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ΚΑΤΕΥΘΥΝΣΗ: ΕΠΙΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑ ΚΑΙ ΡΗΤΟΡΙΚΗ ΤΩΝ ΜΕΣΩΝ

Public Cultural Diplomacy in Digital and Post pandemic Age: Enabling  
strategic partnerships. The CoMuseum initiative.

ΔΙΠΛΩΜΑΤΙΚΗ ΕΡΓΑΣΙΑ

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to analyse Public Cultural Diplomacy in depth, highlighting its origins and importance, and focus on the Greek, American and British Public Cultural Diplomacy. This paper also studies the importance of strategic partnerships and communications in the general context of public cultural diplomacy and its evolution in the post pandemic era. After identifying the main definition of Public Cultural Diplomacy and the ways it is exercised by states and institutions, the purpose of this paper is to connect theory to practice and study the CoMuseum international conference, as an example of Public Cultural Diplomacy.

Founded in 2011 by the Benaki Museum, in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy Greece and the British Council, the CoMuseum initiative has created new dynamics in the fields of public cultural diplomacy and communication. During the last 11 years, annual conferences are being held. Some of the topics of those conferences are networking, entrepreneurship, education, evolution, inclusivity, and communication. Since the beginning of 2020, the Covid 19 Pandemic has not only changed the way we live but has also given humanity a message: In a globalised society, the danger of an international crisis is a constant threat. Considering the damage that the pandemic has caused to the global economy, it has become clearer than ever that if the cultural sector wishes to survive such threats; its diplomacy has to evolve. The focus of this study is going to be around the Public Cultural Diplomacy and CoMuseum initiative, the international museum conference that was held online in 2021, and the international conferences it held in the past.

This study follows a qualitative methodological approach. Firstly, by researching literature review, based on published articles, published paperwork and older studies, and secondly by interviewing key members of the CoMuseum initiative and studying the CoMuseum conference of 2021.

**Keywords:** *Cultural Diplomacy, Public Diplomacy, CoMuseum, conference, collaboration*

## Περίληψη

Σκοπός της παρούσας εργασίας είναι να αναλύσει σε βάθος τη Δημόσια Πολιτιστική Διπλωματία, αναδεικνύοντας την προέλευση και τη σημασία της, και να επικεντρωθεί στην ελληνική, αμερικανική και βρετανική Δημόσια Πολιτιστική Διπλωματία. Η εργασία αυτή μελετά επίσης τη σημασία των στρατηγικών συνεργασιών και της επικοινωνίας στο γενικότερο πλαίσιο της δημόσιας πολιτιστικής διπλωματίας και την εξέλιξή της στη μεταπανδημική εποχή. Αφού προσδιορίσει ο βασικός ορισμός της Δημόσιας Πολιτιστικής Διπλωματίας και οι τρόποι άσκησής της από κράτη και θεσμούς, σκοπός της παρούσας εργασίας είναι να συνδέσει τη θεωρία με την πράξη και να μελετήσει το διεθνές συνέδριο του CoMuseum, ως παράδειγμα Δημόσιας Πολιτιστικής Διπλωματίας. Η πρωτοβουλία CoMuseum που ιδρύθηκε το 2011 από το Μουσείο Μπενάκη, σε συνεργασία με την Πρεσβεία των ΗΠΑ στην Ελλάδα και το Βρετανικό Συμβούλιο, δημιούργησε νέα δυναμική στους τομείς της δημόσιας πολιτιστικής διπλωματίας και της επικοινωνίας. Κατά τη διάρκεια των τελευταίων 11 ετών, πραγματοποιούνται ετήσια συνέδρια. Μερικά από τα θέματα αυτών των συνεδρίων είναι αυτά της δικτύωσης, της επιχειρηματικότητας, της εκπαίδευσης, της εξέλιξης, της συμμετοχικότητας και της επικοινωνίας. Από τις αρχές του 2020, η πανδημία Covid 19 δεν έχει αλλάξει μόνο τον τρόπο ζωής μας, αλλά έχει δώσει και ένα μήνυμα στην ανθρωπότητα: Σε μια παγκοσμιοποιημένη κοινωνία, ο κίνδυνος μιας διεθνούς κρίσης είναι μια διαρκής απειλή. Λαμβάνοντας υπόψη τη ζημία που προκάλεσε η πανδημία στην παγκόσμια οικονομία, έχει γίνει πιο σαφές από ποτέ ότι, αν ο πολιτιστικός τομέας επιθυμεί να επιβιώσει από τέτοιες απειλές- η διπλωματία του πρέπει να εξελιχθεί. Το επίκεντρο αυτής της μελέτης θα είναι γύρω από τη Δημόσια Πολιτιστική Διπλωματία και την πρωτοβουλία CoMuseum, το διεθνές συνέδριο μουσείων που πραγματοποιήθηκε διαδικτυακά το 2021, καθώς και τα διεθνή συνέδρια που πραγματοποίησε στο παρελθόν. Η παρούσα μελέτη ακολουθεί μια ποιοτική μεθοδολογική προσέγγιση. Πρώτον, με ερευνητική βιβλιογραφική ανασκόπηση, η οποία βασίζεται σε δημοσιευμένα άρθρα, δημοσιευμένες εργασίες και παλαιότερες μελέτες, και δεύτερον με συνεντεύξεις με βασικά μέλη του CoMuseum καθώς και με τη μελέτη του συνεδρίου CoMuseum του 2021.

**Λέξεις κλειδιά:** Πολιτιστική Διπλωματία, Δημόσια Διπλωματία, συνέδριο, συνεργασίες

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## **Introduction**

In the Digital and Post Pandemic Era, exercising public cultural diplomacy effectively is of crucial importance for both countries and organisations. By enabling strategic partnerships, institutions like museums can appeal to a larger audience, stay relevant and work with experts of different fields to solve problems that the society and the cultural sector, in particular faces, and create new opportunities that can eventually help them progress.

Public Cultural Diplomacy proved to be a game changer for the international diplomatic stage with countries like the United States of America and Great Britain excelling at it on a global scale. During the Cold War Era, in the 1960's, the term public diplomacy made its appearance as the tension between the west and the east began to climax, and the need of cultural influence became a necessity, for both the western allies and the eastern bloc, for the expansion of their spheres of influence. Yet, Public Cultural Diplomacy did not stop after the end of the Cold War, with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. On the contrary, Public Cultural Diplomacy became one of the most prevalent forms of diplomacy, with most countries practicing soft diplomacy, an alternative name for cultural diplomacy, on a global scale.

As mentioned before, two of the most influential countries regarding public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy are the United States of America and Great Britain. Both countries have maintained excellent diplomatic relations with Greece before, during and after the Second World War. Both countries have ambassadors dispatched in the country and take part in actions and collaborations that contribute to the improvement and maintaining of the good diplomatic relations between the countries. One of those collaborations is the CoMuseum international museum conference. The CoMuseum conference, an innovative initiative created by the Benaki Museum, alongside the United States of America Embassy in Athens, Greece, and the British Council, has been around for more than a decade, initially taking place in Athens, in 2011. Until the pandemic the conference, after 2012, used to take place in both the

capital city of Greece, Athens and the city of Thessaloniki, which is located in the northern part of the country. Since the pandemic of Covid-19 the conference has been held online, in both 2020 and 2021 conferences

Last year, in December 2021, the 11th instalment of the CoMuseum conference was held online, for three days, from December the 1st until December the 3rd. Last year's conference titled (Re)Positioning the museum of tomorrow, as stated on the official website of The CoMuseum, "explored the repositioning of museums and cultural institutions through a human-centred approach, drawing upon new tools, skills and leadership models"(The CoMuseum, 2021).

To understand more about the importance and contribution that this triple diplomatic alliance has on the cultural sector of Greece, and abroad, it is wise to highlight the very effective role that museums play and have played in the past, regarding cultural diplomacy. In particular the involvement of both American and British museums in the CoMuseum conference, including professors and guest speakers of both countries is one of the many roles that museums have on a diplomatic scale. The CoMuseum conference of 2021 saw both British speakers from the University of Glasgow and the University of Leicester, as well as American speakers from the Utah Division of Arts and Museums and the Smithsonian National Museum of American History contributing, representing museums in the USA and Great Britain.

The purpose of this particular paper is to analyse Public Cultural Diplomacy in depth, highlighting its origins and importance, focusing on the Greek, American and British Public Cultural Diplomacy in particular. This research paper also attempts to study the importance of strategic partnerships and communications in the general context of public cultural diplomacy and its evolution in the post pandemic era.

Furthermore this paper attempts to study the dynamic of international collaboration, and the potential given by the digital evolution, which could play a decisive part during and after the pandemic. As members of a global community, working together appears to be the only way out of this crisis. Understanding the threats of today could lead to the reinvention of "Public Cultural Diplomacy" as a whole, which will eventually affect everyone. By researching the consequences and the opportunities that were created because



of the Covid-19 pandemic, my goal is to point out the innovative ways experts follow to fix the damage that has already been caused, and also highlight the importance of the CoMuseum conference, for the cultural and diplomatic sectors in particular, as well as the extraordinary, long lasting, and successful partnership between the Benaki Museum, The American Embassy in Athens, Greece, and the British Council.

This paper will also seek to find the answers to the following research questions:

1. Strategic Alliances and Partnerships. The Power of Communication. What is the real importance of the International museum conference of 2021?
2. How has the technological revolution contributed to reinventing Public Cultural Diplomacy?
3. What are the key points of success of the CoMuseum initiative? The partnership between the Benaki Museum, the U.S. Embassy in Greece, and The British Council.
4. What do the international museum conferences have to offer?
5. Why has Public Cultural Diplomacy become a necessity during and after the pandemic?
6. Can the CoMuseum initiative successfully deal with a Crisis?
7. What are the core challenges that the organising committee of the CoMuseum international museum conference has to face each year?

## **Methodology**

This research paper attempts to study the definition of Public and Cultural Diplomacy, its evolution in the post pandemic era and the importance of strategic partnerships and communications in the general context of Public Cultural diplomacy. This research also attempts to study the dynamic of international collaboration, and the potential given by the technological and digital evolution, which could play a decisive part during and after the pandemic. As members of a global community, working together appears to be the only way out of this crisis. Understanding the threats of today could

lead to the reinvention of “Public Cultural Diplomacy” as a whole, which will eventually affect everyone. By researching the consequences and the opportunities that were created because of the Covid-19 pandemic, taking the CoMuseum international museum conference as the example of my study, my aspiration was not simply to find ways to fix the damage that had already been caused, but also pinpoint the importance of the international conference, and highlight how the organising team behind the CoMuseum conference dealt with the difficulties caused by the pandemic. In addition another goal of this paper was to understand more about the contribution of the organising committee and the nature of their collaboration.

In order to achieve its goal this research work undertakes two important tasks. First of all, it explores the historical importance of Cultural Diplomacy. The paper aims to identify the core definition of the term Cultural Diplomacy, its origins, the kinds of Cultural Diplomacy that have been created throughout the years, as well as the role of Cultural Diplomacy in today’s society. Another focus of this research is to understand more about Public Diplomacy, the US and British approach to it, and its role during and after the Cold War. A topic of interest was the ability of cultural organisations to evolve, through strategic alliances and networking, pushing towards the future even during periods of crisis, using the Covid-19 pandemic as an example.

Secondly, this research paper explores, in detail, a primary example of the implementation of public cultural diplomacy, The CoMuseum Conference. By taking The Comuseum initiative as an example this paper aims to highlight the importance of public diplomacy in the cultural sector, as well as the opportunities that have arisen and will arise via international collaborations between museums and other cultural institutions.

The analysis of this research paper is based on a qualitative methodological approach. Firstly, it involves an extensive literature review over the definition and history of cultural diplomacy, a research on the examples of American and British cultural diplomacy since the 1930’s, as well as the case of Greek cultural diplomacy. Secondly, it focuses on the CoMuseum conference, its importance, as well as the key organisations and people involved, through a series of literature review, interviews and observation.

## **Public Cultural Diplomacy**

Throughout the creation of this part of the paper, I followed a qualitative method, which included an extensive literature review of existing academic papers, research studies, articles and audio recordings. I focused the majority of my research on finding academic papers related to the history of Public and Cultural Diplomacy, focusing on European and American examples in particular. The interest of my research focused, in particular, on the evolution of the Western Cultural Diplomacy and the way it has reshaped and will continue reshaping the cultural sector in the 21st century. Furthermore, I researched and found academic work related to the evolution of Cultural Diplomacy throughout the years. I have also researched and acquired information based on scientific articles and studies focusing on International Collaborations, Cultural Partnerships and sustainability.

To create a coherent result I decided to begin the research by defining what Cultural Diplomacy is according to past studies and articles written by experts. I used past research papers to understand more about the influence that technology and the internet had on Cultural Diplomacy, as well as the ways Cultural Diplomacy can be exercised. I also managed to collect and use paperwork on cultural values, the historical context and the actors of Cultural Diplomacy. A research on Public Diplomacy was also done, during the last part of the first chapter of the paper, focusing on its history and the American approach on Public Diplomacy.

## **The CoMuseum Conference**

The second part of my research focused on the CoMuseum initiative, its functions, the organising committee behind it, the partnerships and the topics it addressed during the last conference, as well as the opportunities that were created. I also researched and gathered information posted on the official website of the conference. The official website allowed me to find out more about the first CoMuseum, the introduction of new topics of interest each year and of course the important partnerships that have been formed throughout these eleven years. The next method that I decided to include is the Case study method of the project. The CoMuseum conference of 2021, as mentioned before, was held online from December 1st to December 3rd. I took part in

the conference as a member of the audience, and throughout these three days, I took notes and participated in the master classes that were organised by the CoMuseum team and the experts. This qualitative method of observation has given me the opportunity to understand the importance of the conference, its collaborations and unique opportunities it presents. I have also studied about the previous CoMuseum conferences that took place during the last decade, since its creation in 2011, focusing on a few of them on certain occasions throughout the paper.

Another qualitative method that I have followed to create the basis of this study is that of in-depth Interviews. I have reached the members of the organising committee of The CoMuseum conference and interviewed them about their views on Cultural Diplomacy, the evolution of The CoMuseum conference throughout the years as well as the challenges that they faced during the hosting of the conference these last 11 years that it has been held. I also interviewed them about the nature of the triple partnership behind the CoMuseum; their views on the problems caused by Covid-19 their duties. A lot of the members of the organising committee are also involved with the British Council, The American Embassy in Athens and the Benaki Museum. The members of the organising committee who I managed to interview, Eleni Alexaki, Senior Cultural and Educational Affairs Specialist at the U.S Embassy in Athens, and Maria Papaioannou, Head of Arts at the British Council, both answered my questions and gave me their view on the CoMuseum conference.

I have also researched and studied public statements made by the former United States Ambassador to Greece and Ukraine, George Ross Pyatt, about the CoMuseum international museum conference and its collaboration with the American Embassy in Athens. Overall, I have researched the CoMuseum initiative by observing and keeping records of everything I encountered in detailed notes in order to learn more about the way it functioned during these 11 years of its creation.

## **Research Limitations**

This research paper focused on Public Cultural Diplomacy using The CoMuseum initiative as its primary case study. Therefore, the information that this research provided may not be enough to cover all the definitions and kinds of Cultural and Public Diplomacy, since its purpose was to study Western Cultural Diplomacy and the possibilities of Museum Collaborations via the annual conference held by the Benaki Museum with the Contribution of the British Council and the American Embassy in Athens, Greece. This study also focused on the outcomes of both extensive literature review and of the interviews given by the organising committee of the CoMuseum conference and its partners. Therefore it is not the outcome of a field study on the particular subject. That is one of the biggest research limitations regarding this paper, since I did not have the chance to take part in the CoMuseum conference as an organising member, observing and working under the organising committee throughout the preparations and during the online conference of 2021.

The interviews used in the paper are another research limitation that needs to be mentioned. Throughout the creation of this research paper I had the opportunity to interview two of the members of the organising committee of the CoMuseum international museum conference. These members are Maria Papaioannou, representing the British Council, and Eleni Alexaki, representing the American Embassy in Athens. I did not have the chance to interview any member of the organising committee that represents the Benaki Museum side of the triple partnership. Therefore this thesis is mostly focused on the perspective of the British Council and the American Embassy, regarding their collaboration at the CoMuseum project, given by the two interviewees.

The research itself may not provide direct ways of implementing cultural diplomacy and creating dynamic collaborations between museums, but it does aspire to be a guide towards understanding the importance of these collaborations and in particular the importance of the CoMuseum conference and cultural diplomacy as a whole.

## **1. The concept of cultural diplomacy**

### **1.1 Definitions. What is Cultural Diplomacy?**

The etymological detection of a term is always a safe way of conceptualizing the aforementioned concept. Quite simply, then, cultural diplomacy is defined as the exercise of diplomacy through culture. For a more complete approach to the term, we can examine the words that make it up. Thus, Giannaras (2001), referring to the etymological origin of the term culture, footnotes that this particular is a product of the city, the result of the political life that governs civilized societies.

Christogiannis (2006) expresses the view that culture constitutes a single whole of values, customs, knowledge and experiences, which were created in the course of historical evolution by a society, have a hyper-individual and diachronic character and are inherited from generation to generation. It is a factor of peace and reconciliation, but also a source of income, since, if properly exploited, it is one of the most important pillars of the economy. Finally, special mention should be made of the definition given by UNESCO for CULTURE, as it was adopted worldwide at the 43rd Unesco International Conference on Education and Culture on 14-9 September 1992 in Geneva. "CULTURE = is the entire web of spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional characteristics that distinguish a society or a social group and constitute the elements of its cultural identity. These include ways of life, traditions, perceptions, arts and letters, and that the system of their moral values includes the fundamental Rights of Man. It includes both formal and popular culture and is not limited to the existing cultural heritage, but is constantly enriched by Memory and Creativity. It is not introverted but is fertilized by external cultural interactions. Moreover, culture is associated with a dynamic relationship with Education, through the "freedom of expression", the freedom of participation and the free movement of persons, scientific knowledge and cultural creations" (UNESCO, 1992).

Culture belongs within the power factors of a state. Kouskouvelis (2009) believes that the theories highlight certain types of power, the application of which is limited to specific sectors, such as security, economy, and culture.

Mazis distinguishes the dimensions of power in economic, technological, military, cultural, political and human. Nye (2005), emphasizes the role of soft power which he defines as "making one country the others want the results it wants without coercion by exploiting its prestige. Of course, Kouskouvelis (2009) believes that Education and Culture can be exploited, as long as there is an appropriate strategy. Giannaras (2001), believes that cultural diplomacy is a realistic practice for the exercise of international relations policy.

On the other hand, the concept of diplomacy is defined as science or art being formally represented, with specific institutional frameworks, by a state in the governments of other states or in international organizations. In other words, we are talking about the skill of managing the external diplomatic relations of a state, which concern all persons and services involved in the international relations of a state. Within this framework, professor of international relations Kouskouvelis (2009), believes that culture can act as a tool in the conduct of foreign policy. Therefore, the strengthening of cultural diplomacy has a special place for a country like Greece, which has a rich cultural heritage.

Thus, by defining the conceptual content of Cultural Diplomacy, it is gleaned as an eminent tool for the exercise of the country's foreign policy, through the various manifestations of our culture. In other words, it aims to ensure and create a climate of mutual understanding and trust between states and their citizens, aiming at the establishment of stable relations that will bring about long-term results. Beyond this approach, we could observe that the conduct of a country's foreign policy, by undertaking and implementing cultural activities, aimed at improving and strengthening interstate relations constitutes cultural diplomacy.

In other words, cultural diplomacy is nothing more than the exercise of legitimate influence through the path of civilization. It is the government policy that uses elements of its culture to design and conduct foreign policy in order to promote it abroad. These elements can be language, arts, customs and traditions, cultural values and goods. It continues the efforts of foreign policy, when the other paths, the most traditional, are not sufficient or have ceased to be open. It can still counterbalance the lack of politics with a global cultural presence. Essentially, with the use of culture, the country is promoted and improves its image as cultural exchanges establish a climate of trust, aiming in

the long term at mutual understanding and the avoidance of political crises and conflicts. Cultural exchange can take place in fields such as arts, sports, literature, music, science and economics it also covers techniques, in the study and preservation of cultural heritage.

## **1.2 Ways of Exercising Cultural Diplomacy**

With the evolution of society, in contemporary reality, where it is characterized by complexity, in a globalized international environment, states are increasingly realizing the importance of cultural relations and cultural diplomacy. Cross-border information, the dissemination of education, the availability and movement of cultural goods and exchanges of persons active in these fields contribute to this. Given, therefore, that classical diplomacy has been enriched with new responsibilities, within an ever-changing international system; the emergence of alternative forms of diplomacy is being sought. As a result, the changes in communication methods brought about by the introduction of new technology have given a series of new responsibilities to the traditional ways of exercising diplomats' duties and responsibilities, including cultural and educational functions (Kouloubis & Konstas, 1985). Consequently, for many countries culture now assumes a value-based dimension in their foreign policy, complementing communication, economic and commercial relations.

Typical is the revulsion of U.S. Senator Fulbright, in the preface to his work *The Fourth Dimension of Foreign Policy*: "Foreign policy cannot be based solely on military perception and diplomatic activities in today's world. The shape of the world in a generation from today will be influenced much more by how we pass on the values of our society to others than by our military or diplomatic superiority" (Kosmidou, 2000). It therefore follows as an indisputable assumption that culture contributes to foreign policy and diplomacy a long-term dimension and perspective. It is easily understood that – with this horizon – transnational cultural exchanges operate flexibly, providing fertile ground for mutual understanding between peoples and building foundations of trust, aiming in the long term to avoid political crises and conflicts.



This cultural exchange can be activated in areas such as the arts, music, literature, science, sport and economics. It also enters the spectrum of the humanities, through the study and preservation of cultural heritage, through the perspective of the heritage of archives, texts and, above all, monuments (Tzoumaka, 2005). This deserves a special point of emphasis. Culture is reflected on a practical level as the sum total of values, practices and institutions, attitudes, creation, technique and economy (Tzoumaka, 2005). Within this framework, the inclusion of both the spiritual and the material element is taken. However, the concepts of culture and cultural values did not and do not have the same meaning in all eras of history and in all regions of the world. Therefore, such a process of cultural exchange has as its basic prerequisite the mutual respect between the cultures that come together. Therefore, communication must be based on a full understanding of the relative value system of those involved, which implies an a priori lack of prejudice towards stereotypes (Retrieved from Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, 2022).

### **1.3 The role of Cultural Diplomacy in foreign policy and international relations**

Cultural Diplomacy is, based on the approach taken so far; an aspect of international relations, with what one might call an ever-increasing instrumental role. Therefore, in order to understand its role in international interactions, it is necessary, first of all, to make the already distinct difference par excellence of the way in which international relations are approached, through the antithetical dipole: "hard" and "soft" power. Historically, of course, the hard power approach is the most widespread way of conducting international and local relations. However, the new data in the global international system, with the ever-increasing and interdependent interweaving of the active players, makes it necessary to cooperate under a new basis. And this is where, at this point, the positive power loads of cultural diplomacy are being injected, as an expression of "soft power". In this context, cultural diplomacy does not function as a complement to the process of political diplomacy par excellence, but as an inherent element of political activity (Retrieved from [Institute for Cultural Diplomacy](#), 2022).

Of course, it is also suggested that the exercise of this kind of diplomacy is disadvantaged compared to secret diplomacy, assuming that the fact of

globalization and the rapid development of new technologies guarantee the emergence of a new civil society, particularly suited to social messages. The ever-increasing presence of the Internet, in all aspects of social life, combined with the huge spread of the media, with the natural consequence of the deluge of information, but also the highly likely possibility of absolute control of information, combined with the inevitable spread of the cultural industry, leads to the conclusion that it can more easily than before operate rather distortively and restrainingly, rather than in support of culture. This is because this overpopulation of information very often contributes to the retention and distortion of information, with the consequent result that cultural diplomacy is a complex process, as it presupposes, undoubtedly, knowledge of various fields and penetration into other fields, such as History, Religion, Education, Ideology, Communication, and Technology. Finally, it calls for foreign policy objectives to be prioritized and for a strategy to be drawn up, in which the various actions will have a special meaning (Tzoumaka, 2005). In all this, the developed countries regard cultural and cultural issues as key priorities for the conduct of their external cultural policy. The main reasons for this approach are condensed into three axial approaches.

Firstly, cultural penetration into another or other countries, aiming, on the one hand, to make the country's positions and values understandable, so as to reduce the differentiation of cultural differences through the convergence of identities, and, on the other hand, to serve sovereign interests by maintaining relations of cultural dependence (e.g. with former colonies). A second aspect is the consolidation and consolidation of a positive image in the international system that induced the improvement of the country's national relations, and a third dimension focuses on economic reasons: the export of cultural products, addressed to the world market, constitutes a particularly profitable process. The formation of a positive image of one country in the others greatly facilitates import trade in these countries (Kosmidou, 2000). Inductively, the particular importance of culture in the international system is understood. Because the culture of a country reflects the value system of its citizens. These cultural values are the guiding principle of their homogeneity or differentiation, without it. to mean that one element acts negatively on the other.

However, in order for them to function in parallel, relations of rapprochement and cooperation must be built in order to support an edifice of mutual understanding and trust for the common good. These efforts have, firstly, an obligation for the governments of the countries to support each other at bilateral and multilateral level and then for these two levels to complement each other. In addition to concluding the agreements on the exchange programmes, however, governments have an obligation to support them financially in order to adequately cover the programmes and achieve the specific objectives of their foreign policy. Unfortunately, however, this financial support is provided by very few countries for the implementation of their educational programmes. This is because the current trends of state bodies are contrary to the intended results. State aid for the arts is now scarce, with the result that the movement of authors and their products, which are the main object of cultural exchanges, is restricted.

While these exchanges offer results to stakeholders and individuals, turning them into the most objective ambassadors of the host country, the governments themselves cannot directly assess the benefit or justify spending on future investments. Indeed, the benefits of cultural exchange activity are fairly long-term, with the result that they do not fit into the political objectives of the ruling parties. The exception to this approach is the industrially developed countries of the West, which, in addition to integrating culture into the conduct of their foreign policy, have made the production of their cultural products not only economic but also a power of influence. Apart from the countries as individual units, educational agreements are signed and supported financially by large international organizations between their member states and third countries. One such organisation is the European Union, which has included in its statutes an article (128), which provides for the development of cultural activities, the protection of cultural heritage and seeks to create the framework for a common cultural policy. The Council of Europe is also concerned with cultural policy issues in the centres and periphery of its member countries, which are much more than those of the European Union (Kosmidou, 2000).

#### **1.4 Cultural Values and their Role in Contemporary International Relations**

The cultural values of a society can be defined as a number of psychological, spiritual and moral factors with common characteristics that unite individuals or groups of individuals with each other. Of the values that can contribute common points of reference, the International Commission for Culture and Development of UNESCO, selected as the most important and set as priorities for its actions, the following five: a. human rights and obligations, b. democracy, c. the protection of minorities, d. the commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes and fair negotiation and e. equality. Cultural values, while at first sight it seems that they may unite social groups with each other, giving them a common identity, with the rapid contemporary international developments, there is a phenomenon of differentiation taking place more and more often, sometimes resulting in local conflicts and, in extreme cases, international hostilities.

It is of course a fact that the increasing emergence of multiculturalism, through the common identities of ethnicities, highlights the differences between them in language, religion, way of life, traditions, arts, nutrition, etc. While this diversity of the peoples of the world is recognized as a valuable commodity, however, it is the same phenomenon that can create disagreements, extreme hostilities, even international conflicts; for the first time in history, the global market and technology bring together people from all the cultures of the world. This achievement has advantages and disadvantages. Communication between cultures can bring about better understanding or cause more friction (Kosmidou, 2000).

Through this prism, many questions reasonably arise which, when answered, will lead to the concluding realization that man, despite his technological achievements, has not yet been able to solve the sociological problems arising from everyday human relations at national and international level. Twenty-five years after the end of the Cold War, it is becoming apparent that no mechanism has yet been found, at least at an international level that can peacefully settle interstate disputes and problems. Moreover, historical experience has shown the inadequacy of such mechanisms. Some, of course, have proposed the creation of an international federal government system,

some others an international system of law, which would solve international problems and others of a global system, which would administer social justice for peaceful coexistence. All these proposals, however, tend towards utopianism, as they do not take into account the existing fundamental differences in cultural values, which are the ones that continue to divide humanity (Kosmidou, 2000).

However, before reaching a concluding decision, it would be advisable to explore what are the most important cultural controversies that play an important role today in shaping the modern and future world. Papp in the latest edition (1997) of his book: "Contemporary International Relations, Frameworks for Understanding", argues that there are six main, but less discussed, conflicts of cultural values on a global scale: individuality vs. collectivity, materialism vs. spirituality, modernization vs. tradition, centralism against decentralization, democratic versus authoritarian political system and finally opposite moral values to each other. These conflicts are not always separated from each other, but often coexist. Papp's analysis is of particular interest as it is an approach that for the first time is presented and touches in depth on the problems of cultural conflicts. These six sets of contradictions, which form the basis of the current conflicts on a national or global scale and which influence developments in international relations (Kosmidou, 2000).

### **1.5 Historical context of cultural diplomacy**

Cultural diplomacy may have been recognized and categorized in the last century as a branch of diplomacy, but culture has been used as a means of exercising soft power even since ancient times. An indicative example is the Epitaph of Thucydides, to whom the greatness of Athens is mentioned, recording and highlighting as advantages the cultural and cultural constitution as well as the perfect morality found in a state that can be characterized as a model of the classical era. The Epitaph lists the following:

"We have a regime that does not copy the laws of others, but more so we are an example to some than their imitators. And this regime has the name

DIMOKRATIA, because it is not the few who are in charge, but most of them. And all citizens are equal before the laws for their private differences. But for the personal emergence and the honors, as each one who stands out in something is preferred in public office, more because he is capable than because he was highlighted by the clergy. Nor, again, someone, because he is poor, and while he can do something good to the state, he is hindered by his insignificant social status. And not only in our public life we live free, but also in our daily relationships we are redeemed from the suspicion between us and we do not get angry with our neighbor, if something pleases him, nor do we take towards him the tone of the annoyed, which of course may not harm him, but he is quickly distressed. And while in our private lives we do not bother each other, in public things we do not make illegalities out of internal impulse above all, obeying each time our rulers and laws, especially those of those who have been voted for the protection of the wronged and those who, although unwritten, nevertheless bring shame unquestionable to the transgressors" (Thoukydides, Epitafios: 37).

Also, "We love the beautiful in simplicity; we love letters without becoming self-indulgent Wealth more as an opportunity for work than as an occasion for boasting. The poverty of admitting is not a disgrace. A greater shame is not to struggle with the job to escape from it. We can take care of our own affairs ourselves and, together with them, the public and pier that each of us is busy with our work, but that is why we are not less well-informed in politics. Because only we, the one who does not take part in them at all, consider him not peaceful, but useless, and we ourselves either make correct thoughts and suggestions on the affairs of the state or, at least, we make correct decisions about them, because we do not think that words harm deeds, but that it is more harmful not to enlighten ourselves further forward with the reason for what we should do. Because in this, too, we really stand out, so that we ourselves are very bold to be and very much ponder what we will attempt. In this regard, in others ignorance brings reckless boldness and knowledge hesitation." (Thoukydides, Epitafios: 40).

Finally, "In summary, I say that our city as a whole is the educational home of Greece and each of us, the same man, I have the opinion that he could, with the greatest comfort and grace, present himself completely in many events of

life. And that what I am saying is not boasting about the occasion, but real truth, is revealed by the very power of our city that we acquired with these ways of life. For she alone, from the present cities, in the ordeal proves superior to her reputation, and only she, neither to the enemies who came against her, gives cause to resent from whom they are suffering, nor to the subjects to complain that they are supposedly ruled unworthy. And because we have presented our power with great signs, and not, in truth, without witnesses, and the contemporaries and the later will admire us, without having any need either from a Homer to praise us, nor from anyone else who with his words for a moment will delight, but the idea that was formed for our works would come to be harmed later by the real truth. We forced every land and sea to open a passage to our boldness and we erected immortal monuments everywhere, together for our successes and failures. So for such a city they too here, having the righteous demand not to be deprived of it, fought valiantly and were killed, and from us who remain each one it is natural to want to suffer anything for its sake." (Thoukydides, Epitafios: 41).

Undeniably, both during the Hellenistic years the conquest of the territories by Alexander the Great that allowed the more intense interaction of the Greeks with the peoples of the dominions, but also in the Roman years that followed and civilization was the "conqueror" after the power of weapons. If the cultural model projected by these cultures were not strong enough to be a means of softly imposing power, perhaps this too would be a cause of a faster collapse of these empires. Byzantine diplomacy, which was characterized at the same time by conservatism, flexibility and perceptiveness, contributed to the prolongation of the empire's life precisely because of its cultural radiance, even at times when its military and economic power was weakened, as it tried to avoid costly wars by pursuing strategies involving flexible diplomatic manipulations, such as the promotion of trade, of Byzantine ideas, culture, the organization of missions and the Christianization of neighboring peoples (Xrysos, 2005).

Subsequently in modern times the most characteristic cases of cultural penetration and spread took place on the one hand during colonialism especially with regard to France and Great Britain as well as during the cold war as the adoption of a specific ideology was intertwined with the exercise of

a specific policy so internal, as well as external as well as with the very specific way of life of entire peoples.

It is also perhaps the most typical case in history in which, although the aim has been essentially to maximise the power and economic exploitation of the colonies, there has been a concomitant, inevitable export and promotion of ideology by the colonizers in the colonies and in the spheres of influence (Kosmidou, 2000). Culture, now also the UN General Assembly resolution on the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, it is becoming a fundamental basis for economic and social development as well as for environmental sustainability and becomes a prerequisite for the maintenance of international peace and development (Naskou – Perraki & Zaikos, 2016). Especially, at a time when the formation of the world market and the development of technology make it easy and continuous to make contact between individuals of all cultures, which is an advantage as it can bring about better understanding and disadvantage at the same time as it can cause more friction (Kosmidou, 2000).

## **1.6 The clash of civilisations**

The two articles published at the end of the cold war by Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington deserve special mention. Fukuyama in his 1989 article "The End of History" argued that liberal capitalism had emerged as an undisputed winner on a social, ideological and economic level in the battle between Western civilization and Marxism, resulting in the elimination of structural conflicts in the future. Of course the ongoing wars, even under the guise of humanitarian intervention and of course the events of 11 September, have demonstrated the utopian nature of Fukuyama's theory (Fukuyama, 1989). Huntington published his theory "The clash of civilisations" in 1993 in which he argued that it was cultures that have a central role in shaping the new world order as well as in the conflicts that would erupt in the future. According to Huntington, there are seven or eight cultural groups worldwide. In particular, these groups are mainly divided by religious criteria and are the Western, Islamic, Slav orthodox, Latin American, Hindu, Confucian, Japanese and possibly African, which



are peculiar to tectonic plates and will cause conflicts where there is a rift and they meet.

It is worth noting that it classifies Greece in the Slavo-Orthodox culture, although it recognizes that classical Hellenism along with the Roman and Jewish religions constitute the pillars of modern civilization. Among other things, he concludes that the West is at risk from rival civilizations, with the exception of the Japanese, which operate with low economic indicators, but also multiply rapidly. The danger lies in an alliance of "Confucianism and Islamism", which relies on weapons of mass destruction to be able to threaten the West. The latter must preserve its unity and culture protected by NATO and without necessarily dominating the US. This theory came back to the fore after 11Th September although Huntington did not consider these facts as a fulfillment of his theory, but as a perversion of the expression of Islam. However, the policies of the USA and Great Britain took seriously the above theory in contrast to France which seems to favour the policy of solidarity (Christogiannis, 2006).

## **1.7 Actors of cultural diplomacy**

**1.7.1 Bilateral Diplomacy.** The main body for the exercise of cultural diplomacy, as well as of all forms of diplomacy, in general is the state. The way in which it conducts the relevant policy depends on the state status of the state and the structure it has defined for the relevant services. Of course, the department responsible for formulating cultural policy is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is assisted on a case-by-case basis by accredited diplomatic staff present in other states or in international organisations. Furthermore, there are usually several cultural institutions that are active abroad with the main aim of promoting the various aspects of a country's culture such as education, language, archaeological monuments, tourism, literary tradition and more. Characteristic and particularly active examples of such organizations are the Foundation for Greek Culture, the British Council and the French Institute (Naskou – Perraki & Zaikos, 2016).

**1.7.2 Multilateral Diplomacy.** The bodies of cultural political diplomacy beyond the states are the international organizations. In this chapter, the action of the Council of Europe and UNESCO deserves special mention. EU actions on culture and cultural diplomacy are analysed in detail in the relevant chapter. Cultural diplomacy can be exercised bilaterally or even multilaterally. Bilateral diplomacy is about exporting cultural norms from one state to one or another, and the best example of organized bilateral cultural diplomacy can be given by France. Multilateral diplomacy is practiced through international organizations and experienced substantial growth after the Second World War when most of the organizations dealing with cultural issues were founded. Their intervention was important both in the dissemination and protection of cultural goods, as well as in addressing cultural issues that arise, but also in promoting cultural diversity. The organizations that are most active in cultural matters are UNESCO and the Council of Europe either through specialized programs or through contracts.

## **1.8 Kinds of cultural diplomacy**

Just as culture can encompass a very wide range of activities and sectors depending on what each country regards as cultural goods, respectively the fields in which cultural diplomacy can be exercised meet with the same breadth. In order to understand what is defined as types of cultural diplomacy, some illustrative examples will be given. A first example is The Educational Diplomacy which consists in creating synergies between culture, education and the economy with the ultimate goal of attracting audiences from abroad who will choose a country to study in its educational or cultural institutions. In this way, educational infrastructure is utilized, they are promoted as sites of particular interest and of course a very large economic benefit is achieved for the host country, both at the level of the state and at the level of individuals. Perhaps the best example of a country that has effectively promoted its educational diplomacy is Great Britain. The British Council, which is the organisation for the promotion of educational diplomacy in Great Britain, offers scholarships for studies in Great Britain and provides educational exchanges between major institutions worldwide.

Similarly, the Fulbright Foundation promotes interaction between people, nations and governments with the ultimate goal of enhancing U.S. soft power

abroad. Many educational institutions around the world follow their example in order to make themselves as global institutions, with the ultimate goal of attracting students and thus financial gain as well as the highest evaluation in the global educational list (Peterson-McGill, 2014). Another form of cultural diplomacy is Ecclesiastical Diplomacy, which consists of interreligious dialogue with the ultimate goal of bridging the differences between countries, as well as countering religious extremism to strengthen religious cooperation, peace and respect for human rights. Although religious diplomacy had somehow backtracked in the 20th century, the events of September 11th brought it back to the forefront (Ritto, n.d.).

Tourism Diplomacy consists in the promotion of tourism as a means of getting to know and understanding other states and through this knowledge, the promotion of peace. Furthermore, the states seek to attract tourists through tourism diplomacy, who unofficially, become shapers of the image of a state abroad, so a successful tourism diplomacy, constitutes a positive image for the country abroad (Carbone, 2017). Furthermore, Archaeological Diplomacy and/or Heritage Diplomacy consists in the promotion of the monuments and archaeological sites of a state in order to attract visitors, the mutual understanding of cultures, the understanding of the origin of each culture and the evolution of modern societies (Carbone, 2017).

Finally, Ecological Diplomacy or Environmental Diplomacy refers to the relationship created by two or more states in order to exchange ideas on the environment and the technologies that can be applied for the improvement and protection of the environment both in the countries involved and worldwide (Tayed et al., 2016).

## **1.9 Public Diplomacy**

In addition to the cultural diplomacy that is being promoted, a new kind of diplomacy is being promoted mainly by the US and Britain. Although the term public diplomacy has appeared in the U.S. since the 60s, it was further promoted by the beginning of the 21st century and refers to the strengthening of the relations of civil societies through

improved channels of communication of citizens at the cultural and educational level without having interfered with any kind of state agencies. The English term "public diplomacy" can be attributed in Greek as "public diplomacy", "open diplomacy" or "citizen diplomacy". It is obvious that the Internet and the general improvement of communications as well as the increase of states with democratic regimes have made it much more appropriate to develop this kind of diplomacy, especially through the multiple NGOs that are active to such an extent and in number that they are now tools for the exercise and application of diplomacy (Tzoumaka, 2005). Public Diplomacy is linked to the communication of the leadership with its people and its effective exercise of influence as well as to the way in which the latter wants the state to be recruited both by its citizens and from abroad. The main goal of the public diplomacy exercised by the leadership is not to radically change people's thoughts and perceptions, but to anticipate and effectively manage their response. Public Diplomacy also uses specific means to influence in the desired direction. In any case, a crucial element for effective influence and for the codification and decoding of a message are the values of a nation, their proper hierarchy and credibility.

Understandably perhaps, it refers as an action to a form of propaganda or psychological operations, but it is not such a thing, as the aim is to benefit both the side that transmits the message and the recipient, through a two-way, but not direct communication and is similar to the spontaneous development of intercultural relations. For the success of the project, the choice of the audience is decisive, as well as the combination of strategic and geographical goals. In particular, as far as external relations are concerned, the purpose of public diplomacy is better communication between the trading states and their citizens so as to enable the improvement and strengthening of their relations (Kosmidou, 2000). Finally, there is no specific definition given for Public Diplomacy. "The consequence of its lack of definitional precision is that it elides what it contains, such as cultural exchange, international broadcasting, and activities that might otherwise be more starkly apparent" (Sevin, Metzgar and Hayden, 2019). It can be said that Public Diplomacy is a timeless practice of trying to influence perceptions and is presented as a new way of approaching foreign policy and state diplomacy that it is based on persuasion, dialogue, networking, negotiation, where information becomes a strategic

balancer that can provide a comparative advantage to the one who will handle it properly (Papachristou, 2009).

## **2. Intercultural dialogue/Dialogue of civilisations: The Alliance of Civilisations**

The importance of intercultural dialogue or dialogue of civilisations remains a priority in today's world. Analysing this a bit further can give us the chance to understand more about the importance and the evolution of Public Diplomacy, especially during the Cold War and post-Cold War Era. Indeed, the whole concept of intercultural dialogue is in short, the involvement of interactivity in global politics. This chapter addresses this theory, while looking into the existing literature review, in attempt to connect Public Cultural Diplomacy to intercultural dialogue. Whether and how exactly the clash of civilisations takes place is a question. However, a similar issue is the possibility of the existence/consolidation of a dialogue of cultures, i.e. intercultural or intercultural, including the religious and philosophical dimensions (Dallmayr, 2002).

After all, conflict is one of the various forms of the historic meeting of civilisations. Indeed, especially in the post-Cold War era, one response to the resounding message of a clash of civilisations was precisely the emergence of the idea of a dialogue of civilisations, which is analyzed in this sub-chapter, with emphasis on a specific diplomatic activity, the Alliance of Civilisations. According to this idea, global politics can or should involve interactive processes that limit if not transform, the confrontational potential of the difference in cultures or cultures. This means not eliminating this difference but initiating it on paths that limit the conflict because of it or at the familiar level. For example, states of different religions may fight each other, but at least not on the pretext or emphasised pretext of the difference in religion. Of course, the issue is complicated in the event of an interreligious or sectarian conflict within a community or the involvement of a state actor with a supranational one.

Admittedly, there have been no shortages of individual movements or actions to foster a climate of tolerance and humanism in the context of contacts between religions, such as the 'Amman Message' in the mid-2000s. It was an initiative of the Jordanian King aimed at clarifying the values and actions that represented traditional and moderate Islam, and at promoting an open and tolerant view. Simply put, this message signaled the good intentions of this religion in the West. Its spread has proved insufficient due to competition within the relevant regional system (Retrieved from: The Amman Message, 2006). However, there are also broader examples, such as the proclamation of 2001 as the 'United Nations Year of Dialogue between Cultures' and in particular the Dialogue between Civilisations in the late 1990s and early the following, an initiative of the then President of Iran (Kayaoglu, 2012). Indeed, this initiative was discussed as an example of the creation of an international public sphere for the relations of civilisations, which highlighted the scope for communication, without, however, overcoming the disagreements of this country with the USA (Lynch, 2000).

A similar and more fruitful undertaking to promote the dialogue of civilisations has proved to be the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations. It is a programme scheme, drawn up within the framework of the UN and oriented towards such a dialogue and cooperation on issues of an intercultural nature, e.g. relations between religions (Retrieved from: United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, 2022). As regards the background of the scheme, immediately after the relevant proposal of the then Prime Minister of Spain, before the UN, consultations took place on this subject and a relevant 'Group of Friends' was established, in early 2004. In the summer of the following year, following the proclamation of the then Prime Minister of Turkey as co-sponsor of the initiative, the latter was adopted by the UN Secretary-General. Since then, consultation procedures have followed, such as the (ministerial) meetings of the Group of Friends or the forums of the Alliance of Civilisations as well as the drafting of relevant plans and progress reports. As far as the scope of activities of this scheme is concerned, a variety of projects and programmes have been developed, oriented towards actors and influential individuals of civil society and with the aim of strengthening it (Retrieved from: [United Nations Alliance of Civilizations](#), 2022).

Indicative is the preparation of scholarships or cultural exchanges through a relevant program. This brings together a number of promising young people from the Arab world and a corresponding number from the Western world, with the aim of getting to know them and engaging them in a discussion with each other and with key decision-makers, various movements, the media, local communities as well as religious groups. This discussion involves the exchange of ideas and aims to familiarize the participants with the culturally diverse and multiple realities (Retrieved from: United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, 2022).

A similar role is played by a summer school, which similarly brings together young people from all over the world to discuss global challenges, in the context of their cultural and religious diversity (Retrieved from: [United Nations Alliance of Civilizations](#), 2022). The desired results are the reduction of stereotypes, the promotion of intercultural harmony and the building of alliances. Another example is the creation of a network entitled 'Intercultural Leaders' (Retrieved from: [Intercultural Leaders](#), 2022). It mainly includes participants in various programs of the initiative but also partners from relevant initiatives, ensuring their continuous contact with the use of digital technology. A framework of financial and general support for intercultural activities was also established entitled 'Intercultural Innovation Award' (Retrieved from: [Intercultural Innovation](#), 2022).

The main beneficiaries are non-profit organizations oriented towards migration and aggregation, intercultural awareness and education on related issues. In this regard, the Youth Solidarity Fund supports youth initiatives to promote long-term relationships between people from different backgrounds, with an emphasis on linking locally and on a small scale with broader movements in favour of social and global change (Retrieved from: [United Nations Alliance of Civilizations](#), 2022). In turn, a competition for technological applications to facilitate intercultural dialogue encourages the development of such applications or digital programmes (games) that promote dialogue and help prevent conflicts (Retrieved from: [United Nations Alliance of Civilizations](#), 2022).

A similar competition concerns an artistic work on migration, diversity and social inclusion (Retrieved from: [United Nations Alliance of Civilizations](#)).

This is a festival where several young people compete with short-term video productions that touch on relevant issues. Interest is also given at the level of the media or information or even education, in cooperation with UNESCO (Retrieved from: United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, 2022). In this context, emphasis has been placed on migration, as to how exactly the movement of populations is presented and highlighted in the media and in the public debate in general. The actions referred to in the above paragraph constitute cultural diplomacy in the sense that in terms of content they focus on issues of identity, culture, religion and intercultural relations. At the same time, in terms of operational logic, they are public diplomacy, which focuses on the involvement of international public opinion and specialized international audiences. In fact, this is a typical example of tools and actions in its context, in that not only the official diplomatic and governmental mechanisms but also individual groups and individuals from civil society are consciously and extensively involved. Similar actions, in particular summer schools or scholarship programmes for short-lived education or exchanges, are often in the quiver of national public diplomacy bodies.

The Alliance of Civilisations is valued positively, to the extent that it offers in a climate of consensus, reflected in society and implemented through movements of cultural respect and cohesion, or even in a platform of progressive intercultural dialogue (Bayar, 2006). In this regard, it is considered to be a case of integrating the concept of culture into the architecture of global governance under three logics, namely (Bettiza, 2014):

- Interpretation focused on identity: socio-political reality includes not only a material dimension but also an ideal one, in which people operate through groups because it makes sense to them.
- Criticism of liberal linear/progressive narratives and 'end of history' type drawings: the Western worldview comes into contact with a variety of contexts of values and living not in the light of the arrogant and dominant victor but in the context of mutual trust and tolerance.
- A practice linking the interests of multiple state and non-state actors: a variety of groups, individuals and mechanisms of both the public and private sectors are involved.



One criticism of this project is that it is based on the dichotomy of 'conflict and alliance', which it reproduces. Always according to this reasoning, it is an institution with a state-centric springboard, which, although aimed at demystifying intercultural conflict, ultimately contributes to its consolidation or that of classical security, giving food to the view that the primary problem is the conflict of the West with its other awe, and especially Islam (Lachmann, 2011).

This criticism is part of the general objection that existing projects for intercultural dialogue approach culture as a religiously unified entity, fail to activate a fundamentally interactive approach and limit security to the absence of war between culturally different states (Bilgin, 2012). However, there is also the counter-argument against the idea that a thought based on the concept of culture is a factor reproducing the confrontational mentality, whereas, on the other hand, the political discourse of the dialogue of civilisations presupposes, in a sense, stronger cultural identities (Petito, 2011).

Similar points of concern were the degree of added value vis-à-vis related programmes (e.g. Dialogue between Cultures), the appropriateness of the term but also of the concept of culture itself, the way in which the UN framework was adopted and the appropriateness of the UN framework (Kausch & Barreñada, 2005). Moreover, an interesting issue lies in the difference in expectations from the programme. While Spain used it as an excuse to withdraw from Iraq and to fight global terrorism, Turkey hoped to strengthen its prestige. But other states or actors also took a stand against him in the light of their foreign policy (Bettiza, 2014).

Similarly, the focus of German public diplomacy on the "dialogue of cultures" by encouraging/supporting the communication frameworks of target groups, with an emphasis on the Arab and Muslim worlds, seems to have emerged more as a strategic action aimed at improving the familiar image than as a comprehensive and generalised interactive process (Zöllner, 2009). Notable, however, the call for dialogue between cultures has also been made by a number of organisations, as indicatively the Foundation for Dialogue between Cultures, the Institute for Interreligious Dialogue, the World Public Forum 'Dialogue of Cultures', the Comprehensive Dialogue Between Cultures or the

Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for Dialogue between Cultures Anna Lindh (Retrieved from: Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, 2022).

The Institute for Cultural Diplomacy is also a body with a similar declared purpose, namely the strengthening of intercultural relations or diplomacy between cultures. Finally, the strong action in this regard by Muslim intellectuals, politicians and institutions- as indeed the Organization of the Islamic Conference - constitutes an activity with internal reservations or disagreement, but is understood as a "case of global Islamic activism". In any case, interactive processes at the level of cultures have been characterized by practical limitations such as the polysemy of 'culture', the criteria for identifying participants, their degree of influence at the political level and institutionalised asymmetries of power. The proposal to create spheres of interactive interaction, i.e. initiatives based on the experiences of successful cases of intercultural coexistence based on principles such as reciprocity, cumulation, cooperation, support and purpose, is a way of overcoming the problems involved (Kayaoglu, 2012).

In this context, the Dialogue between Cultures is considered to be a comprehensive and multi-level dialogue, which nevertheless fell victim to 11 September 2001, while the Alliance of Civilisations is a project with a targeted and practical agenda, which could contribute to the creation of such a sphere. In any case, the interactive approach to cultures, religions and cultures is now an extensive theme of the social sciences and especially of internationalism. Important dimensions are the exploration of the central idea (e.g. the relationship with the world order and justice), its integration into broader political and intellectual debates (e.g. on globalisation, cosmopolitanism, imperialism or security) and its emergence into the contemporary contact of cultures (Köse, 2009).

A dialogue of this kind preoccupies as a key component of the public debate on the characteristics of the present of global politics and the diagnosis of its future, offering a response to a complex political reality with still open issues. It is, however, seen as a viable response, which must not escape attention and in which there must be a relative 'investment' of intellectuals, politicians and societies (Michael & Petito, 2009).

At the same time, a major challenge for the dialogue between cultures is globalisation, otherwise how "the dialogue of cultures takes place in the global era". With its prevailing interpretation, this dialogue presupposes distinct cultures, as opposed to the idea of a world culture that would arise under the formative framework of globalisation. It would include multiple and varied cultural versions but would necessarily place them under the torment of certain evaluative prisms such as human rights (Mazlish, 2004).

On the other hand, a dialogue of normative content in world politics is considered feasible and useful as long as it is separated from the values of specific cultures. Therefore, the position and role of values are an important element that needs to be analysed in interactive projects within international politics. This is not only related to the outcomes of the dialogue (how are the values of the participants affected?) but also by the criteria of representations (who participates from the outset, i.e. by what criteria are the participants determined?). Given the differences within a culture (in the sense of the belief system) or more specifically of religion, the object of representation is not a culture or religion but a tendency of it. Thus, it is not surprising, for example, that most of them are characterized by indicative dipoles of the type traditional-modern, theocracy secularism, supporters of modern values-reactionaries, ecumenism-communitarianism, unbelieving-fundamentalists, supporters of the status-quo and objectors (Senghass, 2013).

Therefore, an equally important element in the conduct of an intercultural dialogue project is the way in which the participants are promoted. Overall, the impact of the concept of dialogue of cultures on the average person is perhaps less, compared to that of conflict. However, it is an idea that exists not only in the world of scientists or intellectuals, but also in the context of world politics, even if it is criticized for tendencies of conservatism, elitism and or emergence from top to bottom. Indeed, not only is it not free of political motives or consequences, but its importance lies precisely in the existence of these motives and consequences. This reference is not intended to devalue the above idea but to remind us that its relevant analysis must include its possible political functions. If anything, its evolution and degree of consolidation are a

crucial indicator of the margin for a confrontational mentality or practices to prevail because of the difference in cultures or cultures (Marchetti, 2009).

### **3. Strategic Partnerships and Cultural Diplomacy - The US and UK examples**

One of the main challenges of Public Diplomacy is that of engagement. The successful implementation of Public Diplomacy manages to engage diverse audiences and stakeholders, by creating a mutual interest that creates functional networks. Zaharna (2011) believes that “Stakeholder engagement occurs across the three dimensions of the network communication approach: network structure, network synergy and network strategy”.

Both The United States of America, using several institutions and embassies, and the United Kingdom, thanks to the activities of the British Council, have managed to build such networks on a global scale, and create lasting collaborations with cultural institutions and organisations. The CoMuseum case is another example of the successful activities of the American and Anglo Saxon Public Diplomacy, but it certainly is not the only one. Understanding the bigger picture of the American and Anglosaxon Public Diplomacy will later help defining the CoMuseum initiative itself.

#### **3.1 The American Public Diplomacy and Practices**

In the United States of America, there are two periods of Public Diplomacy, which one needs to take into consideration. The first period of Public Diplomacy begins with the establishment of the American Intelligence Agency, during the first years of the Second World War. That period ends at the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the 1990s. The second period of Public Diplomacy begins after September 11, 2001 (Mousanezhad, Sohrabi and Akherdin, 2012). “Public Diplomacy as designed by the Western states, especially after the end of the Cold War, has focused on building bridges with the Islamic and Arabic World” (Frangonikolopoulos and Proedrou, 2014).

According to Zaharna, after 2003 a new word was introduced following a prominent US Public Diplomacy report. That word was “engage”. Indeed,

engagement has become a vital part of American Public Diplomacy, especially during the Obama presidency, and it is something that still continues today.

There are several institutions that are responsible for Public Diplomacy in the United States of America, with many of them operating accordingly since the beginning of the Second World War. Those institutions are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Counseling Committee for the Public Diplomacy, The Office of Global Communication of the President, the US Intelligence Agency, The Council of National Security and the Ministry of Defence (Mousanezhad, Sohrabi and Akherdin, 2012). But the United States also invests in Radio, Television and Internet as valuable instruments for applying Public Diplomacy. One of them, and the most recognizable, arguably, is the Voice of America. Acknowledged as the flagship U.S. international broadcaster, the Voice of America broadcasts in forty-four languages. (Metzgar, 2012).

It is important to understand the purpose of Public Diplomacy and what the responsible American institutes take into consideration, in using it. First of all, there is a main purpose regarding the American Public Diplomacy and that is to improve the image that the United States of America have, while fighting anti-US sentiments. Another important key point is that all American citizens should have an active role, regarding Public Diplomacy. (Rostami, 2014). After all, the US Public Diplomacy attempts to connect to the citizens of a foreign country, just as much as it attempts to create communication bridges with their government, if not more. This is one of the main slogans of the American Public Diplomacy is the “People to people ties”, which in sort is “when diplomats meet directly with the citizens of their host country, rather than just with official representatives.” (National Museum of American Diplomacy, 2022). This specific approach on Public Diplomacy, made by the United States, is called People’s Diplomacy.

The American Embassy in Athens is one of the three key partners behind the CoMuseum international museum conference, working together with the Benaki Museum and the British Council for more than eleven years in a row. Yet, the American Embassy in Athens has played an active role, regarding Public Diplomacy, taking part in, or organising several other initiatives. One of those cases, was an entrepreneurial Public Diplomacy initiative, titled

“Hack the Camp”, which was initiated in order to address the refugee crisis in Greece. The initiative was held in 2016, and was organised by the U.S Embassy in Athens, the Impact Hub Athens, and the Onassis Foundation Cultural Center, in collaboration with two international organizations. These international organizations were the Creative Associates from the United States of America and International Alert, a British international organisation. (Kothari and Tsakarestou, 2019). Indeed, according to Kothari and Tsakarestou (2019) “the tri-sector entrepreneurial Public Diplomacy stakeholders alliances seek to implement the people-to-people communication”.

### **3.2 The British Council - Public Diplomacy in the United Kingdom**

In the United Kingdom, Public Diplomacy and Cultural Diplomacy have been closely associated with the British Council. The Foreign and Commonwealth/British Council Management Statement (2007) states that the British Council, established in 1934, is “an organisation that operates at arm’s length from Government and incorporated by Royal Charter. According to Zaharna (2011) “the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, lists its key stakeholders as think tanks, regional outreach champions, businesses, trade unions and faith groups”. The British Council does not carry out its functions on behalf of the crown”. Indeed the very purpose of the British Council is to promote the British way of living abroad and create cultural bridges connecting Great Britain to foreign countries and civilizations.

According to Foreign and Commonwealth Office/British Council (2006) “the British Council itself aims to promote knowledge of the United Kingdom and the English language abroad, to encourage educational co-operation between the UK and foreign countries and promote the advancement of education”. Yet it should be acknowledged that in the UK, the practice of Cultural Diplomacy differs from that of the United States of America in a very distinct way. In the case of the British Council, there is a difficulty in finding images, visual or tangible, that associate with justice, as British Values. (Lang, 2012). That can be considered the long term effect that colonialism has had on the country, and its contemporary foreign policy. So the approach that the

British Council takes, given the circumstances is of course different than that of the American Public Diplomacy institutions, and a lot of times more subtle. The British Council in fact focuses on both culture and education, creating and operating a lot of educational programmes, such as the UK - Greece Strategic Partnership in Education programme, which is “delivered in partnership with the Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and the British Embassy in Athens” (The British Council, 2021).

### **3.3 The collaboration of the Benaki Museum, American Embassy in Athens and the British Council**

According to Frangonikolopoulos (2012) the Department of Information and Public Diplomacy, which is responsible to create a positive image and provide information on national issues “lacks in resources and organisational capabilities”. In order to improve, Greece needs to find the proper way to encourage dialogue, using Public Diplomacy successfully. The collaboration of the Benaki Museum, with the American Embassy in Athens and the British Council, is an exception to the rule. The partnership of eleven years is a successful example of Public Diplomacy and networking (The CoMuseum, 2021). It is important to emphasize the fact that during the eleven years of the CoMuseum conference, the three partners continued to work together, and the interest of the American Embassy in Athens for the CoMuseum international Museum conference remained the same, despite the changes in leadership in the US government. Indeed, throughout these eleven years, the United States elected three presidents, from two different parties, Barack Obama, Donald Trump and Joe Biden. Despite the changes in leadership, the approach of the American Embassy in Athens, one of the institutions responsible for the implementation of Public Diplomacy in Greece, remained unaltered. The CoMuseum international museum conference is in fact a combination of both The American and British Public Diplomacy, with the first focusing on creating people-to-people ties, with the participants of the conference, and the second focusing on promoting the British ideals, culture and English language.

#### **4. The CoMuseum Case – An example of Public Cultural Diplomacy through strategic partnerships**

Analysing the definition of Public Cultural Diplomacy as well as the British and American practices can help in creating a theoretical background. That theoretical background will be useful in order to observe and highlight the key points of the CoMuseum Case initiative.

Greece has been one of the top countries regarding museum innovation and museum impact. The CoMuseum has been one of those innovative programs. Although, It definitely is not the first time that a museum program becomes the vital link to promoting culture and connecting experts and organisations all around the world, the importance of the conference remains vital. In order to better understand the purpose of the CoMuseum conference, I had the opportunity to attend The CoMuseum of 2021, online, as a participant. Throughout the three days that the conference took place, I had the chance to attend the online speeches, during the first day of the conference, as well as the digital masterclasses that took place on the second and third day of the CoMuseum. But, before commenting on the 2021 conference and the impact that it had on this paper, taking a look at the history of the conference will help understand more about its origins and purpose.

##### **4.1 The Origins of the CoMuseum international Conference**

“Museums are a very trusted force, especially in the age of information because they become places for activism, dialogue, debate - this is the core role of the museum in society” (Handaka, 2021).

The CoMuseum conference launched in 2011 for the first time, with experts from Greece, the United Kingdom and the United States attending and taking part of it as speakers. The first conference’s title, The Networked Museum, according to the organisers themselves, found on the official website of the CoMuseum, aimed to foster a dialogue in two critical areas of interest for the museum community: the design and production of interpretive technologies, and the development of strategies to attract new and diverse audiences. It was indeed the first conference that managed to create the background for



international collaboration between museums from all around Europe and the United States. The Networked Museum took place in Athens and lasted for two days, starting on September 27th at 10am, and finishing on the next day, September 28th at 4pm. After the impact of the Networked Museum, the conferences that followed had an extra day added to their calendar. Therefore for the first two days of its duration the CoMuseum international conference is located in Athens, while during the final day the conference is transferred to Thessaloniki.

It is worth mentioning that the title “The CoMuseum ” became official, for all the conferences, after 2019. The previous conferences did have different titles regarding the nature of the issues they addressed and the main focus of each year.

Eleni Alexaki, Senior Cultural and Educational Affairs Specialists at The United States Embassy, in Athens, is one of the CoMuseum key people, and member of the organising committee, that I had the opportunity to interview about the conference, the collaboration with the Benaki Museum, and the importance of the CoMuseum for the Greek-American diplomatic relations. As a member of the organising committee representing the American Embassy in the conference, Alexaki’s main role includes reaching out to specialist and cultural experts from The United States, depending on what the main topics of the CoMuseum are each year, providing the conference with talented speakers. According to Eleni Alexaki the beginning of the partnership between the American Embassy in Greece and the Benaki Museum began eleven years ago. “The American Embassy sponsored the Benaki Museum for a conference, hosted by the Museum, about the best practices in the field of museology and the management of cultural organisations, after the request of the now co-founder and organising committee member Sophia Handaka” (E Alexaki, personal interview, May 16, 2022)

## **4.2 The CoMuseum organising Committee**

Despite its success and the partnerships that have been achieved throughout the eleven years that the CoMuseum international museum conference takes place, it is run by a small group of people, who are the organising committee of the conference. The co-founder of the CoMuseum Sophia Handaka is the Lead Coordinator of the entire project since its creation in 2011. Alongside Handaka and Katerina Gkoutziouli, who is the CoMuseum Project Manager, members of the committee are Eleni Alexaki, who I have already mentioned before, from the US Embassy in Athens, Ioanna Koutsounanou, from the US Consulate in Thessaloniki and Adam Rozan, from the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, and member of the international advisory committee, representing the American side of the partnership. The organising committee also consists of three members of the British Council, Maria Papaioannou, Head of Arts, and Katerina Galani who was part of the British Council until February 2022 (The CoMuseum, 2021). It is important to highlight the fact that both the American Embassy in Athens and the British Council are organising partners of the CoMuseum conference and not just sponsors. That of course means that both institutions are more involved, and share common interests. This perhaps is an indication of the importance of the CoMuseum for all three organising partners.

#### **4.3 The purpose of the CoMuseum international Museum conference**

The CoMuseum is more than just a conference. It acts as a platform of expertise, aiming for the wellbeing of cultural organisations and their communities. The conference also fosters the production and exchange of ideas and the creation of networks, on a global scale, that aim to connect and bring art and culture professionals closer. (Fleming, 2021). Throughout the eleven years of its operation, the conference has managed to boost the human capital of museums, other cultural organisations and initiatives. One of the major contributions of the CoMuseum international museum conference is the building trust, connections, synergies, while encouraging the cross-fertilization of ideas, urging specialists to collaborate.

#### **4.4 The two key points**

There are two points that I would like to emphasise that are of unique importance to anyone who wants to understand the nature of the CoMuseum project. Firstly it is its collaborative nature that we will get the chance to analyse during the next paragraphs of the section. Secondly it is its ability to adapt, evolve and progress as a living organism. Indeed this second point is of crucial importance because just like the CoMuseum, the cultural sector should not remain static. The power of the conference to evolve and adapt has certainly been tested these last 2 years of the Covid-19 pandemic. As found on the official website of the CoMuseum, the 10th edition of the conference was held online for the first time in 10 years. The conference of 2020, titled Leadership, Social Impact, Digital Transformation, Greening the Museum, was one of the great challenges that the organising committee had to face. That was not only because the circumstances only allowed for the CoMuseum conference to be held online, but because it also had to remain relevant to the cultural sector and the challenges it had to face. With a focus on environment, freedom of speech, digitalization and crisis management, the aspiration of the 2020 conference was to be a platform of change.

The former ambassador of the United States of America to Greece and Ukraine, Geoffrey Ross Pyatt addressed the challenges that The CoMuseum of 2020 had to face, while highlighting the importance of the collaboration of the Benaki Museum with the Embassy of the United States of America in Greece, and the British Council. In his own words the former ambassador Pyatt stated “We turn to the arts in times of crisis for aspiration, to reflect on the ideas and emotions that define us, to share experiences in a community, and to take a break from daily pressures in our lives. In these moments, we need our museums and cultural institutions more than ever” (Pyatt, 2020).

The CoMuseum has indeed evolved during the past two years, and adapted to the new circumstances with great success. Behind that success lies the dynamic of the partnerships that have formed during the creation of the project. After all, the very nature of the conference is that of collaboration, a collaboration between museums, and a collaboration with museums, hence the “co” in its name.

The importance of the CoMuseum conference is not only recognized by its American Partners. According to the Head of Arts of the British Council, in

Greece, Maria Papaioannou, the CoMuseum international museum conference is regarded to be the flagship programme of the Museums revisited in the EU initiative. The Museums revisited is a new British Council capacity building programme for the museum sector (The British Council, 2022). The main purpose of this programme is to create a network among cultural institutions, both European and British, while exploring the role of the museum today, as well as highlight the changes that the cultural sector needs to undertake in order to provide responses to global changes. For the British Council and the British Embassy the CoMuseum international museum conference is indeed of crucial importance, since it also is considered a hub for the creation of more cultural projects regarding museums and institutions. One of these projects that I had the opportunity to discuss with Maria Papaioannou, the head of Arts of the British Council in Greece, is the Greening the Museums Webinar series project. The Greening of the Museums webinar series aims to turn museums into sustainability hubs by creating a dialogue and finding innovative ways that could potentially affect the entirety of the cultural sector. The Greening of the Museums webinar series is not the only project highlighted through the CoMuseum conference. The conference provides an excellent opportunity to creators who want to communicate their project and work. That opportunity comes during the workshops and the masterclasses that participants can choose to take part in during the conference.

As it was mentioned before, the CoMuseum conference is a project created by the Benaki Museum, in collaboration with the British Council and the American Embassy in Athens, Greece. Of Course that means that the three members of this collaboration are responsible for creating and running the conference, since its very creation in 2010. The success of this unique partnership which has lasted for more than eleven years appears to be mutual goals that all three of the partners have set, as well as the collaborative mentality that the key members of the committee have incorporated into their work. According to the British Council's Head of Arts in Greece, Maria Papaioannou "working for the CoMuseum international museum conference is a process that requires a lot of research and is all about connecting the dots and respecting the priorities of the rest of the partners" (M Papaioannou, personal interview May 24, 2022). Maria Papaioannou believes that the main

aspect of the CoMuseum is that of creating bonds that can help society progress.

Yet, the CoMuseum conference is an initiative supported by many other organisations as well, alongside the Greek, British and American Governments. The conference of 2021 in particular was sponsored by both Unisystems and Microsoft. The conference has also been supported and covered by the Greek media, one of them being LIFO, one of the largest and most influential online Greek media portals.

#### **4.5 The pandemic of Covid-19 and the CoMuseum conference**

The Covid-19 pandemic has definitely affected the way people live, work and how they communicate. Just like everywhere else, the museum sector was deeply affected by the pandemic, with a lot of smaller Museums all over Greece, being unable to adapt successfully for their audience. According to Maria Tsekou, Educational Manager at National Museum of Contemporary Art in Athens, “What we used to think was interactive has changed now after Covid. Museums need to find fresh ways to play with technology and connect with audiences who are looking for safe, rewarding experiences”. (Fleming, 2021)

Despite the difficulties both the CoMuseum of 2020 and the CoMuseum of 2021 attempted to take a positive approach, focusing on change of digitalization and addressing the pandemic as a catalyst that could accelerate the process of evolution for museums all around the world. British Council’s Maria Papaioannou agrees that “the pandemic may have caused a lot of problems, but it also became a portal of evolution and progress for the CoMuseum international conference” (M Papaioannou, personal interview, May 24, 2022). According to a report, made by the Fleming Agency (2021) for the British Council, it became more clear than ever that digital museum content opens up new ways to engage the audiences and stakeholders. Museums also need to find new ways to attract visitors. One of those ways is being capable of reaching these audiences at home, virtually. The report also

states that digital content does require as much curation as physical collections do. Although the last two CoMuseums, held online, were eventually a success, both Alexaki and Papaioannou believe that attending the conference in Athens and Thessaloniki in person will always be a unique experience and are looking forward to the next CoMuseum.

#### **4.6 The CoMuseum conference of 2021**

The CoMuseum conference of 2021 entitled (Re)Positioning the museum of tomorrow, took place 1-3 December 2021, online, and was the 11th instalment of the international conference hosted by the Benaki Museum, in collaboration with the American Embassy in Athens and the British Council. The key focus of the CoMuseum international museum conference of 2021 was about defining and reevaluating the position that museums and other cultural organisations have in an ever changing and evolving world. According to the official website of the CoMuseum international museum conference, some of the topics that the conference of 2021 addressed were that of sustainability, digital strategies, curating and storytelling, the social impact of museums and cultural organisations and the roles of the museums in the climate crisis. During the three days that the conference took place online, 47 professionals, both from Greek and international museums, universities and organisations examined the key topics of the conference through masterclasses, panel discussions and workshops. Among the speakers was Katy Bunning, Lecturer from the University of Leicester, United Kingdom, Lucia Pietroiusti, founder of the Serpentine Galleries, and Ryan Gaspar, the Director of Brand Partnerships at Microsoft, USA. Microsoft in particular, as mentioned before is one of the main sponsors of the CoMuseum, brought thanks to the networking of the American Embassy in Greece (The CoMuseum, 2021).

At the beginning of the CoMuseum international museum conference of 2021, the audience had the chance to listen to the former ambassador of the United States, Geoffrey Ross Pyat.

“The CoMuseum conference is unique in its scope and reach, bringing together top museums, cultural organisations, civil society and businesses from all over the world. It also represents a long-standing partnership among

the Benaki Museum, the U.S. Embassy, and the British Council, with support also from the UK Embassy and private sponsors such as Microsoft and Unisystems.” (Pyat, 2021)

When asked about what she believes is the greatest challenge about being in the organising committee of the CoMuseum Eleni Alexaki, Senior Cultural and Educational Specialist at the US Embassy, stated: “I don’t believe that there is any particular challenge in communication and the coordination of the experts. The real challenges lie with the preparations that an international conference needs in order to be successful, and of course the logistics that a project of that scale has (Alexaki, personal communication). She also remarked that until now, throughout the years that she has been a member of the organising committee of the CoMuseum, she never faced any challenge when approaching experts from the United States, as well as organisations and institutions, since the vast majority was positive in taking part in the CoMuseum initiative.

Maria Papaioannou agrees with Alexaki, who believes that “one of the greatest challenges that one faces organising such a project is that of logistics, resources and funding that the CoMuseum conference receives each year which is something that can change quite often” (E Alexaki, personal interview, May 16, 2022). But another challenge for Papaioannou is having the right people on ground in order to scout the right specialists. “The real challenge is to have the right people on ground, so that they connect you with the right professionals who are also going to be great interactive speakers and can successfully attract a multicultural audience. You don’t only need to identify the right experts but also bring them together and have them coordinate in order to achieve the engagement you want with the audience. It is all about matchmaking at the end of the day” (M Papaioannou, personal interview, May 24, 2022).

#### **4.7 Strategic Partnerships**

During the previous paragraphs I managed to briefly mention some of the partnerships and sponsorships that the CoMuseum international museum conference

has achieved throughout the 11 years of its existence. The organising committee of the CoMuseum does not only focus on finding professors and connecting with other museums and cultural organisations. What the CoMuseum conference has achieved is also attracting big organisations that have a huge impact in societies, technology and culture on a worldwide level, like Microsoft. During the conference of 2021 Microsoft also hosted a masterclass, where CoMuseum participants could get informed about the projects of the company and in particular that of Ancient Olympia, a Microsoft project that aims to preserve the Archaeological Site of Olympia digitally. The project also aims at the digital revival of the Ancient Olympia, allowing visitors from all around the world to visit and take a glimpse, exploring the ancient city. Another strategic partnership of the CoMuseum 2021 was that with Terentia, a Toronto based company, which develops, implements and supports cloud-native software solutions for digital asset management, collections management, and workflow process for the GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums) industry.

Collaborations with organisations outside the spectrum of culture are of great importance mainly because strategic partnerships are quite under-developed for a lot of museums. That happens because a lot of companies, organisations and institutions do not see museums as their natural partners. That failure should mostly be attributed to the museum sector itself, as it is more crucial than ever for museums to create products and services that will eventually attract and create such partnerships. The CoMuseum conference, throughout these eleven years, is trying to be the link between museums and such organisations and institutions. (Fleming, 2021)

## **Discussion**

One of the main purposes of this paper was to understand Public Cultural Diplomacy better, studying its history and theory while analysing its different forms and practices. Another purpose was to understand how Public Cultural Diplomacy works in practice in a digitalized and post pandemic era, by following and studying the example of the CoMuseum international museum conference.



Taking a moment to point out some of the key findings that this paper has collected will eventually assist in understanding why correct Public Cultural Diplomacy has been crucial to the conference's success throughout the eleven years of its operation. In order to do that this paper will begin by summarising the important key points of each chapter while connecting theory to practice and examples.

First of all there is a specific definition given to Cultural Diplomacy. As mentioned during chapter 1.1 Cultural Diplomacy is the exercise of diplomacy through culture. The way countries and institutions exercise Cultural Diplomacy has vastly changed throughout the years. Though the main concept does remain the same, new communication methods brought by new technology have altered the traditional ways of communicating culture and exercising Cultural Diplomacy. Another way to identify Cultural Diplomacy is by using the term soft diplomacy. Soft diplomacy is, in fact, the kind of diplomacy that does not require violence to achieve its goals. The alternative to soft diplomacy is that of military action.

Another important point is that there are many different kinds of Cultural Diplomacy. Educational diplomacy, one of the kinds of Cultural Diplomacy, is summarised by the attempt of a country to attract foreign audiences who will in turn choose the said country's educational institutions for their studies. Another kind of Cultural Diplomacy is the Ecclesiastical Diplomacy. The ultimate goal of Ecclesiastical Diplomacy is to counter religious extremism and strengthen religion cooperation between countries. Tourism Diplomacy is also a form of Cultural Diplomacy focused on creating a positive image for the country. Next on our list is Heritage Diplomacy, a form of Cultural Diplomacy that aims to the promotion of archaeological sites and monuments. Finally the last form of Cultural Diplomacy that was identified was that of Ecological Diplomacy, the type of Cultural Diplomacy that focuses on the improvement and protection of the environment.

The research also stated that Cultural Diplomacy existed way before modern societies. The term Cultural Diplomacy may be relatively new but as stated in chapter 1.5 Cultural Diplomacy is not an invention of the last century. It has been an active form of diplomacy even since ancient times. Just like today, regimes in ancient Greece and the Hellenistic period, for example, used soft

diplomacy to peacefully communicate culture, ideals and to assimilate populations without the element of violence. In short, the practice of Cultural Diplomacy is much older than its official recognition as a practice of soft diplomacy, which really gives a better understanding of its importance regarding human societies. A proper answer to the research question set during the introduction part “Why has Cultural Diplomacy become a necessity during and after the pandemic?” is that in fact Cultural Diplomacy has not become a necessity during and after the pandemic. Cultural Diplomacy continues to be a necessity in today’s world just like it used to be before the pandemic, and thousands of years ago. As mentioned before it is not a modern invention and it definitely is not used more because of the pandemic. It is used to solve problems created by the pandemic, but that is just a small detail compared to the history of cultural diplomacy.

The technological revolution has contributed to reinventing Public Cultural Diplomacy. As in fact, the digital revolution has contributed to the creation of an international network of communication, for the first time in human history. As mentioned in chapter 1.2, the technological revolution has introduced various changes in communication methods, which in result have given a series of new responsibilities to the traditional way diplomats used to exercise their duties (Kouloubis & Konstas, 1985). That revolution actually brought cultural diplomacy to the forefront of diplomacy.

During chapter 1.9 Public Diplomacy, a new form of Diplomacy that became prominent during the 1960’s was highlighted. Public Diplomacy aims to strengthen the relations between civilised societies, focusing on education and culture while avoiding being directly involved with state agencies.

After identifying the key points and definitions regarding Cultural Diplomacy and Public Diplomacy, the goal of this research paper was to study the CoMuseum conference, from its beginning until the last conference of 2021 and the collaboration of the organising team behind this project. The CoMuseum project was created due to the collaboration between the Benaki Museum, the American Embassy in Athens and the British Council. That collaboration has lasted for over eleven years, with the preparations for the next CoMuseum international museum conference to be on the way. Studying the partnership of these three institutions was crucial to understanding their

success. The interviews I had the chance to take from the members of the organising committee indicate the mutual interest of all three partners at the CoMuseum conference, which is one of the reasons for its longevity. There are a few key findings regarding the CoMuseum that should be pointed out.

First of all, as mentioned before in chapter 4.4 the CoMuseum conference is regarded as the flagship programme of the Museums revisited initiative. The importance of the American and British involvement in the CoMuseum project is a great example of Public Diplomacy as explained in chapter 1.9.

The CoMuseum conference remains an important initiative because it stays relevant. The topics introduced by the organising committee each year are not only innovative and up to date, but also focus on solving problems, bringing people and cultures together and creating networks of collaboration.

The CoMuseum is a hub for innovative programmes focusing on sustainability, culture, art and technology. One of these programmes was the Greening of the Museums webinar series. One of the most important aspects of the CoMuseum conference is that of the CoMuseum Master Classes. Through the Master Classes, participants can interact with the speakers, ask questions and get informed about new innovative topics.

A key finding of this study was on how the pandemic affected the CoMuseum international museum conference. How did the members of the organising committee respond to the new challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic created? It is important to highlight the fact that the two last CoMuseum conferences addressed the pandemic more as an opportunity to change and evolve rather than a disaster. This is a key finding in order to understand how Public Cultural Diplomacy continues to enable strategic partnerships in a pandemic and a post pandemic era. In fact the CoMuseum conference of 2021 managed to appeal to a larger audience because of the pandemic, since a lot more people had the chance to connect and watch the conference online, instead of visiting Athens and Thessaloniki during conferences prior to 2019. Consequently, understanding the success that the CoMuseum had facing the problems that the Covid-19 pandemic created, contributes to evaluating if the CoMuseum initiative is in fact capable of dealing with a crisis. Indeed the collaborative nature of the conference alongside the technology used to support it has allowed the conference to continue even after 2 years of a global

pandemic. There is still a lot of space for future studies, to focus on the CoMuseum international museum conference, and evaluate the organising committee's approach on future crises as well as the impact that the covid-19 crisis had and the crisis prediction mechanisms that were created because of the pandemic, regarding the conference.

Another important point can be found in the last section of the CoMuseum chapter (chapter 4.7 - Strategic Partnerships). The CoMuseum reinvents the way organisations and institutions like schools view museums. Traditionally the partnerships that a museum had were pretty limited and solely focused around the cultural sector. The CoMuseum has managed to build functional partnerships with large organisations, which are not directly related to the cultural sector. Partnerships like Microsoft are proof that Museums should not be limited around cultural partnerships, but expand their reach to sectors like business and technology. Partnerships with American companies like Microsoft are the outcome of the collaboration of the Benaki Museum with the American Embassy in Athens.

Another research question that this paper aimed to answer was about the collaboration of the Benaki Museum, the British Council and the American Embassy in Athens. More specifically, the paper attempted to answer “what are the key points of success of the CoMuseum Initiative. The triple partnership between Benaki Museum, the U.S Embassy in Greece and the British Council”. As identified in chapter 4.4 the two key points that contribute to the success of the CoMuseum are the ability of the conference to adapt and progress, choosing new topics annually depending on the global circumstances, and its collaborative nature. That second point refers to both the core triple partnership that brought the CoMuseum to life, and also to the ability of its organising committee to create partnerships with organisations, institutions and specialists.

What do the international museum conferences, like the CoMuseum, have to offer? As mentioned in chapter 4.3, based on the report of 2021, by Fleming consultant agency, the CoMuseum international museum conference aims to create networks and bring experts closer allowing them to work together, while promoting the exchange of new ideas. The CoMuseum also functions as a hub for new programmes, and ideas through the Master Classes and

workshops. More importantly in chapter 4.7 a very significant contribution of the international conference is highlighted. It is the contribution of such conferences on changing the way organisations and institutions view a museum. The outcome of this contribution can potentially lead to the creation of more partnerships for museums, outside the spectrum of culture.

So what was the real importance of the international museum conference of 2021? The CoMuseum of 2021 was the second conference that was held digitally alongside that of 2020. As stated in chapter 4.6 last year's conference focused on defining and (re)evaluating the position that museums and other cultural organisations have in our societies. The importance of the 2021 CoMuseum international museum conference can be defined on two key achievements. The first achievement is related to the strategic partnerships that the conference managed to create, and the experts that attended the event online, as speakers. As mentioned in chapter 4.6 one of these partnerships was with Microsoft and its innovative project on Ancient Olympia. The second achievement of the CoMuseum conference was the way it dealt with the pandemic and the approach of the organising committee on that matter. Not only has the CoMuseum managed to continue the conferences in 2020 and 2021 but also appealed to a large international audience.

During the research on the CoMuseum conference and the interviews with both Maria Papaioannou and Eleni Alexaki, the challenges that the organising committee has to face, each year, were identified. Specifically, in chapter 4.6 Papaioannou mentions two challenges. The first one, which was mentioned by Alexaki too, is that of logistics, resources and funding. Without the necessary funding the CoMuseum would not be able to function accordingly, accomplishing the yearly goals of the conference. The other challenge that was identified by Papaioannou is that of having the right people on ground, searching for top experts and charismatic speakers for the CoMuseum conference.

Unfortunately there are a few limitations in understanding more about the challenges that the organising committee faces, while preparing for the annual conference. That is mostly because I managed to contact and interview two of the members, representing only two of the three partners behind the CoMuseum, The British Council and the American Embassy. Therefore there

could potentially be more challenges not identified, especially for the members of the organising committee that represent the Benaki Museum, who I did not have the chance to interview.

## **Conclusion**

Cultural Diplomacy may have been categorised as a form of diplomacy during the last century but that kind of diplomacy has been used for thousands of years. Public diplomacy alike, a term that appeared in the United States during the Cold war has become one of the forms of diplomacy promoted by both The United States of America and Great Britain, especially in the 21st century. A combination of both, Public Cultural Diplomacy, refers to the ability to successfully communicate culture and education to people, using museums, cultural organisations, and conferences as cultural hubs.

One of these conferences, the CoMuseum international museum conference is an initiative created by the Benaki Museum in collaboration with the American Embassy in Athens and the British Council, with the very first of the conferences, The Networked Museum, taking place in Athens in 2011. With topics focused around entrepreneurship, education, communication, inclusivity, and museum digitization, the CoMuseum conference has managed to establish itself as a flagship of cultural networking and collaboration between museums, art and cultural experts and organisations from all around Europe, the United Kingdom, The United States of America and Canada.

The CoMuseum international museum conference is in fact the outcome of an effective collaboration between the Benaki Museum, the British Council and the American Embassy in Athens, Greece. The conference has already attracted audiences from all around Europe and North America, while creating unique opportunities for specialists and experts to showcase their work and communicate their knowledge, even during the pandemic of Covid-19. What the CoMuseum conference and the organising team behind that initiative have achieved can be attributed to a successful public cultural diplomatic approach. Discussing with and interviewing Eleni Alexaki, Senior Cultural &

Educational Affairs Specialist at U.S. Embassy and Maria Papaioannou, Head of Arts at the British Council, members of the organising team of the annual conference, gave important insight about the challenges, the internal communication between the organisers, the strategic partnerships and the network that the CoMuseum conference has built throughout these eleven years of operation.

What was made clear throughout this research paper is that just like museums, the CoMuseum is a living organism, capable of evolving and adapting. By approaching different topics each year, depending on what societies and the cultural sector consider vital, the conference has managed to stay up to date and more relevant than ever. The CoMuseum conference is after all the example of successful public diplomacy, since its very purpose is to create connections and bring talented individuals from all around the world, with a passion about culture and museums together.

By studying the CoMuseum conference and the involvement of both the American Embassy in Athens and the British Council, this paper also attempted to connect theory of Public Cultural Diplomacy to practice. Understanding the nature of the triple collaboration behind the CoMuseum and its longevity provided a solid example of Public Cultural Diplomacy.

This particular paper attempts to highlight the importance and the impact that Cultural Diplomacy has in a digital and post pandemic era, focusing on the CoMuseum international museum conference as an example. A lot of previous studies have already created an analytical paperwork of theory on Public Cultural Diplomacy, museum collaboration and the digitalization of the cultural sector, highlighting the positive steps that cultural organisations have already made towards evolution before, during and after the pandemic of Covid-19. This research paper aspires to contribute to the previous academic work, in two ways. Firstly it presents a detailed analysis on Cultural and Public Diplomacy, which focuses on the American and British examples of soft diplomacy. Secondly it attempted to contribute to the research around museums addressing the role that museums have in today's society, regarding communication and collaboration, by using the example of the CoMuseum conference, its potential and the opportunities that have already been created for the cultural sector in Greece, the United Kingdom, USA and Europe.

As there are no other academic papers focused on the CoMuseum conference, the goal of this research paper is to display the conference, by collecting the necessary data, in order to provide a guiding step and a source of information on the subject, for future academic paperwork focusing on the CoMuseum conference, and potentially its evolution throughout the years, or using the conference as a reference for the rest of their statements.

Museums and cultural organisations in general, need to be in the centre of our societies. One must never forget that although a lot of museums focus on preserving the past, their role is much greater than just that. Museums are cultural representatives, diplomats, building networks between different countries, and linking foreign civilizations together. In a digital and post pandemic world, the effective exercise of cultural diplomacy between museums and cultural organisations is not only a step towards evolution but a necessity. While researching about the CoMuseum international museum conference, having the chance to interview and talk to some of the members of the organising committee, I came to realise that there is still a lot that needs to be done towards rebranding the museum. Because even now, in 2022, there are a lot of people who fail to see the multipurpose that a museum has in our society, and that is not the individual's fault. The CoMuseum conference is an innovative project that attempts to change that. By creating strong international networks and working closely with global organisations the CoMuseum does more than just communicating culture between countries and institutions. It communicates culture to experts who in their turn communicate it to their audiences. Therefore I have come to the realisation that the CoMuseum is not “just” a successful international conference, it also is an international ambassador of culture.

Concluding this paper, despite the hundreds of past work done by experts and researchers on Cultural and Public Diplomacy, it is obvious that there is still a lot that needs to be understood regarding the subject. Diplomacy as a whole, as well as cultural, public and other forms of it, may be very specific in terms of definition, but in an ever changing society, the way we practice diplomacy, create strategic partnerships and build networks continues to evolve. Therefore it is more than certain that there are plenty of future research opportunities regarding Public Cultural Diplomacy and the CoMuseum in particular.



Focusing on the CoMuseum, the conference initiative may have begun eleven years ago, but the next CoMuseum international museum conference is on the way, for 2022. The CoMuseum is continuously evolving alongside society itself, constantly building meaningful partnerships and promoting projects and specialists who aspire to have an impact on the cultural sector. The CoMuseum itself gives a great opportunity for future research on the next conferences that are going to take place, as well as the partnerships, speakers and new topics that are going to be introduced in the future. The CoMuseum conference cannot be easily defined and described in detail effectively since, just like society does, it continually progresses.

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