot political leaders referred to the EU's 'moral duty' (European Commission 2018b) and special role in the efforts toward a solution (PIO Press Releases 2009; PIO Press Releases 2013a).

This argument was also used to explain how EU membership could be used to create pressures for Turkey to change its approach toward Cyprus and that the EU could 'play an important role in the efforts to alter the Turkish Policy' (PIO Press Releases 2009), such as through a sanctions policy against Turkey (Cyprus Mail 2021). This policy was later altered to pursuing confidence-building measures (CBMs) given the reluctance of the rest of the member states to pursue sanctions. Elites justified this decision by saying that this would contribute to renewing negotiations between the two parties given their continued stalemate (Cyprus Mail 2022).

Such utilitarian arguments were tightly linked to the *security rhetoric* which underpins Cyprus' approach toward the EU, arguing that decisions pursued in foreign policy and at EU level are vital to Cyprus' interest and political security, especially with regard to its national problem. According to Anastasiades, Cyprus' 'capacity as a member state of the EU more than adequately addresses any security concerns and provides the best guarantee for all Cypriots' (Institute of International and European Affairs 2016). The governing party DISY also claimed that 'European Cyprus is the greatest security for all its citizens' (Democratic Rally 2019).

This prevailing communicative discourse on Cyprus' role and position within the EU demonstrates that political actors saw the EU more as a contributor to Cyprus' interests and security, rather than Cyprus being a constructive EU member. References to how Cyprus could contribute to EU foreign policy remained minimal, and it was only during the country's six-month EU Presidency and the discovery of hydrocarbons in the country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) that a change in narrative could be observed.

If we consider citizen discourse related to this theme as additional indicators of support for foreign policy, this reveals mixed perceptions as well as some resonance with elite arguments. Firstly, citizens overwhelmingly support Cyprus' continued membership since it is better-off,

especially in relation to foreign affairs, referring to the EU's role in human rights protection, promoting solidarity and equality as well as green energy and environmental responsibility (Politis News WEBTV 2021b). They also argued that the EU's contribution to maintaining peace and democracy and strengthening security in the world was one of the reasons Cyprus has benefitted from EU membership (European Commission 2021b). However, in *Eurobarometer* polls, citizens gave utilitarian reasons for what the EU means to them which, for a majority of citizens between 2009 and 2012, was the *freedom to travel, study and work*. Since 2012 an increasing number of respondents also chose the 'euro.' This was consistent up to 2022 indicating that concerns of Cypriot citizens are also utility-based. Nevertheless, respect for democracy, human rights and rule of law was also seen as one of the main assets of the EU, with this being the second most frequently mentioned item in 2021 (European Commission 2021a).

Additionally, citizens overwhelmingly support Cyprus' continued membership since it is better-off, especially in relation to foreign affairs, referring to its role in human rights protection, promoting solidarity and equality as well as green energy and environmental responsibility (Politis News WEBTV 2021b). However, in *Standard Eurobarometer* polls, citizens gave utilitarian reasons for what the EU means to them which, for a majority of citizens between 2009 and 2012, this was the *freedom to travel, study and work*. This was closely followed by *peace* and *democracy*. However, since 2012 an increasing number of respondents chose the 'euro.' This was consistent up to 2022 indicating that concerns of Cypriot citizens are also utility-based. Nevertheless, respect for democracy, human rights and rule of law was also seen as one of the main assets of the EU, with this being the second most frequently mentioned item in 2021 (European Commission 2021a). Moreover, between 2009 and 2022, the claim that the EU means a stronger say in the world has consistently received support by about 20% of respondents, resonating with the credibility argument.

It also seems that the utilitarian argument about the EU providing security and stability for Cyprus has resonated with citizens who have high concerns about both personal and national security given the Cyprus problem. *Eurobarometer* data between 2009-2012 reveal that a majority of Cypriot citizens agreed that they are safer because Cyprus is an EU member. Citizen discourse also reflects the *security rhetoric* where citizens expressed that they feel safe in the EU and reiterated its importance for safety, security, and defence (Press and Information Office 2022). Yet, citizens also expressed the view that Cyprus should play a greater role in guaranteeing both Cyprus and Europe's security.

We also find arguments consistent with the catalyst argument. For example, citizens expressed the view that the Cyprus problem should become 'a common EU interest' (Politis News WEBTV 2021c; 2021d). Nevertheless, a growing number of citizens have realised that the EU's purpose should not be to serve as a catalyst for the Cyprus problem, but it should be the government's responsibility (2021g) and that Cyprus' contribution to the EU should go beyond issues of the Cyprus problem and Turkey given that 'we are part of the European family.' Therefore, citizens want 'Cyprus to be an active member state with active participation with initiative and actions which relate to the EU as a whole' (Politis News WEBTV 2021d; 2021e).

Importantly, citizen discourse also reflects an activation of public opinion. For example, citizens hold the belief that there is no 'common external policy' across the EU or common interests at EU level, and that Member States are only concerned with their own national interests (Politis News WEBTV 2021b; 2021d). This may reflect the fact that Cypriot foreign policy and by extension its approach to EU foreign policy has concentrated on the Cyprus problem and uploading it to the EU level. This is also present in deliberations where most citizens agree that

Cyprus' approach should go beyond the Cyprus problem and that it 'should not just be concerned with issues related to our problem, but to other issues as well' (Politis News WEBTV 2021d). Citizens also expressed a desire for more common European decisions and interests. For instance, a majority of citizens suggested that they wanted more European decision-making in relation to fighting terrorism, promoting democracy and peace in the world, and protecting the environment, and this was consistent across all years asked (Politis News WEBTV 2021d).

Cyprus' (Regional Role) as a Contributor to EU Foreign Policy

Political actors used mostly utilitarian, but also normative, arguments to reiterate the importance of developing Cyprus' role in the Eastern Mediterranean region following the discovery and exploitation of hydrocarbons. Messages justifying Cyprus' more proactive and multifaceted shift in foreign policy included the *responsibility* to develop *understanding* and *cooperation* with countries of the region and acting as a *bridge* between the Eastern Mediterranean countries and the EU (PIO Press Releases 2009; Press and Information Office 2012). Elite decisions were also justified using messages such as to 'contribute constructively to furthering European integration' (Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2013) and 'to perform a constructive, predictable and non-conflicting regional role' (Institute of International and European Affairs 2016).

Communication efforts mostly relied on arguments about *stability* and *prosperity* in the region, as well as *energy security*. Political actors argued that Cyprus' geographical position could enhance its regional role and bilateral relations with the countries of the region that could in turn increase Cyprus' *economic* and *political influence*. Anastasiades, for example, this role 'is closely related to our foreign policy orientations and objectives' (Institute of International and European Affairs 2016). Moreover, political actors argued that Cyprus' geographical position 'in a neighbourhood like the volatile region of the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean' makes it 'an island of stability' (PIO Press Releases 2012c; Presidency 2018).

Importantly, such arguments referred often to the promises and *prosperity* that the region could bring given its rich sources of natural gas. These reflected a sense of responsibility to contribute to energy security and safeguard both Cyprus' interests and those of the EU. For example, Kozakou-Marcoullis argued that 'it will contribute toward greater energy security for Europe, a continent that is on the constant lookout for new sources of energy' (PIO Press Releases 2011). Anastasiades also referred to the prospects for Cyprus 'to become a regional energy hub' adding that it would 'contribute decisively to achieving energy security for the EU' (Institute of International and European Affairs 2016).

This was coupled with arguments about pursuing a more active role in the EU where Cyprus could be seen as a more constructive member given its potential to provide alternative energy sources for Europe. For example, Christodoulides argued that part of the MFA's foreign policy goals was to work 'methodically within the EU to make the case for the energy potential of the region and the significant impact it can have in Europe' (2018). These arguments also related more generally to the EU's relations with the countries of the region. For example, Kozakou-Marcoullis argued that 'as a member of the European Union, the farthest member to the east and to the south, we intend to contribute to promoting and injecting the policies of the Union in our southern neighborhood and to serving as a conduit for our neighbors in Brussels and among our European partners' (PIO Press Releases 2011). The purpose of this was again justified using utilitarian

arguments about ‘enhancing [Cyprus’] image as a credible and responsible member of the EU’ (PIO Press Releases 2012a).

However, we find divergences between these decisions and citizen discourse since citizens expressed concern over the government’s continued exploration of gas during a time when the EU is trying to phase out gas and instead pursue renewable energy sources (Politis News WEBTV 2021a; 2022a; 2022b). They argued that Cyprus cannot ‘go ahead with natural gas exploration’ when the EU wants to be clean by 2050 (Politis News WEBTV 2022a), and that the EastMed pipeline project is no longer feasible or *sustainable* since ‘the future is clean energy’ (Politis News WEBTV 2022b).

These arguments were also coupled with concerns over climate change and environmental issues which political actors only recently started to make references to. They argued that the government should have made ‘more efforts in terms of climate change’ (Politis News WEBTV 2022c). This is also seen as one of the main challenges and concerns for the EU. *Eurobarometer* data, for example, demonstrate an increase in concerns over climate change and the environment since 2012 when 88% of citizens asked for more European decision-making for protecting the environment (European Commission 2012).

Moreover, between 2009 and 2022, citizens asked for more emphasis on protecting the environment and by 2021 deemed it one of the main challenges for the future of the EU and one which should be prioritised (European Commission 2021a). Deliberations in the Politis News Citizens’ Forum also referred to the effectiveness of the EU in tackling issues such as climate change (2021e), and the ineffectiveness of the Cypriot government to do so (2022d). This is also probably why 49% agreed that climate change is one of the main global challenges for the future of the EU in 2021 (European Commission 2021a). Therefore, elite utilitarian arguments regarding Cyprus’ developing regional role through the discovery of hydrocarbons and exploration of natural gas reserves in the region did not seem to ‘have triggered any significant increase in public support’ (Herranz-Surrallés 2012, 396).

EU in the World and in the Future

In relation to the CFSP as well as the EU’s role in the world, political communication has been relatively scant. Not much has been communicated to the public about developing the EU’s international role or strengthening its common foreign policy. Yet, in the sources identified, we find a mixture of normative and utilitarian arguments. Normative justifications mostly referred to the values of *unity*, *solidarity* and *responsibility* that should underpin its foreign policy, but also to maintaining *peace* and *democracy* around the world (PIO Press Releases 2012b). For example, Anastasiades argued that the Union is ‘the most remarkable model of peace and prosperity in modern history and this is a model that we must preserve but also strengthen’ (European Commission 2018b).

Arguments on how the EU contributes to *security*, *stability*, and *prosperity* within Europe, but also across the world also featured prominently in communications (PIO Press Releases 2012d). These arguments were also coupled with arguments on the EU being a *capable* and *effective* actor in response to crises and that Cyprus could also contribute to strengthening the EU’s international role. They also highlighted the *responsibility* of member states in contributing to these goals and remaining *united* using a single voice in foreign policy pursuits. For example, in the context of Brexit, Anastasiades reiterated the need ‘to...define together our clear vision of Europe. In this effort, all EU Member States have a role towards the implementation of a clear

strategy' (European Commission 2018b). This argument was also followed by references to Europe's *strategic autonomy*, highlighting 'the increasing need to protect our territory and external borders and to strengthen the European unity and resolve on the international stage' (Press and Information Office 2019). These arguments were, therefore, used to justify pursuing and contributing to a more collective foreign and security policy at EU level.

Turning to citizen discourse, we find more developed and activated opinion toward the EU's international role, perhaps as a response to the scant communication by elites. In *Eurobarometer* data between 2016 and 2022, citizens increasingly claimed that peace is best embodied by the EU, followed by both the EU and other countries in the world, across all years asked (European Commission 2016; 2017; 2018a; 2020; 2021a). This number also increased between 2016 and 2021. In the Citizens' Forum, citizens also emphasised the role of the EU as a *peace facilitator* and *builder* in the world (Press and Information Office 2022).

Cypriot citizens also believe that the EU's voice counts in the world, although they want to have a role in amplifying it so that not only the EU's voice can be heard in the world, but also Cyprus'. Importantly, citizens claimed that 'for Europe to do well, we must all contribute to it' (Politis News WEBTV 2021f). A majority of citizens also feel that the EU can help tackle global threats and challenges and that it is a place of stability in an otherwise troubled world, with 74% agreeing with this view in 2021 (European Commission 2021a; Press and Information Office 2022).

Nevertheless, those holding the view that the EU's ability to promote peace and democracy outside of its borders is one of its main assets fell to 19% (European Commission 2021b). Moreover, compared to other global players, Cypriot citizens find the EU's influence in the world weaker than that of the US and China. For instance, in 2016 only 19% agreed that the EU's influence on the world stage in 2030 will be stronger than the US', while also being weaker than Russia, China and Japan's influence (European Commission 2016).

Examining *Special Eurobarometer* polls on the Future of Europe (2009-2022), however, reveals that foreign and defence policy were not top priorities for Cypriot citizens. These findings indicate that 'we must not take it as an indicator of Europeans' preoccupation with this issue' (Sojka and Vázquez-García 2013: 60). However, citizens argue that the EU should invest in commerce, good neighbourhood relations, safety and defence, humanitarian, and development aid as well as climate change in the future, all of which are areas of EU external action and reflect a desire to see a more active EU in the world (Politis News WEBTV 2021d; Press and Information Office 2022). Moreover, in the citizens' forum, a majority of citizens agreed that the main issues facing the EU currently include climate change and geopolitical changes, which may be seen as important indicators of foreign policy priorities (Politis News WEBTV 2021d). These activated preferences can thus provide incentives for elites to use citizen discourse to develop EU foreign policy further.

5 Discussion

An analysis of the two types of discourse reveals that citizen-elite interactions are constrained in the foreign policy process and, as a result, citizen input is minimal. Additionally, citizens have attitudes about foreign policy, but a more in-depth analysis reveals that these are mixed. If we take into consideration other indicators of support, these do not exhibit the same amount of support as the CFSP. This suggests that support is mostly superficial, rather than substantial, for EU foreign policy (Brummer 2007). Moreover, the mixed perceptions about EU

foreign policy and the role of the EU are indicative of discursive gaps between citizen and elite discourses. For example, elites seem to prioritise different aspects of foreign policy, like Cyprus' regional role, and place more emphasis on utilitarian justifications for such decisions. In citizen discourse, however, we increasingly find normative arguments for developing EU foreign policy further. Citizen discourse also exhibits a divergence from seeking a greater regional role for Cyprus. These gaps may be consequential for support for EU foreign policy in the long run.

Yet, this analysis also demonstrates that there are *enabling* discourses for foreign policy in citizen discourse that can be used by elites to make decisions that would resonate more with the public. As EU policies become more politicised, this provides further incentives for elites to use citizen discourse as building blocks for making foreign policy (Dimitrova and Kortenska 2017; Hooghe and Marks 2008; Meijers *et al.* 2019; Sojka and Vázquez-García 2013). This, however, can only be facilitated by engaging citizens in coordinative discourse which, given Cyprus' institutional parameters, seems unlikely unless citizens are more directly involved in the policy process. Indeed, the absence of opportunities for citizen engagement in the policy process at the national level has had negative effects on diffuse support for the EU. The remaining section demonstrates this impact using national indicators of political efficacy and policy responsiveness.

Eurobarometer data reveal low levels of political efficacy and policy responsiveness in Cyprus. In six consecutive *Special Eurobarometer* polls on the Future of Europe (2016-2021), a majority of citizens disagreed with the prompt 'the interests of people like you are well taken into account by the political system in Cyprus' (European Commission 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020; 2021). The highest percentage agreeing with this view was only 37% in 2018. Between 2015 and 2021, a majority of citizens also felt that their voice does not count in Cyprus. In 2021, for example, only 30% of those polled agreed that their voice counts (European Commission 2021b).

This is also observed in deliberations. For example, citizens stated that their voices are not heard because the government 'is not so open and its decision-making process is also not that transparent' (Politis News WEBTV 2021f). They added that there are 'no efforts for citizens to become involved,' and 'not many opportunities to be included in discussions' emphasising the absence of access points for citizen input (Politis News WEBTV 2021b). Others also mentioned that citizens do not have any control or say over EU matters (Politis News WEBTV 2021d) and that 'very few people are able to give their opinion on issues' (Cyprus University Technology 2021). Even Cypriot elites made the case for the 'necessity of considering citizens' preferences prior to decisions being made' (Anonymous, 2022. Interview of MFA official by author; Press and Information Office, Republic of Cyprus 2022).

It seems that these perceptions have had negative implications on diffuse support for the EU. For example, Eurobarometer data between 2012 and 2021 demonstrate that a majority of Cypriot citizens do not trust the EU. The lowest level of trust was recorded in Spring 2018 with 83% tending not to trust the EU. Only in Spring 2019 did the percentage of trust in the EU exceed the percentage of distrust (54% to 40%).

Moreover, responses between 2009 and 2021 on the image of the EU were mixed with the majority of citizens having a neutral or negative image. After 2020, more citizens had a positive image (44%) of the EU than those who had a neutral (36%) or negative (20%) image (European Commission 2021-2022). While this is a positive development, it still indicates that perceptions of the EU are largely negative. For example, the highest percentage of citizens having a positive image of the EU was only 56% in 2009 (European Commission 2009b) and again in 2021 (European Commission 2021a). Between 2012 and 2021, a majority of citizens feel that things are going in the wrong direction for the EU. In the most recent Eurobarometer poll, 47% felt that

things are going in the wrong direction, 14% neither direction, 23% right direction (European Commission 2021b). This again illustrates that there are negative evaluations of the EU.

These low levels of diffuse support for the EU amongst Cypriot citizens demonstrate the implications of specific support for policies at the national level. Indeed, ‘national actors...remain the key conduits for interpreting EU policies and their impact domestically’ (Ares *et al.* 2017: 1111). Therefore, if elite decisions and citizen discourse are at odds, EU policies and the Union itself may be interpreted negatively. So long as Cyprus’ institutional parameters constrain citizen discourse, this will have negative repercussions for the EU.

6 Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to examine the extent to which the policy process in Cyprus affords opportunities for citizens to become genuinely involved in the decision-making of EU foreign policy. The results demonstrate that citizen discourse is constrained because there are no access points for citizen input in coordinative discourse. This means that citizen-elite interactions are absent in the coordination of policy, and citizens are only able to have an input *after* decisions are made, in communicative discourse. Given citizens’ role after the fact, we can infer from this that the influence of citizen discourse is very limited. Even though citizens are able to engage in post-hoc ‘deliberation’ and adaptation, this is still limited to feedback loops and potential adjustments of a decision.

Moreover, when examining policy responsiveness, we find both convergences and discursive gaps. For example, citizens and elites converge on the extent to which they would like to see a more active Cyprus that could contribute more effectively to the CFSP. Yet, elites and citizens have differing priorities for EU foreign policy where elites continue to make attempts at uploading the Cyprus problem onto the EU agenda and expanding Cyprus’ role in the Eastern Mediterranean, while citizens want Cyprus to move away from this approach, want more collective European decision-making, and place more emphasis on the environment. Elites also rely mostly on utilitarian justifications for their decisions whereas citizen discourse reflects more normative arguments about political action. This has important implications for the sustainability and support for EU foreign policy because gaps between elites and citizens, worsened by negative evaluations of performance, may be detrimental to continued support for common policies (Sojka and Vázquez-García 2013). Since citizens make retrospective assessments of foreign policy, low political efficacy - feelings that citizens’ interests are considered and represented in the policy process – would affect support for EU policies in the long-term. Therefore, to guarantee the continued support for EU foreign policy, elites must ensure that they use citizen discourse as building blocks in decision- and policy-making.

Yet, political efficacy as well policy responsiveness is largely determined by national institutional context which may lack the necessary channels for direct citizen involvement as is the case in Cyprus. Lower levels of specific support in Cyprus seem to have had adverse effects for diffuse support for the EU (Ares *et al.* 2017). Indeed, then, institutional context matters. It matters because it determines how policy-making processes work and who is heard in that process. In a context of increasing activation of citizen discourse, the continued absence of citizen input, therefore, has important implications for support for common European policies, but most importantly, for the legitimacy of these national and supranational institutions.

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Turkish Soft Power and Public diplomacy in Western Thrace and the Dodecanese

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Abstract

Soft power was adopted by the AKP as the main pillar of Turkish FP within the “Strategic Depth” doctrine that Ahmet Davutoglu envisaged. Emphasis was placed on soft power policies and establishment of public diplomacy agencies which would form an integral part of Turkish Grand Strategy. Turkish soft power on the Muslim minorities of Western Thrace and the Dodecanese and its transformation along the lines of an authoritarian Turkey will be analysed, taking into consideration the repercussions on identity and culture.

This paper is focusing on the soft power policies and the agents that operate in Western Thrace and the islands of Rhodes and Kos. Moreover, the gradual transformation of soft power policies into eventually hybrid threats will be documented.

In the final analysis, the participants in the presentation will get a clear picture of Turkish FP regarding the minorities under AKP, which will provide food for thought for the next step, the analysis of Turkish influence and formation of identity.

keywords: soft power, public diplomacy, western Thrace Muslim minority, Dodecanese Muslim minority, hybrid threats.

1. A short history of the minorities

Western Thrace Muslim Minority

Ibrahim Kalin contends that Muslims in the West, be it immigrants, converted to Islam or second and third generation citizens, are important actors and have a significant role to play. He calls such communities “Islam Diaspora” (Kalin 2012). Minorities in Thrace, as minorities in the Balkans in general, are vestiges of the once thriving Ottoman Empire and reminders of the multicultural character of the area before the domination of the nation state. The Muslim population of Thrace before the Treaty of Lausanne was as follows :

Turks 76,45%, Pomaks 19,76%, Roma, 2,11% Circassians 1,68% and the total population was 118.903 (Divani 2000)

In article 45 of the Treaty of Lausanne Greece agreed to grant certain rights to the Muslims remaining in its territory. 106.000 Muslims remained within the communities of Komotini, Xanthi and Didimoticho.

The word most frequently uttered by Greece and Turkey regarding their Muslim and non-Muslim minorities respectively, is most probably ‘reciprocity’ and this word has been used by administrators in both states in order to restrict the minority rights of the two communities and thus holding their own citizens hostage (Kurban and Tsitselikis 2010).

The Pomaks and the Roma

Pomaks are a population group distributed in Greece and Bulgaria and the estimated number in Greece is 35000-45000 in the prefectures of Xanthi and Komotini.

Historians report that Pomak’s conversion to Islam started in the 16th century under Selim I. According to DNA analyses and HLA genes frequencies, the population groups that are genetically closer to the Pomaks are Bulgarians and Greeks (Syrgios 2014)

There was a strong population of Roma in Thrace even before the Treaty of Lausanne. Turkish policy in the region, taking advantage of the terrible economic status of the Roma, tried to assimilate them, offering them a strong identity, a sense of belonging and, often, economic assistance. (Lavrentzos 2013)

The Dodecanese Muslim Minority

Muslims have been living in Rhodes and Kos since 1522, as subjects of the Ottoman Empire. (Fautre 2015). In the late 19th and 20th centuries, significant numbers of Muslims of Turkish origin settled on these islands. (Tsitselikis 2016). In 1912, when the Dodecanese islands were ceded to Italy, there was an estimated Muslim population of 11.000. After the incorporation of the Dodecanese into the Greek state in 1947, the great majority became Greek citizens. Although they were not officially recognized as a minority, they were given special status for the waqf and the Turkish schools, of which there were nine in Rhodes and three in Kos. (Georgalidou 2003). The Greek population census of 1951 listed 4750 Muslims in the Dodecanese. (Tsitselikis 2016). In total, 10.000 migrated to Turkey since -on account of the Cyprus

conflict- life became difficult for them. One of the first actions undertaken by the Greek administration was to abolish the funding of Turkish teachers. (Kaymakci 2020) Discrimination in the fields of health and education, sabotage of shops, fields and cattle were common. (Kaurikonski 2003)It has been suggested that the Muslims in Kos and Rhodes, who have not been protected by international treaties have been the most severely affected by tensions between the two countries and this is the reason they were more easily integrated than the Muslims in W. Thrace. (Kaurikonski 2003). The cosmopolitan nature of the islands as well as the globalization processes and the promise of economic prosperity through tourism made a peaceful coexistence possible. Today about 3000 live in Rhodes, scattered around the island and 1500 in Kos, concentrated in the city of Kos and the village Platani(Germe in Turkish). Turkish is hardly spoken. (Kaymakci and Ozgun 2015)The Muslims of both islands have difficulty in keeping their identity. (Kaymakci and Ozgun 2018).

3. Public Diplomacy Agents

Turkey employs strategic communication to reach the new imagination it aspires to foster. Its actors strive to project Turkey's story and nation brand. (Sancar 2015) According to Ibrahim Kalin: "The task of the new Turkish Public Diplomacy is to tell the story of the new Turkey to a wide ranging audience across the globe.

The Prime Minister's Office of Public Diplomacy. (KDK)

It was established in 2010 and "its main objective is to provide the coordination between the public agencies and NGOs in their effort to promote Turkey in the international arena and to enhance its credibility." It has the mandate to coordinate public diplomacy activities, measuring foreign aid efforts to reiterate Turkey's role as a donor state.

The MFA.

It is a key actor in Turkey's public diplomacy and is actively involved in cultural diplomacy projects cooperating with NGOs, providing humanitarian aid, even establishing chairs in foreign higher education institutions. The Department of Information and Public Communication was founded in 2011

Ministry for EU affairs

The main objective of the ministry is to inform the public about EU – Turkey accession process and to project a positive image of Turkey as a candidate country.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism

Its denominators are tourism, history, and cinema. The "Go Turkey" initiative and the "Come See Turkey" one are successful examples of Turkish digital diplomacy.

The Prime Ministry's Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency. (TIKA)

TIKA, founded in 1992, is Turkey's official development agency and its activities have been on the foreground in 30 countries in five continents, sponsoring a wide range of projects.

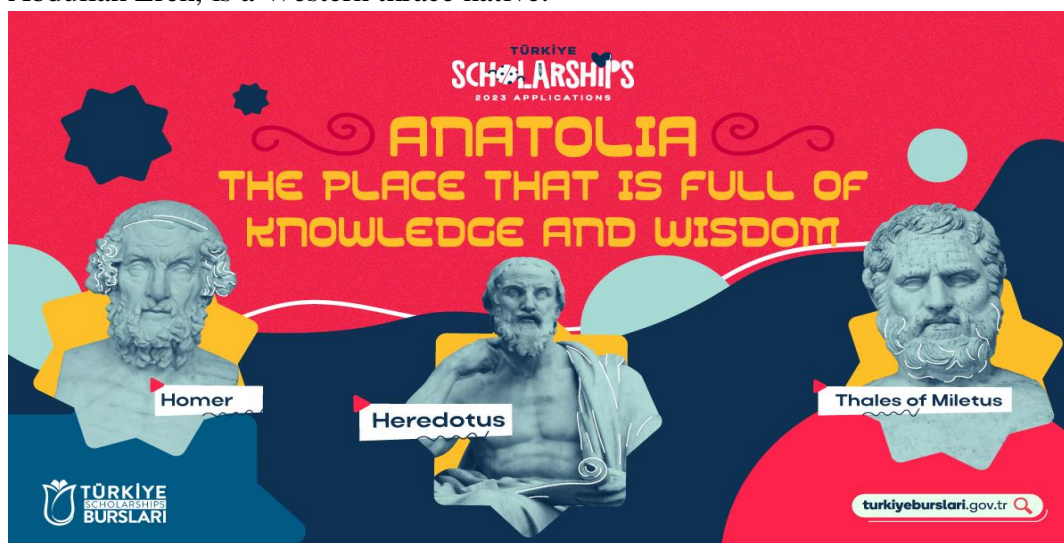
The Prime Ministry's Directorate General of Press and Information

Its main objective is to communicate with media representatives, giving priority to foreign media relations. Through its 39 international offices, it ensures government activities are conveyed to international audiences.

The Prime Ministry's Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities

It was Turkey's first attempt at practicing diaspora diplomacy and was founded in 2010 to assist cultural and social activities of Turkish citizens living abroad, foreign citizens of Turkish origin and sister communities located in different regions. (Ali 2022). The Turkey Scholarship- Turkiye Burslari- benefits 4108 international students in 105 universities in 55 cities.(2021) Students who are awarded scholarships benefit from a number of privileges. They are placed in prestigious universities where the fees are paid for and they also receive a monthly stipend and one year language

learning. Accommodation is provided free of charge in conjunction with social and cultural programs and health insurance as well as return flight tickets are provided. A major network of alumni is also the responsibility of the institution. Its President, Abdullah Eren, is a Western thrace native.

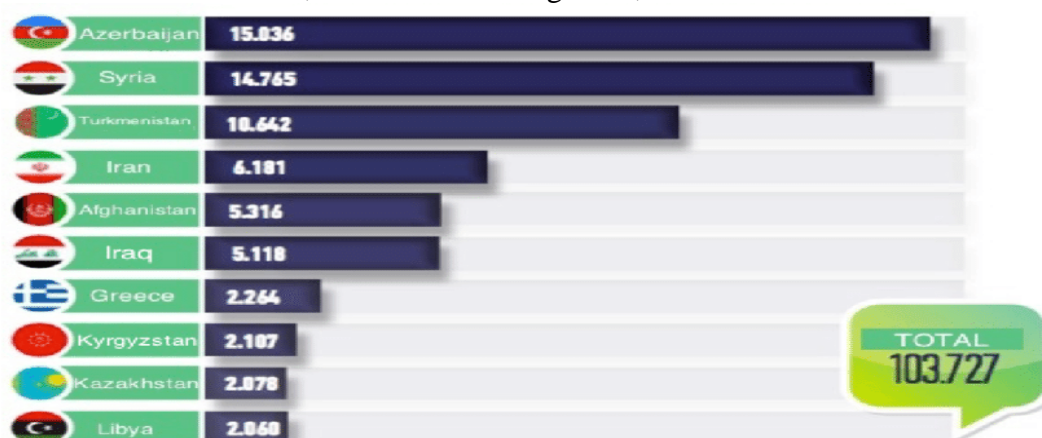


The Prime Ministry's Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency

AFAD operates humanitarian aid projects, which lie at the core of Turkey's brand as a donor state. Davutoglu claimed that humanitarian diplomacy can overcome the dichotomy between soft and hard power or between realism and idealism. (Davutoglu 2013) AFAD has been the leading force behind initiatives in Somalia, Myanmar, Syria, promoting the aid it provides as well, reinforcing Turkey's benevolent nation brand. (Cevik 2016)

Maarif Foundation

After the unsuccessful coup in 2016, the newly established state education institution Maarif was to begin a new education offensive in the Balkans by establishing new Turkish educational institutions in some countries of the Balkan region, from primary schools to universities (like the example of Maarif - New York University in Tirana, Maarif schools in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia).



The Turkish Radio and Television Association

TRT is a major broadcasting tool, seeking to improve credibility. Since 2018, it has been under the jurisdiction of the Directorate of Communications, namely under the direct control of the President. (Elsawah and Howard 2022). The establishment of TRT Balkans in 2021, with headquarters in Skopje is a primary example of Turkish ambitions in the area. (Firat 2021). TRT broadcasts on 15 TV channels, aiming to address 250 million people in 27 countries and 13 autonomous republics. TRT radio is also prominent in Turkish public diplomacy, particularly through its Voice of Turkey program, which broadcasts daily in 29 languages.

TV-Soap Operas

Television has been a major driving force of Turkish public diplomacy since it is approachable and considered reliable. It has helped create what Al-Ghazzi and Kraidy called ‘neo-Ottoman cool’ to describe the policy in which Turkey’s foreign policy agenda creates a new brand of cool around everything related to the Ottoman Empire. (Cevik 2010)

In Erdogan’s own words: “If my six-year-old and thirteen-year old grandkids are becoming familiar with the Ottomans by watching re-runs of this show, then this means we have done a good job”. (Cevik 2011)

The impact of watching these series is that they create attachment, understanding and affection for Turkish identity, culture and values among wide regional publics. (Salem 2014) In other words Turkish soap operas have become cultural ambassadors, acting as a non-government cultural powerhouse. (Cevik 2016)

Cevik advocates that “the drama series cultivates a mediated reality that builds on the AKP’s version of history and therefore reinforces the illusionary idea that the fate of Turkey is similar to that of the Ottoman Empire.



Greeks torture Turkish people in “My Homeland Is You”.

In a nutshell, soap operas have found a way to reconcile Islamic values and tradition with the lifestyles and problems of modernity and have legitimized their role through reference to its imperial past. To a certain extent, the Ottoman Past is central on the grounds that it serves Turkey to say, ‘we have already been the epicenter of the Islamic World, we know how to do it and we can do it again’. (Pothou 2020)

Anadolu Agency

It is Turkey's national press agency, sharing news in 14 languages in 80 countries.

NGOs and Think Tanks

They are also contributing to this huge project that cannot be confined to governmental activities. The Turkish government is in close collaboration with various groups in order to deliver effective public diplomacy. The Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD) and cultural and artistic communities such as the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV). One very influential think tank is the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research, (SETA), publisher of Insight Turkey magazine. The Turkey Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) carries out research on key issues, engaging with global institutions. It has brought together experts from countries like Greece and Armenia, countries that Turkey has had problems with. (Sancar 2015).

The Yunus Emre Institute

It is such an organization with superb results in promoting Turkish language and culture, organizing film and food festivals, competitions, scientific and academic meetings and exhibitions, numbering about 500 annually. (Eksi and Seyfettin 2018). It boasts 63 cultural centers in 52 countries. In its website it claims that its vision is to increase the number of people who forge bonds with, and are friendly to, Türkiye all around the world and its mission to enhance Türkiye's recognition, credibility and prestige in the international arena. Yunus Emre institutes aim at imposing their cultural, linguistic, historical and religious tenets on other nations, rather than being imposed upon by western modernity. (Kaya and Tecmen 2011)

In his opening speech of the Institute in Tirana, Albania, President Abdullah Gül emphasized that:

“These centres are Turkey's invisible power. I mean preserving the vitality of her cultural heritage is Turkey's biggest power. Not many countries have this power. We should appreciate its worth” (Turkish Presidency, 11.12.2009).

Diyanet

Religious outreach has been taken to unprecedented levels by the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), established in 1924 to promote a secularized version of Islam and operates all over the world. (Tul 2019) In AKP Turkey, Diyanet does not indicate the separation of religion and state but an attempt at hegemonic management of religion (Ozturk 2016)

Opinion Leaders and celebrities

They communicate messages to civil societies far more effectively than governments. Nobel literature laureate Orhan Pamuk or Yasar Kemal, awarded the Legion d'Honneur, Nuri Bilge Ceylan who, in his last award at the Cannes Film Festival spoke

about his country and dedicated the award to the youth who lost their lives in the Gezi Park protests.

Personal Diplomacy

Personal diplomacy refers to diplomatic efforts “when a particular national leader tries to sort out an international problem on the basis of their own personal relations with, and understanding of, other national leaders. (Robertson 2011). Turkish personal diplomacy is on the rise since the transformation of Turkish political system after the introduction of the presidential system and Erdogan’s personal characteristics is a contributory factor.

National Brands

Much effort is being put into establishing national brands, which contribute to familiarity, reputation and quality. Turkish Airlines is the leading Turkish brand and there are others which have made their presence felt in the Balkans like, Ziraat Bank, Istiklal furniture, LC Wakiki clothing, Mavi Jeans. The Turkish promotion group which operates the website <https://askturkiye.com/en> aims “to increase the perception of Turkish goods and promote the diversity and quality of Turkish products”



<https://brandisyou.com/en/works/turkey/>

Twiplomacy

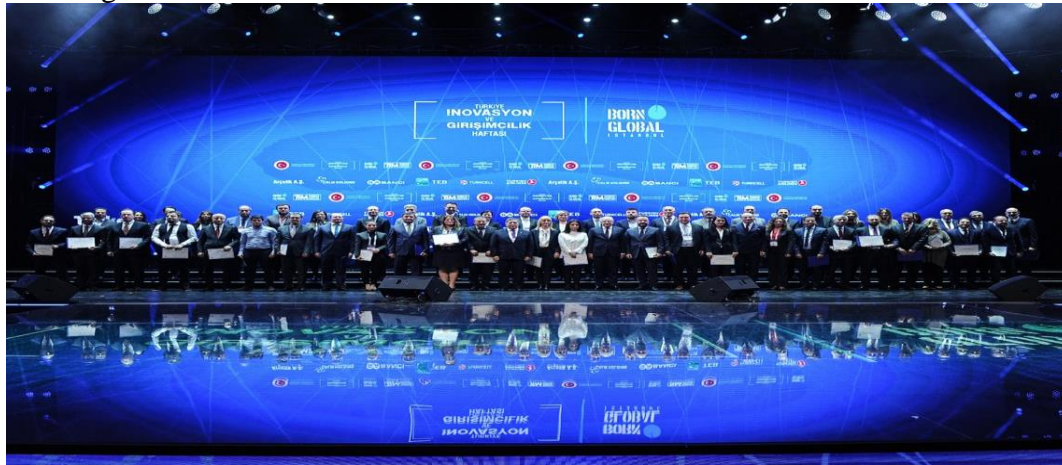
Turkish tweeter accounts consistently create a sense of cult personality around President Erdogan. The main public diplomacy accounts @tika_english1 and @ByegmENG tend to retweet the posts of the President and the Ministry of Foreign affairs. The posts brand Erdogan as a charismatic leader as well as trying to project a good versus evil frame , portraying Turkey as the savior of the Muslim World. Foreign policy (47%) and political values (45%) are used as the main assets for its

twitter diplomacy and Erdogan’s account is the most vibrant with 20 million followers as opposed to 32800 in 2012. (Uysal and Schroeder 2019)

International events

International events such as sports events, concerts, festivals raise people’s awareness of the country in question and effectively promote its message. Women’s Tennis Association (WTA) championship and Formula 1 Turkey Grand Prix are two exceptional sports events. Istanbul’s declaration in 2010 as the European Capital of Culture was of major importance.

The Formula 1 Istanbul Grand Prix was evaluated as a very important instrument for increasing the perception and value of Turkish goods therefore a global digital advertising campaign and sponsorship content were designed for the relevant event. With the emphasis on the fact that our country is a flexible, fast, reliable, and strong business partner in the pandemic and post-pandemic periods and regarding the "ask Turkey" motto, advertising campaigns were carried out on two different channels which video content sharing via F1 official website and F1 official mobile application and content sharing via social media specific to 12 target countries that are both in the export master plan and where Formula 1 events are popular and have high interaction. “Türkiye Innovation Week”, a major meeting event of innovation ecosystem, has been organized since 2012 and hosted 400 thousand visitors till now.



The second edition of Antalya Diplomacy Forum (ADF) was held under the overarching theme “Recoding Diplomacy” on 11-13 March 2022 in Antalya. The Forum hosted 3,260 registered participants from 75 countries, including heads of state and government, ministers, diplomats, and the distinguished members of the business world, press and the academia.



[The Turkish Cinema Summer School](#), which was organized last year for the first time by the Yunus Emre Institute, hosted 23 young filmmakers from 20 different countries in İstanbul. Young filmmakers from different countries such as the U.S., South Africa, Morocco, Russia, England and Iran had the chance to get comprehensive information on the history of Turkish cinema.

Islam

Erdogan’s stated goal was to raise a “devout generation”,(Gursel 2014) one that would shape the future Turkey as opposed to an “atheist generation” he accused the CHP of inciting. Secularism was imposed to Turkey from the top down and had not arisen naturally and was thus easier for religious identity to emerge at the forefront of Turkish politics. (Jenkins 2012)Islam remained the main primary determinant of Turkishness all through the 20th century. The ottoman, muslim past became a cultural determinant and a justification for a hegemonic drive in Turkey’s neighbourhood. (Aydin 2019)

4. Turkish Soft Power Fall

Joseph Nye himself asserted the decline of Turkish soft power as a direct consequence of limits to freedom of the press and freedom of dissent.

Turkey had shattered the hopes that it had created in most governments in Europe and America, that it had put the country into a one-way democratization track. It had attracted the attention of left-wing movements which had found a nesting ground in cosmopolitan Istanbul and thirdly, it had convinced the Arab world that it had created the perfect Muslim democracy. All these people regarded Turkey as a society under constant transformation. (Karakatsanis 2022)

Turkey refuted its own discourse, in the domestic realm the freedoms it claimed it would fight for, were further undermined, creating an ethos gap, which has domestic limitations on democratic freedoms as the main culprit. (Zihnioglu 2019)

Gezi Park

The icon of the soft power fall advocates is of course the Gezi Park events, in the summer of 2013. In May 2013, a group of activists staged a sit-in at Istanbul's Gezi Park, protesting the Turkish government's plans to demolish the park to build a replica of the Ottoman-era Taksim Military Barracks that would include a shopping mall.



European Dream Dies

By 2009, most European chapters had been blocked by member states, including the Republic of Cyprus. (Ozerdem 2019) 11/9 was instrumental in creating an Islamophobic wave across the western world far-right policies emerged, reminding people of the clash of civilizations. A Muslim nation state would not be welcome in the European family. (Oktem 2014)

The Arab Spring

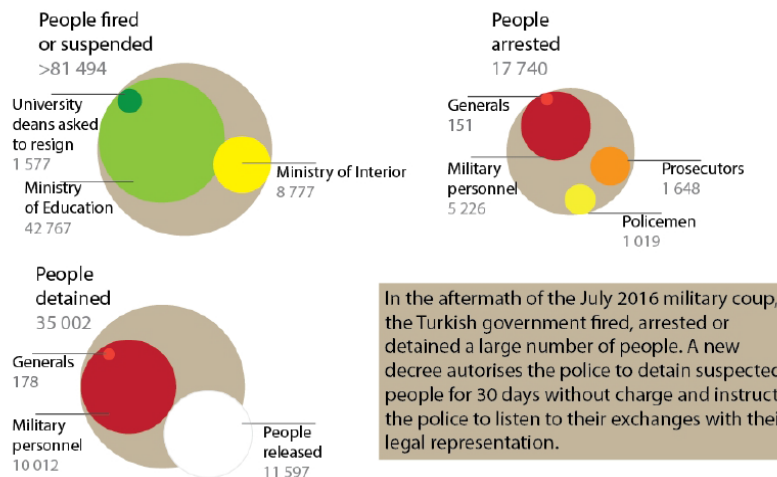
In the Arab Spring, the popular demand for democracy was neglected by the AKP, which considered the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood administration democratic by

nature, extended unconditional support to ii regardless of its democratic deficit and expected the West to do the same. (Cinar 2019)

The 2016 Coup

The purges following the coup convinced everyone that Turkey’s botched military coup was followed by a counter coup carried out by President Erdogan. (Candar 2016) The 19th July *New York Times* editorial that came out four days after the coup was “ The Counter Coup in Turkey”. It asserted that “ President Erdogan is exploiting the crisis not just to punish mutinous students but to further quash whatever dissent is left in Turkey. One can hope that this desperate uprising will prompt Mr. Erdoğan to reach out to his opponents. A more likely scenario is that the upheaval and lingering tensions will compromise Turkey’s democracy and its ability to be a stabilizing influence in NATO and the region.”

Figure 1 – Purges in the public sector after the failed July 2016 coup



Data source: [CNN](http://www.cnn.com), 13 August 2016.

Ilhan Uzel, an ousted by Erdogan University of Ankara Professor claims that after the introduction of the presidential system Turkey has become more nationalist, authoritarian, anti-american, anti-western, confrontational, isolated and pro-russian. (Uzel 2022)

An incident that highlights the effect of authoritarianism and the rift between secular and conservative Turkey is the ban on Kizilcik Serbeti (Cranberry Sherbet) TV series by RTURK, the regulatory media state agency, for “insulting muslim values”. On the other hand, more secular voices talk of “defending women’s rights, of a series where the conflicts between the two cultures are shown within the framework of two conservative and secular families, while an oppressive and authoritarian understanding that disregards the rights of the individual is opposed. ”. The series was suspended for a period of five weeks and fined 1,5 milion TL, provoking an outcry.



Tarnished image in the Aegean

With initiatives like the Mavi Vatan doctrine, the aggressive moves at sea and in the air, Turkey compromises the image of the peaceful nation. The events in Evros, where it was made apparent that the refugees were prompted to breach the border of a European country, caused a stir in the area, with the minorities coming face to face with a new reality.





5. Soft Power wielded on Western Thrace Muslim Minorities and the Dodecanese

The Turkish Consulates

The Greek Commander of Thrace, George Bouboulis telegraphed the MFA in 1926 that “the only threat to national security is the activity of the Turkish Consul”. (Anastasiadou 1982). Not much has changed since then.

Minority MP for PASOK Ahmet Ilhan, in an interview to Kathimerini on 20.06.2022 accused the Turkish consul to Komotini, Murat Omeroglu, of illegal interference in minority affairs and of not abiding by the rules of diplomatic practice.

There is close cooperation between the Consulate and the various associations.



Associations

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (www.abttf.org) has under its auspices several associations that play an active role in the social life of the minorities and also in promoting its interests and objectives. There are also offices of the Federation in Turkey, The USA, a a lot of European cities, Australia.

The Consultative Committee of Turkish Minority of Western Thrace

(BTTADK) whose head Ibrahim Serif, is also the elected mufti of Komotini.

www.bttadk.org.

Although the Greek High Court has declared it illegal, the committee continues its operation and its members are eminent religious and political leaders of the minority.

Culture and Education Foundation of Western Thrace Minority (CEFOM)



www.pekem.org

Turkish teacher Hande Ertem Ergün at an event on 18th December 2022

According to its statute, CEFOM was established to ensure a higher cultural level for the minority, to publish books and organize seminars and lectures, to produce radio and TV broadcasts, to hold events that promote Turkish language and culture, education and art, to research minority problems and grievances and fight for its rights.

Friendship, Equality and Peace (FEP) Party www.debpartisi.org.

According to the Federal Union of European Minorities : “The Friendship Equality and Peace (FEP) Party (Dostluk Eşitlik Barış Partisi (DEB Partisi) was founded on 12th September 1991 by Dr. Sadik Ahmet and colleagues, to tell the majority and world through legal and political means of the injustices suffered by Western Thrace Turks. It is the only legal party of the Turkish minority in Western Thrace. It has 6000 official members. The country wide, antidemocratic 3% threshold being executed to independent candidates constitutes to the Party being unable to send deputies to parliament. The Party works in Greece through politics to implement friendship, equality, peace and Minority Rights. The Party has been a member of FUEN since 2013”. The party was founded to protect the rights of the minority and has recently taken center stage in all efforts of the minority to promote its interests.

Komotini Turkish Youth Union

GTGB www.gtgb1928.org was established in 1928 and only stopped its operations during the German -Bulgarian operation 1941-1944 and the civil war in 1948-1950.



The management of the Komotini Turkish Youth Union (GTGB) and the members of the New Generation Branch visited the city of Thessaloniki and the house of Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on Saturday 15 June 2022



The results of the essay competition on “Sadık Ahmet” were announced at a ceremony held on Saturday, March 18th, 2023 at the GTGB office in Komotini. Speaking to the youth, Levent Sadık Ahmet, son of the late leader Sadik Ahmet, said, “As the Western Thrace Turkish Minority, never give up being Turk. No matter what difficulties you face, never give up being Turk. You see the developments in the Balkans and the world. So let's be very careful.” Dr. Sadık Ahmet” theme competition started with a minute of silence for Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his comrades-in-arms on the occasion of the 108th Anniversary of the 18 March Çanakkale Victory.

Western Thrace Turkish Minority Komotini Mufti Office
www.gumulcinemuftulugu.info

The elected mufti of Komotini, Ibrahim Serif, leads the office. Convicted in various cases by Greek courts, the mufti is a controversial personality. Various educational programmes take place, supplemented by a strong presence on social media.



The final of the “Basic Religious Knowledge Competition” for 2022-2023 school year was conducted on March 18, 2023 when the 8 finalists of Komotivi region competed.



Visit of the Consul to a village in Xanthi region, during an iftar dinner.(25.03.2023)

Western Thrace Turkish Minority Xanthi Mufti Office www.iskecemuftulugu.org

The elected mufti of Xanthi, Mustafa Trumpa, leads the Xanthi Mufti Office and various activities are organized.



A visit on 18th February 2023. Girls from the areas of PEDIADA and GIACA, outside Xanthi, visited the Mufti and exchanged ideas on how to help earthquake victims. Subsequently they visited the local cemetery where they were informed on the lives of previous, deceased muftis.

Xanthi Turkish Union www.iskeceturkbirligi.org

Founded on November 17, 1936, Xanthi Turkish Union is the leading Muslim association of Western Thrace. Various activities are organized for people of all ages. There are courses offered in computers, economics, knitting, sewing, painting, dancing. There is a football team, a theatre club, a women's club.

İSKEÇE TÜRK BİRLİĞİ
Kadın Buluşmaları

Çocuk Hastalıkları Uzmanı
Dr. Münevver Aço

Konu: "Çocuklarda İlk Yardım"
Tarih: 1 Mart 2023, Çarşamba
Saat: 11.00

Yer: İTB Mustafaçova Dikiş - Nakış ve El Sanatları Kursu

"First Aid for children" is the title of an event held by the women of ITB on 1st March 2023.



"Cinema afternoon" with popcorn, on 9th December 2022 .



İLKOKUL EĞİTİMİNİN ÖNEMİ VE AİLE
tüm anneleri bekliyoruz

İskeçe Müftülüğü, İskeçe Türk Birliği ve Batı Trakya Azınlığı Yüksek Tahsililer Derneği, Anaokulu öğrencileri annelerine yönelik olarak "İLKOKUL EĞİTİMİNİN ÖNEMİ VE AİLE" konulu bir etkinlik düzenliyor.

Uzman eğitimcilerin katılacağı etkinliğe tüm annelerimiz davetlidir.

Tarih: 7 Mart 2023 Salı
Saat: 10:00
Yer: İskeçe Türk Birliği

We welcome all mothers. Xanthi Mufti Office, Xanthi Turkish Union and Western Thrace Minority Higher Education Association are organizing an event on "IMPORTANCE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION AND FAMILY" for mothers of Kindergarten students. All mothers are invited to the event, which will be attended by expert educators. DATE: Tuesday, March 7, 2023 Time: 10:00 Place: Xanthi Turkish Union



Emine
OYKU
Ramadan Duban

İSKEÇE TÜRK BİRLİĞİ
1927

BATI TRAKYA AZINLIĞI YÜKSEK TAHSİLLİLER DERNEĞİ

Ramadan Duban'ın yazdığı öykü kitabı "EMİNE"nin tanıtım etkinliği İskeçe Türk Birliği Lokali'nde yapılacaktır.

Tarih: 28 Kasım 2022, Pazartesi **Saat:** 18:00

TÜM HALKIMIZ DAVETLİDİR

Ramadan Duban, teacher and former President of ITB, presented his children's book 'Emine' on November 22, 2022, published by BAKES, Cultural and Educational Association of Western Thrace.



The eighth week meetings of the "Hope for Women, Life for Society" project, carried out jointly by the Xanthi Mufti and the Western Thrace Minority Graduates Association, were completed with a large participation.



Xanthi Turkish Union President [Ozan Ahmetoğlu](#) stated on 26.2.2023 that “One of the results of the devastating earthquakes that took place in our motherland Türkiye, which shattered our hearts, was the softening in relations between Türkiye and [Greece](#) and the rapprochement between the two countries. Undoubtedly, we are the Turks of [Western Thrace](#), who are most pleased with this.

It is our greatest hope that this rapprochement between Türkiye and [Greece](#) will go beyond the emotionality caused by the pain and that the political will that will enable the solution of the problems between the two countries in line with mutual interests will be revealed.

It is the demand and expectation of us, [Western Thrace](#) Turks, that this environment is instrumental in taking steps to eliminate the problems of the [Western Thrace Turkish Minority](#) that have been waiting for a solution for years and the usurpation of rights against the Turkish community...”



YENİ SEÇİLEN GAT YÖNETİMİ DEB PARTİSİNE ZİYARET GERÇEKLEŞTİRDİ

20 Mart 2023

- Batı Trakya Azınlığı Yüksek Tahsilliler Derneği (BTAYTD) çatısı altında faaliyet gösteren Genç Akademisyenler Topluluğu'nun (GAT) yeni Yönetim Kurulu üyeleri 20 Mart Pazartesi günü DEB Partisi'ne ziyaret gerçekleştirdi. Nazik ziyaretlerinden dolayı kendilerine teşekkür eder GAT'ın yeni yönetim kurulunda yer alan gençlerimize sonsuz başarılar dileriz.

@DEBParti /debparti debpartisi

The newly elected board members of the Western Thrace Minority Graduates Association Young Academics Community (GAT) visited Mufti İbrahim Şerif in his office on Monday, March 20, 2023. Later in the same day, a visit was paid to the DEB Party Headquarters. Some days later, on March 26, 2023, they paid their respects to the Xanthi Turkish Union offices.

Western Thrace Fenerbahçe Association



“Western Thrace Fenerbahçe Members Association President Mümin Hasan and the Members of the Board of Directors paid a visit to our Mufti Mustafa Trampa on Thursday, December 15, 2022 . Our Mufti exchanged ideas about the association with the President of the Western Thrace Fenerbahçe Association and the Members of the Board of Directors. Subsequently, upon the request of the Fenerbahçe Members Association, our Mufti became a member of the Association and thanked them for their kind gestures and wished them success.”

Friends of Turkish Classical Art Music Association

The first general assembly of the association was held at the Western Thrace Turkish Teachers' Union in Komotini on December 4, 2022.

The statement of the 'Friends of Turkish Classical Art Music' is as follows: “Until now, we have operated as the Turkish Classical Music Choir under the Western Thrace Turkish Teachers' Union. For a long time, we had the idea of becoming an association. We established our association by putting this idea into practice in August. The aim of our association is to ensure the regular work of our choir, to promote Turkish Classical Art Music, to organize or participate in concerts in the country and abroad, to organize artistic events and to carry out joint activities with other associations with legal identity.”

The Greek Pomak Association (zagalisa.gr)

Imam Ahmet, its President caused a stir on 12.6.2022 when in an open letter to President Erdogan accused him of irredentism, fervently supporting Greek claims.

The Center of Pomak Studies

The Cultural Association of Xanthi Pomaks

This cultural association holds events and generally takes an active role in promoting Pomak culture. The sixth-month weekly seminar on Pomak art and culture covered 22 thematic units, all on pomak art, culture, education. On its Facebook page, the effort to differentiate itself from the Turkish Muslim minority is evident.

Its President , Emine Bouroutzi, was awarded the 2021 International Women of Courage award by the State Department. She has repeatedly spoken out about a “Pomak cultural genocide by Turkey.”

Association of Roma Women of Dendropotamos



The effort to differentiate itself form the Turkish Muslim minority is evident here too.

Additional Associations in Western Thrace

Turkish Minority Movement Association for Human and Minority Rights

Aşağıköy Minority Cultural and Folklore Association

Alantepe Minority Education and Culture Association

Kalkanca Cultural Association

Turkish Women's Cultural Association in Rhodope Province

Madrasah Graduate Teachers Society

Rodop-Evros Provinces SÖPA Graduate Teachers Association

Seçek Minority Education and Culture Association

Seyid Ali Sultan Tekkesi Foundation Protection Delegation

Western Thrace Minority South Evros Education and Culture Association

Western Thrace Madrasah Graduate Muslim Teachers Association

Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA)

Western Thrace Sermon and Irşad Delegation

Xanthi SÖPA Graduate Teachers Association

Evros Youth Minority Association

Turkish Consulate of Rhodes <https://rodos.bk.mfa.gov.tr/>

In comparison with the Consulate in Komotini, The Consulate has not been active in minority affairs and only made its presence felt during the 2021 espionage case when its secretary was sentenced to five years in prison on charges of spying on Greek armed forces.

The Rodos- Kos Turkish Association

It is an Izmir-based association whose aim is to “increase the solidarity among the Turks of Rhodes, Kos and Dodecanese who migrated to Turkey, helping the institutions working for the preservation and restoration of the cultural artifacts from the Ottoman Turks in Rhodes, Kos and Dodecanese, Rodos, Kos and taking initiatives to protect all kinds of social rights, including inheritance rights in the Dodecanese and working for the maintenance and protection of Turkish graves in the islands.”



In Rhodes the Association “Adelphosini” (<http://psmrodou.blogspot.com/>)

It is actively working towards “ a common future and friendly relationships”, Their blog is entirely in Greek and lacks the professional touch associations’ websites boast in Thrace. The football club that bears the same name consists of both Christian and Muslim players. In the case of the espionage of the Consulate’s secretary, the Association distanced themselves from the case, proclaiming “We are Greeks”.



From the annual “pitta cutting” with Greek M.P Manos Konsolas

The Real Estate Management Organization Vakouf of Kos

It is the association which operates the vakouf, (www.vakoufko.gr) a non – state legal entity under private law, governed by the provisions of the articles 117 and 118 of the Law 4821/2021 (Official Gazette A’ 134/31-07-2021) and the Common Ministerial Decision numbered 88878/Θ1 (Official Gazette B’3960/26-07-2022) of the Ministers of Finance and Education and Religions.

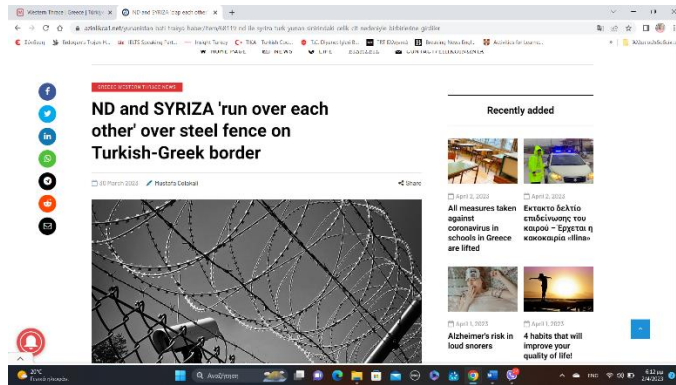
The Organization has a public benefit, non – profit character and is supervised by the Minister of Education and Religions. Its basic purpose is the management of the buildings, plots of land, estates and all kinds of urban, rural and forest real estate in general, as well as of all the movable assets and annuities that had been dedicated until 30.12.1947 to a pious, benevolent and beneficial purpose in general or in favor of a charitable, religious, non – profit foundation, especially in favor of the preservation, maintenance and operation of the Muslim monuments, mosques, cemeteries and other public benefit structures and the implementation of charitable actions and the management of every kind of real estates, assets and annuities, which fall into its ownership and possession.

News Websites

<https://azinlikca1.net/>

January: 267.000 visits

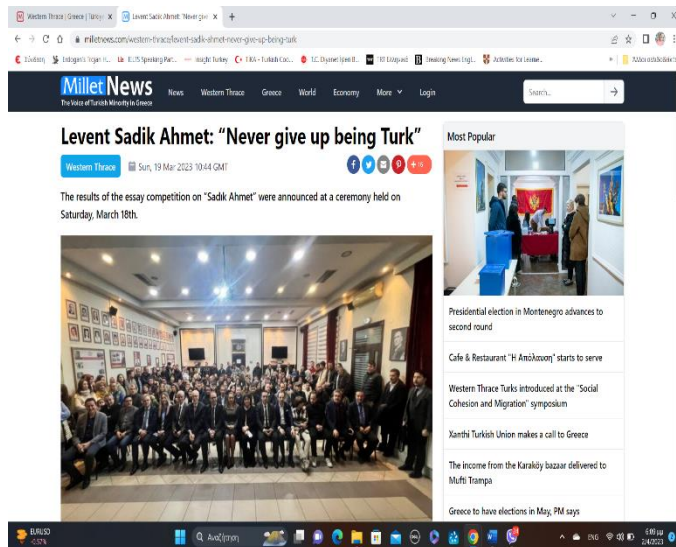
February: 189.200 visits



<https://www.milletgazetesi.gr/>

January: 70.700 visits

February: 58.200 visits



<https://gundemgazetesi.com/index.php>

January : 34.900 visits

February : 10.200 visits



<https://www.rodopruzgari.com/haberler.html>

Fewer than 5000 visits per month

<https://www.burasibatirakya.com/>

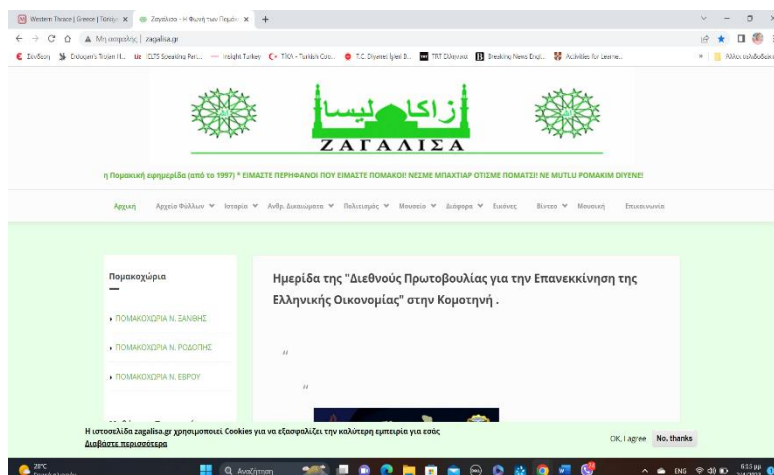
Fewer than 5000 visits per month

<https://www.trakyaninsesi.com/>

Fewer than 5000 visits per month

<http://zagalisa.gr/>

Fewer than 5000 visits per month



Cultural Events



**RODOP İLİ İLKOKULLAR ARASI KIZ ÇOCUKLARI İÇİN
VOLEYBOL TURNUVASI 2023**

VOLEYBOL 2023 TURNUVASI

TURNUVA HAKKINDA BİLGİLER

- Maçlar 6'şar kişilik takımlar arasında oynanacaktır.
- Takımlar sınırsız oyuncu değişikliğine gidebilecektir.
- Takımlar önceden belirlenecek ve sonrasında oyuncu dahil edilemeyecektir.
- Orta okuldan oyuncu getiren takım ve ilerleyen zamanlarda oyuncu ilave eden takım turnuvadan **diskalifiye** edilecektir.
- Oyuncu sayısı yeterli olan veya olmayan takımlar dışarıdan sınırsız oyuncu dahil edebileceklerdir.

Volleyball girls' tournament organized by Arianna municipality in May 2023



School event in Glafki, a pomak village in Xanthi, histing the Consul, the elected Mufti Mr. Mete and the MP Mr. Zeybek.



Omer from Western Thrace won the azan beautiful reading contest

Omer Hacı Karaahmet from Western Thrace, who continued his education in Turkey, in Edirne, won the provincial call to prayer competition organized on the basis of Edirne province. Ömer , who came first in the "Young Bilaller Azan Beautiful Reading " competition organized within the framework of the Edirne Provincial Directorate of National Education Imam Hatip Secondary Schools Vocational Competitions, had also won first places in the competitions he participated in before .Ömer , who is from Çay Mahalle under the Mustafçova Municipality of Xanthi , continues his secondary education at Edirne Selimiye Imam Hatip Secondary School.Known for his beautiful voice , Ömer takes private lessons from the muezzins and teachers in Selimiye Mosque on the Qur'an, mawlid and beautiful call to prayer. Omer from Western Thrace , who participated in the Azan Beautiful Reading competition in Edirne , finished first with full marks from all the jury members .



Gümülcine Turkish Youth Union Folk Dances team participated in the 29th International Hıdırellez Spring Festival held in Çalıkılı village of Valandova province in North Macedonia on 07-08 May 2022 under the chairmanship of the Supervisory

Board Chairman Günay Kenan Amet and Folk Dance Instructor Erkan Demiroğulları. Hıdırellez exhibition was opened as part of the festival. In addition to folk dance teams from Balkan countries and Turkey, oil wrestling games created a visual feast at the festival.



Western Thracians came together at the Handicraft Eyes Festival organized by the Xanthi Turkish Union at the Xanthi Muzaffer Salihoğlu Minority Secondary School-High School Sports Complex.

The event organized by Xanthi Turkish Union was attended by Turkey's Consul General to Komotini Murat Ömeroğlu, Xanthi Mufti Ahmet Mete, Xanthi Siriza Deputy Hüseyin Zeybek, FEP Party Deputy Chairman Ahmet Kara, Mustafaçova Mayor Cemil Kabza, Komotini Turkish Youth Union President Necat Ahmet, East Macedonia – Members of the Thrace State Assembly, city council members, representatives of institutions and organizations as well as many cognates attended.



Western Thrace Minority Graduates Association (BTAYTD) Young Academics Association (GAT) is organizing Youth Festival in Komotini City Center on Friday, 24 August.

The festival, which will be held for the third time this year, will start at 19:00. In the festival, which will include musical groups consisting of many young friends, popular Turkish bands **GRIPIN** , Greek band **VERSUS GR** from Komotini , and Greek vocalist **OLGA MORAITI** will also take the stage.

We invite all the people of Western Thrace to Komotini City Center on Friday, August 24 , for a night full of music and a Festival full of youth .



Western Thrace Minority Graduates Association (BTAYTD) Young Academics Association (GAT) is organizing Youth Festival in Komotini City Center on Friday, August 23.

The festival, which will be held for the third time this year, will start at 19:30. Haluk Levent, one of the popular artists from Turkey, as well as Greek artists Anastasia Vasiliadou and Fotis Ksenakis from Komotini, will take the stage at the festival, which will feature musical groups consisting of many young people.

GAT is waiting for all the people of Western Thrace in Komotini City Center on Friday, August 23 for a night full of music and a festival full of youth.



1st Children's Festival will be held in Komotini İdadiye Minority Primary School . Many events will be held together at the festival.

We invite you to the 1st Children's Festival, which will be held for children of all ages in the courtyard of the 1st Minority İdadiye Primary School on Sunday, October 16, 2022, in Komotini, between 11:00 and 15:00.

Visits of Turkish Government Officials

The various visits of Turkish officials play a cardinal role in the continuity of Turkish presence in Thrace. They promote a sense of belonging and emphasize common identity.

In 2011 Ahmet Davutoglu in Arriana declared "Here I feel like in Turkey, we will always be on your side, we will never leave you, you are in our sleep, you are in your dreams". He visited Arriana, Komotini, Xanthi and Echinus, accompanied by minority members of the Greek Parliament, mayors, minority officials, the Turkish consul in Komotini Sarnic. Of course, he did not miss visits to the Turkish Youth of Komotini, the Turkish Union of Thrace. When in 2014, as PM asked to pay an official visit to Thrace, accompanied by his ministers and to hold a cabinet meeting there, his request was rejected by the Greek government.



In 2017, Turkish President Erdogan visited Thrace, the last visit of a Turkish president being in 1952. He declared solidarity and urged the minority not to be assimilated but integrated into Greek society.



In May 2021, the Turkish junior MFA, whose portfolio is the minorities, Yavuz Kiran, visited Thessaloniki and Thrace where he reiterated Turkish claims, namely the use of the word “Turkish” for the associations and better education, as well as to urge the minority to use minority schools as opposed to the Greek ones, which is the recent trend.

**TÜRKİYE CUMHURİYETİ
DIŞİŞLERİ BAKANLIĞI**

No: 173, 4 Mayıs 2021, Bakan Yardımcımız Sayın Yavuz Selim Kiran'ın Selanik ve Batı Trakya'yı Ziyareti Hk.

Bakan Yardımcımız Yavuz Selim Kiran, 5-6 Mayıs 2021 tarihlerinde Selanik ve Batı Trakya'ya bir ziyaret gerçekleştirecektir.

Sayın Bakan Yardımcımız ziyarette, Ramazan ayı vesilesiyle Gümtülcine ve İskeçe Müftüleri başta olmak üzere, soydaş kurum ve kuruluşlarının temsilcileriyle görüşecek, Batı Trakya Türk Azınlığı mensuplarıyla biraraya gelecek, Azınlık okulları ve Osmanlı eserlerini ziyaret edecektir.

Sayın Bakan Yardımcımız ziyaret sırasında, ayrıca Selanik'te Atatürk Evi'nde incelemelerde bulunacaktır.

2:56 PM · May 4, 2021



Turkish MFA announcement regarding Kiran's visit.
with the elected Muftis.

Kiran's meeting

In 2021, MFA Cavusoglu visited Thrace where he praised the work of the two elected Muftis and the importance of minority schools in maintaining Turkish identity



Sports

The Cultural Association of Solidarity and Mutual Aid of Western Thrace Turks Swabbach and Margins (ABTTF member), hosted the 19th Sadik Ahmed Football Tournament. The tournament, which is annually organized by one of the ABTTF member clubs, this year (2013) took place in Swabach.

Leved Sadiq and Dr. Sadiq Ahmed's grandson, 10-year-old Sadikkhan Sadiq participated in the tournament organized under his name, to honor the deceased leader of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace.

Levent Sadik began his speech by saying "Thank you to those who try to honor the memory of my father and the late leader of the Turks of Western Thrace Ahmet Sadik. Levent said that the goal of the Sadiq Ahmed tournament is to support their fair fight. He said that for this reason last year and this year he participates together with his son in Sadiqhan, which bears the name of his grandfather. He said that as a Sadik Ahmed family they left a legacy to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and that his son Sadikkhan is also a legacy for the Turks of Western Thrace.

Levent Sadik Ahmed stated that "Dr. Sadiq Ahmed lit the torch. After the passing of our father and your leader, we as a family vowed to this flag that was bequeathed to us to hold it proudly until the end".

He added that in reality everyone is a Sadiq Ahmed, and that his only wish is for everyone to embrace this struggle together again. Levent Sadik Ahmed invited everyone to shake hands like in the time of Dr. Sadiq Ahmed.

Western Thrace Fenerbahce Association

The management of the Western Thrace Fenerbahce Association made a courtesy visit to the Western Thrace Turkish minority institutions. The management of the association gave information about the newly established Western Thrace Fenerbahce Association during the visits, and made the managers of minority institutions, who are

from Fenerbahce, members of the association.

Fenerbahce Association President Mümin Hasan and the committee consisting of the members of the association's board of directors were in Komotini on Friday, 16 December; FEP Party, Western Thrace Turkish Teachers' Union and Komotini Turkish Youth Union also visited Xanthi Turkish Union in Xanthi.



Local football Clubs



There is a number of minority football clubs participating in local leagues. It is claimed that they have the colours of the irredentist Western Thrace flag. Xanthi Sports Union is claimed to have set the clock in its logo at 09:15, which is the time Ataturk died.

A very interesting donation from the YTBB was reported in the press in November 2019, when a public diplomacy agency donated sports equipment to minority clubs. The thank-you letter was as follows:

"At the request of the mayors Oder Mumin, Ridvan Ahmed and Ridvan Deli Hussein, sports equipment was delivered to the teams of Polyanthos of the municipality of Iasmos, to Gorgona and Sminthi and Ehino of the municipality of Mykis and to Smigada and Union Yaka of the municipality of Arrians. It was reported that this kind of help can be given to our teams competing in various categories. In this context, we thank the president of the Directorate of Expatriate Turks and Related Communities of Turkey (YTBB), the Consulate of the Turkish Republic in Komotini and the mayors".

Conclusion

It is evident that Turkish soft power is exercised in the areas we research and the assistance of Public diplomacy agents is instrumental in contributing to the formation of a religious-ethnic identity.

The extent of the influence and the fluctuation of public opinion, taking into consideration the changing form of Turkish policy , both foreign and domestic, will be examined using both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

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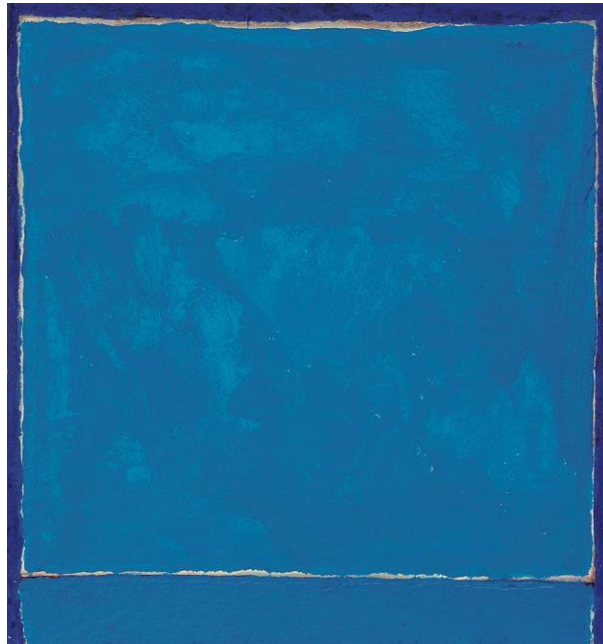
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Cultural diplomacy. The art of a soft power.

Culture, policy or diplomacy?

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Theodoros Stamos, 1969. *Infinity Fields, Delphi I*
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Abstract

Cultural diplomacy is a widely used term. It is linked to memories of a glorious past, national pride and beliefs and it can play crucial role in promoting national branding and enhancing diplomatic influence in international politics. Cultural diplomacy is practiced by a range of actors including national governments, public and private sector institutions, and civil society. Greece pays a special importance to cultural diplomacy as a means of pursuing foreign policy and set a strong Greek cultural identity out to the world. Greek culture is universal, a common route, and a connective net between countries according to Ministry of Foreign Affairs's policy statement. This paper will try to explore the relationship between Culture, Policy and Diplomacy; to conceptualize the notion of cultural diplomacy in order to clarify the main body and the core elements of cultural diplomacy with similar semantic concepts, such as soft power; to describe the implementation of Cultural diplomacy in Greece by selected state and non-state actors.

Keywords: cultural diplomacy, soft power, policy, culture, Greece, state and non-state actors.

I. Introduction

Research background

In recent years, the field of cultural diplomacy has attracted the interest of researchers and institutions in an attempt to find ways of exercising culture as a soft power and examining its role in international relations policy. "*How does Culture, Policy, and Diplomacy interact with each other in shaping international relations?*" "*What are the core elements of cultural diplomacy?*" "*What are some notable examples of cultural diplomacy in contemporary Greece, and their impact in country's international relations?*" This research paper aims to examine critical concepts through a comprehensive review of relevant academic and policy literature, as well as collect and analyze empirical data using methods like interviews, document analysis, online sessions and reports.

Greek culture from ancient time plays a universal role, a strong net with common roots, with a special importance to public diplomacy and cultural influence as a mean of promoting common good, dialogue, peace and pursuing foreign policy. In the political philosophy of Aristotle, the concept of 'polis' Πόλις or city-state is a fundamental concept. Πολιτισμός- which is the Greek word for culture -derives from πόλις- polis; and policy as well. Aristotle argues that 'polis' constitutes a community who have joined forces to attain the objective of living well and pursue a common good. The 'polis' is therefore not simply a collection of individuals, but rather a complex cultural, social and political organization. Consequently, 'polis' represents more than just an assembly of individuals, as it embodies a multifaceted cultural, social, and political organization that serves as a framework for human flourishing (Kalfas 2015; 2022)¹. Aristotle considers the city-polis as the highest form of civilization, where ethics, politics, and economics coexist to bring about the welfare and happiness of the people. The polis, in this sense, is the highest form of society that contains the common good as a vital element. Culture can be defined as the collective creation of this polis of Aristotle, encompassing a dynamic concept of coexistence that gives sense to all citizens of the world (Giannaras 2018).

Culture in its contemporary dimension and perspective is a dynamic concept (Hristova *et al.* 2015) and should be based on the development of an active participatory policy, as underlined in the key principles of the "European Parliament Resolution of 8th September 2015 towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe [(2014/2149 (INI))]" and in particular Articles 14-18, which refer to "*New models of governance promoting culture as a common good*".² The European agenda for cultural policy aims, to improve the quality of life and strengthen social inclusion, integration, cohesion and peace in nations. Specifically, in Article 18:

Article 18 stresses the fact that all programs related to the development of cultural heritage should be a clear example of multi-level governance, stresses the importance of cross-border cultural projects, which contribute to greater economic and social cohesion and encourage participation.

According to Greek academic and politician E. Venizelos³ (2008a; b; 2023⁴), culture is a profound and highly political discourse, where politics and society are diachronically linked. He argues that every action taken in this field is inherently linked to aesthetics, ideology, attitudes, and stereotypes. It reflects the self-consciousness of the community, its diversity, resilience,

¹ Interview data. Professor of Philosophy, Dr Vassilis Kalfas, on 30th November 2022, National Observatory of Athens

² https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2015-0293_EL.html

³ Evangelos Venizelos, is a Greek academic and politician, Deputy Prime Minister of Greece and former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister of Culture, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and former Vice President of the Government.

⁴ Interview data, on 10th April 2023, Athens

relationship with history, and its relationship with others. Culture, explains, is at the same time the most sensitive, the most *'dangerous'* and the most fertile field of political activity. According to his theory and practice in the pursuit of cultural policy, it is essential to consider two critical parameters, namely, Diachronia and Synergy. These parameters refer to the chronological and thematic scope and the basis for the synthesis of cultural policy, respectively. The early documentation of these two pillars of cultural policy-making has helped shape subsequent texts of cultural governance, cultural diplomacy enabling the attainment of a strategic vision that was previously absent in Greece.

The recognition of culture as a fundamental and dynamic component of society, combined with an increasing public awareness, has contributed to the development and vitality of cultural policy at national, European, and global level. The effective development and integration of innovative policies, particularly in the domain of cultural and political governance, is an enormous challenge facing the world today. Public cultural policy needs to become more participatory and active in order to have a sustainable evolution, with opportunities for new voices and the adoption of alternative policies in the field of cultural governance. Cultural flows between people keep intensifying in our globalized world. The President of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani (Unesco 2019) in July 2018, underlined in his speech the significant role of culture, during the *'Culture and Heritage in Europe. Linking past and the future'* conference held in Brussels. His statement was that *"Europe needs a beating Cultural Heart to survive"*.

One the other hand, the humanizing, transformative and enabling power of arts and culture therefore represents a foundational principle for foreign policy for a sustainable world and regeneration (Unesco 2019). This was also delivered through the International innovators forum, at the Global Salzburg Global Seminar⁵ (2021) and share insights, ideas and strategies around the Frame: *'The Creative Power of Arts -Reimagining Human and Planetary Flourishing'* that outlined that now more than ever is the momentum to encourage all world citizens to place Arts and Culture together with education at the heart of recovery and revival (The Creative Power of the Arts: Reimagining Human and Planetary Flourishing 2021). Art and Culture is the *'alive'* cells for strong *'immune'* societies (Manolopoulou 2019; 2020).

Culture. Our Common Ground.

Culture plays a vital role in international relations due to its ability to shape the identity and values of nations and their people, providing a common ground for communication and understanding between different countries (Sassatelli 2002). It serves as a bridge between people, providing a means of sharing and exchanging ideas and practices, promoting mutual respect and understanding. Moreover, enables all actors to set new policies in the Agenda⁶ for a sustainable world (SDGs 2015). The cultural sector serves as an essential field for comprehending collective identity, cultural diversity, solidarity, social cohesion. As a multidimensional concept, culture encompasses shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices, which play a fundamental role in shaping individuals' social, economic, and political lives. Culture must be seen as an open source

⁵Salzburg Global Seminar is an independent non-profit organization founded in 1947 with a mission to challenge current and future leaders to shape a better world. The author is a Fellow and a participant in the International Innovations Forum.

⁶ The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity available at <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>

of collective memory, knowledge, inspiration and spiritual liberation, a place in which one can gain understanding of the world, its collective identity and cultural diversity at national and international level. Culture can be used as an *open data space* to set political messaging, as a shelter to comfort and attraction for building bonds with open minds and hearts. It can keep doors open in difficult times and it can renegotiate relationships for changing times (Demos 2013).

On 30th July 2021, the G20 signed a Joint Declaration on Culture in Rome,⁷ highlighting its spiritual and developmental dimension. The International Forum, which brings together the world's largest economies and the European Union,⁸ highlighted the key role of participatory and development policy-making for culture. This joint statement represents a strong commitment of the International Forum, fully aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the role that culture can play in their achievement, calling for "*full recognition and integration of culture and the creative economy in development processes and policies, involving all levels of societies, including citizens as drivers and enablers for achieving the goals set out in the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development*". The joint statement underlined the frame that Cultural factors have a significant role in international diplomatic relations.

Cultural Diplomacy is the new power, the soft power (Nye 2004; Cull 2008) to link the past with the present for a better future. But what are the main core elements that unify and connect Culture, Policy and Diplomacy? Is there really a *dna* bond between them that sets the *helix* of Cultural Diplomacy? A trilogy that sets new strategies and actors to gain *bona fida* between the nations? Is Culture Diplomacy the Art of a Soft Power? Are there any notable examples of cultural diplomacy in Greece?

Recently, in Greece we experienced a good practice of this trilogy of Cultural Diplomacy. In June 2022, the "Fagan Fragment" was successfully reunited into the eastern frieze of the Parthenon, marking the first instance of repatriation from state to state. This achievement was made possible through an agreement resulting from a productive cultural and diplomatic dialogue between the Sicilian Regional Government, represented by the Regional Councilor for Cultural Heritage and Sicilian Identity Alberto Samonà, and the Greek Government, represented by Minister of Culture, Lina Mendoni. The agreement was made by the Archaeological Museum "Antonino Salinas" in Palermo and the Museum of the Acropolis in Athens (Ministry of Culture and Sports 2022). The Assessore of Cultural Heritage and Sicilian Identity, Dr. Alberto Samonà mentioned in his speech: *'The decision of Italy to pursue this course of action is in line with the vision of a revitalized Europe, one that prioritizes the values of shared cultural heritage and identity, which are deeply rooted in its rich historical and millennial traditions'*. A statement that highlights the power of cultural diplomacy.

Few months later, in March 2023, a significant reunion event occurred when three fragments from the Parthenon's metopes, frieze, and pediments were returned from the Vatican Museum. This remarkable achievement was made possible through the dedicated efforts of multiple stakeholders, including the Holy See, the Vatican Museums, the Ministry of Culture and Sports, and the Acropolis Museum. The successful reunification of these artifacts serves as a testament to the effective collaboration and cooperation between the involved parties and highlights the crucial role that intergovernmental and cross-cultural partnerships can play in safeguarding and promoting

⁷ <https://www.g20.org/the-g20-on-culture-adopts-the-rome-declaration.html>

⁸ Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Canada, China, France, Germany, Japan, India, Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and Spain as a permanent guest.

cultural heritage. This event marks a significant milestone in the ongoing efforts to promote cultural diplomacy and underscores the importance of respecting the rightful ownership and cultural significance of cultural artifacts. Lina Mendoni, Greek Minister of Culture underlined the historical moment: “*This spiritual and fraternal gesture of unique importance and significance by His Holiness Pope Francis to His Beatitude Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens and All Greece, shows in the best possible way how culture can play a pivotal role in fostering dialogue, promoting peace, facilitating community reconciliation, and fostering fraternity among peoples and nations*”.

But should ancient Greek Culture be the only focus of cultural diplomacy, or should modern culture also be considered as a powerful policy tool? It is imperative to acknowledge the significant impact that Modern Greek culture can have on cultural diplomacy policy initiatives, in addition to the country's rich cultural heritage. The incorporation of modern culture can add dynamism, relevance, and diversity to the overall strategic vision of cultural diplomacy. This approach can help to foster a deeper appreciation of contemporary Greek society and its contributions to the global cultural landscape. Addressing the dynamic and evolving nature of Modern Greek culture and history in cultural diplomacy policies can also enhance the country's reputation and soft power, thereby strengthening its position as a leading cultural player on the global stage.

The year 2021 was a significant milestone for Greece as it marked the 200th anniversary of the country's War of Independence against Ottoman rule in 1821. In commemoration, a program of national and international events was unveiled by the coordinating committee responsible for organizing the celebrations,¹⁰ providing Greece with an excellent opportunity for introspection, mindfulness, and re-introduction to Europe and the world. Following this, the Ministry of Culture in Greece announced that it would dedicate the year 2022 to the anniversary of the Asia Minor Catastrophe and promote the memory and identity of refugee communities. Additionally, the current year 2023 marks the centenary of the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne, with a variety of events and lectures. These three instances can be viewed as effective practices in the realm of cultural diplomacy initiatives in Greece.

II. A soft Power Trilogy: Culture, Politics, and Diplomacy.

The architectural triangle of Cultural Diplomacy.

Soft power is a persuading force that frames arguments using culture as our common ground. The ability to obtain what you want through attraction rather than force was coined as "soft power" by American political scientist Joseph Nye in 1990. It refers to the influence that results from the allure of a nation's culture, political values, and particular cultural policies. International relations specialist Jen Melissen (2005) emphasizes that soft power is a postmodern form of the ability to sway people's attitudes and perceptions. Building solid and, most importantly, healthy relationships between many cultures and nations is where culture's soft power rests (Nye 2009). The exchange of tangible and intangible cultural components fosters trust and helps a nation's reputation. Culture, politics, and diplomacy are the three key pillars of a soft power. Each of these

⁹ Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports 2022, Press Release available at <https://www.culture.gov.gr/el/Information/SitePages/view.aspx?nID=4240>

¹⁰ <https://www.greece2021.gr/en/>

components is essential to the soft power strategy of a nation. This conceptual trilogy is referred in my scholarly analysis as the "*Architectural Triangle of Cultural Diplomacy*," which is a theoretical framework for understanding the key elements of cultural diplomacy in a geometric balanced dimension. Culture, politics and diplomacy coexist in cultural diplomacy and influence the way cooperates and forms understanding between nations.

Culture, the first pillar, represents a crucial component of societies, which should not be considered as a luxury, but as an inherent fabric, a connective net, *an alive cell* that shapes, provides oxygen to our collective memory, knowledge, inspiration, and spiritual liberation. Cultural diversity promotes social innovation, creativity, and intercultural dialogue, while enhancing respect for different worldviews, perspectives, and lifestyles. Furthermore, culture fosters solidarity and social cohesion by providing a sense of belonging and shared heritage, as well as a platform for community engagement¹¹. In light of its significant contributions to society, culture deserves greater recognition and support as a fundamental pillar of sustainable development, peace and human wellbeing¹². Tyler's theory, as outlined in his work from 1871, conceptualizes culture as a comprehensive and intricate system that generates social concepts and structures. This approach has facilitated the progression of the field of anthropology (Melville 2012). This theory is similar to that of Arnold (2018), who defines culture as a humanistic concept that inspires and strives towards the prosperity of the world's welfare.

Policy represents the second pillar of the triangle, as cultural diplomacy is also closely linked to political relations between nations. Policy as an overall plan that embraces its goals, is another important component of a country's soft power strategy. A country's policies on issues such as human rights, democracy, and the environment can influence how it is perceived by other nations. A nation that upholds cultural values, democratic principles, and human rights is likely to receive a more favorable perception compared to a nation that does not prioritize these values and doesn't apply certain cultural and social policies. Effective policy implementation can also facilitate the establishment of alliances and partnerships with other nations as well.

For instance, in Greece, certain policy initiatives from non-state actors promote its cultural heritage and history, such as the Athens Democracy Forum¹³, the Olympic Truce-Promoting an ancient Greek tradition¹⁴ and Delphi Forum¹⁵, has facilitated a positive perception and strengthened its cultural diplomacy efforts. Lina Mendoni, Minister of Culture and Sports (Eliamep 2022), underlined the re-emerge of approaches and policies towards soft power by all actors in national and global politics, with a growing interest in the potential power of cultural diplomacy. Furthermore, the digital transformation of culture plays a vital role in modern society as it allows easy and efficient access to various cultural aspects through online platforms and internet connectivity. This facilitates the dissemination of cultural heritage and contemporary creations. A recent example of such an initiative is the program *Ancient Olympia Common Grounds*¹⁶ launched last year. A synergy, a new collaboration between the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports and

¹¹ Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (CETS No. 199)

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list?module=treaty-detail&treaty-num=199>

¹² Council resolution on the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026, as approved by the Council (Education, Youth, Culture and Sport) 29 November 2022.

¹³ <https://www.athensdemocracyforum.com/>

¹⁴ <https://olympics.com/ioc/olympic-truce>

¹⁵ <https://delphiforum.gr/>

¹⁶ <https://olympiacommongrounds.gr/>

Microsoft—is harnessing AI to digitally preserve and restore this rich site for future generations by bringing its structures and cultural impact to life like never before.

The third pillar of the triangle is diplomacy. The main focus of diplomacy is on using peaceful measures to advance foreign policy goals, protect national interests, increase international influence, and promote good relations with other nations (Kissinger 1994). Diplomacy plays a vital role as a critical process of communication and negotiation in global politics and an important foreign policy tool used by global actors (Baylis 2020). Negotiations between nations are the activity and art of diplomacy. But diplomacy also covers the fields of culture, science, and human rights. To strike a balance between the interests of the state and the international community is the main goal of international diplomacy (Qin 2020). Diplomats must be aware of the cultural norms and practices to effectively communicate and negotiate (Verbeke 2022). Diplomacy must be seen as a whole, as a holistic key element in all policies implemented in the global sphere (Craig and Loewenheim 2019).

As the world is changing, societies are reforming and human kind is challenged in an adversarial era –pandemic crisis, the ongoing Russian war against Ukraine climate crisis, and refugee’s crises -the practice of diplomacy has changed and moved from a state based diplomacy that was set in 1961 with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic relations.¹⁷ Last decades have entered the so called new diplomats’ non state actors from the civil society, NGOs foundations, institutions, nonprofit organization, and activists (Melissen 2005). Diplomacy based in state centered practices has given way to new art /structure of diplomacy as a set of actions, behaviors, attitudes and policy makers within a wider spectrum in cultural external relations.

At the same time, cultural policy and cultural diplomacy are crucial components of a country's overall foreign policy strategy, as they can help promote its interests, strengthen its global influence and build positive relations with other countries. A country’s heritage together with the contemporary creative industry, identity and values are reflected in its policies, especially foreign policy.¹⁸ Cultural policy and cultural diplomacy are powerful tools that governments can use to pursue their strategic objectives and establish relations with other countries (Demos 2013). Greece has employed a range of cultural diplomatic strategies, such as establishing international cultural centers, participating in art exhibitions and festivals, and collaborating with other nations to showcase its cultural and artistic richness. These efforts have not only helped to strengthen Greece's cultural identity but have also enhanced its relations with other countries and promoted cross-cultural understanding.

Culture, policy and diplomacy have a strong impact towards a successful implementation of cultural diplomacy. Culture as *“a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations”* (Unesco 2001). Culture has to be seen as a change-agent, well-equipped to operate as a global network actor in international relations. Should develop and imply strategies and policies that communicate high level knowledge about world’s heritage and reform the so called global citizen. Culture can reform the identity of the future societies and build the Citizens of the World.

¹⁷ The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations is an international treaty that was adopted in Vienna, Austria on April 18, 1961, and it entered into force on April 24, 1964. The treaty sets out the framework for diplomatic relations between states and defines the privileges and immunities of diplomats and diplomatic missions.

¹⁸ Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on ‘Cultural diplomacy as a vector of EU external relations – new partnerships and role of CSOs’ (own-initiative opinion) (2023/C 75/17)

Together, the three pillars of the architectural triangle of Cultural Diplomacy form an integrated approach to promoting international relations, understanding, and cooperation through the use of cultural initiatives and exchanges. A profound understating of the relationship between these factors is important for policy makers, diplomats and cultural practitioners in today's world. However, to achieve such a comprehensive vision, it is essential to consolidate national cultural diplomacy policies and provide a clearer articulation across the policy spectrum. Although many countries recognize the value of cultural diplomacy and actively engage in it, they often lack a specific policy, with responsibilities scattered across government. The effective use of cultural diplomacy as a tool of soft power can be hampered by a range of factors, including language barriers, cultural differences, and geopolitical complexities. For example, cultural diplomatic negotiations can be complicated by linguistic and cultural misunderstandings, and the pursuit of foreign policy goals can be influenced by historical tensions and geopolitical rivalries.¹⁹ According to The Vice chair of the ICOM Hellenic Committee and member of the ICOM Resolution Committee (2023), they often encounter difficulties during their meetings, such as linguistic and cultural misunderstandings, which can pose a significant challenge.²⁰

Therefore, countries need to invest in diplomatic resources and expertise in order to effectively leverage soft power and build positive relationships with other countries²¹ (Stenou 2005). This requires fostering data-led policy-making and examining specific challenges and opportunities presented by the digital transformation (Unesco 2022). Adopting cultural diplomacy approaches can help countries identify shared cultural values and legacies, creating opportunities for renewed alliances and enacting the principles of Unesco's 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. Examples of such policy endeavors include multi-country nominations for UNESCO Culture Conventions, regional agreements supporting artist mobility, and the development of cross-border cultural tourism routes. '*Greece is a country with a rich cultural heritage, has a strong cultural identity that promotes policies that build a sense of belonging, of national unity and a cultural brand name destination*' underlines Stavros Benos, former Minister of Culture, and founder of Diazoma.²² Moreover, during the fourth edition of the annual Culture Deal for Europe policy conversion entitled *Culture is the new energy for Europe* that took place in Brussels on 28 February 2023²³, Margaritis Schinas the Greek Vice President of the European Commission responsible for Promoting European Way, highlighted the significance of policies that have a direct impact to people, societies, nations and explained the reason why culture is our core element in our civic, social; stand for democracy, respect and coexistence. '*A felling of belonging convert us .There is no homo europeus but a corpus valorem Europei*'.

¹⁹ Council conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and a framework for action (2019/C 192/04) available at

[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52019XG0607\(01\)&qid=1682411684309](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52019XG0607(01)&qid=1682411684309)

²⁰ Interview Data. Penelope Theologi-Gouti on 21st April 2023, Museum of Science, University of Patras

²¹ Katerina/Kaiti Stenou, is an expert in intercultural communication, served as Director of Cultural Policy and Intercultural Dialogue at Unesco (1992-2014) and as Unesco's Representative to the Alliance of Cultures created in 2005 by the UN.

²² Diazoma is an association of citizens that expresses a new way of thinking, of dealing with and managing affairs that concern us all. An Association that mobilizes both Citizens and State around culture .The author is an elected Boarding Member. More at <https://diazoma.gr/en/cultural-routes/>

²³ Attended online

III. Cultural Diplomacy.

The Art of a soft power

During the twentieth century the meaning of cultural diplomacy often focus after the Second World War, as a key instrument for the United States to end the World war in the nation's effort to contain the Soviet Union. State actors worldwide establish economic, educational, cultural affairs departments in embassies, consulates and cultural centers in order to create and establish a creative dialogue and mutual understanding across nations (Cull 2008; Gienow-Hecht 2010).

Cultural diplomacy has been a widely utilized strategy by governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, and cultural institutions globally, with the aim of fostering international collaboration and mutual understanding. Its effectiveness in resolving conflicts and promoting peace is noteworthy, achieved by facilitating constructive dialogue and knowledge-sharing among individuals from diverse socio-cultural and political backgrounds and viewpoints. Definition of cultural diplomacy has not been set and be understood as a whole concept. It may best described as the actions through countries promote their best cultural and political values to the rest of the world in order achieve mutual understanding, dialogue and achieve their goals. In the contemporary era, cultural diplomacy has gained considerable attention from both academic and political fields. The Institute for Cultural Diplomacy's²⁴ Dr. Emil Constantinescu, President of the Academy for Cultural Diplomacy (2011) and Former President of Romania (1996-2000) provides the following definition: '*Cultural Diplomacy may best described as a course of actions, which are based on and utilize the exchange of ideas, values, traditions and other aspects of culture or identity, whether to strengthen relationships, enhance sociocultural cooperation or promote national interests; Cultural Diplomacy can be practiced by either the public sector, private sector or civil society*'. Cultural diplomacy, when used to promote the world's cultural diversity rather than as a tool for divisive purposes, has the potential to strengthen peace, security, and development, while highlighting the dynamic nature of culture and its ability to evolve over time.

Cultural diplomacy refers to a set of actions aimed at promoting and creating a strong cultural identity of the country as an international channel for developing a long-term relationship with different countries and people with direct or indirect influence on foreign policy. Cultural diplomacy can be defined as '*the exchange of ideas, art information and other aspects of culture between nations and their citizens to promote mutual understanding*' (Cummings 2003). A multidimensional tool for pursuing not only cultural policy but also foreign policy of the country. Culture, both material and immaterial, is a set of material spiritual and characteristics of society or a social group that includes not only art, literature, ways of life of belonging and associating but also traditions and beliefs of a people with specific diversity and historical continuity (Unesco 2001). While non state actors such as civil society institutions, research institutes, international organizations and media influencers are key actors in advancing cultural beneficial policies in a wider sphere. Both (state and non-state actors) position themselves in the international sphere in a way that regulates and shapes a strong cultural, political identity. The concept of Cultural Diplomacy, as described by Christos Giannaras (2001), professor of Philosophy, pertains to a policy that can exclusively be executed by societies and nations who possess the discernment and comprehension of the dynamic otherness that enables them to actively participate in cultural

²⁴ Founded in 1999 in the USA, the Academy for Cultural Diplomacy is an international, not-for-profit, non-governmental organization with headquarters in the USA and in Berlin. www.culturaldiplomacy.org

affairs. Cultural homogeneity may facilitate the formation of genuine friendships with greater ease. And mutual intercultural understanding can be adequate in cultivating favorable relations between nations (Ang, Isar and Mar 2015; Qin, 2020). Despite its significance, art remains a subject of limited research and is frequently undervalued as a tool for Cultural Diplomacy.

This new form of diplomacy involves non-state actors such as NGOs, foundations, institutions, non-profit organizations, and activists, and has been extensively discussed by scholars such as Mellissen (2005). The conventional state-centered practices of diplomacy have been replaced by a new art-structure of diplomacy, which encompasses a broader range of cultural external relations and includes a set of actions, behaviors, attitudes, and policy makers. However, the international arena is currently grappling with the issue of how to leverage culture as a soft power with transformative potential for attaining political, social, and economic objectives, and this topic is being actively debated at the national, European, and international levels. The constructive potential of culture is regarded as a pivotal aspect of the diplomatic and communication strategy of each nation. (Kizlari & Fouseki 2018). Nye explains in 2009 that soft power is the ability to affect others, and most of the times is developed by the civil society, more of the attraction comes from non-governmental actors like Fulbright Foundation, Hollywood, creative industry. Although civil society has the potential to generate interest, it can also face constraints imposed by the government, which can diminish its appeal. When attempting to achieve swift results through governance, it can be challenging, but civil society contributes as a dynamic tool to facilitate progress.

Different stakeholders involved in the implementation of cultural diplomacy remains a big challenge at all levels. The architecture structure between all relevant actors is necessary by all means in order to strengthen the impact in international level. In order to shape cohesive decisions over the long term, it is necessary to adopt a holistic approach and adaptable working methods. The significant number of local players, institutions, and civil society organizations, along with a vast list, form a crucial mass that needs to be unleashed. It is essential to focus particularly on implementing shared projects and collaborative actions. A significant though parameter would be to a human centered synergy with a holistic narrative and vision.

“Cultural diplomacy is harnessed by countries to promote their cultural distinctiveness, thus enhancing the world's cultural diversity while paving the way to cooperation and dialogue.”
(Unesco 2022)

A Cultural Diplomacy Platform has been established in line with the recommendations of the Preparatory Action "Culture in EU's external relations", which was approved by the European Parliament and implemented by the European Commission between 2013 and 2014. The platform is specifically designed to enhance the capacity of the European Union (EU) to effectively engage with various audiences and stakeholders through cultural diplomacy initiatives. *"Cultural diplomacy is an integral part of our common foreign policy"*, said Federica Mogherini, High Representative for Foreign affairs and Security Policy/Vice- President of the European Commission (2014-2019), and thus forms an essential part of how Europe engages with partners around the world. The discipline of International Relations as well as studies on Diplomacy has paid little attention to the soft power of cultural diplomacy in foreign policy (Mark 2009). General texts and a lack of scholarly attention may have its roots in the lack of a common definition of cultural diplomacy and moreover is and should be lies in the terms Diplomacy and Culture and their

semantic concepts (Fox 1999). Cultural diplomacy is a significant policy instrument that deserves a permanent position in the governmental Diplomacy Agenda.²⁵

VI. Conclusion

Challenges and Opportunities in Greece

The underlying assumption of this paper is that the concept of cultural diplomacy should be regarded with greater seriousness, in a manner that is open, interdisciplinary, and dynamic, emphasizing in synergies of both state and non-state actors, who can jointly harness the power of culture. To achieve this, a comprehensive cultural policy and framework of diplomatic strategy should be developed over time, within a flexible bureaucratic and institutional framework. Specifically in Greece, the universal nature of Greek culture reveals a common path and connective network between countries. In Greece, the term Cultural Diplomacy has been limited to that described on the Foreign Ministry's webpage: *'Greece attaches special importance to cultural diplomacy as a means of pursuing foreign policy and reaching out to the world. Greece culture is universal, a connective net towards the search for common origins and historical bonds between countries. Bilateral education and cultural programs are very important tools. Separate individual agreements and programs are often developed between institutions'*²⁶.

General Secretariat of Public Diplomacy and Hellenic Diaspora (2022) underlined that undoubtedly, fostering mutual understanding and cultural exchange is a hallmark of Greek culture, acting as a net for establishing common origins and historical ties with other nations. Cultural programs serve as a significant tool in promoting such initiatives. Furthermore, educational diplomacy is an integral aspect of our nation's public and cultural diplomacy efforts, involving transnational educational initiatives, collaboration between public organizations and civil society, as well as Greece's involvement in international educational events and programs across Europe. It involves using cultural initiatives and exchanges to help build stronger political relationships and facilitate dialogue between governments in order to achieve peaceful goals (2022, EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026).

Greece pays a special importance to cultural diplomacy as a means of pursuing foreign policy and set a strong Greek identity out to the world. Cultural diplomacy may sound new as a term and as a policy practice, but its application and practice has its roots as far back as international relations. Greek culture is universal a common route, a connective net between countries. Greece in last years is trying to seek a soft path of facilitating sustainable development and economic growth, and furthermore reshape its national image after the economic crisis faced the previous years.

In 1985 Melina Mercouri, the most influencer cultural *'diplomat'* of Modern Greece, as a Greek Minister of Culture, arose the question about the role of cultural policy within the European Union towards a sustainable future of Europe and all humanity. She took the initiative to start the European Capital of Culture in 1985 in Athens. On the 9th December 2016, city port of Eleusis in Greece was nominated as the European Capital of Culture for the year 2021, in order to become

²⁵ International Cultural Relations Perspectives and recommendations informed by the participants of the Voices of Culture Structured Dialogue on International Cultural Relations (2 - 9 February 2022), Moderation, rapporteurs, and compilation of the reports: Else Christensen-Redzepovic, Nicole McNeilly and Gabrielle Bernoville. Edited by Sana Ouchtati.

²⁶ As stated on the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the field of special foreign policy issues <https://www.mfa.gr/en/foreign-policy-issues/cultural-diplomacy/>

an effective mediator in the European dialogue²⁷ through its program called “*Transition To EUphoria*” from the Greek word ‘*ευφορία*’. But due to Covid pandemic the celebration was transferred the current year (2023).

Maria Euthimiou (Eliamep 2022), historian, professor of History in University of Athens, highlighted the need for another strategy. She has conducted an analysis of a high emotional intelligence strategy that aims to enable Greece to identify and highlight the less obvious and less stereotypical aspects of its cultural identity to win over international interlocutors on an emotional level. The strategy entails a willingness to relate to these interlocutors by emphasizing contemporary cultural realities, that are often absent in national and international contexts, rather than solely relying on the universally recognized greatness of ancient Greek culture. Through this approach, the country can foster a deeper emotional connection with its international counterparts and achieve greater success in its cultural diplomacy efforts.

According to the founder²⁸ of the Hellenic Diaspora Foundation²⁹ (2023), current cultural and diplomatic policies fall short in meeting the demand for art discovery, particularly in the realm of contemporary Greek art, which remains largely unexplored. Within Greece, there is a lack of a strategic plan or vision to promote the country's cultural identity on a global scale, resulting in a missed opportunity for cultural diplomacy policies. Despite the accomplishments of artists such as Theodore Stamos, Takis, and Filolaos,³⁰ who have made significant contributions to the world's cultural map of contemporary art and spread Greek culture across the globe, their work hasn't been adequately evaluated and promoted.

According to the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Chrisoulakis (Eliamep 2022) who is responsible for Hellenic Diaspora and Public Diplomacy, public diplomacy is a mechanism that modern states utilize to achieve their foreign policy objectives by connecting with the international public and influencing international public opinion. This mechanism is incorporated horizontally into the diplomatic efforts of every modern country to establish a positive international image and to formulate and disseminate a functional national narrative. The new structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the General Secretary of Hellenic Diaspora and Public Diplomacy established by law in February 2021, confirms that public diplomacy and Diaspora are two crucial pillars of foreign policy. This practice has been employed historically to export a country's culture, such as the ancient Greeks' construction of the library at Alexandria. In contemporary times, organizations like the Hellenic Foundation of Culture The Hellenic Foundation of Culture aims to establish itself as a hub for constructive dialogue, offering innovative and inspiring agenda that captivates both Greeks and Philhellenes worldwide.

How can we ensure a reinforced, coherent and a long term cultural diplomacy policy involving all actors by an inclusive strategy? The most important is to finalize how really Greece wants to manage and promote her Greek identity worldwide. What's its story narrative? The development of a cohesive national narrative in Greece, achieved through the collaborative efforts of intergovernmental and non-governmental actors, is an essential area of focus for realizing a successful strategic vision (Christogiannis 2002).

Now is the momentum to reform its policy structure, to call for governments, policymakers, and diplomats to adopt cultural diplomacy as a strategic tool to achieve geopolitical and geo-economics

²⁷ <https://eleusis2021.eu/>

²⁸ Interview Data. Vasilis Kaligiratos on 20th April 2023, Hellenic Diaspora Foundation

²⁹ The mission of the Hellenic Diaspora Foundation is the dissemination of knowledge, research and the promotion of contemporary artistic creation, mainly by artists of Greek origin who lived in America, France, or in other countries abroad during the 20th century. Interview data 2023

³⁰ <https://www.hellenicdiaspora.org/home/philolaos-his-many-faces/>

objectives in a manner that recognizes and bridges the divide between officials and cultural producers. Cultural diplomacy has the potential to strengthen relationships between nations and promote peace, and mutual respect. The premise of this paper is that cultural diplomacy should be taken seriously and approached in a more open, interdisciplinary, and dynamic manner. The mentality of synergy between state and non-state actors can help harness the power of culture to achieve this goal. By valuing the contributions of different cultural perspectives and follow the so called agile governance by involving all stakeholders in the decision-making process and encouraging open communication channels. This process entails establishing a well-defined and coherent framework that emphasizes the shared values and collective goals of the nation. It is crucial to ensure that the proposed narrative is inclusive, representative, and reflective of the nation. It is crucial to avoid misusing cultural diplomacy for pushing an agenda, exercising cultural domination, misleading or misinforming audiences, or using culture to achieve policies that undermine peace and international cooperation.

With the spotlight today on the debate around the reunification of Parthenon Sculptures in Athens, a debate that Melina Mercouri started almost 40 years ago, we hope the following period to witness a historic agreement, a successful cultural diplomacy case study, between Greece and UK. An agreement that will serve as a symbol of Western World's recognition of the universal value of Greek culture and will highlight Britain's global leading role as a guardian of world cultural heritage. An act of justice and honor promoting peace, solidarity and cultural understanding. An Art of Diplomacy statement.

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