



## DISCUSSION PAPERS IN DIPLOMACY

Strengthening Greek Public Diplomacy

Present Conduct and Future Potential

Christos A. Frangonikolopoulos

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Greek economic crisis and its potential impact on the future of the eurozone have monopolized media coverage globally. The international press has mounted a fierce and negative campaign against Greece. Greece, however, has not responded to the critiques. Instead, Greece seems to be passively accepting that politically and economically it is on the periphery of the West and the EU, and anticipating that solutions to its problems will be provided only by Brussels and Washington. Greece, however, could invest in the critical role that public diplomacy plays in contemporary global politics. This requires a shift from a public diplomacy that concentrates only on forging cultural and educational links, to a public diplomacy that focuses on the most significant regional and global issues by encouraging communication and dialogue, with official and non-state actors, working with and through internal and external societies and public opinion. When considering Greece's location in a complex, volatile and security-consuming geographical zone—including the Balkans, the Black Sea region, the Mediterranean and the Middle East—such a public diplomacy strategy would not only provide Greece with new opportunities for dealing with its bilateral problems (which include Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)). It would also enhance its relevance and influence in multilateral organizations and forums, supplying it with ample opportunities in world affairs that go far beyond its current economic condition and limited hard-power capabilities.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Christos A. Frangonikolopoulos is Assistant Professor of International Relations at the School of Journalism and Mass Communications, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He was born in South Africa in 1965, studied Politics and Government (BA Honours) and International Relations (Ph.D.) at the University of Kent at Canterbury in the UK. He has worked as a diplomatic newspaper correspondent (1995–2003) and adviser to the Greek Parliament (1997–2003), and from 2004–2005 he also worked for public television. His most recent book is *Greek Media and Foreign Policy* (Athens: I. Sideris, 2011) and he is also co-editor of the book *Transnational Celebrity Activism: Changing the World* (London: Intellect, 2011). He has published in many journals, such as *Global Society*, *The Round Table*, *Nordicom*, *Etudes Helleniques*, *Greek Review of Political Science*, *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, *Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, and the *International Journal of Electronic Governance*.

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# STRENGTHENING GREEK PUBLIC DIPLOMACY PRESENT CONDUCT AND FUTURE POTENTIAL

*Christos A. Frangonikolopoulos*

## Introduction

Greece has been grappling with the task of defining its role in the world since the mid-1990s. Greece entered the 1990s with an ambivalent and contradictory position. It was the end of the Cold War, and Greece was well prepared, internally and externally, enjoying an established democracy, as well as secure memberships in major international and regional organizations (such as the EU and NATO), yet it failed to take advantage of the opportunities that lay ahead. Unfortunately, Greece engaged in external adventures, such as the name dispute with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and consonance with nationalist and authoritarian Balkan leaders. This not only led to the deferment of major foreign policy decisions, but also to external antagonisms with neighbouring countries and member states of the EU.<sup>1</sup> Greece became part of the 'Balkan problem', losing its opportunity to operate as a catalyst for managing or, even better, resolving the region's problems. As a result, Greece was ascribed as having a 'credibility deficit', the so-called 'Greek Paradox', which was understood as the gap between Greece's promises and capabilities as a member of the EU and NATO and its actual performance.<sup>2</sup>

Bearing the above in mind, the Greek government began to develop an alternative approach and discourse in the formation of Greece's foreign policy. The aim was to adjust the role and position of Greece to the concerns, needs and obligations of regional and global governance. In particular, Greece initiated and facilitated the diplomacy of development and humanitarian assistance, becoming a member of the Development Assistance Committee

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<sup>1</sup>) Roza Tsagarousianou, 'Nationalism, Ethnic Antagonisms and Mass Communications in Greece', in Tim Allen and Jean Seaton (eds), *The Media of Conflict* (New York: Zed Books, 1999), pp. 175–192.

<sup>2</sup>) Graham T. Allison and Kalypso Nicolaidis (eds), *The Greek Paradox: Promise vs. Performance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).

(of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD) and establishing Hellenic Aid. Bilateral and multilateral aid granted by Greece in 2009 reached US\$ 607.27 million.<sup>3</sup> Greece became an active member of the Human Security Network, an informal world consultation forum for governments, international organizations, the academic community and civil society representatives. Greece also began to pursue a more active role in military, peace and civil operations by the EU and NATO. Greece has financed programmes on rural development, water resource management, education and healthcare worth a total of 800,000 in Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Greece participated in the anti-piracy naval operation off the coast of Somalia, the EU Training Mission based in Uganda, the EU Mission on the Rule of Law in Kosovo and the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia. Greece furthermore began to promote an active and constructive role in the Balkans. Indicative is the Hellenic Plan for the Reconstruction of the Balkans (HPRB), an effort by Greece—and with a total budget of 550 million euro—to contribute to the modernization of infrastructure, promote production investments, support democratic institutions and the rule of law, modernize public administration and local government, and strengthen the welfare state in the recipient countries of South-Eastern Europe.<sup>5</sup> Last, but not least, and with the aim to improve Greece's 'image', Greece invested in 'media events diplomacy' by organizing the 2004 Athens Olympic Games (see below).

These initiatives, however, have not contributed to the repositioning of Greece, as their effect in building a new image for the country has been limited. With Greece's public diplomacy still focusing on cultural and educational links, as well as attracting tourists, little has been done to portray Greece's modern achievements. As a result, over the last two years the headlines and the huge amount of media coverage on the Greek financial crisis have been characterized by an intense use of value-laden expressions and labels that convey a negative sentiment. Europe talks of 'bad' and 'good'

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<sup>3</sup>) *Annual Report of Greek Bilateral and Multilateral Humanitarian and Development Aid* (Athens: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hellenic Aid, 2009).

<sup>4</sup>) See online at <http://www.mfa.gr/www.mfa.gr/el-GR/Policy/Multilateral+Diplomacy/InternationalOrganizations/NATO/>, accessed 19 March 2011.

<sup>5</sup>) See online at <http://www.mfa.gr/www.mfa.gr/el-GR/Financial+Policy/ESOAV>, accessed 19 March 2011.



Europeans and ‘lazy’ southerners. ‘Boom, kick them out of the eurozone. Our citizens no longer want to pay for these wasteful Greeks’, wrote the Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf* on 19 May 2010 following the results of an opinion poll among 11,000 Dutch citizens. The title of an article in *Le Monde* on 6 February 2010 is also indicative, ‘Bad Greece Puts the Euro Under Pressure’, as is the use of the acronym PIIGS (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain), termed by the liberal magazine *The Economist*. In addition, media coverage of the Greek debt crisis has been dominated by dramatic pictures of demonstrations and issues such as corruption, extensive tax evasion, the inefficient illegal system and bureaucracy in Greece, rather than by an analysis of the complicated Greek economic situation. Such coverage, when combined also with the narrow orientation of Greece’s public diplomacy, cannot but contribute to the deterioration of Greece’s position in the world.<sup>6</sup>

The purpose of this paper is: (a) to present Greece’s current public diplomacy mission, structures and activities; (b) to analyse the institutional and ideological problems of Greece’s public diplomacy; and (c) to suggest possible directions in utilizing public diplomacy as a foreign policy instrument that demonstrates Greece’s relevance in the world. Greece’s public diplomacy employs cultural exchanges, education programmes and foreign broadcasts to convey Greek interests and ideals to foreign audiences. Little attention is paid to listening, and the approach does not promote dialogue and interaction with foreign audiences. Greece needs to establish a public diplomacy strategy that involves state and non-state actors, domestic and foreign societies with the aim of encouraging communication and dialogue.

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<sup>6</sup>) See Andreas Antoniadis (ed.), *The Economic Crisis in the International Press* [in Greek] (Athens: Athens Centre for International Political Economy, Institute for International Relations, 2010); *Analysis of the European Press on the Greek Economic Crisis* (Athens: International Communication Policy Forum, February 2011), online at <http://icp-forum.gr/wp/?p=2331>, accessed 19 March 2011; and George Tzogopoulos, *Framing the Greek Crisis in the International Media*, Working Paper 16 (Athens: ELIAMEP, 2011).

## **Present Conduct**

### ***Mission, Structures and Activities***

Public diplomacy, according to article 17<sup>7</sup> of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs' organizational statute, is a constituent component of Greece's foreign policy, the purpose of which is to influence the governments and publics of other countries. The ultimate aim is the projection of a positive image, regionally and internationally, as well as the provision of credible information on Greece's so-called 'national issues' (including Greek-Turkish relations, Greek-FYROM relations and Cyprus). This task is assigned to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Information and Public Diplomacy (DIPD). The DIPD issues press releases and prepares periodical essays that are distributed internally and externally (to Greek embassies in other countries). This requires the DIPD to follow national and external media, and to collect facts and information on issues regarding the ministry and Greece. The head of the DIPD, usually a high-ranking diplomat, is the spokesperson of the foreign ministry, keeping representatives of the national media and foreign correspondents informed on a daily basis.

The DIPD, however, is not provided with a unit of strategic planning and specialized staff in political and international communications. Its activities are limited mainly to supporting the work of the ministry's press spokesperson. Indicative is the fact that the working staff of the DIPD is only comprised of two interpreters/translators (English and French).<sup>8</sup> As a result, the DIPD has to work with the Secretariat General of Information and Communication (SGIC). The SGIC, which is under the authority of the Minister of Internal Affairs, has a mandate to: (a) inform state services and public sector agencies on important international events, as well as views and reactions of Greek and foreign public opinion, including those of mass media, on issues affecting the country; (b) inform international public opinion, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on the Greek positions and

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<sup>7</sup>) *Statute on the Organizational Structure of Greece's Foreign Affairs Ministry*, No. 356, 5 July 2007, article 17.

<sup>8</sup>) See online at <http://www1.mfa.gr/organismos-ypex/kephalaio-b-kentriki-ypiresia/arthro-17-uperesia-enemeroses-kai-demosias-diplomatias.html>.

views on various issues, with the aim to promote Greece's image abroad and contribute to the strengthening of relations with foreign countries and international organizations, (c) contribute to the strengthening of national and cultural links with Greeks of the diaspora; and (d) collect and make good use of data, especially in the fields of national, political, social, economic, cultural and environmental issues concerning Greece, as well as international issues that are relevant to the country and/or the international bodies of which Greece is a member.<sup>9</sup> In line with its mandate, the SGIC publishes the *Greek News Agenda* (GNA),<sup>10</sup> a daily online bulletin in English, which informs its external readers of developments in domestic politics and current affairs, international relations, business, energy, culture and travel. It is a reference for issues of general as well as of particular interest, providing useful online sources for additional information and documentation. The SGIC also on a regular basis publishes separate online bulletins for Greek readers regarding Greece's political, economic, cultural and environmental affairs, as well as Greece's foreign policy and international developments. Regular online bulletins with information regarding the content of Greek-language programmes in foreign radio stations—such as Deutsche Welle, Bayrak, The Voice of Russia and Radio Macedonia–Skopje—are also published.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the SGIC, and not the DIPD, also oversees the 36 Greek Press and Communication Offices Abroad (PCOs), which operate within the framework of Greek diplomatic missions as the principal information links between Greece and the foreign media or other opinion leaders, as well as the general public.

It is the Directorate of Services Abroad (DSA) of the SGIC, in particular, that coordinates and directs the work of the PCOs. The DSA (a) examines issues related to the PCOs, determines their targets and the way they act and operate, and provides them with instructions and guidelines on how to inform and influence international public opinion in favour of Greek views and opinions; and (b) sees to the refutation of false or misleading news deriving from articles or broadcasts by foreign press and media, in cooperation with

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<sup>9</sup>) See online at [http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/en/index/ministry/min\\_mission.htm](http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/en/index/ministry/min_mission.htm), accessed 25 October 2011.

<sup>10</sup>) See online at <http://www.greeknewsagenda.gr>.

<sup>11</sup>) See online at <http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/index/information/info-bulletins.htm>.

the PCOs.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the PCOs and the DSA also gather and process data and information regarding international or specific issues that are related to international relations of Greek interest, and make use of them through the publication of news bulletins, such as the following English, French, German and Chinese weekly editions, which present a summary of the main Greek political, economic and cultural events: *Greece Hebdo*;<sup>13</sup> *Griechenland Aktuell*;<sup>14</sup> and the Chinese and English news review *Greece-Sila*.<sup>15</sup> Some PCOs also publish news bulletins, such as the online bulletin<sup>16</sup> that is published in Helsinki, the weekly bulletin *Boletín Griego de Noticias*<sup>17</sup> in Madrid, the *Monthly News Review*<sup>18</sup> in Beijing, the bi-monthly *Foroellenico*<sup>19</sup> bulletin in Rome and the monthly bulletin *Greece*<sup>20</sup> in London. The PCOs furthermore plan, coordinate and supervise festivals,<sup>21</sup> exhibitions<sup>22</sup> and events<sup>23</sup> that

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<sup>12</sup>) See online at [http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/index/ministry/min\\_intern\\_pressoffice.htm](http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/index/ministry/min_intern_pressoffice.htm), accessed 25 October 2011.

<sup>13</sup>) See online at [http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/en/index/other\\_pages-2/grecehebdo.htm](http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/en/index/other_pages-2/grecehebdo.htm)

<sup>14</sup>) See online at [http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/en/index/other\\_pages-2/griechenlandaktuell.htm](http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/en/index/other_pages-2/griechenlandaktuell.htm).

<sup>15</sup>) See online at [http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/en/index/other\\_pages-2/chinese\\_bulletin.htm](http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/en/index/other_pages-2/chinese_bulletin.htm).

<sup>16</sup>) See online at [http://www.greekembassy-press.fi/GNB\\_show\\_bulletin.php](http://www.greekembassy-press.fi/GNB_show_bulletin.php).

<sup>17</sup>) See online at [http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/en/index/other\\_pages-2/boletin\\_griego\\_de\\_noticias.htm](http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/en/index/other_pages-2/boletin_griego_de_noticias.htm).

<sup>18</sup>) See online at <http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/en/index/information/greece-world-2/greece-online.htm>.

<sup>19</sup>) See online at <http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/en/index/information/greece-world-2/greece-online.htm>.

<sup>20</sup>) See online at <http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/en/index/information/greece-world-2/greece-online.htm>.

<sup>21</sup>) See online at [http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/en/index/information/greece-world-2/culture\\_abroad-festivals.htm](http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/en/index/information/greece-world-2/culture_abroad-festivals.htm).

<sup>22</sup>) See online at [http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/en/index/information/greece-world-2/culture\\_abroad-exhibitions.htm](http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/en/index/information/greece-world-2/culture_abroad-exhibitions.htm).

<sup>23</sup>) See online at

promote Greece abroad. In this area, the work of PCOs, as well as of the DIPD, is also complemented by the activities of a number of state institutions, such as the Hellenic Foundation for Culture (HFC), the Greek National Tourism Organization (GNTO), the radio network The Voice of Greece and the World Council of Hellenes Abroad (WCHA).

The aim of the HFC<sup>24</sup> is to promote Hellenic culture and to disseminate the Greek language all over the world. Since its founding in 1992, the HFC has created branches in Odessa, Alexandria and Berlin. It operates offices with representatives in London, Vienna, Brussels and Washington DC. During the period 2007–2009, the HFC founded Centres of Hellenic Culture in Trieste, Belgrade, Bucharest, Tirana, Sofia and Melbourne. These centres organize seminars on teaching Greek as a foreign language, and—in cooperation with public and private cultural institutions and the local government—also organize major cultural and artistic events with the aim of promoting Greek civilization.

The GNTO is a public entity supervised by the Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism. It has 32 national offices and 21 offices abroad in countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, China, France, Israel and Russia.<sup>25</sup> As the ruling state agency for tourism, the GNTO is responsible for Greece's advertising campaigns, for publications (posters, leaflets, books and promotional material), for the organization of international exhibitions and tourism fairs, as well as for the publication of the bulletin *Greek Travel Business News*.<sup>26</sup>

The radio network The Voice of Greece,<sup>27</sup> which is owned by the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT), transmits in all five continents where Greeks live, from the Balkans and Europe to Africa and Japan and from the United States to Australia. The network includes productions of political, cultural and folkloric interest. ERT-5, however, is not only intended for Greeks living abroad, but also for foreigners living in Greece and abroad. It

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[http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/en/index/information/greece-world-2/culture\\_abroad-festivals.htm](http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/en/index/information/greece-world-2/culture_abroad-festivals.htm).

<sup>24</sup>) See online at <http://www.hfc.gr/wmt/webpages/index.php?lid=2&pid=2>.

<sup>25</sup>) See online at <http://www.visitgreece.gr/portal/site/eot/menuitem>.

<sup>26</sup>) See online at [www.visitgreece.gr/portal/site/eot/menuitem](http://www.visitgreece.gr/portal/site/eot/menuitem).

<sup>27</sup>) See online at <http://www.voiceofgreece.gr/>.

accomplishes this through daily programming in twelve<sup>28</sup> languages at short and medium wavelengths. ERT-5 is thus a source of timely and direct briefing of the various developments in Greece and the world. The Voice of Greece has also joined the world's internet community with live online transmission of its programming 24 hours a day.

Finally, the WCHA was established in 1995 to consult with and advise the Greek state on issues concerning the Greeks abroad. The WCHA, with permanent headquarters in Thessaloniki, is comprised of seven geographic regions (the United States and Canada, Central-South America, Europe, Africa, the near Middle East, Oceania-Far East, and former Soviet Union countries), managed by an eleven-member Presiding Board. Its main goal is to establish cooperation, offer support, and bring together the Greeks of the diaspora, thus creating a global network.<sup>29</sup> The Presiding Board of the WCHA, in cooperation with the Coordinating Councils of the seven regions, undertakes systematically to record problems, recommendations and proposals made by its members and the Greeks abroad in general. It also focuses on issues concerning education, culture, youth and entrepreneurship. In this context, the WCHA and the Hellenic Regional Development Centre (HRDC) cooperate in the materialization of the 'Speak Greek-Live Greek' programme. This endeavour falls under the auspices of the Greek foreign ministry and the Greek UNESCO Committee, while also enjoying unreserved support from the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation and the cooperation of academic institutions.<sup>30</sup> It is worth noting that the teaching material is offered in English, Russian and Spanish. Those interested in learning Greek can register to have access to the online multimedia language-learning programme ([www.greek-learning.gr](http://www.greek-learning.gr)).

### ***Limitations and Drawbacks***

Despite the above-mentioned examples, Greece's public diplomacy lacks a well-coordinated and central direction. As already noted, the DIPD does not oversee the activities of the PCOs and lacks resources and organizational

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<sup>28</sup>) English, German, French, Spanish, Russian, Polish, Albanian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian, Turkish and Arabic.

<sup>29</sup>) See online at <http://en.sae.gr/?id=12379&tag=SAE+Regions>.

<sup>30</sup>) See online at <http://en.sae.gr/?id=13552&tag=Speak+Greek+%E2%80%93+Live+Greek>.

capabilities. In addition, the messages and activities that are directed to international audiences are mainly devised and formulated by the Greek Ministry of Internal Affairs, and in particular the SGIC. The treatment of PCO staff members is also characteristic. According to a recent public press release by their association,<sup>31</sup> their professional development and elevation, as well as their posting abroad, are not guided by clear and specific rules, but are decided without prior warning and preparation. What is important is not their expertise or ranking, but the priorities of the political leadership, and in particular the SGIC, as illustrated by the appointment of various personalities (including journalists and artists) as heads of the PCOs abroad. Such personalities do not always possess the relevant qualifications and education that the Press and Communication Officers have acquired at the National School of Public Management (Department of Press Attachés)<sup>32</sup> after graduation from university.

Moreover, Greece's public diplomacy is also narrowly defined. Greece's governments still resort to the old and outdated logic of styling and reproducing the country's international image as an attractive holiday destination.<sup>33</sup> This priority, as well as the emphasis on projecting its glorious past, indicates that Greece's public diplomacy, as practised today, is mainly about selling a culture and a way of life, and not about trying to develop mutual and long-lasting relationships. This may be attributed to Greece's memory of traumatic experiences resulting from a long, and in some cases painful, process of nation-building, as well as from the constant—as far as the perception of external 'threat' is concerned—display of Turkey's revisionist stance (from the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 onwards).

Public opinion and Greece's political elite thus do not sufficiently appreciate Greece's current position in the global arena, and perceive Greece through

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<sup>31)</sup> See online at <http://icp-forum.gr/wp/?p=1301>, accessed 10 March 2011.

<sup>32)</sup> The Department of Press Attachés was established in 1993, with the aim of preparing Press and Communication Officers to function effectively as communication channels between Greece and the rest of the world. The programme of study (two years) is designed to provide specialized knowledge in the areas of political communication, media, diplomacy, foreign policy and international relations. See online at [http://www.ekdd.gr/esdd/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=127&Itemid=197](http://www.ekdd.gr/esdd/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=127&Itemid=197).

<sup>33)</sup> Maria Fola, 'Greece as a Brand' [in Greek], *International and European Politics*, Issue 16 (2009), pp. 61–70.

the prism of 'Greek exceptionalism'.<sup>34</sup> This discourse moulds Greek citizens to believe that although they are 'superior', history has been playing 'tricks' with them, as they are permanently betrayed by 'foreign allies' and the powerful 'West'. At the core of this ideological position is the 'culture of the underdog', the basic traits of which are introversion, xenophobia, siege mentality, and a prevalence for conspiracy-related approaches and interpretations of international developments.<sup>35</sup> Greeks suspected, and continue to suspect, complicity by the United States and the EU on the Cyprus issue, the Aegean and Greece's debt crisis.

As a result, Greek foreign policy is not only dominated by ethnocentric stereotypes, but is also heavily influenced by a political discourse that is dominated by ethno-populist content. Of all NATO and EU members, Greece, in particular during the 1980s and 1990s, showed the greatest ambivalence in its choice of foreign policy options. Greece's initiatives did not conform to Western standards of external behaviour, such as Greece's refusal to condemn either the establishment of the military regime in Poland in 1981 or the former Soviet Union's destruction of Korean Airlines flight 007 in 1983.

Furthermore, as foreign policy-making in Greece is largely motivated by the need to maximize electoral impact and popularity, domestic public opinion becomes a fundamental source of decisions and priorities. This not only amplifies the perception of 'a country under siege' from external pressure (as indicated in the demonstrations and mass rallies of the early 1990s to demonstrate national/popular unity against international recognition of FYROM), but also facilitates the adoption of inflexible and usually irrational political positions. Examples of the latter are the Greek embargo on the small and newly neighbouring state of FYROM in 1995, and the recent decision by Prime Minister George Papandreou to propose a referendum on whether or not to accept the European debt deal for Greece to which he had personally agreed.

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<sup>34</sup>) Panagiotis Ioakimidis, *Greece's Regional, European and International Position* [in Greek] (Athens: Papazisis Publishers, 2007).

<sup>35</sup>) Nikiforos Diamandouros, *Cultural Dualism and Political Change in Post-authoritarian Greece*, Working Paper 50 (Madrid: *Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Ciencias Sociales*, 1994); and Ioannis Stefanidis, *Stirring the Greek Nation* (London: Ashgate, 2007).



This reality in many instances restricts the government and policy-making mechanisms from prioritizing appropriately. Greece's politicians, and in particular prime ministers and foreign ministers, had and continue to have a predominant and catalytic role on the decision-making process, determining the content, objectives, characteristics and quality of Greece's foreign policy initiatives. Diplomats and Press and Communication Officers mainly operate as executive and procedural organs that support the decisions of their superiors, rather than developing and debating alternative policies and strategies. The direction of Greece's foreign policy and international communication is left to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, without prior debate and consultation in the context of collective bodies or institutions.<sup>36</sup>

This institutional gap does not allow for an open, public and political debate on Greece's public diplomacy. In fact, decisions on the direction of Greece's public diplomacy, one could argue,<sup>37</sup> are largely left to the politicians and leaders who (may) have a vision and strategy for Greece's international position and image. One such example is Constantine Karamanlis, who—as the Greek prime minister in the 1950s and the 1970s—invested in Greece's possibilities as an attractive cultural and holiday destination. He personally supported and achieved the upgrading of Greece's archaeological sites, established the Athens and Epidaurus Festivals, cultivated the idea of creating the Acropolis Museum, constructed luxurious hotels and invested in Greece's roads, airports and ports. Another example is that of Costas Simitis, prime minister of Greece from 1996 to 2004, who pressed for Greece's political and economic modernization, the consolidation of Greece's position within the EU, as well as upgrading Greece's infrastructure.

### ***The Public Diplomacy of the Greek Olympics: A Lost Opportunity***

The absence of a public debate also creates major obstacles in the understanding, communication and coordination of Greece's public diplomacy, as was seen from the management of Greece's image and position

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<sup>36)</sup> Panagiotis Ioakimidis, 'The Model of Foreign Policy-Making in Greece: Personalities Versus Institutions', in S. Stavridis *et al.*, *The Foreign Policies of the EU's Mediterranean and Applicant Countries in the 1990s* (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 140–170.

<sup>37)</sup> Andreas Makris, 'The Political Dimension of "Nation-branding" and the Case of Greece' [in Greek], *International and European Politics*, Issue 16 (2009), pp. 57–60.

before and after the Athens Olympic Games of 2004.<sup>38</sup> Preparing for and hosting the Athens Games proved to be a unique exercise and experience for Greece as a whole. For more than five years, the city of Athens looked like a major construction site. In addition to the entire games infrastructure in Athens and other Greek cities, 2,800 km of roads were built or upgraded in the Greater Attica region. The new metro, together with refurbishment works in the existing light rail system as well as the suburban rail, gave the city of Athens a contemporary European outlook.<sup>39</sup> The hosting of the Games was also successful. For the first time ever, a record 201 national Olympic committees participated in the Olympic Games. More than 21,000 media representatives from around the world attended the Games and 3.9 billion people had access to the television coverage.<sup>40</sup>

However, by investing in an idealized projection of Greece's glorious past and the return of the Olympic Games to their birthplace Athens,<sup>41</sup> the Organizing Committee of the Athens Olympic Games (ATHOC) failed to provide Greece with sustaining messages, visions and priorities for the twenty-first century. As a result, no public discussion was held on the environmental or economic consequences of the Games.<sup>42</sup> In fact, and according to the results of public polls for the period 2001–2003, most Greek citizens conceived the Games as Greece's passport to the developed, Western world. The problems and consequences associated with the Olympic Games, both in economic and environmental terms, seemed to be of secondary importance. Nearly 83 per cent of the respondents considered the Games to be a 'very important event', with 28.5 per cent expecting the creation of job opportunities, 21.4 per cent

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<sup>38</sup>) Maria Fola, *Communication Strategies and Nation Branding: The Case of the Athens Olympic Games 2004* [in Greek], unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Department of Political Science, University of Crete, 2010, pp. 289–305.

<sup>39</sup>) Maria Fola, 'Athens City Branding and the Olympic Games 2004', in Keith Dinnie (ed.), *Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practices* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2008), p. 115.

<sup>40</sup>) Maria Fola, 'The International Image of Greece: An Analysis on the Occasion of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games', presentation at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Hellenic Ph.D. Symposium on Contemporary Greece, London School of Economics, 14–15 June 2007, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup>) Roy Panagiotopoulou, 'The Communication Strategy of the 2004 Athens Olympic Games' [in Greek], *Communication Issues*, No.1 (2004), pp. 38–57.

<sup>42</sup>) Roy Panagiotopoulou, 'NGOs: Social Influence and Reputation', in Christoforos Vernadakis (ed.), *Public Opinion in Greece 2005–2006: Political and Social Representations, Euroscepticism and Non-governmental Organizations* [in Greek] (Athens: Savalas, 2007), p. 172.

that the Games would improve Greece's international position, and 27.7 per cent that Greece's infrastructure would be upgraded.<sup>43</sup>

As Greece discovered, however, preparing for the Games was not an easy task. The Games were characterized by delays in the assignment and execution of projects, conflicts between the government and the ATHOC regarding their jurisdictions, and increased concerns about the rising cost of the Games and tight deadlines. This neither contributed to positive international reporting, nor to a reduction of the negative international stereotypes regarding contemporary Greece.<sup>44</sup> In a qualitative survey carried out among opinion leaders of six countries (the United States, Japan, France, the United Kingdom, Spain and Germany) by the ATHOC in December 2003, the Greeks were perceived to lack the qualities of careful planning, reliability and organizational skills. Furthermore, it was also emphasized that the Greeks are not associated with attributes that are considered to play an important role in modern democracies, such as social responsibility or capable administration. Respondents described the Greeks as somewhat 'indolent'. The Greeks, it was felt, are pleasant and passionate, 'essentially harmless', but also 'relatively unimportant', 'a nation that must not necessarily be taken all that seriously'. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that few respondents were able to comment on Greece's economic or political situation.<sup>45</sup>

This is not to argue that the final success of the Athens Games did not generate a series of positive messages for the image of Greece. According to global research undertaken by the ATHOC, respondents felt more positive towards Greece after the Athens Olympic Games had taken place, with figures reaching 45 per cent in the United States, compared to 36 per cent prior to the Games, and 44.9 per cent in Europe, compared to 44 per cent with positive perceptions prior to the Games. Awareness of Greece as the host country of the 2004 Olympic Games also significantly improved. In all of the

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<sup>43</sup>) Christoforos Vernadakis, 'Greek Public Opinion and the Athens Olympic Games 2004' [in Greek], *Communication Issues*, No. 1 (2004), pp. 81–84.

<sup>44</sup>) Nikos Demertzis, Stelios Papathanasopoulos and Antonis Armenakis, 'The Image of Greece during the Preparation of the 2004 Athens Olympic Games' [in Greek], *Communication Issues*, No. 1 (2004), pp. 57–79.

<sup>45</sup>) Fola, 'The International Image of Greece', pp. 20 and 23.

countries involved in the survey, awareness levels about Greece reached results higher than 88 per cent after the hosting of the Games.<sup>46</sup>

Following the Games, however, the opportunity to redefine Greece's position was lost. The Greek government not only failed to utilize and maintain the sporting infrastructure, but has also failed to develop a consistent strategy of objectives for communicating Greek modernity and social-economical development. Rather, Greece's public diplomacy continues to rely on its natural beauty, history and culture as a means to attract the world's attention, failing to dispel all of the myths and clichés regarding the passionate but unreliable Greek character. Bearing that in mind, and with the confidence and reliability deficit that Greece's debt crisis has created, a consistent public diplomacy strategy is required for developing, promoting and implementing key messages for the positioning of Greece.

## **Future Potential: Paths to Strengthen Greek Public Diplomacy**

### ***Rethinking Greece's Position in the World***

Greece first needs to appreciate fully its contemporary regional and international position, as illustrated by the 2011 Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI was introduced as an alternative to conventional measures of national development, such as income levels and the rate of economic growth. It has been published every year since 1990 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The HDI represents a push for a broader definition of well-being and provides a composite measure of three basic dimensions of human development: health; education; and income. The HDI gives Greece a ranking of 29 out of 187 countries with comparable data,<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>) Fola, 'The International Image of Greece', pp. 25–27.

<sup>47</sup>) Such as Turkey with a HDI rank of 92, Romania of 50, Bulgaria of 55, Croatia of 46, Russia of 66, Serbia of 59, Cyprus of 31, Egypt of 113, Italy of 24, Portugal of 41, the United Kingdom of 26, Spain of 23, France of 20, Slovakia of 35 and Finland of 22. See online at <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/GRC.html>, accessed 3 November 2011.

which is positive when compared to other countries in the region and in Europe.<sup>48</sup>

Despite this reality, the Greek government has failed to respond to critiques by the international press about a profoundly 'corrupt' and 'clientelistic' state with an 'overburdened' public sector and 'lazy' civil servants. This is not to deny that Greece's debt crisis should not be attributed to the economic and social failures of its political system, but by passively accepting Greece's 'peculiarity', one fails to understand its international dimension and affinity with related events in other developed countries of the world. The debt crisis, for example, should also be associated with the global economic crisis, interdependence, vulnerability and EU cohesion, as similar debt problems are troubling 'bigger' and 'more developed' EU member states as well. Public and political discourse needs to be more substantial and should focus on Greece's contemporary position, Greece's values and how those are related with the values of other countries, and Greece's comparative advantages and how they should be perceived, discussed and projected internationally.

To do so, Greece needs to understand and not undermine its historical progress and direction. From a poor and developing country in the 1950s, Greece now enjoys the highest level of development in the wider Balkan and Mediterranean region, combined with an established democracy and membership in the eurozone, the EU and NATO. This progress should not only provide Greece with confidence, but should also unleash its capabilities and promises in order to deal with the actual problems of its political and economic system, such as corruption, low competitiveness and production.<sup>49</sup> In particular, Greece needs to develop a balancing strategy, one that not only allows it to be indispensable regionally and internationally, but also permits it to continue its internal political and economic reforms and development. This cannot be practised without rethinking the concept and practice of public diplomacy in today's interdependent and turbulent world.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>) See Human Development Report 2011, 'Key to HDI Countries and Ranks, 2011', in *Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All* (New York: United Nations Development Program, 2011), p. 126.

<sup>49</sup>) Kevin Featherstone (ed.), *Politics and Policy in Greece: The Challenge of Modernization* (London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 2006).

<sup>50</sup>) Jan Melissen, *Wielding Soft Power: The New Public Diplomacy* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', Discussion Papers in Diplomacy, 2005), p. 30.

### ***Rethinking the Concept and Nature of Public Diplomacy***

Mainstream public diplomacy practice focuses on: (a) cultural diplomacy (arts, educational and sporting exchanges); (b) advertising and sponsorship of media programming and events; (c) media relations (meeting and communicating with journalists, editors and producers); (d) hosting and participating in public events; and (e) radio and television broadcasting.<sup>51</sup> Such actions are not only aimed at informing and influencing audiences overseas for the purpose of promoting the national interest and foreign policy goals, but are also focused on improving a country's image or reputation. Although important, such actions, as we have seen with the example of the United States, are not sufficient for creating a favourable global environment. Neither do they contribute—as Greece's example with the Athens Olympic Games of 2004 illustrates—to the reduction of stereotypes. This is not surprising, as the emphasis of such public diplomacy actions is on constructing a friendlier environment within which states can pursue their policies. Public diplomacy, as it is currently practised in Greece, is monological, aimed at making individuals in other countries supporters of ideas, views and values that are friendly to the country exercising the public diplomacy, and disregarding, however, that in today's world it is what one hears and understands, not what one says, that is important.

The rise of global communications, the spread of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe and the recent upsurge in North Africa and the Middle East, the growth of global NGOs and the development of powerful multilateral organizations have changed the nature of power, government and diplomacy. They are affecting the way in which governments conduct their diplomacy and increase the importance of the public dimension in foreign policy. They provide new opportunities for citizen participation, as members of the public are developing new competencies for global engagement through the use of information and communication technology. In addition, domestic issues such as health, crime and the environment have become essential elements of global security. Moreover, as the concept of security has broadened, the gap

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<sup>51</sup>) Nicholas J. Cull, 'Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, No. 616 (2008), pp. 31–54.

between what used to be domestic and foreign policy has rapidly closed, making citizens' everyday concerns the concerns of foreign policy-makers.<sup>52</sup>

This has not only facilitated a shift from geopolitics to a foreign policy that emphasizes the primacy of values and ethics,<sup>53</sup> but has also opened up the field of global politics to other actors and other types of activity, which mainly rely on the social power of individuals and NGOs. Social power, which is defined as the ability to set standards and to create norms and values that are deemed legitimate and desirable, without resorting to state-centric power, is a central part of contemporary global politics.<sup>54</sup> States compete with global communication networks and NGOs to communicate information to the public. Foreign policy and diplomacy are taking place in a system of mutually beneficial relations that is no longer state-centric, but composed of multiple actors and networks that not only operate in a fluid global environment of new issues and contexts, but also cooperate and learn from each other.<sup>55</sup> As a result, and as the recent literature on the subject underlines,<sup>56</sup> public diplomacy today can only be successful if it is designed to operate within a 'polylateral' world of multiple actors. The challenge for public diplomacy is to be inclusive and collaborative, facilitating substantive dialogues with broader foreign societies and actors, such as domestic and global NGOs and civil

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<sup>52</sup>) Andrew Heywood, *Global Politics* (London: Palgrave, 2011).

<sup>53</sup>) David Ronfeldt and John Arquilla, 'Noopolitik: A New Paradigm for Public Diplomacy', in Nancy Snow and Paul M. Taylor (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* (New York and London: Francis & Taylor, 2009), pp. 352–367.

<sup>54</sup>) Peter van Ham, *The Social Power of International Relations* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>55</sup>) Melissen, *Wielding Soft Power*, p. 9, reference 31.

<sup>56</sup>) Jan Melissen (ed.), *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Nancy Snow and Paul M. Taylor (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* (New York: Francis & Taylor, 2009); Geoffrey Allen Pigman, *Contemporary Diplomacy: Representation and Communication in a Globalized World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), pp. 121–138; Eytan Gilboa, 'Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, No. 616 (2008), pp. 55–77; and Shaun Riordan, *Dialogue-based Public Diplomacy: A New Foreign Policy Paradigm?* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', Discussion Papers in Diplomacy, 2004), p. 8.

society movements, not only when trying to convey messages and to develop friendly relations, but also when dealing with global issues.<sup>57</sup>

In the realm of contemporary global politics, therefore, public diplomacy cannot only depend upon the attractiveness of a country's culture or way of life. This approach is too limited, as it only aims at affecting the policies, dispositions and actions of other states in an indirect way.<sup>58</sup> In today's world, establishing and maintaining public diplomacy requires building mutually beneficial relationships with internal and foreign publics. Engaging other actors, internal and external, and incorporating their views should be at the centre and not the periphery of public diplomacy. This requires a shift from a hierarchical public diplomacy communication model to a network-oriented model. The first, as noted above, transmits top-down information flows to a target audience, seeking to influence foreign public opinion, which in turn influences the foreign policy of other countries. The network model, on the other hand, and in light of common transnational problems, seeks to build relationships around common interests in order to promote action in fields where governments seem unable to deliver. It requires more diverse membership and less hierarchical organization to incorporate new actors and their specialized knowledge more efficiently, which means abandoning the logic of transmitting carefully crafted messages to a large but static audience in order to achieve policy objectives. Instead, there needs to be a focus on building sustainable relationships with foreign publics as an end in itself, through message exchange, dialogue and interaction. The changing global environment, which is characterized by cultural diversity, turbulence, the emergence of new actors and the rise of interactive media, makes this all the more necessary.<sup>59</sup>

When considering Greece's location in a complex, volatile and security-consuming geographical zone—including the Balkans, the Black Sea region, the Mediterranean and the Middle East—such a public diplomacy strategy

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<sup>57</sup>) Jan Melissen, *Beyond New Public Diplomacy* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', Clingendael Discussion Papers No. 3, 2011).

<sup>58</sup>) Alan K. Henrikson, *What Can Public Diplomacy Achieve?* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', Discussion Papers in Diplomacy, 2006).

<sup>59</sup>) Ivaylo Iaydjiev, 'Searching for Influence and Persuasion in Network-Oriented Public Diplomacy: What Role for "Small States"?', *Exchange: The Journal of Public Diplomacy*, No. 2 (2011), pp. 40–49.



will not only provide Greece with new opportunities in dealing with its bilateral problems (such as Turkey and FYROM), but will also enhance its relevance and influence in multilateral organizations and forums, supplying it with ample opportunities in world affairs that go far beyond its current economic condition and limited hard-power capabilities.

### **Improving Practice at Regional and Global Levels**

Greek foreign policy has mainly developed over the years on the logic of dealing with ‘threats’ that derive primarily from neighbouring countries. Without doubt, some of these ‘threats’ existed and continue to do so. However, a distinguishing characteristic of Greece’s foreign policy was, and is, excessive appreciation of these threats. Greek foreign policy is mainly occupied with Greece’s uneasy and in many cases hostile and conflictual relationships with Turkey and FYROM. This has not only created a political context and public discourse<sup>60</sup> within which negotiated and conciliatory solutions to long-standing problems with Greece’s neighbours is out of question, but has also deprived Greece from participating energetically in the global system. The challenge for Greece, therefore, is how to develop a collaborative and multi-stakeholder public diplomacy strategy<sup>61</sup> that contributes to the country’s security and credibility through active participation in the discussion, management and resolution of pressing problems on the regional/global agenda. With that in mind, the following section suggests possible changes at two levels: at the regional level, through Greece’s public diplomacy towards Turkey and the Balkans; and at the global level through the thematic refocusing of Greece’s public diplomacy.

#### ***The Regional Level***

At the regional level, Greece’s foreign policy must try to rationalize and reconceptualize its neighbouring ‘threats’, especially in relation to Turkey, which has dominated Greece’s foreign policy and behaviour since 1974. This position was justified in 1974 with the invasion of Cyprus and Turkey’s subsequent assertions and claims in the Aegean. Today, however, Greece’s

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<sup>60</sup>) Christos A. Frangonikolopoulos, ‘The Media and Foreign Policy: The Case of Greece’, *Etudes Helleniques/Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2007), pp. 161–187.

<sup>61</sup>) Mark Leonard, *Public Diplomacy* (London: Foreign Policy Centre, 2002).

successful policy to secure membership for Cyprus within the EU and to support Turkey's European orientation have significantly limited the probability of a military escalation between Greece and Turkey, either with regard to Cyprus or the Aegean. This reality should allow Greece to invest in the political, economic and social rapprochement of the two countries, and facilitate and encourage a frank exchange of views that will create the conditions to overcome the frictions of many decades.<sup>62</sup>

Greece's relations with Turkey should therefore be the basis of a public diplomacy strategy that rests on ideas and values such as respect for others and cooperation, rather than conflict. The aim should be to listen and change, to engage the public in Greece and Turkey at the communication level, and at the policy level to build bridges and achieve mutual comprehension.<sup>63</sup> What is required is a public diplomacy that will assess and value the differences and similarities of the Greek and Turkish societies, their aspirations, achievements and the cultural life of their individuals, and their common economic, social and environmental problems.

The Greek government should work towards promoting interaction among journalists, youth and civil society actors, facilitating in-depth communication and developing a greater knowledge and empathy with the position and the problems of the 'other'. This requires public debate, contact and communication. Journalists and NGOs from Greece and Turkey should be encouraged to establish a common internet site or NGO, through which they could portray the anxieties and positions of their countries, while at the same time facilitating a two-way communication with academics, artists, professionals and civil society organizations. They could also be encouraged to cooperate, collect and interpret facts on common economic, social and environmental problems and thus create understanding and a better comprehension of the subtleties of Greek and Turkish issues.

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<sup>62</sup>) Alexis Iraclides, *The Greek–Turkish Conflict in the Aegean: Imagined Enemies* (London and New York: Palgrave, 2010); and Panayiotis J. Tsakonas, *The Incomplete Breakthrough in Greek–Turkish Relations: Grasping Greece's Socialization Strategy* (London and New York: Palgrave, 2010).

<sup>63</sup>) Geoffrey Cowan and Amelia Arsenault, 'Moving from Monologue to Dialogue to Collaboration: The Three Layers of Public Diplomacy', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, No. 616 (2008), pp. 10–30.

Despite its significant economic presence in the Balkans,<sup>64</sup> Greece has not succeeded in creating trust and credibility in the region. The emphasis on the name dispute with FYROM has not allowed Greece to diversify its agenda and encourage collective regional efforts to deal with pressing political, social, ecological and economic problems. Greece's Balkan policy, unfortunately, was also pursued with the offensive logic of 'economic penetration'. This logic, combined with Greece's manifestation of xenophobia towards Albanian and other Balkan immigrants, not only activated defensive responses from the Balkan countries, but has also produced a syndrome of distrust and constraint, as shown by the results of a survey that was undertaken during the last decade. Although 96 per cent of the respondents in the Balkan countries admired Greece's political and economic development, only 26 per cent regarded its policies and society as tolerant. In fact, 74 per cent stated that Greece was 'aggressive'.<sup>65</sup>

It is therefore absolutely vital that Greece develops a public diplomacy strategy with the aim of inaugurating stable and long-lasting policies of co-existence and understanding. For example, Greece could take the initiative to monitor, push and encourage the countries of the Western Balkans in an effort to accelerate their progress towards meeting and implementing the EU accession criteria, values and principles. This should also be accompanied by increased and substantial cooperation—with governmental and non-governmental actors of the region—on the open and crucial regional issues of the environment, tourism, education, technology and organized crime. In due time, and by pursuing such an energetic role, Greece will be able to crouch with neighbouring countries and their societies, playing a central role in developing solutions to common problems and concerns.

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<sup>64</sup>) More than 3,500 Greek businesses are active in this region, with a constantly expanding network of Greek banks, which account for 20 per cent of the banking market in the region, including Turkey. Greek investments in the region have climbed to over 14 billion, creating more than 200,000 jobs. See Dimitris Platis, 'Assistance to Neighbouring Transitional Countries: Economic Diplomacy and International Development Assistance', in *About Brand Greece* (Athens: Secretary-General of Communication and Information, 2008), pp. 209–216.

<sup>65</sup>) Nikos Vlachakis, 'Greece's Public Diplomacy in South-Eastern Europe and Turkey' [in Greek], *International and European Politics*, Issue 16 (2009), p. 96.

### *The Global Level*

At the global level, Greece needs to refocus the thematic orientation of its public diplomacy. In particular, instead of concentrating only on the issues of culture, history, education and tourism, public diplomacy could also focus on the mounting global threats and problems. This is not intended to downgrade the benefits stemming from cultural or educational activities, nor to advocate their termination, but Greece—as a country among the first 30 in the world in terms of human development—needs to position itself as a contributor and force for development, democratization and peace in the world.

One could argue that this is not possible given Greece's current economic difficulties and debt crisis, which have put Greece on the fringe of decision-making on many issues. Greece, however, as the recent developments in the eurozone indicate, is not alone in having to deal with such economic difficulties. In addition, its geographical location, as well as the fact that it is not burdened with a colonial and imperialist past, allows Greece to communicate much more easily and effectively than the 'powerful' countries of the EU and the West on global issues such as development, peace, conflict prevention and governance.

The changes that are currently taking place in North Africa and the Middle East, for example, are opportunities that Western governments cannot neglect. People in the region are demanding changes that Western governments have been propagating for but have failed to support. In fact, the popular uprisings of 2011 took many Western analysts and elites by surprise—a surprise that was justified, given their failure to understand the growing political disenchantment and despair of the Arab peoples. By focusing too much on the factors that explain the stability of authoritarian regimes (that is, limited electoral campaigns, market reforms and diplomatic relations with major Western countries),<sup>66</sup> many Western countries failed to appreciate how the dissent of diverse constituencies that possess few institutional channels to express their discontent may find ways to express

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<sup>66</sup>) E. Laipson (ed.), *Seismic Shift: Understanding Change in the Middle East* (Washington, DC: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2011).

demands through novel means of political mobilization and communication.<sup>67</sup> Greece can take a leading role in developing the conditions for Western governments to engage with the people of the region instead of their governments. Greece could facilitate genuine dialogue, and build mutual understanding and sustainable relationships, with individuals and groups that could operate as forces for social and political change in the Arab world.<sup>68</sup> In addition, and given the satisfactory relations that Greece maintains with many countries in the region (such as Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Iran), it could also develop a supplementary and supportive mediating role, facilitating and enabling meetings and negotiations between official and unofficial actors engaged in the region's conflicts.

Such initiatives will facilitate Greece's relevance in multilateral organizations and other significant global forums and actors, supplying it with ample opportunities to gain influence in world affairs that extend far beyond its limited economic capabilities. In that direction, it is also important that Greece invests in the increasing 'globalization' of its foreign policy. For many years, and especially after 1974, the geographical orientation of Greece's foreign policy was limited to Turkey, Cyprus, the Balkans, the EU and the United States. Today this is no longer the case. There is a geographical expansion of Greece's foreign policy to Russia, the Caucasus and the Middle East. The gradual development of contacts, communication, trade and investments with the emerging powers of South and East Asia (India and China) is also significant. This important development is not only the result of globalization and the emergence of new economic powers, but also of the 'denationalization' of Greece's foreign policy. Non-state actors, businessmen and a diversity of private-sector institutions and organizations are pressing Greece to diversify its interests and concerns.<sup>69</sup>

In an era of financial crisis, this diversification of Greece's interests and concerns could serve as a significant source of economic investment, trade

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<sup>67</sup>) M. Kaldor, *Civil Society in 1989 and 2011*, 2011, available online at <http://www.opendemocracy.net/mary-kaldor/civil-society-in-1989-2011>, accessed 5 September 2011.

<sup>68</sup>) Rianne van Doeveren, *Engaging the Arab World through Social Diplomacy* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', Clingendael Discussion Papers No. 4, 2011).

<sup>69</sup>) Panayiotis J. Tsakonas (ed.), *Greek Foreign Policy: Emerging Actors and Processes*, *Hellenic Studies/Études Helleniques*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2007).

and new flows of tourism. In addition, and when considering the need to refocus Greece's public diplomacy, this diversification should also encourage the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take steps to equip Greece's domestic audience with tools through which to understand the world. Greece could launch a citizens' diplomacy programme, enhancing its domestic audience's awareness and understanding of global issues and problems. This will allow citizens to engage and initiate networks at the regional and international levels. Another option would be to establish a foreign policy programme, promoting informed dialogue among the domestic audience via the internet.<sup>70</sup>

A new public diplomacy strategy for Greece also requires the creation of a new and self-contained unit of Public Diplomacy Officers within the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with enhanced jurisdiction and autonomy within the Greek embassies and consulates. Diplomats are mainly concerned with the conduct of foreign policy and communicating the priorities, positions and intentions of their government to the official representatives of the countries to which they are posted. This should not be the case for Public Diplomacy Officers, as they need to place a greater emphasis on all aspects of Greece's society, economics, politics and culture. To do so, they need to be in direct, open and continuous communication with representatives of the media, business, commerce, trade, research, academic and artistic communities in the countries to which they are posted, developing a culture of dialogue and listening, and building concrete relationships.

Working in these directions, however, also implies that Greece's Ministry of Foreign Affairs develops a department or unit that examines issues that arise or relate to globalization, global threats and global governance. So far, and with the exception of Hellenic Aid, no such unit exists. This would not only allow a national ongoing dialogue on foreign policy, but also provide the basis on which to reshape Greece's public diplomacy, driving it not only to concentrate on significant global issues, but also to accentuate the importance of dialogue, listening and understanding for the various inconsistencies, shortcomings and perspectives of existing policies.

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<sup>70</sup>) Ashvin Gonesh and Jan Melissen, *Public Diplomacy: Improving Practice* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', Discussion Papers in Diplomacy, 2005), pp. 7–9.

One important example is the debt crisis in the eurozone.<sup>71</sup> Public diplomacy could be helpful in the following two ways: first, by communicating Greece's standpoint to the people of the world; and second, by initiating a holistic European debate on the crisis and the nature of economic governance. The fact that Greece's politicians only held intensive negotiations with government officials, without appealing to the European people, constitutes a significant setback in endeavours to overcome Greece's economic problems.<sup>72</sup> Given the negative media framing and understanding of Greece's position, EU member states' governments find it extremely difficult to convince their citizens and constituencies of the need to support Greece. Moreover, the eurozone is currently experiencing an existential threat, with the debt problems and difficulties of Greece, Italy, Spain and even France. However, there is little public debate in the EU member states on the character of the EU's economic governance model. Although EU member states' governments seem to be dealing inadequately with the crisis, the EU has yet to initiate an open public discussion in order to provide its argumentation for supporting its policies, and in so doing benefit from feedback and counter-arguments.

There is a need to communicate policies with EU citizens, to open venues of dialogue in order to reverse the crisis. Greece could therefore cooperate with NGOs and academic institutions whose activities centre on the issue, initiating dialogue with Europeans with the aim of defining and understanding the depth and parameters of the crisis, framing and communicating it to the public and pushing for the most proper policies. This could be accomplished by creating supranational websites and forums where EU citizens can express their opinions and comments. Online interviews with officials could also be organized, with questions from the public. Such initiatives would not only increase trust, but would also allow for dialogue on the shortcomings and contradictions of current policies, and in so doing would also facilitate the potential for counter-proposals and their incorporation.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71)</sup> I am indebted to Dr F. Proedrou, Lecturer of International Relations at City College–University of Sheffield, for contributing to the arguments and insights of this paragraph.

<sup>72)</sup> Kevin Featherstone, 'The Greek Sovereign Debt Crisis and the EMU: A Failing State in a Skewed Regime', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (2011), pp. 193–217.

<sup>73)</sup> J. Gregory Payne, 'Reflections on Public Diplomacy: People-to-People Communication', *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (2009), pp. 579–606.

## **Conclusion**

Greece's grave economic crisis poses an existential threat for the country, as its exit from the eurozone into the periphery of the EU is a possible scenario. Despite the dreadful consequences that this would have for the welfare level of the majority of Greek citizens, it would contribute to the further weakening of Greece's global confidence and as a result also to Greece's eventual isolation not only within the EU, but also within other regional and global forums. Under such circumstances, it is all the more possible that not only Greek exceptionalism and nationalism will be augmented, but also that Greece's relations with Turkey and FYROM will deteriorate.

Greece must thus try to work hard so as not to remain in the 'corner' of the EU, surviving only on the generous loans of the eurozone member states and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Given the current financial and economic crisis, Greece must not passively accept that politically and economically it is on the periphery of the West and the EU, anticipating that solutions to its internal and external problems will be provided by Brussels and Washington. As noted above, Greece needs to develop a balancing public diplomacy strategy, one that not only allows it to be indispensable regionally and internationally, but also permits it to continue its internal political and economic reforms and development. This is not to argue that public diplomacy is a magical tool that will resolve Greece's institutional and societal problems. This requires hard and consistent work internally. Public diplomacy, however, can be instrumental in opening venues of dialogue with foreign publics that will not only lead to more lasting and sustainable relationships at a regional level, but also contribute to raising the confidence of the Greek people with regard to their position in Europe and the global system.

Public diplomacy in this context is necessary in order to reverse possible isolationist tendencies and to place Greece more solidly within the regional and global system. This cannot be done without rethinking and refocusing Greece's public diplomacy. At the regional level, this requires a public diplomacy strategy that works on changing attitudes, on an effort to increase familiarity with the 'other side', by providing and exchanging reliable information and views not only by increased contacts among journalists,



academics and students, but also with other actors of civil society who have been neglected by the emphasis on cultural and educational links. At the global level, Greece's public diplomacy should focus on the profound and critical issues of our era, facilitating open-access networks of dialogue among states, NGOs and the public. The issue of the EU's economic governance—as discussed above—is, of course, only indicative, since a number of other issues—terrorism, environmental degradation and immigration, etc.—could be added to the priorities of Greece's public diplomacy. The state-centric dialogue on these issues could be extended to include others whose concerns are no less demanding of recognition. The threats and problems of today's world are a matter of common security, rather than one's national security alone. There is thus not only a need to open up the possibility of applying pressure on states, but also of broadening the range of actors involved in the management and resolution of these problems.

The challenge might seem insuperable, but it should not be ignored if Greece wants to enhance its relevance, role and influence in the international system. Prosperity in a globalized and turbulent world requires Greece to develop the outlook and skills that can only be gained from exposure to and understanding of other values, experiences and arguments at the regional and global levels. In these terms, public diplomacy is therefore not a luxury for a country plagued by severe institutional and economic problems. On the contrary, it can contribute to a better future.



## NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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- 1 Jan Melissen (ed.), *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005) pp. 16-25.
  - 2 Melissen (2005), p. 24.
  - 3 Ingrid d'Hooghe, 'Public Diplomacy in the People's Republic of China', in Jan Melissen (ed), *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005) pp. 88-103.
  - 4 D'Hooghe (2005), p. 90.
  - 5 Ellen Huijgh, 'The Public Diplomacy of Federated Entities: Examining the Quebec Model', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2010), pp. 125-150
- Discussion Papers in Diplomacy should be cited as follows: Brian Hocking and David Spence, Towards a European Diplomatic System?, *Discussion Papers in Diplomacy*, No. 98 (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', 2005).
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