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Communicating Greece in Times of Economic Crisis: The Role and Significance of Public Diplomacy*

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RÉSUMÉ

La crise économique grecque et son impact potentiel sur l'avenir de la zone euro ont monopolisé la couverture médiatique dans le monde. La presse internationale a mené une campagne féroce et négative contre la Grèce. La Grèce, toutefois, n'a pas répondu aux critiques. Jusqu'à présent, le pays semble accepter passivement que d'un point de vue politique et économique il se trouve à la périphérie de l'Occident et de l'UE, anticipant des solutions devant être fournies par Bruxelles et Washington. La Grèce, toutefois, pourrait s'investir dans le rôle critique que joue la diplomatie publique au niveau de la politique contemporaine mondiale. Cela nécessite le passage d'une diplomatie publique, qui ne se concentre que sur l'établissement de liens culturels et éducatifs, à une diplomatie publique qui met l'accent sur d'importantes questions régionales et mondiales. Cela suppose un encouragement à la communication et au dialogue avec des acteurs officiels et non-étatiques, en collaboration avec et à travers des groupes internes et externes et aussi avec l'opinion publique. Il faut se rappeler la position de la Grèce dans une zone géographique complexe et volatile qui inclut les Balkans, la région de la mer Noire, la Méditerranée et le Moyen-Orient. Une telle stratégie de diplomatie publique fournira au pays non seulement de nouvelles possibilités dans sa coopération bilatérale avec des Etats (Turquie, ARYM) avec lesquels il est en opposition sur certains points mais lui permettra aussi d'améliorer sa pertinence et son influence dans les organisations multilatérales et les forums. Dès lors de nombreuses opportunités se présenteront au pays dans les affaires du monde et ce bien au-delà de sa situation économique actuelle et de ses capacités limitées de puissance.

ABSTRACT

The Greek economic crisis and its potential impact on the future of the Euro zone have monopolized media coverage globally. The international press has mounted a fierce and negative campaign against Greece. Greece, however, has not responded to the critiques. So

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far the country seems to be passively accepting that politically and economically it is on the periphery of the West and the EU, anticipating solutions to the country's problems to be provided only by Brussels and Washington. Greece, however, could invest on the critical role public diplomacy plays in contemporary global politics. This requires a shift from a public diplomacy that concentrates only on forging cultural and educational links, to a public diplomacy that focuses on the most significant regional and global issues by encouraging communication and dialogue, with official and non-state actors, working with and through internal and external societies and public opinion. When considering Greece's location in a complex, volatile and security-consuming geographical zone, including the Balkans, the Black Sea region, the Mediterranean and the Middle East, such a public diplomacy strategy will not only provide the country with new opportunities in dealing with its bilateral problems (Turkey, FYROM). It will also enhance its relevance and influence in multilateral organisations and forums, supplying it with ample opportunities in world affairs far beyond its current economic condition and limited hard power capabilities.

Introduction

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

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

assistance, becoming a member of the Development Assistance Committee (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD) and establishing *Hellenic Aid*. Bilateral and multilateral aid granted by Greece in 2009 reached 607.27 million USA dollars.³ The country became an active member of the *Human Security Network*, an informal world consultation forum for governments, international organisations, the academic community and civil society representatives. Greece also began to pursue a more active role in military, peace and civil operations of the EU and NATO. Greece has financed programmes on rural development, water resource management, education and healthcare with a total of €800,000 in Afghanistan.⁴ In addition, the country participated in the Anti-piracy naval operation off the coast of Somalia, the EU Training mission based in Uganda, the EU Mission on the Rule of Law in Kosovo and the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia. Greece furthermore began to promote an active and constructive role in the Balkans. Indicative is the Hellenic Plan for the Reconstruction of the Balkans (HPRB), an effort on the part of Greece, with a total budget of 550 million euro, to contribute to the modernisation of infrastructure, promote production investments, support democratic institutions and the rule of law, modernise public administration and local government and strengthen the welfare state in the recipient countries of South-eastern Europe.⁵ Last, but not least, and with the aim to improve the ‘image’ of the country, Greece invested in ‘media events diplomacy’ by organizing the 2004 Athens Olympic Games (see below).

These initiatives, however, have not contributed to the repositioning of Greece, as the effect of the above initiatives and the Games of 2004 in building a new image for the country has been a limited one. With Greece’s public diplomacy still focussing on cultural and education links, as well as attracting tourists, little has been done to portray the country’s modern achievements. As a result, over the last two years, the headlines and the huge amount of media coverage on the Greek financial crisis have been characterized by an intense use of value-laden expressions and labels that convey a negative sentiment. Europe talks of ‘bad’ and ‘good’ Europeans and ‘lazy’ southerners, ‘Boom, kick them out of the euro zone. Our citizens no longer want to pay for these wasteful Greeks’, wrote the Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf* on May 19, 2010 following the results of an opinion poll among 11,000 Dutch citizens. Indicative is also the title of an article in *Le Monde* on February 6, 2010: ‘Bad Greece puts the Euro under pressure’ and the use of the acronym PIIGS (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain) termed by the liberal magazine *The Economist*. In addition, media coverage of the Greek debt crisis has been

dominated by dramatic pictures of demonstrations and issues such as corruption, extensive tax evasion, inefficient illegal system and bureaucracy in Greece, rather than by an analysis of the complicated Greek economic situation. Such coverage, when combined also with the narrow orientation of Greece's public diplomacy cannot but only contribute to the deterioration of the country's position in the world.⁶

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

Present Conduct: Mission and Structures of Greece's Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy, according to article 17 of the Foreign Affairs Ministry's organizational statute, is a constituent component of the country's foreign policy, the purpose of which is to influence the governments and publics of other countries. The ultimate aim is the projection of a positive image, regionally and internationally, as well as the provision of credible information on Greece's so-called 'national issues' (Greek-Turkish Relations, Greek-FYROM relations and Cyprus). This task is assigned to the Minister and the *Department of Information and Public diplomacy* (DIPD), which issues press releases and prepares periodical essays that are distributed internally and externally (Greek embassies). This requires that the DIPD follows the national and external media, collecting facts and information on issues regarding the Ministry and Greece. The head of the department, usually a high-ranking diplomat, is the spokesperson of the Foreign Ministry, informing on a daily basis the representatives of the national media and the foreign correspondents. The DIPD, however, is not provided with a unit of strategic planning and specialised staff in political and international communication, and is not

engaged in any sort of research and planning of public diplomacy⁷. Its activities are limited mainly to supporting the work of the Ministry's press spokesperson. Indicative is the fact that the working staff of the DIPD is only comprised of two interpreters/translators (English and French).⁸

As a result, the DIPD has to work with the *Secretariat General of Information & Communication* (SGIC). The SGIC, which is under the authority of the Minister of Internal Affairs (!), has a mandate to⁹ (a) inform state services and public sector agencies on important international events as well as views and reactions of Greek and foreign public opinion, including those of mass media, on issues affecting the country, (b) inform international public opinion, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on the Greek positions and views on various issues, with the aim to promote the country's image abroad and contribute to the strengthening of relations with foreign countries and international organizations, (d) contribute to the strengthening of national and cultural links with Greeks of the Diaspora, and (e) collect and make good use of data, especially in the field of national, political, social, economic, cultural and environmental issues concerning Greece, as well as international issues that are relevant to the country and/or the international bodies of which Greece is a member. In line with its mandate, the SGIG publishes the *Greek News Agenda* (GNA)¹⁰, a daily online bulletin in English, which informs its external readers of developments in domestic politics and current affairs, international relations, business, energy, culture, and travel. It is a reference for issues of general as well as of particular interest, providing useful online sources for additional information and documentation. On a regular basis the SGIG also publishes separate online bulletins for Greek readers regarding the country's political, economic, cultural and environmental affairs, as well as Greece's foreign policy and international developments. Regular online bulletins with information regarding the content of Greek language programmes in foreign radio stations, such as Deutche Welle, Bayrak, The Voice of Russia and Radio Macedonia-Skopje, are also published.¹¹ In addition, the SGIG, and not the DIDP, also oversees the thirty-six Greek Press and Communication Offices Abroad (PCOs), which operate within the framework of Greek Diplomatic Missions as principal information links between Greece and the foreign media or other opinion leaders as well as the general public.

In particular, it is the Directorate of Services Abroad (DSA) of the SGIG, which coordinates and directs the work of Press and Communication Offices Abroad. The DSA¹² (a) examines issues related to the PCOs, determines their targets and the way they act and operate, provides them with instructions and

guidelines on how to inform and influence the international public opinion in favor of Greek views and opinions, and (b) sees to the refutation of false or misleading news deriving from articles or broadcasts by foreign press and media, in cooperation with the Press and Communication Offices. In addition, and in cooperation with the PCOs, they also gather and process data and information regarding international or specific issues which are related to the international relations of Greek interest, and make use of them through the publication of news bulletins. Indicative are the following English, French, German and Chinese weekly editions, which present a summary of the main Greek political, economic and cultural events: *Greece Hebdo*, *Griechenland Aktuell* and the *Chinese & English News Review "Greece - Sila"*. Some PCOs also publish news bulletins, such as the *online bulletin* published in Helsinki, the weekly bulletin *Boletín Griego de Noticias* in Madrid, the *Monthly News Review* in Beijing, the bi-monthly *Foroellenico* bulletin in Rome and the monthly bulletin *Greece* in London. The PCOs furthermore plan, coordinate and supervise festivals, exhibitions and events that promote Greece abroad. In this area, the work of PCOs, as well as of DPID, is also complemented with the activities of a number of state institutions, such as the *Hellenic Foundation for Culture* (HFC), the *Greek National Tourism Organisation* (GNTO), the radio network *The Voice of Greece* and the *World Council of Hellenes Abroad* (WCHA).

The aim of the HFC¹³ is to promote the Hellenic culture and to disseminate the Greek language all over the world. Since its founding in 1992, the HFC has created branches in Odessa, Alexandria and Berlin. It operates offices with representatives in London, Vienna, Brussels and Washington. During the period 2007-2009, the HFC founded Centers of Hellenic Culture in Trieste, Belgrade, Bucharest, Tirana, Sofia and Melbourne. These centers organise seminars on teaching Greek as a foreign language, and in co-operation with public and private cultural institutions and the local government, they also organise major cultural and artistic events with the aim of promoting Greek civilisation.

The GNTO is a public entity supervised by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. It has thirty two national offices and twenty one offices abroad in countries such as the USA, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, China, France, Israel and Russia.¹⁴ As the ruling state agency for tourism, GNTO is responsible for Greece's advertising campaigns, for publications (posters, leaflets, books, promotional material), for the organisation of international exhibitions and tourism fairs, as well as the publication of the bulletin *Greek Travel Business News*.

The radio network The Voice of Greece¹⁵, owned by the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT), transmits in all five continents, where Greeks live, from the Balkans and Europe to Africa and Japan and from the USA to Australia. The programme includes productions of political, cultural and folklore interest. ERT 5, however, is not only intended for the Greeks living abroad, but also to foreigners living in Greece and abroad. It accomplishes this through a daily programme in 12 languages at short and medium wavelength. Thus, ERT5 is a source of timely and direct briefing of the various developments in Greece and the world. The Voice of Greece has also joined the world community of the Internet with live transmission of its programme 24 hours a day.

Finally, the WCHA was established in 1995, to consult and advise the Greek State on issues concerning the Greeks abroad. The WCHA, with permanent headquarters in Thessaloniki, is comprised of seven geographic Regions (USA, Canada, Central-South America, Europe, Africa, Near-Middle East, Oceania-Far East, Former Soviet Union countries) managed by an eleven-member Presiding Board. Its main goal is to establish cooperation, offer support and bring together the Greeks of the Diaspora creating a global Network.¹⁶ The Presiding Board of the WCHA, in cooperation with the Coordinating Councils of the seven regions, undertakes to systematically record problems, recommendations and proposals made by its members and the Greeks abroad in general. It also focuses on issues concerning Education, Culture, Youth and Entrepreneurship. In this context, the WCHA and the Hellenic Regional Development Centre (HRDC) cooperate in the materialization of the 'Speak Greek-Live Greek' programme. This endeavor is under the auspices of the Greek Foreign Ministry and the Greek UNESCO Committee while enjoying the unreserved support of the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation and the cooperation of Academic Institutions. It is worth noting that the teaching material is offered in English, Russian and Spanish. Those interested in learning Greek can register to have access to the online multimedia language-learning programme (www.greek-learning.gr).

Limitations and Drawbacks

Despite the above mentioned examples, Greece's public diplomacy lacks a well coordinated and central direction. There is no joint platform of cooperation between different ministries to form a common strategy for public diplomacy, each one contributing its own ideas, means and resources. The reality instead is overlapping responsibilities and individual action, without

central planning¹⁷. As noted, the *Department of Information and Public diplomacy* (PUBLIC DIPLOMACY) does not oversee the activities of the PCOs and lacks resources and organizational capabilities. In addition, the messages and activities directed to international audiences are mainly thought of and formulated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and in particular the *Secretariat General of Information & Communication* (SGIC).

Characteristic is also the treatment of the PCOs. Firstly, the press officers are not staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Secondly, and according to a recent public press release of their Association¹⁸, their professional development and elevation, as well as their posting abroad, are not guided by clear and specific rules, but are decided without prior warning and preparation. PCOs do not participate, however, in any kind of communication policy planning administered either by the Secretariat, or by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs¹⁹. What is of importance is not their expertise or ranking, but the priorities of the political leadership, and in particular the SGIC, as illustrated in the appointment of various personalities (journalists, artists) as Heads of the PCOs abroad. Such personalities do not always possess the relevant qualifications and education that the Press and Communication Officers have acquired at the National School of Public Management (Press Attachés Department)²⁰ after graduation from University.

Public diplomacy, as Skouroliakou rightly argues²¹, is not acknowledged as a foreign policy instrument, and little attention is given on how to develop its possibilities. Foreign policy goals are pursued mostly, if not exclusively, through traditional diplomacy paths, i.e. government to government relations. Such an approach has inevitably limits for the available audience, and does not facilitate a debate and dialogue between different publics to develop a different view of foreign policy, even concerning publics of immediate interest, such as the Turkish one or the one of FYROM.

Greece's Narrow Public Diplomacy Conception

Moreover, Greece's public diplomacy is also narrowly defined. Greece's governments still resort to the old and outdated logic of styling and reproducing the country's international image as an attractive holiday destination.²² This priority, as well as the emphasis on projecting its glorious past, indicates that Greece's public diplomacy, as practiced today, is mainly about selling a culture and a way of life, and not about trying to develop mutual and long lasting relationships in a changing world.

This may be attributed to Greece's memory of traumatic experiences resulting from a long, and in some cases painful, process of nation building, as well as from the constant –as far as the perception of external 'threat' is concerned– display of Turkey's revisionist stance (from the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 onwards). Thus, public opinion as well as the country's political elite do not sufficiently appreciate Greece's current position in the global arena, and perceive the country through the prism of 'Greek Exceptionalism'.²³ This discourse molds Greek citizens to believe that although they are 'superior', history has been playing 'tricks' with them, as they are permanently betrayed by 'foreign allies' and the powerful 'West'. At the core of this ideological position is the 'culture of the underdog', basic traits of which are introversion, xenophobia, siege mentality, and a prevalence for conspiracy-related approaches and interpretations of international developments.²⁴ Greeks suspected and continue to suspect complicity of the USA and the EU on the Cyprus issue, the Aegean and the country's debt crisis.

As a result, Greek foreign policy is not only dominated by ethnocentric stereotypes, but is also heavily influenced by a political discourse dominated by ethno-populist content. Of all NATO and EU members, Greece, in particular during the 1980s and 1990s, showed the greatest ambivalence in its choice of foreign policy options. The country's initiatives were not in conformity with Western standards of external behavior, as for example in Greece's refusal to condemn the establishment of the military regime in Poland in 1981, or the destruction by the USSR of the Korean Airliner in 1983. Furthermore, as foreign policy making in Greece is largely motivated by the need of maximizing electoral impact and popularity, domestic public opinion becomes a fundamental source of decisions and priorities. This not only amplifies the perception of 'a country under siege' from external pressure (as indicated in the demonstrations and mass rallies of the early 1990s to demonstrate the national/popular unity against the international recognition of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)), but also facilitates the adoption of inflexible and usually irrational political positions. Examples of the latter are the Greek embargo on the small and newly neighboring state of FYROM in 1995, and the recent decision of Prime Minister George Papandreou to propose a referendum on whether or not to accept the European debt deal for Greece to which he had personally agreed.

This reality in many instances restricts the government and policy-making mechanisms from prioritizing appropriately. The country's politicians and in particular prime ministers and foreign ministers had and continue to have a

predominant and catalytic role on the decision making process, determining the content, objectives, characteristics and quality of Greece's foreign policy initiatives. Diplomats and Press and Communication Officers, as noted above, mainly operate as executive and procedural organs that support the decisions of their superiors, rather than that of developing and debating alternative policies and strategies. The direction of Greece's foreign policy and international communication is left to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, without prior debate and consultation in the context of collective bodies or institutions.²⁵

This institutional gap does not allow for an open, public and political debate on Greece's public diplomacy. In fact, decisions on the direction of Greece's public diplomacy, one could argue²⁶, are largely left to the politicians and leaders who (may) have a vision and strategy for the country's international position and image. One such example is Constantine Karamanlis, who as prime minister of the country in the 1950s and the 1970's invested on Greece's possibilities as an attractive cultural and holiday destination. He personally supported and achieved the upgrading of Greece's archaeological sites, established the Athens and Epidaurus Festivals, cultivated the idea of creating the Acropolis Museum, constructed luxurious hotels and invested on the country's roads, airports and ports. Another example is that of Costas Simitis, prime minister of Greece from 1996 to 2004 who pressed for the country's political and economic modernization, the consolidation of Greece's position within the EU, as well as the upgrading of its infrastructure.

Greek Olympics Public Diplomacy

The absence of a public debate also creates major obstacles in the understanding, communication and coordination of Greece's public diplomacy. Indicative is the management of Greece's image and position before and after the Athens Olympic Games of 2004.²⁷ Preparing for and hosting the Athens Games proved to be a unique exercise and experience for the country as a whole. For more than five years, the city of Athens looked like a major construction site. In addition to the entire games infrastructure in Athens and other cities of the country, 2,800 km of roads were built or upgraded in the greater Attica region. The new metro together with refurbishment works in the existing light rail system as well as the suburban rail gave the city of Athens a contemporary European outlook.²⁸ The hosting of the Games was also successful. For the first time ever a record of 201 National Olympic Committees participated in the Olympic Games. More than

21,000 media representatives from around the world attended the Games and 3.9 billion people had access to the television coverage.²⁹

However, by investing on an idealized projection of Greece's glorious past and the return of the Olympic Games to their birth place, Athens³⁰, the Organizing Committee of the Athens Olympic Games (ATHOC) failed to provide the country with sustaining messages, visions and priorities for the 21st century. As a result no public discussion was held on the environmental or economic consequences of the Games.³¹ In fact, and according to the results of public polls for the period 2001-2003, most Greek citizens conceived the Games as the country's passport to the developed, Western world. The problems and consequences associated with the Olympic Games, both in economic and environmental terms, seemed to be of secondary importance. Nearly 83% of the respondents considered the Games to be a 'very important event', with 28.5% expecting that they would create job opportunities, 21.4% improve the international position of Greece and 27.7% upgrade the country's infrastructure.³²

As Greece discovered, however, their preparation was not an easy task as they were characterized by delays in the assignment and execution of projects, conflicts between the government and the ATHOC regarding their jurisdictions, increased concern on the rising cost of the Games and tight deadlines. This did not contribute to positive international reporting, nor to a reduction of the negative international stereotypes regarding contemporary Greece.³³ In a qualitative survey carried out among opinion leaders of six countries (USA, Japan, France, United Kingdom, Spain and Germany) by the ATHOC in December 2003, the Greeks were perceived to lack the qualities of careful planning, reliability and organisational skills. Furthermore, it was also emphasized that the Greeks are not associated with attributes that are considered to play an important role in modern democracies, such as social responsibility or capable administration. Respondents described the Greeks as somewhat 'indolent'. The Greeks, it was felt, are pleasant and passionate, 'essentially harmless' but also 'relatively unimportant', 'a nation that must not necessarily be taken all that seriously'. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that few respondents were able to comment on Greece's economical or political situation.³⁴

This is not to argue that the final success of the Games did not generate a series of positive messages for the image of Greece. According to a global research undertaken by the ATHOC, respondents felt more positive towards Greece after the Athens Olympic Games took place, with figures reaching 45% in the US, compared to 36% prior to the Games, and 44.9% in Europe,

compared to 44% with positive perceptions prior to the Games. Awareness of Greece as the host country of the 2004 Olympic Games also significantly improved. In all countries involved in the survey, awareness levels reach results higher than 88% after the hosting of the Games.³⁵

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

Rethinking Greece's Position in the World

To begin with, Greece needs to fully appreciate the country's contemporary regional and international position. Indicative are the results of the 2011 *Human Development Index* (HDI). The HDI has been introduced as an alternative to conventional measures of national development, such as the level of income and the rate of economic growth. It is published every year since 1990 by the *United National Development Program* (UNDP). The HDI represents a push for a broader definition of well being and provides a composite measure of three basic dimensions of human development: health, education and income. The HDI index gives Greece a rank of 29 out of 187 countries with comparable data³⁶ which is positive when compared to other countries in the region and in Europe.³⁷

Despite this reality, the Greek government has failed to respond to the critiques of the international press about a profoundly 'corrupt' and 'clientelistic' state with an 'overburdened' public sector and 'lazy' civil servants. This is not to deny that Greece's debt crisis should not be attributed to the economic and social failures of its political system, but by passively accepting Greece's 'peculiarity' one fails to understand its international dimension and affinity with related events in other developed countries of the world. The debt crisis, for example, should also be associated with the global economic crisis, interdependence, vulnerability and cohesion of the EU as similar debt

problems are troubling 'bigger' and 'more developed' EU member states as well. Public and political discourse needs to be more substantial and should focus on Greece's contemporary position; the country's values and how those are related with the values of other countries; and its comparative advantages and how they should be perceived, discussed and projected internationally.

To do so Greece needs to understand and not undermine its historical progress and direction. From a poor and developing country in the 1950s, Greece now enjoys the highest level of development in the wider Balkan and Mediterranean region, combined with an established democracy and membership in the euro-zone, the EU and NATO. This progress should not only provide Greece with confidence, but should also unleash its capabilities and promises in order to deal with the actual problems of its political and economic system, such as corruption, low competitiveness and production.³⁸ In particular, Greece needs to develop a balancing strategy, one that not only allows it to be indispensable regionally and internationally, but also permits it to continue its internal political and economic reforms and development. This cannot be practised without rethinking and utilizing the concept and possibilities of public diplomacy in today's interdependent and turbulent world.³⁹

Rethinking the Concept and Possibilities of Public Diplomacy

Mainstream public diplomacy practice focuses on (a) cultural diplomacy (arts, educational and sporting exchanges), (b) advertising and sponsorship of media programming and events, (c) media relations (meeting and communicating with journalists, editors, producers), (d) hosting and participating in public events, and (e) radio and television broadcasting.⁴⁰ Such actions are not only aimed at informing and influencing audiences overseas for the purpose of promoting the national interest and foreign policy goals, but are also focussed on improving the image or reputation of a country. Although important, such actions, as we have seen with the example of the USA, are not sufficient for creating a favorable global environment. Neither do they contribute, as Greece's example with the Athens Olympic Games of 2004 illustrates, to the reduction of stereotypes. This is not surprising as the emphasis of such public diplomacy actions is on constructing a friendlier environment within which states can pursue their policies. Public diplomacy as practiced is monological, aiming at making individuals in other countries supporters of ideas, views and values that are friendly to the country/ies

exercising public diplomacy, disregarding, however, that in today's world it is what one hears and understands, not what one says that is important.

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

'International' politics, as Heywood⁴¹ clearly illustrates, has been transformed into 'global' politics through a variety of new developments. Although it would be absurd to dismiss states and national governments as irrelevant, equally absurd would also be to deny that over a significant number of issues states operate in a context of global interdependence and interconnectedness. This has not only facilitated a shift from geopolitics to a foreign policy that emphasizes the primacy of values and ethics⁴², but has also opened up the field of global politics to other actors and other types of activity, which mainly rely on the social power of individuals and NGOs. Social power, defined as the ability to set standards, create norms and values that are deemed legitimate and desirable, without resorting to state-centric power, is a central part of contemporary global politics.⁴³ States compete with global communication networks and NGOs to communicate information to the public. Foreign policy and diplomacy is taking place in a system of mutually beneficial relations that is no longer state-centric, but composed of multiple actors and networks that not only operate in a fluid global environment of new issues and contexts, but also cooperate and learn from each other.⁴⁴ As a result, and as the recent literature on the subject underlines⁴⁵, public diplomacy today can only be successful if designed to operate within a 'polylateral' world of multiple actors. The challenge for public diplomacy is to be inclusive and collaborative, facilitating substantive dialogues with broader foreign societies and actors, such as domestic and global NGOs and civil society movements, not only when trying to convey messages and develop friendly

relations, but also when dealing with global issues.⁴⁶

In the realm of contemporary global politics, therefore, public diplomacy cannot only depend upon the attractiveness of a country's culture or way of life. This approach is too limited, as it aims only, at affecting the policies, dispositions and actions of other states in an indirect way.⁴⁷ In today's world, establishing and maintaining public diplomacy requires building mutually beneficial relationships with internal and foreign publics. Engaging other actors, internal and external, and incorporating their views should be at the centre and not the periphery of public diplomacy. This requires a shift from a hierarchical public diplomacy communication model to a network oriented one. The first, as noted above, transmits top-down information flows to a target audience, seeking to influence foreign public opinion, which in turn influences the foreign policy of other countries. The network model, on the other hand, and in light of common transnational problems, seeks to build relationships around common interests in order to promote action in fields where governments seem unable to deliver. It requires more diverse membership and less hierarchical organization to incorporate new actors and their specialized knowledge more efficiently, which means abandoning the logic of transmitting carefully crafted messages to a large but static audience in order to achieve policy objectives. Instead, there needs to be a focus on building sustainable relationships with foreign publics as an end in itself, through message exchange, dialogue, and interaction. The changing global environment, characterized by cultural diversity, turbulence, the emergence of new actors and the rise of interactive media, makes this all the more necessary.

When considering Greece's location in a complex, volatile and security-consuming geographical zone, including the Balkans, the Black Sea region, the Mediterranean and the Middle East, such a public diplomacy strategy will not only provide the country with new opportunities in dealing with its bilateral problems (Turkey, FYROM), but will also enhance its relevance and influence in multilateral organisations and forums, supplying it with ample opportunities in world affairs, far beyond its current economic condition and limited hard power capabilities.

Paths to Improving Greek Public Diplomacy

Over the years Greek foreign policy has developed mainly on the logic of dealing with 'threats' that derive primarily from neighboring countries.

Without doubt, some of these ‘threats’ existed and continue to do so. However, a distinguishing characteristic of Greece’s foreign policy was and is the excessive appreciation of these threats. Greek foreign policy is mainly occupied with the country’s uneasy and in many cases hostile and conflictual relationship with Turkey and FYROM. This has not only created a political context and public discourse⁴⁸ within which negotiated and conciliatory solutions to long-standing problems with Greece’s neighbours are out of question, but has also deprived Greece from participating energetically in the European and global system. Greece, as Skouroliakou rightly stresses⁴⁹, “while sticking to its own problems, it stays aside of the contemporary debates resulting in European policies, ultimately working against its own interests: diplomacy is a multilevel give and take game where empathy is vital; what might not be interesting to you could be crucial for someone else, so listening and comprehending others is important if you want your case to be heard”. The challenge for Greece, therefore, is how to develop a collaborative and multistakeholder public diplomacy⁵⁰ strategy that contributes to the country’s security and credibility through active participation in the discussion, management and resolution of pressing problems of the regional/global agenda. With that in mind, the next section suggests possible changes at three levels. At regional level, through Greece’s public diplomacy towards Turkey and the Balkans; at global level through the thematic re-focusing of the country’s public diplomacy and at institutional level through the creation of structures and mechanisms that work on and decide the content of Greece’s public diplomacy. Finally, the paper also examines how Greece can utilize public diplomacy in dealing with the complex and multifaceted issue of the debt crisis in a multi-actor system such as the EU.

Regional Level

At a regional level, Greece’s foreign policy must try to rationalise and re-conceptualise its neighbouring ‘threats’, especially in relation to Turkey which has dominated the country’s foreign policy and behaviour since 1974. This position was justified in 1974 with the invasion of Cyprus and Turkey’s subsequent assertions and claims in the Aegean. Today, however, Greece’s successful policy to secure the membership of Cyprus within the EU and to support Turkey’s European orientation, have significantly limited the probability of a military escalation between the two countries either with regard to Cyprus or the Aegean. This reality should allow Greece to invest on the political, economic and social rapprochement of the two countries, and facilitate and encourage the frank exchange of views that will create the

conditions for overcoming the frictions of many decades.⁵¹

Greece's relations with Turkey therefore should be the basis of a public diplomacy strategy which rests on ideas and values such as respect for the others and cooperation, rather than conflict. The aim should be to listen and change, to engage the public in Greece and Turkey at the communication level and at the policy level, building bridges and achieving mutual comprehension.⁵² What is required is a public diplomacy that will assess and value the differences and similarities of the Greek and Turkish societies, their aspirations, achievements and cultural life of their individuals, common economic, social and environmental problems.

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

Despite its significant economic presence⁵³ in the Balkans, Greece has not succeeded in creating trust and credibility in the region. The emphasis on the name dispute with FYROM has not allowed Greece to diversify its agenda and encourage collective regional efforts to deal with pressing political, social, ecological and economic problems. Greece's Balkan policy, unfortunately, was also pursued with the offensive logic of 'economic penetration'. This logic, combined with Greece's manifestation of xenophobia to Albanian and other Balkan immigrants, not only activated the defensive responses of the Balkan countries, but has also produced a syndrome of distrust and constraint. Indicative are the results of a survey undertaken in the mid-noughties. Although 96% of the respondents in the Balkan countries admired Greece's political and economic development, only 26% regarded its policies and society tolerant. In fact, 74% stated that Greece was 'aggressive'.⁵⁴

It is, therefore, of absolute necessity that Greece develops a public diplomacy strategy with the aim of inaugurating stable and long-lasting policies of co-existence and understanding. Greece, for example, could take the initiative

to monitor, push and encourage the countries of the Western Balkans in an effort of accelerating their progress towards meeting and implementing the EU accession criteria, values and principles. This should also be accompanied by increased and substantial cooperation, with governmental and non-governmental actors of the region on the open and crucial regional issues of the environment, tourism, education, technology and organized crime. In due time, by pursuing such an energetic role Greece will be able to crouch with neighboring countries and their societies, playing a central role in the development of solutions to common problems and concerns.

Global Level

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

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

The changes that are currently taking place in North Africa and the Middle East, for example, are opportunities that Western governments cannot neglect. People in the region are demanding changes that Western governments have been propagating for, but have failed to support. In fact, the popular uprisings of 2011 took many western analysts and elites by surprise -a surprise that was justified, given their failure to understand the growing political disenchantment and despair of the Arab peoples. By focusing too much on the factors that explain the stability of authoritarian regimes (i.e. limited electoral campaigns, market reforms, diplomatic relations with major Western countries)⁵⁵, many Western countries failed to appreciate how the

dissent of diverse constituencies that possess few institutional channels to express their discontent, may find ways to express their demands through novel means of political mobilization and communication.⁵⁶

European disarray over Libya and Syria has shown how difficult it is for the EU governments to find common cause, even on urgent and high-profile foreign-policy challenges. The mixed and even contradictory reactions of different EU governments to the Arab popular revolts have highlighted the lack of a common external policy. The exclusive focus of the West with governments of the area did not allow them to develop an understanding of internal (economic, social) dynamics. Open venues with the publics would have allowed for a greater understanding of those dynamics, and lead to a formulation of a policy that is more effective. Events in Egypt, to take an example, not only caught the Western governments by surprise, but in doing so forces them to re-examine their foreign policy *vis-à-vis* them and the wider geopolitical landscape in the Middle East⁵⁷.

Given the satisfactory relations that Greece maintains with many countries of the region, such as Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and Iran, it could consider the possibility of: (a) assuming a role as a 'bridge' between the West and the underdeveloped world, facilitating the promotion of collaborative projects and endeavors that reduce the 'clash of emotions' that arise between the 'rich' and the 'rest', and (b) take a leading role in developing the conditions for engagement of Western governments with the people of the region instead of their governments. Greece could facilitate genuine dialogue, and build mutual understanding and sustainable relationships with individuals and groups that could operate as forces of social and political change in the Arab world.⁵⁸ In addition, it could also develop a supplementary and supportive mediating role, facilitating and enabling meetings and negotiations between official and unofficial actors engaged in the conflicts of the region.

Such initiatives will facilitate Greece's relevance in multilateral organisations and other significant global forums and actors, supplying it with ample opportunities to gain influence in world affairs far beyond its limited economic capabilities. In that direction, it is also important that Greece invests on the increasing 'globalization' of its foreign policy. For many years, and especially after 1974, the geographical orientation of Greece's foreign policy was limited to Turkey, Cyprus, the Balkans, the EU and the USA. Today this is no longer the case. There is a geographical expansion of Greece's foreign policy with Russia, the Caucasus and the Middle East. Significant is also the gradual development of contacts, communication, trade and investments with the

emerging powers of South and East Asia (India, China). This important development is not only the result of globalization and the emergence of new economic powers, but also of the 'denationalization' of Greece's foreign policy. Non-state actors, businessmen and a diversity of institutions and organizations of the private sector are pressing Greece to diversify its interests and concerns.⁵⁹

In an era of financial crisis, this diversification of Greece's interests and concerns could serve as a significant source of economic investments, trade/new flows of tourism. In addition, and when considering the need to re-focus the country's public diplomacy, this diversification should also encourage the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take steps to equip Greece's domestic audience with tools through which to understand the world. Greece could launch a citizens' diplomacy program, enhancing the awareness and understanding of the domestic audience with global issues and problems. This will allow citizens to engage and initiate networks at regional and international level. Another option would be to establish a foreign policy program, promoting informed dialogue among the domestic audience via the internet.⁶⁰

Institutional Level

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

According to Skouroliakou⁶¹, it is necessary, firstly, that Press Officers and Press Offices should move under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Department of Information and Public diplomacy. The Department of Information and Public diplomacy will be responsible for promoting Greek foreign policy to both international and domestic audience. This will not only solve problems of coordination and centrality, but will also provide Press

Officers the opportunity to engage in more initiatives, craft policy plans and become more exposed to the public. Secondly, to create a mechanism charged with communication policy planning. That would also allow better coordination with other relevant institutions (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Development, Ministry of Education etc.). In fact, ENAT (the Greek Union of Press Officers) recommends the creation of a Greek Strategic Committee for Public diplomacy with executive and operating competences to be administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with central role of the Department of Information and Public diplomacy. It would have a decisive rather than a mere consultative role and would be the government's advisor on public diplomacy. Last but not least, there is the question of funding public diplomacy activities. This should be done by cutting on the defense budget. Greece, as outlined above, should be a 'soft power' rather than a 'hard power' state. Greece has one of the highest military expenditures among NATO countries. Greece should reallocate these resources to public diplomacy training, cultural and business activities abroad and promotion of a positive image of the country.

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

This is very important in a globalizing world, as traditional diplomacy is both increasingly contested for its inherent lack of transparency, as well as incompetence to solve a number of problems. States have lost power over the economy, being reduced to little more than instruments for the restructuring of national economies in the interests of global capitalism. Globalization is uneven and a hierarchical process, characterized not only by growing polarization between the 'rich' and the 'poor', but also by a weakening of democratic accountability as institutions of global political and economic governance fail to reflect the interests of all groups and states. Regional and international bodies, such as the EU, the World Bank and the IMF, have adopted a neoliberal agenda, acting in the interests of transnational corporations and banking conglomerates. In addition, despite the instabilities

and imbalance that have led to an intensifying global economic crisis, the great powers and international organizations seem unwilling to regulate and reform the global financial system⁶². They adopt short-term policies, dealing with the symptoms rather than the roots of the problems. They do not make an effort to explain their policies and implement them by neglecting valid objections that are put forward by politicians, academics and civil society actors.

This not only increases their lack of transparency, but also their effectiveness, as it is illustrated in the joint efforts of the EU and the IMF to deal with the debt crisis of Europe. Despite the ample critiques and protests against the market fundamentalism of their 'structural adjustment' programmes (as for example, the reduction of government spending on everything and the privatization of assets), and evidence that the IMF's policies in Asia and Russia and elsewhere, often deepened rather than reduced economic crises, the EU and IMF are unwilling to engage in a public debate on the logic of their strategies, providing argumentation and perhaps benefitting from feedback and counter-arguments. In this way, the solution to the euro-zone crisis will be impossible to achieve without bringing social and political tensions to the surface, creating problems for years to come.

The Example of the European Union

With the above in mind, Greece should also invest in a public diplomacy strategy that aims at enhancing transparency and legitimacy, and, therefore, also the efficiency of the country's efforts to deal with and overcome its severe economic problems. The country is not only witnessing a massive economic crisis, but the national government has also done very little to encourage public debate on stringent fiscal and economic measures, the viability and prospects of European economic governance. Public diplomacy, therefore, should aim at creating hubs for discussion, argumentation and counter-argumentation and feedback. Greece could do this at two levels:

Firstly, encourage and facilitate a public debate on European economic governance. Ever since the design of the single currency, there have been serious doubts on its sustainability. The sovereign debt crisis that has hit the euro-zone vividly demonstrated the insufficiency of existing European economic governance. Faced with the shortcomings of European economic governance, the EU, however, has not responded by choosing to pursue fundamental changes, but has opted to reform its economic governance framework by strengthening fiscal discipline through the introduction of more

automatic sanctions and stricter surveillance⁶³. This response, however, has little to say about the absence of growth and about how to address the social impact of austerity measures. So far, one could argue, the response of the EU is about primarily satisfying the financial markets, and not about analyzing the effectiveness and feasibility of other alternative economic governance approaches and arguments to promote and protect investment in social services. Furthermore, little is done to persuade and assure the support of the European citizens with more stringent fiscal and economic measures. In our network society, however, states should be inclusive and collaborative with a number of NGOs and academic institutions in both understanding the depth and parameters of the problem, framing and communicating it to the public and pushing for the most proper recipes.

In this direction, Greece's Ministry of Foreign Affairs could launch an electronic-internet citizens' diplomacy program, enhancing the awareness and understanding of the domestic audience with European issues and problems. This will allow citizens to initiate networks at regional and international level, promoting informed dialogue among the domestic and foreign audience via the internet. This could prove helpful in two directions:

- It could increase the linkage of the process towards the consent of the peoples of Europe. It is important for citizens to understand why the institutions of the EU are pushing for greater austerity measures. To ask if it works, and in so doing to better inform campaigns for alternative economic governance approaches and strengthen the case for protection and investment in the social sector⁶⁴.
- To break the polarization of opinion on how to deal with the crisis. Should the EU continue to invest on a cautious, step-by-step approach with an emphasis on stricter rules, conditionality and austerity, or move forward with the introduction of Eurobonds and a change in the statute books of the ECB so that it becomes a proper lender of last resort? The EU needs to find a more common ground on where sensible economics and political reality can join forces. Citizens and thinkers need to present and widely discuss their views and ideas on how economic governance can be improved and how the euro-zone can grow out of this crisis⁶⁵.

Secondly, initiate a campaign to communicate the country's standpoint and position to the rest of the world. The European and international press have mounted a fierce and negative campaign against Greece, dominated by dramatic pictures of demonstrations and value-laden stories of the 'lazy' and

‘corrupt’ Greeks. This coverage, one may argue, may be due to the fact that the Greek crisis has been covered by journalists who are unfamiliar and not knowledgeable with the country’s challenges. In addition, one may also argue, that the political establishment, not only in Greece, but also in the member states of the EU, are a major driving force behind the current negative coverage⁶⁶. In Greece successive governments have failed to deal with long-standing problems (low competitiveness, trade and investment imbalances, fiscal mismanagement). As result, and by placing the economy in a vulnerable international position, Greek politicians, instead of taking the responsibility for formulating and implementing an internal reform program, seem, unfortunately, to prefer agreeing to policies imposed from the troika. This pushes the national governments to hold closed negotiations with the troika, shifting as a result the blame abroad, to the EU and the IMF. European politicians, on the other hand, have thrown all the responsibility on Greece, ignoring a more balanced interpretation of the crisis, such as the short-sighted interests of the markets and the EU’s inefficient supervision of the fiscal state of Greece and other member states⁶⁷.

Journalists and citizens, Greek and European, as a result, are naturally encountered with arguments of the ‘credibility deficit’ in Greece and the insistence of the EU and the IMF to ‘punish’ Greece. This, and given the hostile public opinion with regard to Greece, has led to a situation of unrealistic policies and targets to support the country and the euro-zone, which may well put the European integration at risk. This becomes all the more possible when considering the position of the greatest economy of the EU, Germany, which perhaps more than any other member state has responded by viewing the interests of the EU as identical with its national interests. Germany’s role in supporting Greece and other member-states with similar problems raises serious questions about its responsibilities within the euro-zone and even about its commitment to a single currency. Germany’s insistence on bilateral consultations and official summits, most of which take place behind closed doors, breeds suspicion and fears to both the governments and the people of other EU member-states alike. By disrespecting and disregarding its partners, and by ignoring also the possibility to discuss with European citizens the future of the EU’s economic architecture, it will be difficult to overcome the euro-zone crisis.

Greece, therefore, and without denying the malfunctions of its state structure, should invest on a consistent public diplomacy campaign with the following two objectives:

1. To communicate Greece's efforts and policies to put its house in order during the last three years. This could be done by establishing a central website, containing as much as possible in depth news, analysis and special reports, that may be useful also to anyone that wishes to travel, study, invest or work in Greece. In this direction, the website should also provide linkages that will allow possible users to locate all state and non-state actors initiatives and campaigns which project the image of the country and its efforts to overcome the crisis. Important also is that it provides linkages with blogs and other social network sites, providing the potential for dialogue, proposals and counter proposals on the crisis.
2. To open venues for dialogue, through the creation of transnational websites and fora, whereby citizens, NGOs and social movements can express their opinions and comments and ask critical questions. The state is no longer the best source of information, or even the most likely catalyst of policy change and stability. Governments no longer monopolize the collection of data and the production of information and research on global issues. Global movements serve as authoritative sources of information that originate outside statist discourse. They generate important information about global issues and their sources have been empowered by the increased sophistication and power of computers and the internet⁶⁸. Bearing this in mind, Greece's initiatives, therefore, will not only provide greater transparency, but also a venue for an exchange of ideas, discussion and criticism of the shortcomings and contradictions of current policies. Creating such open-access networks of dialogue may provide Greece with the possibility of not only facilitating a greater understanding of the parameters of the euro-zone crisis internally and externally, but also of the opportunity of contributing to the implementation of policies that facilitate the survival of the euro and not its destruction.

Conclusion

Greece's grave economic crisis poses an existential threat upon the country, as its exit out of the euro zone and into the periphery of the EU is a possible scenario. Despite the dreadful consequences this will have for the welfare level of the majority of Greek citizens, it will contribute to the further weakening of the country's global confidence and as a result also to its eventual isolation not only within the EU, but also within other regional and global forums. Under such circumstances, it is all the more possible that not only greek

exceptionalism and nationalism will be augmented, but also that the country's relations with Turkey and FYROM will deteriorate.

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

Public diplomacy in this context is necessary in order to reverse possible isolationist tendencies and place Greece more solidly within the regional and global system. This cannot be done without rethinking and re-focusing the public diplomacy of the country. At regional level this requires a public diplomacy strategy that works on attitude change, on an effort of increasing the familiarity with the 'other side', by providing and exchanging reliable information and views not only with increased contacts between journalists, academics and students, but also with other actors of civil society neglected by the emphasis on cultural and educational links. At global level Greece's public diplomacy should focus on the profound and critical issues of our era, facilitating open-access networks of dialogue between states, NGOs and the public. The emphasis of Greece's public diplomacy on cultural and historical links has not delivered the desired results. Greater benefits can be reaped through the development of a well planned and coordinated soft-power orientation, highlighting and investing on its significant role as a pole of stability as well as a pillar of the EU and NATO in the Mediterranean, the Middle East and North Africa. To do so Greece must extricate herself from the logic of 'Greek Exceptionalism', becoming a positive actor by providing ideas, initiatives and solutions to global problems, rather than just appearing

as a county that has only problems, internal and external.

In a globalizing world, Greece should also strive to practice a public diplomacy that encourages and embraces dialogue and feedback. The example of the EU and the euro-zone crisis is indicative. Government to government negotiations, at bilateral or multilateral level, has failed to provide stability and solutions to the problem. Moreover and when considering the increasing reaction not only of Greek, but also of an increasing amount of citizens, social movements and NGO's in other member-states of the EU to question the logic of imposed and unrealistic austerity measures, Greece should seriously consider complementing its government to government relations with a public diplomacy that facilitates communication and discussion processes between governments and foreign publics, with the aim not only of communicating official standpoints, but also listen and reply to potential counter-arguments and in some cases even incorporate some of them into the final policies. What ultimately matters most is the support and confidence of the EU citizens. The public opinions within the euro-zone, including the stronger and weaker countries, need to be convinced of the benefits of the single currency and the common destiny it entails. If supportive, this could potentially lead to more favorable terms for dealing with the Greek economic crisis, but also to a prosperous and stable monetary union.

The issue of the EU's economic governance as discussed above is of course only indicative, since a number of others, like terrorism, environmental degradation, immigration etc. could be added to the priorities of Greece's public diplomacy. The state-centric dialogue on these issues could be extended to include others whose concern is no less demanding of recognition. The threats and problems of today's world are a matter of common security, rather than anyone's national security alone. Thus there is not only a need to open up the possibility of putting pressure on states, but also on broadening the range of actors involved in the management and resolution of these problems. The challenge might seem insuperable, but it should not be ignored if Greece wants to enhance its relevance, role and influence in the international system. Prosperity in a globalized and turbulent world requires that Greece develops the outlook and skills that can only be gained from exposure to and understanding of other values, experiences and arguments at regional and global level. In these terms, public diplomacy, therefore, is not a luxury for a country plagued by severe institutional and economic problems. To the contrary it can contribute to a better future.

NOTES

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