

**T.C.
ISTANBUL KÜLTÜR UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**EVALUATION OF IMM'S CITY DIPLOMACY ACTIVITIES DURING
İMAMOĞLU'S FIRST TERM (2019-2024) FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PUBLIC
DIPLOMACY**

MA Thesis by

**Zana GÜMÜŞ
1900003140**

Department: International Relations

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Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hazal PAPUÇÇULAR KUTLU

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Members of Examining Committee:

Prof. Dr. Çağla Gül YESEVİ

Dr. Ahmet Cemal ERTÜRK

JUNE 2024

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Enstitü	:	Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü
Dalı	:	Uluslararası İlişkiler
Programı	:	Uluslararası İlişkiler
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ÖZET

Bu araştırma tezi, İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi'nin Ekrem İmamoğlu'nun belediye başkanlığına seçilmesinin ardından 2019-2024 yıllarını kapsayan ilk döneminde gerçekleştirdiği kent diplomasisi faaliyetlerini ortaya koymayı ve bunları kamu diplomasisi açısından değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Bu bağlamda, tez beş bölümden oluşacaktır. İlk bölüm giriş ve metodolojiyi açıklayacak, ikinci bölüm kamu diplomasisinin kavramsal gelişimini ve temel kavramlarını, Türkiye'nin kamu diplomasisi uygulamalarına ilişkin örneklerle birlikte açıklayacaktır. Üçüncü bölümde ise, kent diplomasisinin kavramsal gelişimi, küreselleşme sürecinde kentlerin artan önemi, bu durumun kamu diplomasisine yansımaları ve kent diplomasisi ile küresel kent örgütlerine işlevsel yaklaşım ele alınacaktır. Dördüncü bölümde, İBB'nin 2019-2024 yılları arasındaki kent diplomasisi stratejisinin temel unsurlarının yanı sıra kent diplomasisi ile kamu diplomasisinin kesişimleri açıklanacak ve İBB'nin bazı kent diplomasisi faaliyetleri kamu diplomasisi açısından yorumlanacaktır. Ayrıca son olarak, beşinci bölümde sonuçlar sunulacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kent diplomasisi, kamu diplomasisi, İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi

University : **Istanbul Kültür University**
Institute : **Institute of Graduate Studies**
Department : **International Relations**
Programme : **International Relations**
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ABSTRACT

This research thesis aims to present the city diplomacy activities carried out by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality during the first term spanning from 2019 to 2024 following Ekrem İmamoğlu's election as mayor, and to evaluate them from the perspective of public diplomacy.

In this regard, the thesis will consist of five chapters. The first chapter will explain introduction and methodology, the second chapter will explain the conceptual development of public diplomacy and its basic concepts, followed by examples of Türkiye's public diplomacy practices. In the third chapter, the conceptual development of city diplomacy, the growing importance of cities in the globalization process, its reflection on public diplomacy, and the functional approach to city diplomacy and global city organizations will be discussed. In the fourth chapter, along with an explanation of the key elements of IMM's city diplomacy strategy from 2019 to 2024, it will also explain the intersections of city diplomacy and public diplomacy, and some sections of IMM's city diplomacy activities will be interpreted from the perspective of public diplomacy. And lastly, in the fifth chapter the conclusion will be presented.

Keywords: city diplomacy, public diplomacy, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used in this thesis.

IMM	:	Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality
UN	:	United Nations
EU	:	European Union
CoE	:	Council of Europe
TRNC	:	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
UCLG	:	United Cities and Local Governments
B40	:	Balkan Cities Network
C40	:	C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group
METROPOLIS	:	World Association of the Major Metropolises
Ak Party	:	Justice and Development Party
CHP	:	Republican People's Party
TİKA	:	Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency
YTB	:	Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities
İPA	:	Istanbul Planning Agency
PRS	:	Presence Switzerland
USIA	:	United States Information Agency
VOA	:	Voice of America
TRT	:	Turkish Radio and Television Cooperation
IULA	:	International Union of Local Authorities
U20	:	Urban 20
PES	:	Party of European Socialists
İETT	:	Istanbul Electric Tram and Tunnel Enterprises
WOA	:	World Olympians Forum
IFC	:	International Finance Cooperation
NATO	:	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OECD	:	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
CoE Congress	:	Congress of the Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Methodology of the Study

In the globalized world, international relations have become too complex to be viewed from a single perspective. International organizations, whose roots trace back to the Congress of Vienna and became significant elements in international balances, emerged on the world stage after World War I with the League of Nations. Today, alongside nation-states, these international organizations are the most important actors in international relations. With a history of about a century and now active in various fields such as the United Nations (UN), the Council of Europe (CoE), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and many others, these structures have certainly brought a new perspective to international relations and changed all understandings. Today, as the concept of international relations gives way to more inclusive global relations, cities have also become integrated into these structures on the world stage, alongside nation-states, globally operating large-scale corporations, and international organizations.

Undoubtedly, for someone looking at world events from a realist perspective, the networks formed by cities, transboundary initiatives, and foreign relations may not hold much significance in the chaotic international arena.¹ Similarly, theorists gathered around liberal thought often propose an alternative to the anarchic order drawn by realists, focusing on large multinational corporations, civil society organizations, and governmental bodies that can impose sanctions at certain points through credits, financing, and economic collaborations. However, city diplomacy, which can also be seen as a manifestation of the soft power of states and public diplomacy activities, is a topic that is not widely discussed in global relations.

¹ Figures like Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer highlight the chaotic state of the international arena by discussing the possibilities of conflict between states. Liberal thinkers, attempting to interpret this anarchic state of international relations from a more "optimistic" perspective, emphasize the significance of non-state actors in global affairs.

Today, nearly half of the world's population lives in cities.² Since the Industrial Revolution, large masses of people have migrated from rural areas to big cities due to reasons such as unemployment and livelihood difficulties. In Türkiye, a country with a late-industrializing economy, there has been a significant migration from villages to cities, especially since the implementation of neoliberal economic policies starting from the 1980s.³

Alfred Zimmern emphasized the central role of industrialization and technology - especially modern communication technologies - in the emergence of the discipline of international relations.⁴ Looking at other examples in history, it can be observed that industrialization triggered urban growth. Therefore, when considering industrialization and technological developments as triggering factors for the emergence of the discipline of international relations, as well as for the emergence of cities, it can be said that they serve as unifying factors in intercity communication in the international context. Ultimately, the factors that benefit the city are at the forefront of establishing communication and developing areas of cooperation between cities. Strengthening a city's industrial, technological, and commercial value is also a primary reason for the relationships established between cities.

Moreover, it may be argued that as cities grew, a global urban sociology and culture developed, marked by common lifestyles and specific cultural components among city inhabitants. In fact, people now identify not only with their national identities but also with their urban identities, such as being a resident of Istanbul, London, or Paris. Considering incidents from a city-centric viewpoint, as opposed to a national one, may indicate that a Londoner and an Istanbulite share more lifestyle similarities than does an average British living in Lichfield.⁵

Cities are giving rise to their own leaders. It's not possible to attribute this to a single factor. Challenges of urban life, the difficulty of developing a common living culture, and the presence of local governments in many areas from transportation to security all contribute to

² "World Cities Report 2022: Envisaging the Future of Cities," United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2022, 39.

³ Hilal Yıldırım, "Neoliberal Bir Politika Olgusu olarak Türkiye'de Geçekonu Mekânı," *Kamu Yönetimi ve Politikaları Dergisi* 2, no.2, (2021): 258.

⁴ Yasin Başpınar, "Uluslararası Güç Mücadelesinde Dijital Diplomasinin Yeri" (PhD Thesis, Milli Savunma University, 2022), 42.

⁵ A city with a population of approximately 30,000 in the United Kingdom.

fostering more conscientious leadership in city management. Particularly in addressing significant realities of the 21st century like climate change, cities can come together to form initiatives. Similarly, in areas such as preserving historical heritage, developing tourism, and increasing cultural activities, cities worldwide always collaborate. In doing so, cities not only align with their countries' foreign policy strategies but also contribute to them.

This study aims to examine the activities of cities, especially metropolises, which can be seen as new actors in international relations. It seeks to explain the contributions of cities to national foreign policy strategies and public diplomacy, and in this regard, aims to illustrate the relationships of Istanbul, one of the world's largest metropolises, with other cities, international organizations, and foreign mission representatives. The topics to be addressed in this study will cover the term of office of Ekrem İmamoğlu, the Mayor of Istanbul, from 2019 to 2024. The rationale behind my selection of this period as the focal point of my thesis stems from its distinction as the inaugural instance wherein Istanbul is governed by a political entity distinct from the AK Party throughout its incumbency. However, in order to better understand the background of the issues to be examined, reference will also be made to previous periods and the activities of other local governments in the national or international arena.

In this thesis, document analysis and qualitative research methodology were employed, and interviews were conducted. In order to obtain answers to the research questions, an initial literature review was conducted, and various books, articles, news sources, electronic resources, and reports were examined.

Public diplomacy is a form of communication that brings together various stakeholders in society. For instance, Natalia Broś⁶ and Viktoriia Ivanchenko⁷ have emphasized the importance of civil society in public diplomacy. Similarly, individuals such as Candace L.

⁶ Natalia Broś, "Public Diplomacy and Cooperation With Non-governmental Organizations in the Liberal Perspective of International Relations," *Journal of Education, Culture and Society* 8, no. 1 (July 10, 2017): 11–22.

⁷ Viktoriia Ivanchenko, "NGO Public Diplomacy As An Instrument Of Global 'Soft Power' Competition: American And West European Approaches," *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 20, no. 3 (2006): 10–15.

White⁸ and Crocker Snow⁹, who highlight the significance of global companies and the business world in public diplomacy, have contributed to this field with their work. All of these perspectives present a process and a network of global relations from different angles compared to interstate relations. In my research, I aimed to underscore the importance of cities in public diplomacy and explain this through the example of Istanbul. In this regard, scholars like Özçakıl¹⁰ and Güleç¹¹ have also conducted studies at the master's and doctoral levels in Türkiye. However, unlike these two researchers, I based my thesis on the example of Istanbul.

This thesis aims to answer and examine the following three research questions:

- 1- Can city diplomacy activities be interpreted as public diplomacy?
- 2- Does the city diplomacy activities of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (2019-2024 term) develop a different discourse compared to national foreign policy?
- 3- Can İmamoğlu's foreign relations activities be interpreted as an alternative public diplomacy activity?

1.2 Subject and Content of the Study

The subject of this thesis is to emphasize the importance of city diplomacy, which has emerged as a new trend in international relations, and to explain the relationship between city diplomacy and national foreign policy. It aims to develop an explanation of how Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality's (IMM) foreign policy vision, the contributions of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu to Istanbul's visibility and capacity for assuming responsibilities on the international stage, and how city diplomacy is used as a tool of public diplomacy.

This thesis aims to highlight the importance of city diplomacy in today's international relations. The impact of Istanbul on the international stage and its contributions to national foreign policy strategies through city diplomacy will be examined and clarified in detail.

⁸ Candace L. White, "Exploring the Role of Private-sector Corporations in Public Diplomacy," *Public Relations Inquiry* 4, no. 3 (September 1, 2015): 305–21.

⁹ Crocker Snow, "The Privatization of U.S. Public Diplomacy," *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 32, no. 1 (2008): 189–99.

¹⁰ Yasemin Özçakıl, "Bir Kamu Diplomasisi Türü Olarak Şehir Diplomasisi: Eskişehir Büyükşehir Belediyesi Örneği" (Master Thesis, Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, 2009).

¹¹ Selim Yücel Güleç, "Kamu Diplomasisi ve Yerel Yönetimler Konya Büyükşehir Belediyesi Örneği" (PhD Thesis, Necmettin Erbakan University, 2021).

Additionally, the role of Ekrem İmamoğlu in international relations will be evaluated, focusing on how he contributes to Istanbul's international visibility and reputation.

Furthermore, this thesis will examine how public diplomacy is implemented by IMM, showing how this type of diplomacy shapes Istanbul's role in international relations. Explaining the effects of city diplomacy and public diplomacy on national foreign policy, foreign policy strategies, and international relations is one of the main objectives of this thesis.

In conclusion, this thesis aims to understand how city diplomacy and the use of soft power by Istanbul influence its role in international relations in detail. To achieve this, the activities of IMM during Ekrem İmamoğlu's first term as mayor from 2019 to 2024 will be discussed, and examples from previous periods will be provided to explain the background of these activities.

CHAPTER TWO

2. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

2.1 Conceptual Development of Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy is a type of diplomacy that emerged with the development of mass communication tools in international relations. It is a communication and propaganda tool used by a state or nation to introduce, explain, and promote its foreign policy and cultural values to other countries. Often referred to as the "soft power" of a party, such activities aim to foster understanding, cooperation, and friendship among people, unlike the use of hard power such as military force or economic sanctions.

In the field of international relations, alongside interstate negotiations, treaties, and diplomatic relations, public diplomacy, which is used to introduce a country and create a positive image on the international stage, is gaining increasing importance. Public diplomacy offers a more rational approach by promoting understanding, cooperation, and friendship among people. Iztaeva and Abzhaparova express the following: "The indisputable advantage of public diplomacy is when people of the different countries not on a pointer from above, and happy-go-lucky or circumstances at first get acquainted, and then start being on friendly terms."¹² Therefore, public diplomacy aims to foster cooperation, understanding, and friendship among peoples independently of government-to-government relations.

In an era where international relations are becoming increasingly complex and borders are becoming more blurred, the concepts of public diplomacy and soft power offer a new perspective on how states can be effective on the international stage. This change has fundamentally influenced the role of states in public diplomacy and their strategies of influence. According to Manheim's definition, public diplomacy refers to the efforts of states to influence the international public opinion or elites in line with the interests of the country.¹³

¹² Venera Iztaeva and Laura Abzhaparova, "The Purpose And Methods Of Public Diplomacy In The Example Of Kazakh-Turkish Relations," *Alinteri* 1, no. 1 (2017): 40.

¹³ Jarol B. Manheim, *Strategic Public Diplomacy and American Foreign Policy: The Evolution of Influence* (Oxford University Press on Demand, 1994), 4.

Cull emphasizes the distinctive feature of public diplomacy from traditional diplomacy as follows:

"Traditional diplomacy is international actor's attempt to manage the international environment through engagement with another international actor; public diplomacy is an international actor's attempt to manage the international environment through engagement with a foreign public."¹⁴ Before the development of communication tools and the increase in access to information, not only diplomacy but almost all matters concerning peoples in general and governmental bodies were related to a specific social group. In this regard, diplomacy, which emerged as a form of communication between states, developed in a manner that concerned the traditional sense of two-state forms and their ruling classes. However, in the extraordinary increase in mass media and access to information in the 20th and 21st centuries, neither state governance could be reduced to a single social group nor did interstate relations take on different dimensions, somewhat becoming relationships between peoples with globalization.

Malone defines public diplomacy as "direct communication with foreign peoples, with the aim of affecting their thinking and, ultimately, that of their governments."¹⁵ It could even be said that today, all states and lobby groups around the world are making efforts not only to influence the people of a specific country but also to address and influence general audiences globally, along with the new lifestyle brought by popular culture. In this regard, content platforms such as HBO, Netflix, and open platforms like YouTube, rather than television channels, have created audiences who can think differently from their societal context and have similar lifestyles, on a global scale. Carminati states that Netflix is a powerful purveyor of American soft power, and alongside this, he points out that Korean pop music, Japanese anime, and Indian Bollywood movies are also significant pillars of public diplomacy.¹⁶

Gilboa puts forth three fundamental concepts regarding public diplomacy and explains them as follows:

¹⁴ Nicholas J. Cull, ed., *Public Diplomacy: Lessons From the Past* (Figueroa Press, 2009), 12.

¹⁵ Gifford D. Malone, "Managing Public Diplomacy," *The Washington Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (July 1, 1985): 199.

¹⁶ Daniele Carminati, "Netflix as a Global Soft Power Multiplier," *Modern Diplomacy*, November 24, 2023, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2023/11/21/netflix-as-a-global-soft-power-multiplier/>.

“The Basic Cold War model, developed to explain the bipolar world dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union, during which public diplomacy became an alternative tool; The Non-State Transnational model, a revised version of the original model considering the emergence of new actors in global politics, aiming to examine how these actors use public diplomacy; The Domestic PR model, which presents the most popular approach where states utilize their characteristics such as credibility, neutrality, and expertise to make their public diplomacy strategies more effective by engaging non-state actors.”¹⁷

Başpınar states regarding the context in which public diplomacy emerged, "In the 20th and 21st centuries, advancements in science, technology, communication, and transportation, driven by advancing technology, have not only influenced individuals' daily lives but also revolutionized the field of international relations. In this era where access to information, travel opportunities, and participation in political decision-making processes have become easier, the assumption based on classical realist thought that states are the primary actors in international relations has significantly eroded; societies, and even individuals, have become actors in international politics."¹⁸ In other words, public diplomacy manifests itself in a new era where mass communication tools are more effective than weapons of mass destruction, extending beyond the atmosphere predicted by classical realist thought. However, in addition to this, looking at historical examples, it also can be seen that public diplomacy activities were used not only in 20th and 21st centuries, but it has a background. Foreign powers, as seen in the policies pursued by Napoleon Bonaparte during the Egyptian Campaign, have also conducted successful public diplomacy efforts, especially towards the populations in the territories they occupied. So much so that Bonaparte conducted a propaganda campaign during the Egyptian Campaign emphasizing Islamic elements.¹⁹

¹⁷ Laura Meričková, “Alternative Approaches to Public Diplomacy,” *Polish Sociological Review* 187, no. 3 (2014): 352.

¹⁸ Yasin Başpınar, “Uluslararası Güç Mücadelesinde Propagandanın Yeri ve Kamu Diplomasisine Dönüşümü” (Master Thesis, Istanbul University, 1999), 77-78.

¹⁹ Halil Erol, “Islamic Propaganda by the French During the Occupation of Egypt (1798-1801),” *İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyoloji Dergisi/İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyoloji Dergisi* 42, no. 1 (March 30, 2022): 163–90.

2.1.1 Soft Power

The classical concept of public diplomacy has been reshaped by the notion of "soft power" proposed by Joseph Nye. Nye developed the concept of soft power in 2005, defining it as "the ability to shape the preferences of others through attraction, without coercion or payment."²⁰ The primary aim of this policy can be summarized as enhancing the image and prestige of countries through mutual understanding. This is one of the fundamental objectives of public diplomacy. Soft power is a country's presentation of its attractive qualities to other peoples. This form of presentation not only fosters cooperation between countries and peoples, but it can also be said that the application of soft power promotes peace and mutual understanding.²¹

Yılmaz also emphasizes, according to Nye, that soft power represents the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideas, and policies, stating the following on the subject:

"The correctness and effectiveness of the policies pursued by a country, both domestically and internationally, as well as its potential for soft power alongside its military and economic power, are among the factors determining the success of public diplomacy. The term soft power also denotes how attractive and exemplary a country is perceived by others."²²

Therefore, it can be said that the primary reason for a country to conduct public diplomacy activities is to make its culture and identity attractive to a foreign population. The concept referred to as soft power essentially encompasses efforts made by one country to be sympathetically received by the populations of other countries. Özel states that soft power became widespread in the 1990s and has an constructivist/neo-liberal perspective. According to him, this constructivist approach emphasizes a culture-focused policy by highlighting democratization, economic integration, and the rule of law.²³ Layne also notes that soft power can be approached from a constructivist perspective, and he also discusses this concept in

²⁰ Joseph S. Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 94.

²¹ Mohammed B. E. Saaida, "The Role of Soft Power in Contemporary Diplomacy," *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews* 4, no. 4 (2023): 3119–30.

²² Zülfikar Bayraktar, "Türkiye'nin Balkanlar'daki Yumuşak Gücü Türk Kültürü," *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, no. 35 (2012): 184.

²³ Cengiz Özel, "Yumuşak Güce Bütünsel Bakış," *Güvenlik Bilimleri Dergisi* 7, no. 1 (2018): 1–27.

relation to democratic peace and institutionalism.²⁴ Many countries have adopted an approach aimed at preventing conflict by keeping cultural dialogue open. For example, Germany has adopted a stance of increasing dialogue with Muslim countries following the September 11 attacks.²⁵

2.1.2 Understanding of New Public Diplomacy

Melissen also notes that the image-building, propaganda, and other activities of public diplomacy are as old as diplomacy itself, and public diplomacy has entered a new understanding parallel to the increasing communication tools.²⁶ And public diplomacy has witnessed change over time. Especially with the advancement of mass communication tools, new trends have emerged in this type of diplomacy. Karahan Toker and Çağla emphasize that the new model of public diplomacy, particularly with the development of social media, has opened up significant space for non-state actors and even enables "people to people" diplomacy to be conducted.²⁷

The primary difference identified by Melissen between new public diplomacy and traditional public diplomacy is that while traditional public diplomacy focuses on relations between state actors and other international actors, new public diplomacy addresses not only specific informal groups, organizations, and individuals, but also targets the general public of foreign communities.²⁸ In this, the development of communication tools, the internet, media, and social media have been influential. In the 20th century, with the advent of television, and in the 21st century, with the widespread use of the internet, public diplomacy began to be conducted through many different tools. It can be seen that content creators with accessible independent content from all regions of the world have also started to conduct public diplomacy activities on their own. Especially on social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, there is a significant exchange of information among young people. Nowadays, particularly in a time when young populations relocating to different countries for education

²⁴ Christopher Layne, "The Unbearable Lightness of Soft Power," in *Soft Power and US Foreign Policy*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2010), 51–82.

²⁵ Abdullah Mesud Doğan, "Public Diplomacy Perceptions: Elements of Soft Power in Germanys and Turkeys Foreign Policy" (Master Thesis, Middle Eastern Technical University, 2019).

²⁶ Jan Melissen, Donna Lee, and Paul Sharp, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

²⁷ Elif Karahan Toker and Cengiz Çağla, "New Public Diplomacy, Social Media and Non-State Actors," *Dumlupınar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, no. 72 (April 22, 2022): 92–108.

²⁸ Jan Melissen, Donna Lee, and Paul Sharp, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

and job opportunities can reach various peoples around the world through their social media accounts, it is evident that those who settle in the U.S. and Western European countries promote the opportunities of these countries. This positively influences the perception of these countries among other populations, increasing their appeal as attractive destinations. This freedom of movement in public diplomacy²⁹ provides a platform for shaping public opinion on many issues considered fundamental problems of our time.³⁰ Moreover, these issues are addressed not by states but by non-state actors such as civil society organizations, companies, and cities.³¹

The table below indicates the differences between conventional diplomacy, old public diplomacy, and new public diplomacy:

	Conventional Diplomacy	Old Public Diplomacy	New Public Diplomacy
Subject	Government	Government	Government; Non-governmental Actors
Object	Government	Foreign Publics; Government	Foreign Publics; Government; Virtual Global Space
Resources/ Assets	Hard Power	Soft Power	Soft Power
Medium/ Carrier	Governmental Dialogues & Negotiations	PR Campaign; Propaganda; Old Media	Diverse Media, Including New Digital Media
Communication Type	Horizontal, Closed Negotiations	One-way, Unilateral, Asymmetric, Closed	Two-way, Horizontal, Symmetric, Open

Figure 1: *Comparison of Three Types of Diplomacy*³²

Conventional diplomacy focuses on governments as the primary actors and prioritizes a pattern of relations between states. Looking at old public diplomacy, the main focus is on governments, but it also aims to communicate with different societies alongside intergovernmental relations. New public diplomacy, on the other hand, emphasizes open and

²⁹ The increasing use of the internet and phones, and the threshold people have crossed in accessing information, in my opinion, has provided significant freedom of movement for both states and non-state actors to present themselves and carry out activities in their favor.

³⁰ Awareness about climate change and global warming is an example of this.

³¹ From the perspective of climate change, many civil society organizations and global city organizations appear to have influenced global public opinion.

³² Taehwan Kim, "Paradigm Shift in Diplomacy: A Conceptual Model for Korea's 'New Public Diplomacy,'" *Korea Observer - Institute of Korean Studies* 43, no. 4 (2012): 533.

mutual communication and can be implemented not only by governments but also by civil society organizations and non-state actors. In this regard, new public diplomacy is a field of soft power application that includes sub-national figures alongside nations.

2.2 Basic Elements in Public Diplomacy

Nicholas Cull has categorized public diplomacy under five main headings: "listening", "advocacy", "exchange diplomacy", "international broadcasting" and "cultural diplomacy"³³

Type of Public Diplomacy	Sample Activities	Form of Public Diplomacy Has Been Salient
1. Listening	Targeted polling	Switzerland
2. Advocacy	Embassy press relations	United States
3. Cultural diplomacy	State-funded international art tour	France
4. Exchange diplomacy	Two-way academic exchange	Japan
5. International broadcasting	Foreign-language short-wave radio broadcasting	Britain

Figure 2: *Basic Taxonomy of Public Diplomacy*³⁴

Cull demonstrates the headings in his article "Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories" with the following examples:³⁵

Listening: Cull defines Listening as an attempt by an actor to manage the international environment by collecting the views of different societies. Here, he mentions Switzerland and highlights the Presence Switzerland (PRS), established by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in 2000, as an example. He mentions that the mission of this organization, established by Swiss authorities, is to regulate the country's international image by communicating with opinion makers in other countries.

Advocacy: Cull defines Advocacy as an international communication activity undertaken by an actor to actively promote its specific policy, idea, or general interest in the

³³ Nicholas J. Cull, ed., *Public Diplomacy: Lessons From the Past* (Figueroa Press, 2009).

³⁴ Nicholas J. Cull, "Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 35.

³⁵ *Ibid* 31-54.

minds of a foreign public in an attempt to manage the international environment. He refers to the intermediate nuclear forces discussions that began in 1975, highlighting the "twin-track" policy of the United States during this period. According to this policy, while the U.S. deployed weapons to Europe against the Soviets on one hand, it also worked on reducing weapons.

Exchange Diplomacy: Describing Exchange Diplomacy as an actor sending its citizens abroad and hosting citizens of other countries in its own country for purposes such as education, Cull provides examples from ancient Nordic and Celtic civilizations, as well as successes of the Japanese during the Meiji period in acquiring modern knowledge from foreigners.

International Broadcasting: When explaining International Broadcasting, Cull illustrates it as the use of elements such as radio, television, and the internet by an actor to interact with foreign populations, highlighting the significance of the BBC with reference to Britain.

Cultural Diplomacy: Here, Cull exemplifies Cultural Diplomacy by referencing the US-Soviet tension, stating that the US employed cultural diplomacy activities using photo exhibitions to change its image associated with war.

The table and headlines above show the five main headings of public diplomacy, their application areas, and examples of implementing countries. Of course, these examples can be diversified. Additionally, there are various methods of public diplomacy. Cultural interaction, educational and academic collaborations, media elements, and aid activities can also be considered as important components of public diplomacy.

Cultural interaction lies at the heart of public diplomacy. Sharing a country's culture with others is achieved through cultural exchange programs such as art, music, literature, and sports. Examples of such events include the Eurovision Song Contest among European countries³⁶ and Turkvision among Turkic Republics.³⁷ These events provide opportunities to

³⁶ Lisanne Wilken, "The Eurovision Song Contest as Cultural Diplomacy During the Cold War: Transmitting Western Attractiveness," in De Gruyter eBooks, 2019, 171–90.

³⁷ Fırat Purtaş, "Cultural Diplomacy Initiatives of Turkic Republics," *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs* 22, no. 1 (2017): 100.

explore and understand different cultures, foster connections between people, and showcase cultural diversity. Moreover, they contribute to making a country's artistic and cultural richness more recognizable internationally. For instance, Istanbul was selected as the European Capital of Culture in 2010.³⁸ In this regard, cultural diplomacy emerges as one of the most significant techniques of public diplomacy.

Educational and academic collaboration is another important component of public diplomacy. According to Akar, "Public diplomacy, an indispensable element of today's state policies, highlights the importance of soft areas in activities conducted towards foreign peoples. One of the foremost of these areas is education."³⁹ Through opportunities such as university exchange programs, scholarships, and joint research projects, greater academic collaboration is fostered between countries. This encourages the sharing of knowledge and experience and helps build bridges between students, researchers, and faculty members. Academic collaboration not only strengthens bonds between people but also contributes to scientific and technological advancements. In this respect, the European Union's (EU) Erasmus projects and student exchange programs hold a significant place in the EU's public diplomacy.⁴⁰

Another important element of public diplomacy is the positive promotion of a country's government and private sector through foreign media and public relations. This helps a country to be better understood on the international stage and to create a positive image. Well-designed communication strategies can effectively convey a country's policies, values, and culture, enabling closer relationships with foreign societies. Hollywood can be considered one of the most important tools in U.S. foreign policy.⁴¹ Again, Qatar's state channel Al-Jazeera being dubbed as the "Taliban Channel" by the United States after the September 11 attacks demonstrates the power of the media in international relations.⁴²

³⁸ Aysun Cançat, "2010 Avrupa Kültür Başkenti İstanbul Kültür Ve Sanat Projelerinin Kurumsal Disiplinleri; İstanbul Kültür Sanat Vakfı, Kültür A.Ş. Örneği," *Art-Sanat Dergisi*, no. 6 (2000): 229–41.

³⁹ Ercan Akar, *Eğitim Diplomasisi (TASAM)*, 2023.

⁴⁰ Ercan Akar and Muharrem Gürkaynak, "Bir Kamu Diplomasisi Aracı Olarak Avrupa Birliği Erasmus+ Programı," *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 42 (2001): 263–94.

⁴¹ Emel Akbaş, "ABD Dış Politikasını Meşrulaştırma Aracı Olarak Hollywood Sineması: Tarihsel Bir Özdeyiş," *Tarihyazını* 4, no. 2 (2004): 212–23.

⁴² Leyla Melike Koçgündüz, "Ortadoğu'daki Ayaklanmalarda Bir Katalizör Olarak Al Jazeera Ve Mısır Örneği," *Ortadoğu Analiz* 3, no. 29 (2011): 87.

A country can create a positive image in the international aid community by meeting the needs of people through aid projects in other countries. This emphasizes humanitarian values and encourages international humanitarian efforts. Foreign aid can be used to support crisis situations or to promote the development of developing countries, contributing to efforts to improve living conditions for people. At this point, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of the funds provided by the EU to candidate countries and the Marshall Aid⁴³ provided by the United States at the beginning of the Cold War. As another example, we can cite Germany's military, financial, and diplomatic support to Israel since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1965.⁴⁴

In addition, activities such as disaster diplomacy, particularly evaluated under the heading of humanitarian diplomacy, which will be considered within the scope of humanitarian diplomacy, not only bring governments closer together but also enable societies to come closer to each other, thus fully achieving the goal of public diplomacy. Kelman, in relation to this issue, asks the question "Can catastrophe bring peace?" and considers the approaches of countries and peoples in the aftermath of disasters as an element of peace-building.⁴⁵ Indeed, in the face of the destruction caused by disasters, aid activities are carried out independently of the political stances of countries, leading to closer relations between peoples. Despite the mutual disputes in Turkish-Greek relations, Greece sent 250 tons of humanitarian aid to Türkiye following the earthquake centered in Kahramanmaraş.⁴⁶ Türkiye provided firefighting support following the wildfires in Greece.⁴⁷

Public diplomacy has become an integral part of international relations today. Elements such as cultural exchange, education and academic collaboration, public relations and media,

⁴³The Marshall Aid, provided by the United States to war-torn and strategically important countries after World War II against the Soviet threat, can be considered as a multi-dimensional issue that needs to be considered militarily, politically, and economically. However, while these aids should be approached in a multi-dimensional manner, it can be said that they turned into American propaganda within the society receiving the aid, creating a pro-American atmosphere.

⁴⁴ Felix Berenskötter and Mor Mitrani, "Is It Friendship? An Analysis of Contemporary German–Israeli Relations," *International Studies Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (February 16, 2022).

⁴⁵ Ilan Kelman, *Disaster Diplomacy: How Disasters Affect Peace and Conflict* (Routledge, 2011).

⁴⁶ Anadolu Ajansı, "Yunanistan'ın Deprem Bölgesine Gönderdiği 250 Ton Yardım Malzemesi Edirne'ye Ulaştı," March 21, 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/asrin-felaketi/yunanistanin-deprem-bolgesine-gonderdigi-250-ton-yaritim-malzemesi-edirneye-ulasti/2851345#:~:text=G%C3%B6khan%20Balc%C4%B1%2FAA-,Edirne,yard%C4%B1m%20malzemesini%20T%C3%BCrkiye'ye%20g%C3%B6nderdi>.

⁴⁷ Anadolu Ajansı, "Yunanistan'dan Türkiye'ye Yangın Söndürme Desteği İçin Teşekkür," July 22, 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/yunanistandan-turkiyeye-yangin-sondurme-destegi-icin-tesekkur/2951907>.

as well as foreign aid and humanitarian efforts, are effective tools used to enhance a country's international influence and establish closer relations with the international community. Public diplomacy contributes not only to intergovernmental relations but also to fostering understanding and cooperation among people, thereby supporting global peace and stability. Therefore, public diplomacy is considered an indispensable element of today's global relations.

Public diplomacy stands out as a multifaceted field that requires comprehensive consideration. With the advancement of mass media, not only governments but also individuals, groups, companies, and civil society organizations have become stakeholders in diplomacy. In this regard, cities also contribute to the establishment of bridges between countries and the facilitation of smoother relations alongside governments' foreign policy activities.

2.3 Public Diplomacy Activities of Türkiye

With the increasing communication tools, a very intense public diplomacy traffic has begun worldwide. Such traffic not only opens up an important area in public diplomacy for superpowers that possess significant capital and manpower beyond regional and local powers but also beyond. The public diplomacy we clearly saw in the propaganda struggle that developed between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War was being conducted with opportunities that another country could not achieve at that time. For example, in 1953, in the United States, the United States Information Agency (USIA) was established with the aim of managing the communication process with world populations.⁴⁸ Similarly, the Voice of America (VOA) radio, broadcasting in 27 languages, has constituted a significant influential force for the United States.⁴⁹ Moreover, when the norms and values exhibited by the EU, supported by its economic power, are combined with the EU's normative power⁵⁰, they complete the unique structure of the EU, unlike any other entity.

Türkiye claims to be a regional power in its own region.⁵¹ On September 4, 2020, Turkish President Erdoğan connected via phone to the graduation ceremony of the 2nd Term

⁴⁸ Yasin Başpınar and Levent Ürer, "Uluslararası Politikada Dijital Diplomasinin Yeri: Ukrayna- Rusya Savaşı Örneği," *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları* 131, no. 259 (2022): 416.

⁴⁹ Başpınar, "Uluslararası Güç Mücadelesinde Propagandanın Yeri ve Kamu Diplomasisine Dönüşümü."

⁵⁰ The European Union, with its political strategy emphasizing norms such as human rights, democracy, and freedom of the press and thought, establishes itself in the countries within its sphere of influence, influencing their policies by introducing its values into their agendas.

⁵¹ Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu*, 2010.

Command and Staff Training of the National Defense University's War Colleges, stating, "Türkiye is further enhancing its regional and global power position with the historic reforms it has been implementing in all fields day by day."⁵² This speech holds a particularly significant dimension: The Turkish President, in his address at a military school graduation ceremony, not only emphasized the country's position in global power balances but also delivered it in an occasion where Libya's Defense Minister, Selahaddin Namroush, whom Türkiye directly engages with, was among the guests of the ceremony.⁵³ The point the Turkish President wanted to emphasize here is that Türkiye will be an actor in global balances with its hard power elements. Türkiye has been directly involved in many issues in the Middle East, starting with the Arab Spring and ultimately culminating in events that have reached its own borders. In this context, Türkiye has conducted extensive military operations in Syria and Iraq, and has strengthened its military presence in northern Syria to create a corridor.⁵⁴ This militarization in foreign policy serves as an example of the use of hard power during the AK Party government period and the areas where this power is utilized.

Türkiye has been governed by AK Party governments since 2002. The AK Party, which describes itself as "conservative democrat,"⁵⁵ has implemented domestic policies aimed at conservatization and, especially between 2011 and 2016, has shifted Türkiye's Western-oriented political stance in foreign policy towards a more anti-Western and "neo-Ottoman" strategy, aiming to expand Türkiye's influence, particularly in the former Ottoman territories, especially in the Middle East.⁵⁶ According to Yıkılmaz, Neo-Ottomanism is an inclusive ideology that encompasses subtopics such as regional leadership, incorporating Islamic elements within it.⁵⁷ These policies of the AK Party have led to critical attitudes towards

⁵² Ministry of National Defence of Türkiye, "Cumhurbaşkanımız Sn. Erdoğan MSÜ'deki Mezuniyet Törenine Telefonla Bağlandı," September 4, 2019, <https://www.msb.gov.tr/SlaytHaber/492020-80673>.

⁵³ TRT Haber, "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Türkiye, Bölgesel Ve Küresel Güç Konumunu Her Geçen Gün Geliştirmekte," September 4, 2020, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-turkiye-bolgesel-ve-kuresel-guc-konumunu-her-gecen-gun-gelistirmekte-514006.html>.

⁵⁴ Emre Gündoğdu, "Türkiye'nin Yükselen Askeri Caydırıcılığının Dinamikleri (2016-2023)," Akademik Hassasiyetler 10, no. 23 (2023): 447–68.

⁵⁵ Ak Parti, "Muhafazakar Demokrat Siyasi Kimlik," accessed April 9, 2024, <https://www.akparti.org.tr/parti/2023-siyasal-vizyon/siyaset/muhafazakâr-demokrat-siyasi-kimlik>.

⁵⁶ Fatih Yaşlı, "Dış Politikada Üç Dönem: Batıcılık, yeni-Osmanlılık, Sözde Avrasyacılık," Birgün, October 10, 2017, <https://www.birgun.net/makale/dis-politikada-uc-donem-baticilik-yeni-osmanlilik-sozde-avrasyacilik-183816>.

⁵⁷ Ayça Yıkılmaz, "Ak Parti'nin Dış Politika İdeolojisi: Yeni Muhafazakârlık" (Master Thesis, Istanbul University, 2016), 62.

Türkiye in the West.⁵⁸ Generally, as of the 2010s, Türkiye has pursued a foreign policy that expands its military presence in Syria and Iraq, adopts a tough stance in the Eastern Mediterranean, implements strong measures against Armenia alongside Azerbaijan in the Caucasus, and seeks to expand its influence in Libya and Egypt.

Especially with the emergence of the Iraq War in the early 21st century, Western arguments in the Middle East began to weaken by the 2010s. Türkiye, seeking to capitalize on this situation, has set out to expand its influence as a regional power. In Türkiye, many researchers, politicians, and experts find the atmosphere that emerged after the Iraq War concerning for Türkiye. In this regard, Yaycı notes: “Türkiye must protect its interests in the region. Because any unrest in Iraq, affecting a country thousands of miles away, will also affect Türkiye.”⁵⁹ Kalın also points out that a new "Turkish story" has emerged in this context, emphasizing that the changes stemming from Türkiye's internal dynamics are visible in foreign policy across a wide spectrum, from Europe to America, and from the Middle East to Asia.⁶⁰

However, Türkiye is not only a country striving to assert itself in its region through military power. At the same time, it engages in public diplomacy efforts, particularly in the Balkans, Turkic republics, and the Middle East, using various elements. Hasan Kocabıyık puts it this way, "The process of Türkiye's opening up to the outside world that began in the 1990s and its tendency towards active multilateral foreign policy has highlighted the need to strengthen its social and cultural ties, especially with the Balkans and the Turkic Republics. Since then, it can be observed that Türkiye's public diplomacy activities have also begun to develop."⁶¹

Türkiye carries a shared heritage with the Middle East, the Balkans, and Central Asia, both historically and culturally. Beyond this shared heritage, there is a focus on claims that

⁵⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye Directorate of EU Relations, “Avrupa Parlamentosuna, Konseye, Avrupa Ekonomik Ve Sosyal Komitesine Ve Bölgeler Komitesine Sunulan Komisyon Bilgilendirmesi,” 2023, accessed April 8, 2024, <https://ab.gov.tr/siteimages/resimler/2023%20Türkiye%20Raporu.pdf>.

⁵⁹ Cihat Yaycı, “İrak'ta Yaşanan Savaşlar ve Türkiye'ye Etkileri,” *Güvenlik Stratejileri Dergisi* 15, no. 30 (2019): 350.

⁶⁰ İbrahim Kalın, “Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Türkiye,” *Perceptions* 16, no. 3 (1998): 7.

⁶¹ Hasan Kocabıyık, “Değişen Diplomasi Anlayışı, Kamu Diplomasisi ve Türkiye,” *Avrasya Etüdüleri* 55, no. 1 (2019): 188.

Türkiye is the successor to the Ottoman Empire, which dominated the Middle East and the Balkan region for centuries.⁶² This heritage issue has been rejected by some Turkish governments, but it has been particularly embraced during the AK Party period.⁶³

Before the AK Party era, Türkiye's relations were focused on integration policies with the West, influenced by the Cold War.⁶⁴ However, Türkiye took significant steps to protect its own power and interests against the West at a time when the end of the Cold War was not yet foreseeable. The Cyprus Peace Operation carried out in 1974 reflects Türkiye's perspective on regional issues very clearly at that time.⁶⁵ The embargo imposed by Türkiye's ally, the USA, following the Cyprus Peace Operation, led the country to adopt a more distant stance towards the West.⁶⁶ However, Turgut Özal, who served as Prime Minister from 1983 to 1987 and then as President until his death in 1993, became associated with privatization-friendly policies since his bureaucratic career and also displayed a pro-US stance in foreign policy.⁶⁷ Once more, the governments of the 1990s adopted numerous reforms in support of Türkiye's Western-oriented policies.⁶⁸ In this regard, Türkiye became a member of the EU Customs Union in 1995.⁶⁹

Therefore, Türkiye's efforts to protect its own interests and assert itself in regional issues are closely linked to the end of the Cold War. However, in the changed dynamics after the Cold

⁶² Ahmet Uysal and Hüsamettin İnan, "Osmanlı Mirası ve Yeni Dünya Düzeni," *Dumlupınar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, no. 22 (2008).

⁶³ Nagehan Tokdoğan, *Yeni Osmanlıcilik: Hinc, Nostalji, Narsisizm*, 2018.

⁶⁴ Eren identifies the period of 2002-2009 as the "Construction Period of Idealism/Liberalism" of the AK Party and indicates that during this period, integration policies with the West, such as full membership in the EU, were emphasized. ("Erdem Eren, "Bütüncül Teori İnşası: Ak Parti Dönemi Türk Dış Politikası'nın Analizi (2002-)," *UPA Strategic Affairs* 2, no. 2 (2021): 14-16.)

⁶⁵ Hasan Yılmaz, "Kıbrıs Barış Harekâtı ve Sonuçları," *İnönü Üniversitesi Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 6, no. 1 (2017): 87-98.

⁶⁶ Anıl Nalkıran, "Soğuk Savaş Döneminde Türkiye'de Amerikan Karşıtlığının Yükselişi" (PhD Thesis, Trakya University, 2022).

⁶⁷ Hasan Yüksel, "Yeni Çalışma Yaşamının 3Dsi Ekseninde Anavatan Partisi'nin Neoliberal Eğilimli Politikalarının İşgücü Piyasalarına Etkileri," *Ordu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Sosyal Bilimler Araştırmaları Dergisi* 7, no. 2 (2017): 255-68.

⁶⁸ Colella D. Soyaltın, "Türkiye-Avrupa Birliği (AB) İlişkilerinde 1990'lı Yılların Analizi," *USBAD Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Akademi Dergisi* 2, no. 3 (2020): 26-56.

⁶⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Türkiye Directorate of EU Relations, "Customs Union," accessed April 8, 2024, https://www.ab.gov.tr/46234_en.html.

War, Türkiye is striving to carve out a place for itself between the East and the West, focusing on achieving this as a regional power.

Following the end of the Cold War and the admittance of former Eastern Bloc countries into the EU⁷⁰, Samuel Huntington links the non-acceptance of Türkiye by Western countries to a clash of civilizations.⁷¹ In such a period, Türkiye felt the need to find non-Western alternative partners for itself. Just as Europe turned to the states behind the Iron Curtain with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Türkiye turned to the Turkic republics beyond the Caucasus with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Moreover, during this period, Türkiye also began to develop relations with Muslim Albanians and Bosniaks following the bloody dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia. In this situation, it has led Türkiye to channel its soft power elements and public diplomacy into these regions, resulting in an active public diplomacy effort in the Balkans, West Asia, and Central Asia. It can be said that through Türkiye's intensive public diplomacy activities in these regions, a relationship is established between the peoples in these regions and the Turkish people, making Türkiye an attractive center for the people in these areas.

2.3.1 TİKA as a Public Diplomacy Element of Türkiye

The emerging dynamics facing Türkiye in the new era have highlighted the need for it to be a significant force not only militarily but also culturally, socially, and economically in its relations with neighboring regions. In this regard, in 1992, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) was established.⁷² With the establishment of TİKA, Türkiye embarked on conducting public diplomacy effectively as a soft power element.

Kılıçoğlu and Yılmaz state, "TİKA can be considered as the first institution implemented within the scope of Public Diplomacy by Türkiye in the new era following the collapse of the Soviet Union."⁷³ Nonetheless, they note that almost all of the offices opened abroad by TİKA between 1992 and 1999 were located in former Soviet countries.⁷⁴ Türkiye's

⁷⁰Hungary, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia joined the EU in 2004, while Romania and Bulgaria joined in 2007, and Croatia joined in 2013.

⁷¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Gardners Books, 2002).

⁷² TİKA, "Tarihçe," accessed April 4, 2024, <https://tika.gov.tr/kurumumuz/tarihce>.

⁷³ Gökmen Kılıçoğlu and Ayhan Nuri Yılmaz, "Bir Kamu Diplomasisi Kurumu Olarak TİKA'nın Ak Parti Döneminde Kullanılması," *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları* 116, no. 229 (2017): 175.

⁷⁴ *Ibid* 177.

interest in the former Soviet states after the Cold War stems from its desire to carve out a regional and global position in the redefined international balances.

TİKA utilizes various aspects of public diplomacy, with cultural diplomacy being the most significant among them. Cultural diplomacy is not a unilateral display of power but rather a two-way interaction.⁷⁵ At this point, TİKA particularly strives to preserve traces of Turkish culture through its restoration projects. For example, in 2023, TİKA restored the Sultan Murat Mosque in Skopje, the capital of North Macedonia.⁷⁶ Again, as another significant restoration project, TİKA conducted the restoration of the Ethem Bey Mosque in Tirana, the capital of Albania, in 2021.⁷⁷ In Senegal, a country geographically distant from Türkiye, TİKA also inaugurated a rehabilitation center in 2020.⁷⁸ In 2023, TİKA also provided food package assistance in Afghanistan following an earthquake, coordinated by the Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye in Kabul and the Consulate General in Herat.⁷⁹ In addition, in 2023, Duha Türkü, who earns a living by breeding reindeer in the Taiga region of Mongolia, renewed the tents of 230 families to withstand cold winter conditions. They provided material support such as raincoats, boots, first aid supplies, and medicine for the reindeer.⁸⁰ TİKA implements many projects like this in 150 countries.⁸¹ In this context, TİKA's public diplomacy activities address communities in very different geographies. TİKA's field of activity spans from the Altai Mountains to the Danube River. In this respect, this region, unlike the Middle East, can be considered as the primary area where Türkiye asserts its regional power claim.

⁷⁵ Zakir Avşar et al., eds., *Türkiye'nin Yumuşak Güç Enstrümanı Olarak Kültürel Diplomasi ve İletişim*, 1st ed. (Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2022), 23.

⁷⁶ İHA, "TİKA Tarafından Restore Edilen Üsküp Sultan Murat Camii Törenle Açıldı," April 7, 2023, <https://www.ih.com.tr/haber-tika-tarafindan-restore-edilen-uskup-sultan-murat-camii-torenl-acildi-1160976>.

⁷⁷ TOKİ Haber, "TİKA'nın Restore Ettiği Ethem Bey Camii Törenle Açıldı," January 17, 2022, <https://www.tokihaber.com.tr/haberler/restorasyon/tikanin-restore-etti-ethem-bey-camii-torenl-acildi>.

⁷⁸ Haberler.com, "Emine Erdoğan Senegal'de Rehabilitasyon Merkezinin Açılışını Yaptı," January 28, 2020, <https://www.haberler.com/emine-erdogan-senegal-de-rehabilitasyon-merkezinin-12862775-haberi>.

⁷⁹ TİKA, "TİKA'dan Deprem Felaketini Yaşayan Afganistan'a Gıda Kolisi Desteği," October 10, 2023, https://tika.gov.tr/detail-tika%27dan_deprem_felaketini_yasayan_afganistan%27a_gida_kolisi_destegi.

⁸⁰ TİKA, "TİKA Moğolistan'daki Duha Türklerine Destek Olmaya Devam Ediyor," October 12, 2023, https://tika.gov.tr/detail-tika_mogolistan%27daki_duha_turklerine_destek_olmaya_devam_ediyor.

⁸¹ TİKA, "Hakkımızda," accessed April 10, 2024, <https://tika.gov.tr/kurumumuz/hakkimizda>.

2.3.2 The Presidency for Turks and Related Communities Abroad as a Public Diplomacy Element of Türkiye

Beside TİKA, many different organizations contribute to Türkiye's soft power. The Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) stands out among them. It is a public institution that conducts studies related to Turkish citizens living abroad, groups identified as kinsfolk, and relatives of Türkiye studying in higher education institutions.⁸²

In this context, the YTB, affiliated with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Türkiye, conducts studies on issues concerning Turkish citizens living abroad and other nations and groups historically and culturally close to Türkiye.

The YTB defines its areas of activity on its website as follows:

"Today, there is a Turkish diaspora of approximately 7 million people living around the world, the majority of which are in Continental Europe. Strengthening the ties of this diaspora, whose homeland is Türkiye, is important for our country, our diaspora, and the host countries. The YTB pursues a multidimensional and inclusive diaspora policy towards the Turkish presence abroad. In this context, preserving the identity and culture, especially the mother tongue, of the Turkish diaspora; strengthening the sense of belonging to the homeland; and consolidating their economic, social, cultural, and legal status in the countries of residence constitute the basis of the Presidency's diaspora policy."⁸³

Studies regarding kinship communities sharing a common history and culture constitute one of the main areas of activity for the YTB. The Presidency operates in a vast civilization basin, spanning from the Balkans to Africa, from the Caucasus to Eastern Europe, and from Central and East Asia to the Middle East.

The third main area of activity for the YTB is international student mobility. In this context, the "Türkiye Scholarships" program is significant. Since 2012, coordinated by the YTB in cooperation with relevant institutions, the Türkiye Scholarships program is an extensive

⁸² Kürşad Emrah Yıldırım and Ali Yıldırım, "Türkiye'nin Yumuşak Güç Sembollerinden Türk İşbirliği Koordinasyon Ajansı Ve Yurtdışı Türkler Ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı'na Genel Bakış," Karadeniz Uluslararası Bilimsel Dergi, 2017.

⁸³ YTB, "Başkanlığımız," accessed May 2, 2024, <https://ytb.gov.tr/kurumsal/baskanlik>.

scholarship program offered to qualified international students coming to Türkiye for higher education from various countries around the world.⁸⁴

Regarding this matter, the YTB states the following on its website:

"Within the framework of the 'growing together' principle, the YTB aims to contribute to the creation of qualified human resources by enabling international students to support the growth and development processes of their own countries after completing their education in Türkiye. These students, who become members of the Türkiye Graduates family, which has 150,000 members worldwide, contribute to relations between their countries and Türkiye in various fields while strengthening intercultural cooperation and mutual understanding."⁸⁵

2.3.3 Yunus Emre Institute as a Public Diplomacy Element of Türkiye

Similar to these two institutions, the Yunus Emre Institute stands out as one of Türkiye's most important institutions in terms of cultural diplomacy. Conducting educational activities as one of Türkiye's most significant soft power elements, the Yunus Emre Institute represents a key player in this field. The conceptualization of soft power has facilitated the inclusion of difficult-to-define elements such as culture alongside material aspects in foreign policy.⁸⁶ Therefore, Nye has placed among the soft power tools of countries; art, education, popular culture, cultural interaction, tourism, mutual contacts, and the political tradition conducted within the country.⁸⁷ According to Nye, a country's culture contributes to its soft power to the extent that it is found attractive by other countries.⁸⁸

In this regard, it is possible to say that Turkish culture, which Türkiye possesses, is found attractive by other countries. In fact, Türkiye has a strong viewership of Turkish series in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Middle East, South Asia, and Central Asia, similar to the

⁸⁴ Abdulmuttalip Işidan, "Uluslararası Öğrencilerin Burslandırılmasında Kamu Kurumlarının Rolü (Yurt Dışı Türkler Ve Akraba Toplulukları Başkanlığı Örneği)," *Akdeniz Havzası Ve Afrika Medeniyetleri Dergisi* 4, no. 1 (2022): 1–8.

⁸⁵ YTB, "Başkanlığımız."

⁸⁶ Ahmet Nazif Ünalmiş, "Yumuşak Gücün Tesis Edilmesinde Kültürel Diplomasinin Önemi ve Bir Uygulayıcı Olarak Yunus Emre Enstitüsü," *Bilig – Türk Dünyası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, no. 91 (2019): 139.

⁸⁷ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means To Success In World Politics* (Public Affairs, 2004).

⁸⁸ *Ibid* 268.

Hollywood effect of the United States.⁸⁹ This not only contributes to the promotion of Turkish culture but also has an impact on the learning and dissemination of the Turkish language. In this regard, the language courses offered by the Yunus Emre Institute serve as complementary and supportive measures to enhance this interaction.

2.3.4 Religious Activities and Media Components as Public Diplomacy Elements of Türkiye

Indeed, the Presidency of Religious Affairs, which regulates religious affairs in Türkiye, also conducts activities abroad, particularly in Muslim countries, to increase its influence through various foundations.⁹⁰ It is possible to say that the Directorate of Religious Affairs conducts an active digital public diplomacy activity, especially through its social media accounts.⁹¹

In addition, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of the media in Turkish public diplomacy. In addition to extensively exporting its TV series, Türkiye has also tried to carve out a place for itself in the international media by incorporating a concept called TRT World under its public broadcaster, TRT. Indeed, when looking at the objectives of TRT World, it can be seen that it aims to create a different perspective among viewers and to break conventional molds.⁹²

The Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications states the following regarding public diplomacy:

"Public diplomacy is a relationship-building method aimed at understanding the needs, cultures, and peoples of other countries; conveying messages, correcting misconceptions, and identifying suitable

⁸⁹ İrfan Arık and Fatih Çelik, "Dublajı Yapılan Türk Dizilerinde Deyimlerin ve Kalıp İfadelerin Aktarımı (Kırgızistan Örneği)," *Korkut Ata Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, no. 13 (2023): 744.

⁹⁰ Fatma Zeliha Kahraman, "Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın Yurt Dışı Din Hizmetleri: Danimarka Örneği" (Master Thesis, Sakarya University, 2007).

⁹¹ Meryem Okumuş, "Bir Dini Diplomasi Aktörü Olarak Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın Dijital Hesaplarının Diyalogsal İlişki Açısından Analizi," *Medya Ve Din Araştırmaları Dergisi* 4, no. 1 (2021): 153–70.

⁹² Yeliz Karadeniz, "Türkiye'nin Kamu Diplomasisinde Trt World'ün Rolü," *Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Akademi Dergisi(USBAD)* (Online) 4, no. 9 (August 20, 2022): 560–78.

platforms for common purposes. In other words, it is a collection of positive relationships established by state and non-state actors with the peoples of other countries."⁹³

Szondi, the changing understanding of public diplomacy as follows: "Direct or indirect government involvement, support, and control are core to many public diplomacy definitions and programs, although the government is not always the 'official face' of public diplomacy campaigns as the role of non-state actors in public diplomacy is also on the increase."⁹⁴ Therefore, the use of Türkiye's media power is an example of this. Content, series, and productions produced by the state broadcaster Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) being presented to the global market are indicative of this.

TRT is positioned as a TV show exporter reaching more than 700 million viewers in over 150 countries.⁹⁵ According to Çapık and Dulupçu, Türkiye, the world's second-largest TV series exporter after the USA, finds an audience for its series across a wide geography, from the Middle East to Europe, and from Africa to South America.⁹⁶

⁹³ Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı, Kamu Diplomasisi Nedir? (Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2022), 11.

⁹⁴ Gyorgy Szondi, "Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding: Conceptual Similarities and Differences," Netherland Institute of International Relations Clingendael, 2008, 11.

⁹⁵ Esra Sayın, "Türk Dizileri Dünyanın Dört Bir Yanına Köprü Oldu," TRT Haber, March 2, 2021, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/kultur-sanat/turk-dizileri-dunyanin-dort-bir-yanina-kopru-oldu-560791.html>.

⁹⁶ Eser Çapık and Murat Ali Dulupçu, "Türkiye'nin Tanıtımında Türk Dizilerinin Bölgesel Başarısı," Geographies Planning & Tourism Studios 3, no. 2 (2023): 158.

CHAPTER THREE

3. CITY DIPLOMACY

3.1 The Conceptual Development of City Diplomacy

With the development of cities as densely populated units, city administrations have tended to establish communication with similar cities outside their national borders and collaborate with other city administrations on issues relevant to cities. In this regard, the concept known as city diplomacy has emerged. Looking at the scope of city diplomacy, this concept refers to the efforts of sub-state city actors regarding issues concerning local governments, rather than diplomatic activities among Ancient Greek city-states or the relationships maintained by Italian city-states during the Middle Ages. Thus, with the emergence of the globalization process and the localization of many issues affecting communities, city diplomacy has evolved as a type of diplomacy that also encompasses the concept of "glocalization."⁹⁷ Pluijm and Melissen describe this concept as, "City diplomacy is the institutions and processes by which cities, or local governments in general, engage in relations with actors on an international political stage with the aim of representing themselves and their interests to one another."⁹⁸

City historians consider the year 1913, when the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) was established, as the year when intercity global relations emerged.⁹⁹ Since this period, many regional and global organizations have emerged that bring cities together around specific purposes or through cultural and regional classifications.

Through the distinction between the diplomatic activities of sub-state actors and traditional diplomacy conducted by governments, Butler uses the concept of "paradiplomacy"

⁹⁷ Basri Yalın and Zeynep Arıöz, "Glocalization: An Emerging Strategy In The Context Of Local-Global Dialectics And The World Bank's Contribution," *Yönetim ve Ekonomi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 21, no. 3 (October 14, 2023): 220–37.

⁹⁸ Rogier Van Der Pluijm and Jan Melissen, *City Diplomacy: The Expanding Role of Cities in International Politics*, 2007, 6.

⁹⁹ Suna Ersavaş Kavanoz and Nisa Erdem, "Evaluation of Diplomatic Bilateral Cooperation Within the City of Ankara," *Ankara Araştırmaları Dergisi* 10, no. 2 (2022): 230.

to describe personal and parallel diplomacy that competes with or complements governments' regular foreign policy.¹⁰⁰

3.1.1 Paradiplomacy

The definition of paradiplomacy was first proposed by Rohan Butler in 1961. According to him, paradiplomacy is defined as diplomatic activities conducted outside official channels.¹⁰¹ Aguirre, on the other hand, pointed out that since the 1980s, paradiplomacy has been used in North American literature for the political analysis of federal systems and theories of renewed federalism.¹⁰² In this regard, Utomo indicates that Butler's concept of paradiplomacy corresponds to the modern concept of "secret diplomacy."¹⁰³ Referring to Butler's definition of paradiplomacy, Utomo states, "In this first attempt to define the concept, paradiplomacy was defined as a set of secret diplomatic activities which may take place under the table, as opposed to the official diplomatic acts."¹⁰⁴

Neves points out that the concept of paradiplomacy emerged in the 1920s within the context of relations among countries under the dominion of the British Empire, such as Canada, South Africa, and Australia.¹⁰⁵ Soldatos defines paradiplomacy as "activities conducted by subnational actors with foreign countries in a specific direction and at various levels."¹⁰⁶ Duchacek, one of the first to introduce the concept, evaluated the concept using the term "micro diplomacy" along with the concept of paradiplomacy, defining it as "a miniature of activities conducted in the field of international relations."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ Rohan Butler, "Studies in Diplomatic History and Historiography in Honour of G. P. Gooch," *International Affairs* 38, no. 3 (1961): 12–25.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Iñaki Aguirre, "Making Sense of Paradiplomacy? An Intertextual Enquiry About a Concept in Search of a Definition," *Regional & Federal Studies* 9, no. 1 (1999): 185.

¹⁰³ Ario Bimo Utomo, "Reimagining City Identities in Globalisation: A Constructivist Study on City Paradiplomacy," *Global South Review* 1, no. 2 (2020): 35.

¹⁰⁴ Ario Bimo Utomo, "The Paradiplomatic Role of the ConIFA in Promoting Self-Determination of Marginalised Entities," *Global Strategis* 13, no. 1 (2019): 30.

¹⁰⁵ Miguel Santos Neves, "Paradiplomacy, Knowledge Regions and the Consolidation of Soft Power," *Janus.Net - E-Journal of International Relations* 1, no. 1 (2010): 20.

¹⁰⁶ Panayotis Soldatos, "An Explanatory Framework for the Study of Federated States as Foreign-policy Actors," in *Oxford University Press eBooks*, 1990, 34.

¹⁰⁷ Esra Çelebi Zengin and Ali Davut Alkan, "Yerel Bir Politika Aracı Olarak Paradiplomasi," *Kent Akademisi* 15, no. 1 (2022): 442.

Milani and Ribeiro state that diplomacy refers to relations between nation-states, while paradiplomacy occurs between municipalities and federated states.¹⁰⁸ According to Wolff, paradiplomacy is the ability of sub-state entities to protect their interests in international relations and foreign policy.¹⁰⁹ It can be said that the collaboration and coming together of cities, which are one of these sub-state entities, in global relations according to their own interests and around common benefits, is essentially the basis of city diplomacy.

3.1.2 Reasons for Cities to Collaborate in a Global Context

The governance of cities through international partnerships aims to contribute to addressing many of the challenges brought about by our era. For instance, irregular migration, one of the greatest issues of the 21st century, directly affects urban organization. Similarly, as observed during the Covid-19 pandemic, cities found themselves in a position that shaped the conditions for the pandemic's spread. Consequently, the battle against the pandemic can be interpreted as a municipal issue. During the pandemic, the efforts of cities in combating Covid-19 varied from country to country but directly concerned local governments. For example, in countries like Türkiye where health management is centralized under the national government, the IMM conducted disinfection operations across the city and implemented regulations on public transportation.¹¹⁰

Again, on another significant issue of our time such as the climate crisis, cities are making efforts to address this problem with the instruments at their disposal. In the case of Istanbul, transitioning to electric vehicles in public transportation, efforts to create green spaces, and advancements in recycling are examples of these efforts.¹¹¹

Pejic and Acuto, states as follows:

¹⁰⁸ Carlos R. S. Milani and Maria Clotilde Meirelles Ribeiro, "International Relations and the Paradiplomacy of Brazilian Cities: Crafting the Concept of Local International Management," *BAR - Brazilian Administration Review* 8, no. 1 (2011): 24.

¹⁰⁹ Stefan Wolff, "Paradiplomacy: Scope, Opportunities and Challenges," *The Bologna Center Journal of International Affairs* 10 (2007): 141–50.

¹¹⁰ Nahit Bek and Aslı Bek, "Yerel Yönetimlerin Covid-19 İle İmtihanı: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Örneği," *Lapseki Meslek Yüksekokulu Uygulamalı Araştırmalar Dergisi* 2, no. 4 (2021): 117–27.

¹¹¹ "İBB, "İBB Sürdürülebilir Şehir Olma Yolunda," September 5, 2023, <https://cevre.ibb.istanbul/ibb-surdurulebilir-sehir-olma-yolunda>.

“With the rise of populism and continuing clout of many national governments, tensions between central and local executives have surged to new heights on fraught policy issues like climate, migration, and pandemic response.”¹¹²

The division of responsibilities between local and central governments seems to create a competition in creating analyses on these issues. This situation becomes even more complex, especially in cases where major cities are governed by the opposition party rather than the ruling party, as seen in the example of Türkiye.

Therefore, cities are communicating on a global level today to form collaborations on issues such as public health, climate change, transportation, and sustainability. Additionally, it is observed that cities are also engaging in collaborations in areas such as finance, infrastructure, waste management, and sports and cultural activities. In this regard, city diplomacy keeps a multi-faceted dialogue and coordination process open.

3.1.3 Global City Organizations

Cornago indicates that in addition to being affiliated with the states they belong to, cities also pursue their own foreign policies.¹¹³ This also facilitates cities cooperating with each other and perhaps sometimes leading them to pursue an agenda outside of national foreign policy.

Therefore, cities feel the need to collaborate on issues that concern them as stakeholders and authorities in many important matters. This need is met by various associations such as C40 (C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group) for climate issues, Healthy Cities Network for public health issues like pandemics, Eurocities for cultural collaborations, Balkan Cities Network (B40), Asia Mayors Forum, Union of Turkish World Municipalities, Association of European Historic Cities, MedCities, Organization of Islamic Capitals, and others for broader collaborations. These organizations engage in extensive efforts to connect cities worldwide and bring closer those facing similar issues in terms of finding solutions.

¹¹² Daniel Pejic and Michele Acuto, “City Diplomacy Back Home: Central-Local Tensions in a Time of Global Urban Governance,” *Columbia Journal of International Affairs*, April 1, 2022.

¹¹³ Noe Cornago, “Paradiplomacy and Protodiplomacy,” *The Encyclopedia of Diplomacy*, May 3, 2018, 1–8.

With the beginning of the 21st century, cities started to gain significant importance in international relations. Alongside the UN Habitat program, a major city initiative emerged for the first time with the establishment of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) in 2004.¹¹⁴ UCLG presented itself as an organization aiming to connect all cities worldwide, facilitating the sharing of local governance practices directly impacting people's lives and enhancing governance.

Certainly, alongside large-scale organizations like UCLG, regional and issue-specific scaled city networks also began to emerge by the end of the 20th century. One such network, Eurocities, was established with the collaboration of six major cities in Western Europe. These cities were Barcelona, Birmingham, Frankfurt, Lyon, Milan, and Rotterdam.¹¹⁵ Again, as a 21st-century initiative, the C40 emerged as a structure prioritizing climate change and global warming, encompassing very significant cities worldwide.

3.1.4 Sister City and Twinning Activities

In addition to all these inter-city organizations, there are also twinning activities aimed at developing bilateral relations among cities, which have been ongoing for a very long time. These activities, known as "sister cities," date back to World War II. In this regard, the world's first sister city relationship was established between the British city of Coventry and Stalingrad in the Soviet Union in 1944.¹¹⁶

From that time onwards, sister city agreements began to be made between cities with common issues and similarities. In this respect, Istanbul's first sister city was the city of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, with an agreement between the two municipalities in 1965.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ "History of Our Movement," UCLG, accessed April 6, 2024, <https://www.old.uclg.org/en/centenary#:~:text=The%20foundation%20of%20UCLG%20in,associations%20from%20across%20the%20globe.>

¹¹⁵ Türkiye Belediyeler Birliği, "Eurocities," accessed April 6, 2024, https://www.tbb.gov.tr/Tr/icerik_avrupa-sehirler-birligi-eurocities_90.

¹¹⁶ Trevor Baker, "A Tale of Twin Cities: How Coventry and Stalingrad Invented the Concept," *The Guardian*, February 3, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/mar/04/twin-cities-coventry-stalingrad-war#:~:text=But%20even%20before%20that%20Coventry,help%20to%20the%20Soviet%20Union.>

¹¹⁷ Arda Bay and Vedat Çalışkan, "National and international sister city relationships of İstanbul: determinative factors and characteristics of spatial distribution," in *1st Istanbul International Geography Congress Proceedings Book* (Istanbul University, 2019), 104–12.

Again, when city diplomacy and sister city relationships are perceived as softer than intergovernmental relations, it will also be observed that they serve the interests of countries. For example, Taipei, the capital of Taiwan with limited recognition, participates in organizations like UCLG and establishes bilateral relationships with many global cities.¹¹⁸ In this sense, these relationships actually benefit the interests of Taiwan.

Looking at it, the municipality of Nicosia Turkish Municipality, which is the capital of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) with very limited recognition and struggling to establish diplomatic relations, has been officially included in the constitution of the Republic of Cyprus since 1958.¹¹⁹ It is likely that the recognition of Nicosia Turkish Municipality on the international stage could pave the way for the TRNC. During the tenure of İmamoğlu in the IMM, Nicosia became the sister city of Istanbul on December 10, 2020.¹²⁰

IMM Foreign Relations officials have stated the following regarding IMM's understanding of sister city relationships:

“Sister city relationships emerged as an approach aiming to bring peace efforts to the local level after World War II. However, I can say that currently, they are not very functional. As IMM, the process

¹¹⁸ Pejic and Acuto, “City Diplomacy Back Home: Central-Local Tensions in a Time of Global Urban Governance.”

¹¹⁹ This issue is regulated in Article 173 of the Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus as follows:

- 1- Separate municipalities shall be created in the five largest towns of the Republic, that is to say, Nicosia, Limassol, Famagusta, Larnaca and Paphos by the Turkish inhabitants thereof: Provided that the President and the Vice-President of the Republic shall within four years of the date of the coming into operation of this Constitution examine the question whether or not this separation of municipalities in the aforesaid towns shall continue.
- 2- The council of the Greek municipality in any such town shall be elected by the Greek electors of the town and the council of the Turkish municipality in such town shall be elected by the Turkish electors of the town.
- 3- In each such town a co-ordinating body shall be set up composed of two members chosen by the council of the Greek municipality, two members chosen by the council of the Turkish municipality and a President chosen by agreement between the two councils of such municipalities in such town. Such coordinating body shall provide for work which needs to be carried out jointly, shall carry out joint services entrusted to it by agreement of the councils of the two municipalities within the town and shall concern itself with matters which require a degree of co-operation.

¹²⁰ İBB, “İBB Yeni Dönemin İlk Kardeşlik Protokolünü Lefkoşa ile İmzaladı,” December 10, 2020, <https://frd.ibb.istanbul/ibb-yeni-donemin-ilk-kardeslik-protokolunu-lefkosa-ile-imzaladi>.

of becoming sister municipalities does not only happen through our initiative. There needs to be shared values, culture, history, and other elements between two cities to establish a sisterhood relationship.

For example, Sarajevo may not be equivalent to Istanbul in terms of size and population, but a close relationship can be established due to shared history, culture, and similarities such as the significant Bosnian population in Istanbul. Our relationships with major cities like Shanghai and Guangzhou are also good. However, progress in this process may be challenging if there is no mutual interest.

At present, it is important to focus primarily on communication and cooperation with existing sister cities. Nowadays, rather than sister city relationships, it is crucial to concentrate on cooperation protocols and projects that can contribute to the living standards of the residents.”¹²¹

3.2 The Impact of the Globalization Process on Cities and City Diplomacy

With the emergence of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, the search for raw materials and mass production activities began to develop. The world's first industrial city also emerged in Britain, and in this respect, the city of Manchester manifested itself as an industrial city. By the 1900s, Manchester, considered the center of the Industrial Revolution, had become one of the world's largest ten cities.¹²²

Giddens remarks on urbanization in England as follows:

"In 1800, only a small minority of the population of England and Wales lived in towns of any size. A century later, around 40 percent of the population lived in cities with populations of 100,000 or more, and about 60 percent lived in towns with populations of 20,000 or more.”¹²³

In a world transformed by the Industrial Revolution, globalization's political dimension can be seen as completed with the American Revolution of 1776 and the French Revolution of 1789. Indeed, the American Revolution represented a rebellion against Britain, the superpower of the time, and showcased the nationalization of a commercial society which started a

¹²¹ IMM Department Officials, Foreign Relations. Personal Interview. 22 March 2024.

¹²² Richard J. Williams, "Manchester After Engels," *Places*, no. 2020 (2020).

¹²³ Anthony Giddens, *Sociology: A Brief But Critical Introduction* (Red Globe Press, 1986), 7.

capitalist order in Americas.¹²⁴ Similarly, inspired by the idea of independence, the French Revolution established a republic based on liberal values in its own country.¹²⁵ Subsequently, societies across Europe became driven to establish nation-states based on national sovereignty.¹²⁶ The process expanded with Napoleon Bonaparte's coronation as Emperor of French in 1804, and the ensuing Napoleonic Wars that engulfed the entire continent until 1814, spreading the ideas of independence throughout Europe.¹²⁷ The imperial thought of the 19th century, along with the advancement of technology, laid the groundwork for the first steps of globalization. With the development of railways and the increase in sea trade, Britain established an extensive network of colonies and trade from the Americas to Australia, from Africa to the farthest reaches of the Pacific.¹²⁸ This imperialist colonization has brought about a globalization process in which various regions of the world interacted with each other and trade flourished.

Europe's other major powers, striving to catch up with Britain's advanced colonial network, embarked on colonial activities in many parts of the world in search of raw materials and labor.¹²⁹ In this regard, while the African continent was almost entirely colonized by Western powers, the famous port cities of Asia also served as gateways for European trade. During this period, places like Hong Kong and Shanghai, which were colonized by Britain, became areas where Western trade flourished in Asia.¹³⁰

The global trade concern during the lead-up to World War I can be seen as one of the fundamental causes of the war. In this period when the search for raw materials deepened, commercial activities led to interaction among regions around the world. The First World War

¹²⁴ Paul A. Gilje, "The Rise of Capitalism in the Early Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 16, no. 2 (January 1, 1996): 159.

¹²⁵ Akif Kemal Koç, "İngiliz ve Amerikan Devrimlerine Fransız Devrimi Üzerinden Bir Bakış," *Liberal Düşünce Dergisi* 23, no. 91–92 (2018): 53–72.

¹²⁶ Mehmet Baltacı, "Fransız Devrimi Sonrasında Ortaya Çıkan Milliyetçilik Akımının Osmanlı Devleti'nde Olumsuz Etkileri," *Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi - Sobider* 59, no. 59 (January 1, 2022): 540–55.

¹²⁷ Martyn P. Thompson, "Ideas of Europe During the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 55, no. 1 (1994): 37.

¹²⁸ Ayşe Yaşar and Hamza Akengin, "İngiliz Sömürgeciliği ile Emperyalizminin Gelişimi ve Özellikleri," *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, no. 57 (2022): 426–44.

¹²⁹ Heinrich Von Treitschke, "Die Ersten Versuche Deutscher Kolonialpolitik," in *De Gruyter eBooks*, 1884, 555–66.

¹³⁰ Asuman Suner, "Hong Kong: Sömürgecilik Tarihinde Bir Sayfa Kapanırken," *Birikim Dergisi*, 1997, <https://birikimdergisi.com/dergiler/birikim/1/sayi-99-temmuz-1997-sayi-99-temmuz-1997/2295/hong-kong-somurgecilik-tarihinde-bir-sayfa-kapanirken/2815>.

was essentially a product of globalization. Hence, while it was a European war, it affected many regions of the world and ultimately led to the involvement of the United States in the war in 1917. After the First World War, this process of globalization slowed down. However, the economic crisis that occurred in the post-war period affected the entire world. The collapse of the stock market in the United States in 1929, leading to the Great Depression, was also a consequence of globalization. Because the world economies interconnected by invisible networks became more vulnerable as a result of this interdependence.

After the Second World War, the world became bipolar.¹³¹ The United States, one of the victors of the war, formed a bloc with its allies in Western Europe, while the Soviet Union, another victor of the war, formed another bloc by promoting governments under its influence in Eastern Europe. Until the 1990s, relations between the two blocs remained stagnant. In this context, rather than globalization, regionalization can be mentioned in international relations during this period. Organizations such as the Western European Union, the European Economic Community precursor to the EU, and NATO emerged as organizations demonstrating regional cooperation during this period.

After the end of the Cold War, the world became unipolar, and the liberal values of the West became dominant common values. In fact, some political scientists like Fukuyama have claimed that the end of history has arrived.¹³² The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the transition to a liberal economic system, including Russia and the countries of the Eastern Bloc, facilitated the arrival of foreign investors to these countries, prompting them to take steps to facilitate foreign investment.¹³³ At this point, multinational corporations quickly embarked on investment activities in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, while the major cities of these countries also began to globalize. Cities, which increased their importance in industrial, commercial, cultural, and social fields, also pioneered their countries' opening up to the world.

¹³¹ İhsan Sabri Balkaya, "New World Order After World War II And Turkey," *The Journal of Academic Social Science Studies* Volume 6 Issue 2, no. 6 (2013).

¹³² Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?," *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 3–18.

¹³³ Remzi Bulut, "Economic Change in Countries Membership of the European Union From the Eastern Bloc Axis," *Tesam Akademi*, November 9, 2023, 343–74.

Global cities proliferated rapidly in the 1990s following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the expansion of the liberal world order.¹³⁴ Cities in the former Soviet geography such as Baku, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Almaty, alongside trade centers, have begun to rapidly develop and attract the influence of the outside world. Similarly, cities in Eastern Europe such as Prague, Warsaw, Budapest, Bucharest, and Belgrade are experiencing rapid development and drawing the attention of the external world.¹³⁵ Additionally, the disappearance of the Soviet threat has led to increased global-scale trade activities, resulting in Western cities also adopting a new facade.¹³⁶

Additionally, globalization can be considered as a process that has evolved since the early 20th century, and it can be seen as a rekindled issue towards the end of the Cold War. The period before the First World War, characterized by intense commercial activities, can be considered as the initial steps of globalization. Referring to Yertüm, Hirst, and Thompson, it is noted that today's global economy is not much different from the pre-World War I economy.¹³⁷ During that time, important trade centers like London had already developed around the world.¹³⁸

According to Mursitama and Lee, globalization has also created a competitive situation among cities.¹³⁹ In fact, this is most noticeable among cities that can be called today's global cities such as New York, Tokyo, Paris, London, Beijing, Hong Kong, Moscow, and Istanbul. The competition among cities where the Olympics will be held brings forth a competitive

¹³⁴ Selim Yücel Güleç, "Kamu Diplomasisi ve Yerel Yönetimler Konya Büyükşehir Belediyesi Örneği" (PhD Thesis, Necmettin Erbakan University, 2021), 22.

¹³⁵ Recep Bozdoğan, *Küresel Şehirler ve İstanbul* (Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, 2021), 87.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Umut Yertüm, "Küreselleşmenin Fordist- Kitleli Üretim Tarzına Etkisi," *Fırat Üniversitesi İİBF Uluslararası İktisadi Ve İdari Bilimler Dergisi* 1, no. 1 (2017): 68.

¹³⁸ Stefan Goebel and Jerry White, "London and the First World War," *The London Journal* 41, no. 3 (2016): 199–218.

¹³⁹ Tirta Nugraha Mursitama and L Lee, "Towards a Framework of Smart City Diplomacy," *IOP Conference Series. Earth and Environmental Science* 126 (2018): 1–7.

situation among cities in terms of having the best infrastructure¹⁴⁰, tourism capacity¹⁴¹, and other aspects.

Yavaşoğlu defines globalization as the flow of politics, culture, products, and ideas among societies and states, despite its emergence primarily from economic concerns.¹⁴² Akgün describes the impact of globalization on cities as follows: "Globalization, by shrinking distances in communication and transportation, bringing cities closer to each other, and paving the way for their development and change over time, has become a force that changes the role of cities and increases their power."¹⁴³

Açıkgöz states that urbanization is no longer dependent solely on industrialization and emphasizing that besides industrialization, there are many other factors contributing to urbanization, and it cannot be reduced to a single cause anymore.¹⁴⁴ The emergence of new global cities with increasing technology and communication opportunities will also determine new areas where new cultures, arts, and commercial centers will arise worldwide. Thus, besides cities that can be called global cities today, many significant centers in the Middle East, South Asia, and the Pacific region can also emerge.

In this context, the G20 organization, which brings together the world's largest 20 economies and was established in 1999, has been organizing the U20 (Urban 20) events since 2017, parallel to its own meetings, bringing together cities of member countries.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰This situation is very evident in Istanbul. The opening of the Istanbul Grand Airport (IGA) in 2018 sparked many discussions. Being built as the largest airport in Europe, IGA surpasses other airports on the continent in this regard.

¹⁴¹ Destinations like Paris and Rome, which are among the most important cultural tourism spots in Europe, are conducting very intensive public relations campaigns to enhance their capacities.

¹⁴² Emine Büşra Yavaşoğlu, "Ulusal ve Uluslararası Bağlamda Kent Diplomasisi Uygulaması: İstanbul Örneği" (Master Thesis, Marmara University, 2022), 7.

¹⁴³ Hasan Akgün, "Kardeş Kent İlişkilerinin Geliştirilmesinde Diplomasinin Yeri Ve Kapsamı: Uluslararası İstanbul-Büyükçekmece Kültür Ve Sanat Festivali Örneği," *İdealkent* 15, no. 40 (2023): 309.

¹⁴⁴ Özkan Açıkgöz, "Küreselleşme, Şehir Ve Küreselleşmenin Bir Boyutu Olarak Habitat Toplantıları" (PhD Thesis, Istanbul University, 2006).

¹⁴⁵ C40 Knowledge Community, "Urban 20," accessed April 6, 2024, [https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/Urban-20-U20?language=en_US#:~:text=The%20Urban%2020%20\(U20\)%20was,to%20engage%20in%20the%20G20.](https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/Urban-20-U20?language=en_US#:~:text=The%20Urban%2020%20(U20)%20was,to%20engage%20in%20the%20G20.)

This organization, which brings together developed and developing countries, also brings together the cities of developing countries on the path of globalization. Considering the population growth and urbanization in developing countries in Asia and Latin America, alongside the trend of declining population in cities in the West, the relationships between these cities are beginning to develop, leading to the emergence of a new global network of cities. Utomo, in terms of changes in state structures and perspectives on international issues due to globalization, has stated, "Facing the current of increasingly rapid globalization, states have become too big to deal with small problems, while at the same time it is too small to deal with big problems."¹⁴⁶

Many of the issues that are currently surfacing on a global scale directly affect the over half of the world's population that lives in cities. Issues such as climate change, food crises, health, migration, security, and trade are prominent areas that concern cities directly and where cities can contribute. Çalışkan, on the other hand, highlights Adam Smith, known as the architect of liberal economic thought, focusing on cities as centers of industry, trade, consumption, and craft functions, stating that the importance cities gain in these areas defines the city.¹⁴⁷ Therefore, cities are organized as living and governing units that, in the globalized world, develop around certain values, shaping the world in various areas, and sometimes surpassing even the countries within which they are located in terms of opportunities and recognition.

According to Yılmaz, these cities, which have a distinct identity apart from the metropolitan city and can influence the world in economic, socio-cultural, and political spheres, are referred to as "world cities" or, in more popular usage, "global cities".¹⁴⁸ And according to Sassen, the fundamental characteristics of global cities include hosting powerful financial institutions that shape the world economy, being leading producers in the finance and service

¹⁴⁶ Ario Bimo Utomo, "Reimagining City Identities in Globalisation: A Constructivist Study on City Paradiplomacy," *Global South Review* 1, no. 2 (2020): 34.

¹⁴⁷ Merve Deniz Çalışkan, "Şehirler Diplomasisi Ve İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Örneği" (Master Thesis, Marmara University, 2019), 5.

¹⁴⁸ Onur Kemal Yılmaz, "Küresel Kentler ve Türkiye Kentlerinin Küresel Kentler Arasındaki Konumları," *SUTAD*, no. 47 (2019): 470.

sectors, serving as centers for technology-based innovative production, and also being the primary market for all the products they produce.¹⁴⁹

In this regard, London emerges as an important example. Indeed, the city of London has developed into a significant financial center in the world today. When we look at the governance structure of London, the City of London, defined as the historic London center and known as the "Square Mile," has its own autonomous structure and operates under a separate governance scheme from the Greater London Authority.¹⁵⁰ Within this autonomous administration covering an area of 2.9 km², the headquarters of international companies and financial institutions are located. In this respect, the City of London is perceived worldwide as the primary source of Britain's economic power.¹⁵¹

Similarly, cities like Hong Kong and Shanghai in Asia should be considered separately from the central administration of China. These cities have their own laws and economic regulations, possessing autonomous structures within the People's Republic of China.¹⁵² In fact, Hong Kong even has a separate passport from China, enabling its openness to the world.¹⁵³ In the United Arab Emirates, the city of Dubai stands out. Emerging as a significant hub for finance, art, sports, and culture in the Gulf Region, Dubai can also be interpreted as an important source of prestige for the UAE in terms of public diplomacy. Additionally, the emphasis on New York in American movies and the portrayal of Las Vegas's role in the entertainment industry through media channels demonstrate that cities can be tools for a country's public diplomacy activities. In this context, countries use the brand city images they create as a tool for diplomacy in the global public opinion.

As seen in the examples of London, Hong Kong, and Dubai, these cities, which can be referred to as "global cities," can assert themselves on the international stage. It is worth

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ian Doolittle, "The Great Refusal: Why Does the City of London Corporation Only Govern the Square Mile?," *The London Journal* 39, no. 1 (2014): 21–36.

¹⁵¹ *Anadolu Ajansı*, "Londra Dünyanın En Büyük Finans Merkezi Olmayı Sürdürme İddiasında," February 5, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/londra-dunyanin-en-buyuk-finans-merkezi-olmayi-surdurme-iddiasinda-/1724739>.

¹⁵² Phil C. W. Chan, "Hong Kong's Political Autonomy And Its Continuing Struggle For Universal Suffrage," *Singapore Journal of Legal Studies*, 2006, 285–311.

¹⁵³ *Cumhuriyet*, "Dünyanın En Güçlü Pasaportu Belirlendi," July 16, 2023, <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/dunya/galeri-dunyanin-en-guclu-pasaportu-belirlendi-2099873#photo-4>.

mentioning that the concept of a "global city" is more concerned with its sphere of influence rather than its population and cosmopolitan structure.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, while some metropolitan cities and megacities measured by population scale cannot be considered global cities, cities with lower population levels can still qualify as global cities.¹⁵⁵

In this respect, Istanbul can be regarded as a global city in terms of its commercial, cultural, and social context, and as a megacity in terms of its population, infrastructure, and amenities. Keyder highlights the significance of Istanbul by stating: "Unlike other global cities, Istanbul has always been a world city: the legendary splendor of this city, which has been the capital of an empire for more than fifteen hundred years, has been watched with envy by Europe, and then by the Balkans and the Middle East."^{156 157}

Cemal Bař emphasizes the importance of local governments in being able to formulate development strategies at the local level, generate development policies by mobilizing local financial and human resources, and create local employment opportunities within the framework of engaging stakeholders.¹⁵⁸ From this perspective, the most important subject and objective of city diplomacy is for global cities to collaborate with similar cities on a global scale by mobilizing local financial and human resources and engaging stakeholders. This includes developing partnerships and finding solutions ranging from development policies to various global issues.

¹⁵⁴ Yılmaz, "Küresel Kentler ve Türkiye Kentlerinin Küresel Kentler Arasındaki Konumları."

¹⁵⁵ Yılmaz, "Küresel Kentler ve Türkiye Kentlerinin Küresel Kentler Arasındaki Konumları."

¹⁵⁶ Çağlar Keyder, İstanbul, Küresel ile Yerel Arasında (Metis, 1999), 9.

¹⁵⁷ Keyder's in the same work, White also states in his article that the effects of changing economic policies in Türkiye since the 1980s were most intensely felt in Istanbul, which became a megacity with a population of 10 million during that period.

¹⁵⁸ Cemal Bař, Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Hedefleri (Türkiye Belediyeler Birlięi, 2017), 35.

3.3 Assessing City Diplomacy from Functional and Neo-Functionalist Perspectives

With the process of globalization, the importance of cities in the international arena has increased. Cities communicate with different cities around the world to attract investment and establish collaborations on issues concerning urban development. In addition, cities conduct diplomatic activities in cultural, aid, educational, and civic engagement domains, thus engaging in partnerships with elements of public diplomacy.

Today, a country's reputation in the international arena is not only measured by its military power and political maneuverability but also by a process that incorporates various elements and combines them with soft power elements to enhance the country's reputation. Joseph S. Nye, who introduced the concept of soft power into the literature and emphasized the intense pursuit of diplomatic processes focused on cultural and economic collaborations in countries' foreign policies, expresses the following views on this matter:

“Today, however, the definition of power is losing its emphasis on military force and conquest that marked earlier eras. The factors of technology, education, and economic growth are becoming more significant in international power, while geography, population, and raw materials are becoming somewhat less important.”¹⁵⁹

In this regard, it is possible to explain the system presented by the functionalist perspective with the elements of soft power, public diplomacy activities, and thus the activities of city diplomacy that intersect with public diplomacy. Pioneering the functionalist approach, Mitrany highlighted initiatives aimed at forming an international community and adopted an approach that prioritizes cooperation over the international politics that accentuate conflicts between countries.¹⁶⁰

Mitrany first articulated functionalism in his 1943 book "A Working Peace System." In this book, he outlined the main principles of the functionalist approach and suggested that achieving world peace would involve not only state actors but also international organizations and civil society, engaging in functional areas such as the economy. He proposed that such

¹⁵⁹ Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy*, no. 80 (1990): 154.

¹⁶⁰ Faruk Sönmezoğlu, *Uluslararası İlişkilere Giriş* (Der Yayınları, 2017).

efforts could serve as a precursor to political integration in the future.¹⁶¹ In this regard, Mitrany, who positioned non-state actors in international relations, emphasized international organizations in his proposition within the context of the circumstances of that period. However, in the changing conditions of today, alongside international organizations that encompass nation-states, there has emerged a development where global cities and the global organizations they form also contribute to world peace and assume a functional value for cultural and economic cooperation.

Erol states, "For functionalists, international organizations are not an end in themselves but a means to address the priorities dictated by human needs, and therefore they should be flexible, adapting their functions according to the requirements of the day."¹⁶² According to this explanation, the European Coal and Steel Community, established in 1952, should be able to renew its functional status in the changing dynamics as the European Economic Community in subsequent periods and it should do so. However, alongside the issues international organizations focus on, should the organizations themselves also change functionally according to the requirements of the day? In the mid-20th century, when the Age of Empires ended and nation-states became the most important power on the international stage, Mitrany's theory, which focused on this state structure and accordingly transformed international organizations into the basic units of nation-states, needs to be reconsidered in an era of increased globalization and the development of sub-state actors.

Again, Erol points out that functionalism requires an international effort to solve problems that concern society, stating the following: "Functionalism primarily draws attention to technical issues in the international environment, such as preventing pollution in the Mediterranean, and argues that through international organizations to which nation-states delegate some of their powers, these problems can be solved free from political concerns."¹⁶³ Some of today's most important global issues, such as climate change and migration, directly concern cities and urban administrations. Therefore, in solving such problems, beyond

¹⁶¹ David Mitrany, *A Working Peace System* (Oxford University Press, 1943).

¹⁶² Aslı Erol, "Yeni-İşlevselcilik Işığında Avrupa Bütünleşmesi" (Master Thesis, Ankara University, 2007), 14.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

international organizations and nation-states, local governments and the global organizations and collaborations they form are crucial.

Ernst Haas explains functionalism by emphasizing an organization's sense of duty. He lays the foundations of the neo-functional approach with the criticisms he puts forward.¹⁶⁴ In fact, Haas was influenced by Jean Monnet's pragmatic approach to European integration and merged it with the functionalist approach.¹⁶⁵ According to him, an organization is as functional as it can effectively accomplish its mission.¹⁶⁶

The discussion of the functional aspects or "tasks" of international organizations is an important matter to consider. For example, the EU has united around certain norms and values. In fact, the idea of a unified Europe emerged after the fall of the Roman Empire. Throughout history, many states have attempted to unite Europe under the claim of becoming a new Rome. What distinguishes the EU from Charlemagne's or Bonaparte's empires in history, and even from many international organizations today, is essentially its functionality and the sense of duty it imposes on itself. Therefore, what sets the EU apart from its historical counterparts and many contemporary international organizations is its functionality. The functionalist approach, which highlights organizations like the EU in international relations, presents a different picture from the international arena depicted by the realist perspective. In such an arena, alongside supranational formations, subnational institutions also have positions that can influence global relations.

The important point to consider here is the functionality of cities. Today, cities, where more than half of the world's population resides, have international collaborations beyond the national borders they are located within. Cities are moving towards a transnational organization as subnational mechanisms. According to Bulkeley, transnational city networks represent cities in the global political arena not only as actors in problem-solving efforts but also as actors in global governance.¹⁶⁷ Transnational municipal networks are utilized to identify potentials for

¹⁶⁴ Ernst B. Haas, *Beyond the Nation State: Functionalism and International Organization* (ECPR Press, 2008).

¹⁶⁵ Nesibe Gül Kılıç, "Orta Asya Entegrasyon Tartışmaları ve Avrasya Birliği" (Master Thesis, Istanbul University, 2019), 16.

¹⁶⁶ Robert I. McLaren, "Mitranian Functionalism: Possible or Impossible?," *Review of International Studies* 11, no. 2 (1985): 142.

¹⁶⁷ Harriet Bulkeley, "Reconfiguring Environmental Governance: Towards a Politics of Scales and Networks," *Political Geography* 24, no. 8 (2005): 875–902.

more efficient and successful implementation of sustainable development.¹⁶⁸ Issues such as energy, peace, poverty, gender, and inequality have been observed to be significant concerns for networks. These issues are further diversified by "multi-purpose" transnational municipal networks. Networks explicitly emphasize this diversity and multifaceted initiatives.¹⁶⁹

Especially megacities with populations exceeding 10 million resemble each other in terms of their capabilities and the challenges they face. These megacities, or the cultural and commercial centers as well as capitals of countries, also influence their own national policies. For example, Anne Hidalgo, the Mayor of Paris, with whom good relations were developed during the İmamoğlu era, ran for the Presidency in the elections held in 2022.¹⁷⁰ Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski was also a candidate for the Presidency of Poland.¹⁷¹ Budapest Mayor Gergely Karacsony emerged as the prime ministerial candidate of the opposition bloc in his country.¹⁷² Similarly, Boris Johnson, who previously served as the Mayor of London, became the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.¹⁷³ Following his tenure as the Mayor of Istanbul, which marked a significant turning point in his political career, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan became a recognized leader among broad segments of the Turkish population and subsequently assumed the position of Prime Minister. The policies implemented at the local level by cities influence national policies and shape national politics. With the increase of megacities and the initiatives established among them, there is an opportunity to develop relationships initiated through city diplomacy that could later influence national politics.

Mitrany, the pioneer of functionalist approach, foresaw a process of global integration.¹⁷⁴ He emphasized that international organizations and supra-national structures

¹⁶⁸ Marco Keiner and Arley Kim, "Transnational City Networks for Sustainability," *European Planning Studies* 15, no. 10 (2007): 1369–95.

¹⁶⁹ Michele Acuto and Steve Rayner, "City Networks: Breaking Gridlocks or Forging (New) Lock-ins?," *International Affairs* 92, no. 5 (2016): 1147–66.

¹⁷⁰ In the elections held on April 10, 2022, Anne Hidalgo received 1.74% of the votes and finished in 10th place.

¹⁷¹ In the elections held on June 28, 2020, Trzaskowski received 30.46% of the votes in the first round. In the second round elections on July 12, 2020, against his opponent, the incumbent President Andrzej Duda, he lost by receiving 48.97% of the votes.

¹⁷² "Hungary Is Sliding Toward Authoritarianism. Can the Mayor of Budapest Save It?," *TIME*, November 5, 2020, <https://time.com/5907735/budapest-hungary-mayor>.

¹⁷³ Boris Johnson (b. 1954) served as the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs from 2016 to 2018 following his tenure as Mayor of London. He then assumed the position of Prime Minister as the leader of the Conservative Party.

¹⁷⁴ David Mitrany, "The Prospect Of Integration: Federal or Functional," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 4, no. 2 (1965): 119–49.

formed in this integration process would serve the development of countries politically, socially, economically, and culturally around specific purposes agreed upon by the participating countries. In contrast to Mitrany's globalist integration approach, Haas focused on regional integration and emphasized that these alliances were formed in line with the interests of the actors involved.¹⁷⁵ In this regard, Eurocities, MedCities, the CoE Congress, B40, and similar organizations are regional integration structures parallel to international organizations in terms of global sub-national structures. Looking at the example Erol provided of preventing pollution in the Mediterranean¹⁷⁶, it can be seen that the efforts of cities such as Marseille, Venice, Athens, Izmir, Barcelona, Tunis, and Alexandria in the Mediterranean basin are functional considering the populations of these cities and the target population they influence. Furthermore, local governments support central governments' policies and activities in many aspects. Disregarding the administrations of mega-cities in the region when discussing issues in the Mediterranean basin does not seem feasible given the increasing urbanization trends today.

When we categorize such global city organizations based on their functions, it is evident that the C40 organization, which addresses climate change, reaches a significant portion of the world's population with its 96 member cities. It is possible that the efforts of such an organization provide greater benefits than many international organizations. Organizations like World Association of the Major Metropolises (METROPOLIS), which encompass many cities with millions of inhabitants, contribute to creating a more livable habitat for people today, raising awareness on issues such as earthquake risk, migration, urbanization, urban renewal, transportation, and public health. Initiatives like the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact work towards obtaining healthy food and sustainable production, which concerns urban health.

Indeed, cities come together not only for such activities but also to form initiatives for democratic values and ideals. The Pact of Free Cities is an example of this.

The objectives of the Pact are stated on its official website as follows:

¹⁷⁵ Kılıç, "Orta Asya Entegrasyon Tartışmaları ve Avrasya Birliği," 16.

¹⁷⁶ Erol, "Yeni-İşlevselcilik Işığında Avrupa Bütünleşmesi."

“The Pact of Free Cities, founded by the Mayors of the Visegrad Four capitals (Warsaw, Prague, Bratislava and Budapest) in 2019, is a global network of cities determined to stand up for progressive values and fight against nationalistic populism.”¹⁷⁷

Looking at it, it will be seen that the founding city elements are the capitals of countries with similar historical and political backgrounds, which were formerly part of the Eastern Bloc and later integrated into the West. In this respect, the global and regional organizations established by cities are not only formed for specific concrete collaborations but also give rise to initiatives unified around certain values and ideas, such as the EU and the CoE.

Roger Tooze has the following to say about the functionalist approach and Mitrany:

"Thus, when Mitrany argues that ‘International economics and politics can no longer be divided into watertight compartments and far from resenting it we should use all our ingenuity to further the process of interchange’, he means that international politics should be organized on lines dictated by international economics. The assumption of the 'separability' of economics and politics is critical to the functionalist endeavour."¹⁷⁸

Here, Tooze indicates that Mitrany's functionalist approach connects economy and international politics. Cities that have evolved since the Industrial Revolution have become the driving forces of national economies today. So much so that the gross domestic product of cities like Tokyo and New York has exceeded 1 trillion dollars.¹⁷⁹ Comparatively, Türkiye's entire gross domestic product has only surpassed 1 trillion dollars by the end of 2023.¹⁸⁰ Therefore, the economic potentials and trade volumes of global cities have exceeded those of many nation-states.

It is inconceivable to think that cities with such large economies cannot be influential on the global stage. Looking at the example of the City of London, we can see the global impact

¹⁷⁷ *Pact of Free Cities Website*, “Pact of Free Cities,” accessed May 1, 2024, <https://www.pactoffreecities.com/>.

¹⁷⁸ Roger Tooze, “The Progress of International Functionalism,” *British Journal of International Studies* 3, no. 2 (1977): 213.

¹⁷⁹ *FinCity.Tokyo*, “The Organization of Global Financial City Tokyo,” accessed May 1, 2024, <https://fincity.tokyo/en/strength/economic>.

¹⁸⁰ Naki Bakir, “IMF: Türkiye 2023’te 17’nci Büyük Ekonomi,” *Dünya Gazetesi*, October 12, 2023, <https://www.dunya.com/kose-yazisi/imf-turkiye-2023te-17nci-buyuk-ekonomi/707595>.

of a local authority. The President of the London Chamber of Commerce emphasized that London accounts for one-fifth of the country's economy with an annual GDP of £170 billion.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, the City of London supports its economic prowess by promoting it through an initiative termed as a “Global City”. The City of London Corporation runs The Global City to showcase the UK as a place for financial and professional services firms to locate, invest and grow.¹⁸² So, London's independent efforts not only benefit the United Kingdom on a national scale but also demonstrate the functionality of the city on a global level.

Looking at the Global City initiative of the City of London, we see a similar effort underway in Istanbul as well. The Istanbul Investment Agency, established by the IMM in 2020, aims to attract investment to Istanbul on a global scale.¹⁸³ Similarly, there are many other cities where similar examples exist. For instance, Paris Investment Agency visited Istanbul Planning Agency (İPA) in this regard.¹⁸⁴ Utilizing their characteristics as global cities, these cities can engage in initiatives in this direction, enabling global cities to collaborate towards economic integration and development. Through central governments, these collaborations can transform into national-level policies. In such a scenario, the initiative formed by global cities will first foster cooperation at the local level, then at the national level, and finally at the regional or global level.

¹⁸¹ London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Fostering London’s Global City Status* (London Chamber of Commerce and Industry.), 2. <https://www.londonchamber.co.uk/LCCI/media/media/APPG-London-as-a-Global-City.pdf>.

¹⁸² The Global City, “The Global City,” accessed April 1, 2024, <https://www.theglobalcity.uk>.

¹⁸³ NTV Haber, “İstanbul Yatırım Ajansı Kuruldu,” February 17, 2020, https://www.ntv.com.tr/ekonomi/istanbul-yatirim-ajansi-kuruldu,wDOQrVCHjk6AlpuHlj_cyA.

¹⁸⁴ İstanbul Planlama Ajansı, “Paris Yatırım Ajansı’nı İstanbul’da Ağırladık,” April 17, 2023, <https://ipa.istanbul/paris-yatirim-ajansini-istanbulda-agirladik>.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. EXAMPLES AND ANALYSIS

4.1 The General Outline of IMM's City Diplomacy Approach

Istanbul, as the largest city in Türkiye, holds significance not only at the national but also at the international level. With approximately 16 million inhabitants residing in Istanbul, which constitutes 18.34% of the country's population, it is a city of great importance.¹⁸⁵ According to a research conducted by TÜİK in 2022, based on current prices, Istanbul reached the highest GDP with 4 trillion 564 billion 280 million TL, accounting for 30.4% of the total GDP at the provincial level.¹⁸⁶ Istanbul is the cultural, commercial, and historical capital of the country. In this respect, Istanbul also holds a significant place in Türkiye's cultural and tourism policies.

Metropolitan municipalities in Türkiye are local administrations established in cities where the population exceeds 750,000 and operates throughout the entire province boundaries.¹⁸⁷ The first metropolitan municipalities in Türkiye were established with the Law No. 2972 issued in January 1984¹⁸⁸, and one of these cities is Istanbul. Historically, culturally, and commercially, Istanbul, the largest and most important city in the country, also hosts many international events and organizations held in Türkiye.

In 1996 Istanbul hosted an important international conference.¹⁸⁹ The Habitat II Conference provided a global platform for urbanization and environmental issues, enhancing Istanbul's international influence. Additionally, international events hosted by Istanbul, such as

¹⁸⁵ TÜİK, "Adrese Dayalı Nüfus Kayıt Sistemi Sonuçları," 2023, <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Adrese-Dayali-Nufus-Kayit-Sistemi-Sonuclari-2023-49684>.

¹⁸⁶ TÜİK, "İl Bazında Gayrisafi Yurtiçi Hasıla," 2022, <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Il-Bazinda-Gayrisafi-Yurt-Ici-Hasila-2022-45867>.

¹⁸⁷ Ozan Yetkin, "The Structure and Future of Metropolitan Municipality in Turkey," *Akademik Düşünce Dergisi*, no. 1 (2020): 4–16.

¹⁸⁸ [Mevzuat.gov.tr](http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr), "Mahalli İdareler İle Mahalle Muhtarlıkları Ve İhtiyar Heyetleri Seçimi Hakkında Kanun," 1984, <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuatmetin/1.5.2972.pdf>.

¹⁸⁹ *Habitat II: Kent Zirvesi İstanbul '96 : İstanbul, 3-12 Haziran '96, 1997.*

the Eurovision Song Contest in 2004, showcased the city's cultural richness and hosting capabilities.

During Kadir Topbaş's tenure (2004-2017), Istanbul gained further prominence on the international stage. Especially, it appeared when Topbaş became the President of UCLG in 2010. It strengthened the city's representation in the international arena.¹⁹⁰ Additionally, Istanbul being named the European Capital of Culture contributed to the promotion of the city's cultural heritage and activities on the international stage.

During İmamoğlu's first term as mayor, which began in 2019, Istanbul has pursued a policy of contributing to international events and emphasizing intercity communication. In this regard, the fundamental policy of Istanbul's city administration is to be open and accessible to all cities around the world within the framework of protocol rules.¹⁹¹ However, it can also be said that Istanbul has strong communication with cities such as Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Beijing in China, as well as with important centers in the Balkans like Sarajevo, Tirana, Skopje, and Athens, and cities in Europe such as Berlin, Paris, and Florence.¹⁹² Istanbul has potential for cooperation and common ground with all these cities. In Istanbul's city diplomacy, common benefits such as sharing knowledge and experience, providing technical support, and collaborating on solving common problems take precedence.¹⁹³

On the other hand, the cities visited by Ekrem İmamoğlu, the Mayor of Istanbul, until the end of his first term starting from 2019, are as follows: in October 2019, he visited Paris¹⁹⁴, Strasbourg for the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CoE Congress) 37th session¹⁹⁵, and Copenhagen for the C40 Summit¹⁹⁶, in November 2019, he

¹⁹⁰ Kadir Topbaş was elected as the president of the United Cities and Local Government (UCLG), the largest inter-city organization in the world, in the elections held in 2010 and 2013. He held this position until 2016.

¹⁹¹ IMM Department Officials, Foreign Relations. Personal Interview. 22 March 2024.

¹⁹² IMM Department Officials, Foreign Relations. Personal Interview. 22 March 2024.

¹⁹³ IMM Department Officials, Foreign Relations. Personal Interview. 22 March 2024.

¹⁹⁴ İklim Haber, "Paris Belediye Başkanı İmamoğlu'nu C40 Zirvesi'ne Davet Etti," October 2, 2019, <https://www.iklimhaber.org/paris-belediye-baskani-imamoglu-c40-zirvesine-davet-etti>.

¹⁹⁵ Cumhuriyet, "İmamoğlu Strasbourg'da Konuştu: İstanbul Seçimleri Tüm Dünya İçin Öğretici," October 30, 2019, <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/imamoglu-strasburgda-konustu-istanbul-secimleri-tum-dunya-icin-ogretici-1572581>.

¹⁹⁶ İklim için Kentler, İmamoğlu C40 Zirvesi'nde: 'Hedefimiz Yeşil İstanbul,'" accessed May 1, 2024, <https://iklimicinkentler.org/imamoglu-c-40-zirvesinde-hedefimiz-yesil-istanbul>.

visited Berlin¹⁹⁷ and London¹⁹⁸, in December 2019, he visited Sarajevo¹⁹⁹. In September 2021, he visited Athens²⁰⁰, in November 2021, he visited Nicosia²⁰¹ and then Glasgow for COP26.²⁰² In February 2022, he visited Munich for the Munich Security Conference²⁰³, in March 2020 he visited Lausanne²⁰⁴, in April 2022, he visited Warsaw²⁰⁵ and Sarajevo²⁰⁶, in June 2022, he visited Sofia²⁰⁷. In September 2023, he visited Florence²⁰⁸, and in January 2024, he visited Tirana for the B40 Summit²⁰⁹. The only place outside of Europe where Mayor İmamoğlu traveled during his first term was Dubai for COP28 in December 2023²¹⁰.

In December 2021, when the issue of imprisonment for Ekrem İmamoğlu arose, mayors of major European cities, including Dario Nardella, the Mayor of Florence and the then

¹⁹⁷ Euronews, "İmamoğlu, Berlin Duvarı'nın Yıkılışı Anısına Düzenlenen Etkinlikte Merkel ile Bir Araya Geldi," November 9, 2019, <https://tr.euronews.com/2019/11/09/imamoglu-berlin-duvarinin-yikilis-anisina-duzenlenen-etkinlikte-merkel-ile-bir-araya-geldi>.

¹⁹⁸ Anadolu Ajansı, "Ekrem İmamoğlu Londra Belediye Başkanı Sadık Han'la Görüştü," November 14, 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/ekrem-imamoglu-londra-belediye-baskani-sadik-hanla-gorustu/1645845>.

¹⁹⁹ Son Dakika Haber, "İBB Başkanı İmamoğlu, Saraybosna'da Temaslarda Bulundu," December 27, 2019, <https://www.sondakika.com/guncel/haber-ibb-baskani-imamoglu-saraybosna-da-temaslarda-12760795>.

²⁰⁰ Euronews, "Ekrem İmamoğlu, Atina'da Yunanistan Başbakanı Miçotakis ile Bir Araya Geldi," September 22, 2021, <https://tr.euronews.com/2021/09/22/ekrem-imamoglu-atina-da-yunanistan-basbakan-micotakis-ile-bir-araya-geldi>.

²⁰¹ Berkay Varol, "İmamoğlu: 'Denктаş'ın Anıt Mezarı Çevresinin Lefkoşa Belediyesi'ne Tahsisiyle İlgili Sorunlar Yaşandı. Bunu Başbakan ile Paylaştım.'" Anka Haber, November 23, 2021, https://ankahaber.net/haber/detay/imamoglu_denktasin_anit_mezari_cevresinin_lefkosa_belediyesine_tahsis_ile_ilgili_sorunlar_yasandi_bunu_basbakan_ile_paylastim_63098.

²⁰² Euronews, "Ekrem İmamoğlu, Glasgow'da Düzenlenen COP26 Zirvesi'ne Davet Edildi," November 1, 2021, <https://tr.euronews.com/2021/11/01/dogal-gazda-sanayi-abonelerine-yuzde-48-zam>.

²⁰³ T24, "Ekrem İmamoğlu, Münih Güvenlik Konferansı'nda Panele Katıldı," February 19, 2022, <https://t24.com.tr/haber/ekrem-imamoglu-munih-guvenlik-konferansi-nda-panele-katildi,1016057>.

²⁰⁴ Hürriyet, "İstanbul 2036 Olimpiyatlarına Talip," March 25, 2022, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/istanbul-2036-olimpiyatlarina-talip-42029448>.

²⁰⁵ Sözcü, "İmamoğlu Varşova'da... İBB'nin TIR'ları Varşova Ve Köstence'ye Ulaştı," April 20, 2022, <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/imamoglu-varsovada-ibbnin-tirlari-varsova-ve-kostenceye-ulasti-wp7086567>.

²⁰⁶ Anka Haber, "Ekrem İmamoğlu Saraybosna'da: 'İstanbul Aynı Zamanda Bir Boşnak Kenti,'" April 25, 2022, https://www.ankahaber.net/haber/detay/ekrem_imamoglu_saraybosnada_istanbul_ayni_zamanda_bir_bosna_k_kenti_83995.

²⁰⁷ Anka Haber, "Bulgaristan'ın 10 Kenti, 'B40 Balkan Şehirleri Ağı'na Dahil Oldu," June 28, 2022, [https://ankahaber.net/haber/detay/bulgaristanin_10_kenti_b40_balkan_sehirleri_agina_dahil_oldu_imamoglu_ibb_olarak_yapilabilecek_tum_is_birliklerine_acigiz_\(dk\)_93017](https://ankahaber.net/haber/detay/bulgaristanin_10_kenti_b40_balkan_sehirleri_agina_dahil_oldu_imamoglu_ibb_olarak_yapilabilecek_tum_is_birliklerine_acigiz_(dk)_93017).

²⁰⁸ Medyascope, "İmamoğlu, Floransa'da Konuştu: 'Dünyada Olduğu Gibi, Türkiye'de de Yeni Bir Gelecek Tahayyülüne İhtiyaç Duyuyoruz,'" September 30, 2023, <https://medyascope.tv/2023/09/30/imamoglu-floransada-konustu-dunyada-oldugu-gibi-turkiyede-de-yeni-bir-gelecek-tahayyulune-ihhtiyac-duyuyoruz>.

²⁰⁹ Birgün, "İmamoğlu, B40 Balkan Şehirleri Ağı Zirvesi'ne Katıldı," January 30, 2024, <https://www.birgun.net/haber/imamoglu-b40-balkan-sehirleri-agi-zirvesi-ne-katildi-502661>.

²¹⁰ Haberler.com, "İmamoğlu, BM'nin Dubai'de Düzenlediği 2023 İklim Değişikliği Konferansı'nda Konuştu," December 6, 2023, <https://www.haberler.com/guncel/imamoglu-bm-nin-dubai-de-duzenledigi-2023-iklim-16601609-haberi>.

President of Eurocities, the Mayor of Athens, the Mayor of Hannover, and the Secretary General of Eurocities came to Istanbul to express their support for İmamođlu, delivering messages of support.²¹¹ Also, Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo sent a written message; Utrecht Mayor Sharon Dijksma, Linz Mayor Klaus Luger, and Hamburg Mayor Dr. Peter Tschentscher also sent video messages to the meeting in Istanbul. Also, Rome Mayor, Prague Mayor, Brussels Mayor, Sarajevo Mayor and Budapest Mayor gave supporting messages via their social media accounts.²¹² In this regard, it is possible to say that the city diplomacy activities during the İmamođlu era resonated with Western cities and especially with social-democratic municipal administrators.

At this point, it can be said that during the period covering İmamođlu's first term from 2019 to 2024, the Istanbul municipal administration conducted a deliberate public diplomacy campaign with Western cities, charting a course that could provide an alternative to Türkiye's national foreign policy through various visits and events. When examined, it is noteworthy that in 2021, the year İmamođlu started his foreign visits after Covid-19 pandemic, all visits were made to European cities. In contrast, among the 14 foreign visits made by Turkish President Erdoğan in 2021, 11 were at the level of state visits, focusing on regions emphasized by Turkish foreign policy such as the Caucasus, Africa, the Balkans, the Gulf, and Central Asian countries, including invitations from Azerbaijan, the TRNC, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Russia, Angola, Togo, Nigeria, Turkmenistan, and Qatar. As it can be seen, Erdoğan visited Azerbaijan twice in 2021. He also went to Brussels for the NATO, Italy for the G20, and New York for the UN meetings.²¹³ However, these should be considered within the framework of meetings organized by international organizations.

Türkiye today maintains warm relations, particularly with countries exhibiting authoritarian tendencies such as Azerbaijan, Russia, and Hungary. Yılmaz highlights the development of Turkish-Russian relations after the Cold War, stating, "The potential for

²¹¹ Rona Şenol, "Avrupalı Belediye Başkanları İmamođlu İle Dayanışmak İçin İstanbul'da," Medyascope, December 29, 2022, <https://medyascope.tv/2022/12/29/avrupali-belediye-baskanlari-imamoglu-ile-dayanismak-icin-istanbulda-sehirlerde-dogan-demokrasiler-sehirlerde-yine-insa-olacak>.

²¹² Euronews, "Avrupalı Belediye Başkanlarından İmamođlu'na Destek: Karar, Olası Adaylığa Yönelik Saldırı," December 16, 2022, <https://tr.euronews.com/2022/12/16/avrupali-belediye-baskanlarindan-imamogluna-destek-karar-olasi-adayliga-yonelik-saldiri>.

²¹³ TRT Haber, "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, 2021'de 14 Yurt Dışı Ziyareti Yaptı," December 28, 2021, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-2021de-14-yurt-disi-ziyareti-yapti-639727.html>.

cooperation between the two countries, especially in the commercial field, has increased significantly. Since the 1990s, Russia has become one of Türkiye's most important trading partners."²¹⁴ After the May 2023 General Elections in Türkiye, Azerbaijani President Aliyev congratulated Turkish President Erdoğan, stating, "The brotherly Turkish people have once again shown their trust in their leader in these elections."²¹⁵ In December 2023, as a result of the treaty between Türkiye and Hungary, the relationship between the two countries was elevated to the level of "enhanced strategic partnership."²¹⁶ On the other hand, there has been a political cooling, especially in relations with EU member countries. However, it is possible to see that this stagnation and cooling are not reflected in İmamoğlu's intercity relations.



²¹⁴ Muzaffer Ercan Yılmaz, "Türkiye-Rusya İlişkilerinin Gelişimi (1923-2023)," *Avrasya Uluslararası Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 2023, 44.

²¹⁵ TRT Haber, "Aliyev: Kardeş Türk halkı bu seçimlerde de liderine güvenini gösterdi," May 15, 2023, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/aliyev-kardes-turk-halki-bu-secimlerde-de-liderine-guvenini-gosterdi-767436.html>.

²¹⁶ BBC News Türkçe, "Erdoğan Ve Orban, Ortak Siyasi Bildiri'ye İmza Attı: Türk-Macar İlişkileri 'Geliştirilmiş Stratejik Ortaklık' Seviyesine Çıkarıldı," December 18, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/cyd03qzjq4o>.

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Paris	-	Athens	Munich	Florance	Tirana
Kopenhagen	-	Nicosia	Florance	Dubai	
Strasbourg	-	Glasgow	Lausanne		
Berlin	-		Warsaw		
London	-		Sarajevo		
Sarajevo	-		Sofia		

Figure 3: *İmamoğlu's foreign visits during his first term (2019-2024) by year.*

It can be said that Mayor İmamoğlu actively and effectively utilizes international platforms in city relations. He has managed to transfer his image and popularity in the Turkish public to international arenas, portraying a profile capable of fostering basic cooperation, mutual interaction, addressing common problems, mutual problem-solving, and analyzing issues of mutual benefit in inter-city relations. Additionally, he emphasizes these aspects in external channels, going beyond by delivering messages that highlight certain values eroded by the basic discourses set by national foreign policy.

These statements clearly demonstrate how an organization aiming to foster cooperation among Balkan cities like B40 can provide a platform not only for fulfilling the fundamental functions of city diplomacy but also for allowing İmamoğlu the freedom to outline a foreign policy vision. Another example of this is the international reaction sparked by the request for İmamoğlu's imprisonment, which could be considered a local issue, and the gathering of European mayors in Istanbul to express their support, serving as another instance.

Today, it is not widely conceivable that the President of France would share a supportive message with the Turkish President in the event of a dispute, but the Mayor of Paris, the capital and largest city of France, could take such action in support of Mayor İmamoğlu. Similarly, the Mayor of Athens, the capital of Greece, a country with which Türkiye has long-standing disputes on matters deemed vital to national security, could visit Istanbul to express support for

İmamoğlu.²¹⁷ More importantly, İmamoğlu can even be addressed by the heads of state in these countries.²¹⁸ This demonstrates İmamoğlu's capacity in public diplomacy and the brand image of Istanbul emerging through this diplomacy.

Since 2019, Istanbul, which has been leading the main opposition movement in Türkiye, stands out as an important development in terms of differentiating from the government's foreign policy initiatives, by involving Istanbul in city diplomacy activities equivalent to global cities and entering into relationships that produce arguments against the government's public diplomacy instruments. Istanbul's Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu has aimed to draw an alternative vision in response to the promotion of Istanbul and the smear campaigns against Türkiye's image abroad since taking office in June 2019.

In relation to this, IMM Foreign Relations officials state that rather than Mayor İmamoğlu having a specific interest in any region, he is open to communication with all cities from all regions around the world, and Mayor İmamoğlu is noted to have a vision in foreign relations.²¹⁹

In the interview I conducted on the subject, the following points were emphasized:

“After Ekrem İmamoğlu was elected as the Mayor of Istanbul, a visionary period in IMM's foreign relations emerged once again. However, of course, the Covid-19 pandemic during this period led municipalities, like elsewhere in the world, to focus on internal projects in Istanbul. During this time, the priority of all municipalities was directed towards public health. Nevertheless, efforts continued for external relations. It wouldn't be quite accurate to say that Ekrem İmamoğlu prioritized any specific region; Istanbul is being opened to as many global cities as possible, maintaining relationships and collaborations with every city and region that is protocol-compliant.”²²⁰

²¹⁷ Kostas Bakoyannis is also the nephew of Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis.

²¹⁸ Mayor İmamoğlu met with Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis during his visit to Greece in 2021.

²¹⁹ IMM Department Officials, Foreign Relations. Personal Interview. 22 March 2024.

²²⁰ IMM Department Officials, Foreign Relations. Personal Interview. 22 March 2024.

Furthermore, the aforementioned officials have used the following statements regarding the cities and regions with which IMM has the most intense relationships:

“There is incredible interest from cities in China. Cities like Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Beijing show remarkable interest. Our relations with cities that are members of the B40, which we pioneered, are good. Athens, Sarajevo, and Tirana are among them. We have good relations with Florence and Paris. There is intense interaction and interest with Berlin. These relationships can be periodic, and new relationships can also be established. As IMM, we keep communication channels open with cities all over the world.”²²¹

Especially since 2013, Western states claiming that the AK Party has been undergoing a process of authoritarianism within the country have been criticizing the government, particularly for detained journalists, restrictions on press freedom, and the suspension of democratic processes. From this perspective, the relationship between Istanbul, the most developed city in terms of history, commerce, culture, and social context, and the most populous city in the country, which is governed by a party other than the ruling party, with Western cities holds a position that could soften negative perceptions towards Türkiye.

The former President of the Party of European Socialists (PES), Sergei Stanishev, highlighted the changing perception towards Türkiye by stating:

"By voting for the opposition, the citizens of Istanbul sent a clear sign to Erdogan and his government that the country needs to be brought back to true democracy, rule of law, and freedom of speech. The victory of İmamoğlu is a new hope for Türkiye.”²²²

The main issue here is that the Istanbul elections have softened claims that democracy has been suspended in Türkiye. So much so that the country's largest city has come to be governed by an opposition party as a result of the elections.²²³ This has the potential to

²²¹ IMM Department Officials, Foreign Relations. Personal Interview. 22 March 2024.

²²² The Party of European Socialists, “Opposition Victory in Istanbul: A New Hope for Türkiye,” September 7, 2022, <https://pes.eu/international/opposition-victory-in-istanbul-a-new-hope-for-T%C3%BCrkiye>.

²²³ The election held on March 31, 2019, in which İmamoğlu led with 48.80% against his opponent, was canceled on May 6, 2019, as a result of AK Party's objections, and the election was repeated. In the re-run election on June 23, 2019, İmamoğlu won the election with a 9.22% lead over his rival. Therefore, the

strengthen the perception in the international community that democratic elections are taking place in the country and that alternative opposition parties are gaining ground against the AK Party. The interpretation by Western media of Ekrem İmamoğlu, who won the IMM elections, as one of the most important figures against Erdoğan, also expands the influence of the IMM.

4.2 The Use of City Diplomacy as a Component of Public Diplomacy

Cities, where more than half of the world's population resides, offer people more opportunities in many aspects compared to rural areas. Extensive technology, communication, and internet networks provide urban residents with the opportunity to acquire information on an international scale. In this regard, the relationships between cities have the potential to influence the thoughts of urban residents regarding the countries concerned.

If the ultimate goal of public diplomacy is interpreted as creating a positive impression among societies, then the role of these activities between cities in regulating relations between societies will be recognized. “Public diplomacy aims to create a positive image among the people and intellectuals of a country, to create cultural attraction between countries, and to contribute positively to the country's image.”²²⁴

Referring to Van Der Plujim and Melissen, Muhasilovic recognize the rising role of local governments in public diplomacy, where some cities are developing a consistent “municipal foreign policies”.²²⁵

At this point, networks and collaboration activities formed by cities can also have a direct impact on the country's image. In this regard, especially in contentious situations in Türkiye's relations with Western countries, the city diplomacy activities of major cities with important cities in the countries involved in the dispute can contribute to creating a positive atmosphere, especially among urban populations.

government's refusal to accept defeat in the Istanbul elections and the repetition of the election were also addressed by the Mayor at the CoE Congress.

²²⁴ Başpınar, “Uluslararası Güç Mücadelesinde Propagandanın Yeri ve Kamu Diplomasisine Dönüşümü,” 79.

²²⁵ Jahja Muhasilović, “Turkish Local Communities and City Diplomacy With Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *Journal of Balkan and Black Sea Studies* 3, no. 4 (2020): 142.

Muhasilovic indicates that as of mid-2017, local governments in Türkiye had sister city relationships with 1619 cities, 646 of which were in Europe, and when the Balkans are included, this number rises to 1085. He also notes that among the municipalities with sister city relationships in the Balkans, the first four are Balkan countries.²²⁶ When looking at Türkiye's relations with the EU, the EU accession process, and its Balkan policy, it's possible to argue that local governments also establish relationships in this context. It can be said that local governments participate in these public diplomacy activities to positively enhance Türkiye's image in Europe and the Balkans. Especially, the global city diplomacy activities of AK Party municipalities complement the policies of the central government.

Following the 2019 Local Elections in Türkiye, the transition of important cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, Antalya, Adana, and Mersin from the People's Alliance (Cumhur İttifakı) to the Nation Alliance (Millet İttifakı) paved the way for a different city diplomacy system apart from Türkiye's central foreign policy. In this context, Istanbul, which plays a significant role in Türkiye's image-building efforts and has hosted numerous international events, has pursued sister city relationships and city diplomacy activities closer to the pro-European stance of the opposition, unlike the Turkish government.

According to Leffel, local and regional governments conduct diplomacy activities in the global context when the central government makes moves that may harm universal norms in foreign policy.²²⁷ Also, referring to the "world society" theory²²⁸ in sociology, it suggests that sub-national actors intervene to uphold values such as human rights in the international arena in response to the central government's failure to do so.²²⁹

Considering the recent Turkish foreign policy, it is possible for local governments to engage in activities aimed at improving Türkiye's image in this context. The tone used by the Mayor of Istanbul in his foreign visits and international meetings suggests that democracy and human rights in Türkiye can be achieved through a change in government. Thus, the city diplomacy conducted provides an image correction at a time when Türkiye's adherence to

²²⁶ Muhasilović, "Turkish Local Communities and City Diplomacy With Bosnia and Herzegovina," 147.

²²⁷ Benjamin Leffel, "Principles Of Modern City Diplomacy And The Expanding Role Of Cities In Foreign Policy," *Journal of International Affairs* 74, no. 1 (2021): 179–200.

²²⁸ John Wear Burton, *World Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1972).

²²⁹ Leffel, "Principles Of Modern City Diplomacy And The Expanding Role Of Cities In Foreign Policy."

certain norms and values is questioned, indicating that policies not implemented by the Turkish government could be implemented in the future in Türkiye.

Public diplomacy involves multidimensional communication. Cities demonstrate a structure in 21st-century global relations where multifaceted communication channels are open. Especially through sister city relationships, cultural activities, and continuous collaboration on environmental issues, cities do not limit their city diplomacy activities to a single area, but open up a communication channel that can directly turn into public relations activities related to many issues concerning society.

Harlow defines public relations as follows:

"Public relations is a privileged management function that helps to establish and maintain mutual communication, understanding, acceptance, and cooperation between an organization and its target audience, involving the management of issues and problems, responding to the public, assisting management in informing the public, defining and emphasizing management's responsibility to serve the public good, serving as an early warning system to help predict trends, assisting management in effectively benefiting from changes, and using ethical communication techniques and research as primary tools."²³⁰

The local governments, which are the closest administrative units to the public, conduct intensive public relations activities. The globalization of these efforts transforms city diplomacy into a form that addresses the public. According to Say, public diplomacy represents a two-way interaction.²³¹ City-to-city relationships often benefit not only from bilateral interactions but also from initiatives formed by multiple cities coming together. Therefore, city diplomacy goes far beyond the relationships between two cities and is conducted through organizations such as UCLG, Eurocities, and B40.

Cities, beyond the national level, have the potential to carry brand value in a global context. Many cities have hosted major events bearing their names. Throughout history, Vienna

²³⁰ Şükrü Alper Yurttaş, "Yerel Yönetimlerde Halkla İlişkiler Üzerine Karşılaştırmalı Bir Çalışma: Çatalca Ve Nanterre Belediyeleri" (Master Thesis, Istanbul University, 2009), 5.

²³¹ Seyfi Say, "Propaganda İçin Kullanılan Bir Örtmece Olarak Kamu Diplomasisi Kavramı," *İnsan&İnsan* 2, no. 4 (2015).

is associated with the Vienna Congress that ended the Napoleonic Wars, Munich with the Munich Security Conference, a small town like Davos with the Davos summits, and Istanbul with the Intercontinental Marathons. This goes beyond the national reputations of cities. Hence, major events like the Olympics serve as crucial tools for city administrations in public diplomacy. Gordon Waitt examines the Games as a propaganda exercise and its role in creating feelings of urban community despite the polarization caused by socio-economic differences.²³²

The population power, budget, and human resources at the disposal of cities are increasing in importance day by day. Referring to Harvey, Malfas states, "local governments have become comparatively autonomous from central governments, and as a result, they have adopted less bureaucratic and more competitive practices."²³³ The competition among cities leads to them asserting themselves and engaging in diplomatic activities to stand out from other cities, beyond the priorities of supranational formations and national foreign policies. Ak explains this situation as, "Rather than aiming to enrich urban culture, the Olympic Games are used as strategic tools to present the city to the international public and create a new urban image."²³⁴ Therefore, as seen in the case of the Olympics, cities transform such events into public diplomacy activities.

Arne Musch categorizes city diplomacy into three activity areas: lobbying, projects, and dialogue activities.²³⁵ And, referring to the importance of lobbying, he says, "Lobby-type city diplomacy amounts to early warning and conflict prevention when it takes place before the conflict becomes militarized. There is great potential in this type of activity: foreign local governments with twinning relations can be among the first outsiders to notice that a violent conflict is brewing in an area."²³⁶ When we look at this discourse, which explains city diplomacy activities by emphasizing their conflict prevention feature, the peace-building nature of cities in international politics will be seen. This is an element that will bring about the intensive use of public diplomacy. Sohaela Amiri pairs city diplomacy with public diplomacy,

²³² John Rennie Short, "Globalization, Cities and the Summer Olympics," *City* 12, no. 3 (2008): 335.

²³³ Maximos Malfas, Eleni Theodoraki, and Barrie Houlihan, "Impacts of the Olympic Games as Mega-events," *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers. Municipal Engineer/Proceedings of ICE. Municipal Engineer* 157, no. 3 (2004): 216.

²³⁴ Duygu Ak, "Evaluation of the Olympic Games in Terms of Their Impacts on the Host City," *Pamukkale Journal of Eurasian Socioeconomic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2015): 8.

²³⁵ Arne Musch et al., eds., *City Diplomacy* (UCLG, 2008), 7.

²³⁶ Musch et al., *City Diplomacy*, 18.

defined as "efforts to establish and maintain relations with peoples in other societies to advance a country's policies and actions,"²³⁷ by noting that city administrations are open to interpersonal exchanges.²³⁸ The argument here is that cities have the capacity to establish relationships, and these relationships can contribute to their sustainability within peoples.

Nicholas Cull has categorized public diplomacy into five main headings: "listening," "advocacy," "exchange diplomacy," "international broadcasting," and "cultural diplomacy."²³⁹ And, Amiri explains city diplomacy in five functions. These are: trade and economic development (1), diplomatic representation and protocol (2), promoting international exchanges (3), supporting cultural ties and aids, civic engagement, and education (4), and policy collaboration, advocacy, and action (5).²⁴⁰

City diplomacy also reveals commercial and economic collaborations. However, alongside this, cultural activities, aid efforts, educational activities, and civic engagement are also part of city diplomacy. These aspects are also elements of a healthy public diplomacy activity. Therefore, these elements of city diplomacy reflect one aspect of public diplomacy. Cities engage in diplomatic activities to secure loans, create financing opportunities, win grants, and attract investors from other cities in many ways. These aspects certainly form an important part of city diplomacy. However, on the other hand, city administrations are directly accountable to society and individuals. Therefore, every action taken by cities addresses society and individuals. The most important point here is the cultural interaction between cities, which constitutes the cornerstone of city public diplomacy.

On the other hand, cities have the power to influence public opinion in other cities they address. The main focus of IMM's city diplomacy activities will also be examined in this context. Because the IMM administration, which follows a different political line from the AK

²³⁷ Jan Melissen and Jian Wang, "Introduction: Debating Public Diplomacy," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 14, no. 1–2 (2019): 1.

²³⁸ Sohaela Amiri, "Understanding the Dynamics Between U.S. City Diplomacy and Public Diplomacy," *Journal of Public Diplomacy* 2, no. 1 (2022): 98.

²³⁹ Nicholas J. Cull, ed., *Public Diplomacy: Lessons From the Past* (Figueroa Press, 2009).

²⁴⁰ Amiri, "Understanding the Dynamics Between U.S. City Diplomacy and Public Diplomacy."

Party government in Türkiye and develops a different rhetoric, also exhibits this attitude abroad. The implications of this also shape how the Turkish people presents itself to other countries.

City diplomacy activities generally follow the foreign policies of national governments. It is rare for any city to communicate with countries and their cities where communications are limited in the central foreign policy. In contrast, the capacity of cities to influence the international public opinion is lower compared to national governments. However, some global cities can achieve significant gains on the international stage. Istanbul is one of the cities that can be cited as an example of these cities.

Looking at the past administrations of the IMM, it can be observed that during Mayor Topbaş's tenure, IMM played a significant role in Türkiye's foreign policy goals in the Balkans, Africa, and the Islamic world, which we can define it as Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia, North Africa and some territories of Balkans, the regions which has a Islamic culture with the Muslim majority. Additionally, disaster diplomacy has also played a significant role in IMM's previous administrations. IMM teams conducted a 105-day operation in the town of Basira in the Punjab province of Pakistan, creating a significant impact on public opinion in Pakistan through this endeavor.²⁴¹ In 2012, IMM undertook the solid waste management project for Mecca, which is considered sacred for the Islamic religion and is the pilgrimage center for 1.5 billion Muslims worldwide.²⁴² In 2013, IMM also played a significant role in preparing the metrobus project for Lahore, Pakistan.²⁴³

There is a new emerging trend in international relations which involves intercity interaction. This intercity interaction goes beyond national borders, enabling cities with similar cultural and sociological backgrounds to develop significant relationships with each other on various matters. Looking beyond Istanbul, Bursa, also a city with Ottoman heritage, demonstrates the functionality of local governments in terms of public diplomacy and its subset,

²⁴¹ Yeni Şafak, "İBB'den Pakistan'a Çıkartma," December 14, 2011, <https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/ibbden-pakistana-cikartma-356661>.

²⁴² İBB İSTAÇ, "Mekke'nin Temizliğini İSTAÇ Yapacak," December 14, 2012, <https://www.istac.istanbul/basin-odasi/haberler-ve-duyurular/mekkenin-temizligini-istac-yapacak>.

²⁴³ Anadolu Ajansı, "Pakistan'ın Metrosu İstanbul'dan," February 10, 2013, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/pg/foto-galeri/pakistanin-metrobusu-istanbuldan/0/115735>.

cultural diplomacy, similar to central government instruments like TİKA, by restoring Ottoman-era artifacts such as the Rufai Tekke and Gazi Baba Tomb in Skopje.²⁴⁴

Public diplomacy stands out as a multifaceted field that requires comprehensive consideration. With the development of mass communication tools, not only governments but also individuals, groups, companies, and civil society organizations have become stakeholders in diplomacy. In this regard, cities contribute to the establishment of bridges between countries and the facilitation of smoother relations, alongside governments' foreign policy activities.

Such efforts not only go beyond inter-city interaction and communication but also contribute to shaping Türkiye's public diplomacy inventory in these regions. Currently, under the İmamoğlu administration, despite maintaining communication with cities worldwide within the framework of protocol rules, the IMM endeavors to portray a more democratic, liberal, and participatory image of Türkiye in the international arena, especially in terms of democracy, freedom of thought and expression, human rights, and inclusivity, to counteract any damage to its reputation. This is evident in statements given to the international press and speeches made at international meetings. Particularly noteworthy examples include İmamoğlu's speech at the CoE Congress shortly after his election and his speech at the Munich Security Conference.

However, city diplomacy very rarely positions itself outside of national foreign policy. Amiri tells the following regarding this issue, “While the natures of city diplomacy and public diplomacy are such that they can inform both national diplomacy and foreign policy through closed feedback loops, they are regardless bound by diplomacy at the national level.”²⁴⁵ Especially in a country where the central government is strong, such as Türkiye, the international relations of cities are under the control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²⁴⁶ In addition, there is no objection to cities organizing around national interests. Even though communication with countries where the relations of national governments are weak or

²⁴⁴ Bursa Metropolitan Municipality, “Üsküp, Bursa İmzalı Yeni Bir Esere Daha Kavuştu,” December 21, 2012, <https://www.bursa.bel.tr/haber/uskup-bursa-imzali-yeni-bir-esere-daha-kavustu-12143>.

²⁴⁵ Amiri, “Understanding the Dynamics Between U.S. City Diplomacy and Public Diplomacy.”

²⁴⁶ Ayşe Sayın, “İBB’ye Gönderilen ‘Büyükelçilerle Görüşmeye Dışişleri İzni Zorunluluğu’ Yazısı Tartışma Yarattı,” BBC News Türkçe, July 6, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-62072654>.

turbulent may be limited, cities can fulfill this mission in complex bilateral relationships where the use of soft power elements is necessary.

As observed particularly in Istanbul, inter-city relations generally occur with cities of countries with which Türkiye has been engaged in alliance relations at various periods, and where interstate relations have been positive. However, during the period of 2019-2024, cities of countries with which the country has strained relations are also establishing good relations. However, despite this, while there may be divisions in rhetoric and occasional tense periods in the political context, European countries still rank among Türkiye's most intense trade partners. Erdem Ersavaş and Kavanoz also note that local governments in Türkiye implement general foreign policy trends, especially regarding international matters such as alignment with the EU and the accession process, in their local diplomacy strategies.²⁴⁷

Thus, city diplomacy activities, which can be seen as an important element intersecting with public diplomacy, especially when viewed through the lens of Istanbul, are conducted not with cities perceived as direct threats to Türkiye, such as cities in Syria or Israel, but with Western countries where dialogue is kept open, there is a significant trade volume, political relations continue, and where public support is needed at certain points. In this respect, it can be said that the city diplomacy activities of the IMM support national interests. Relations maintained with cities in many countries where Türkiye experiences political crises should be seen as an important field of activity, primarily to maintain the trade volume between these countries and Türkiye and to break the existing negative perception. Of course, in addition to this, local governments may also have different objectives in their foreign relations. Çelebi Zengin and Alkan express that "local governments, which are important tools of the decisions taken and activities carried out by states, can have different agendas and initiatives from states in some areas." This suggests that cities can pursue policies different from those of the states to which they are globally connected.²⁴⁸ However, when looked at, the activities carried out by IMM can be interpreted as efforts to facilitate Türkiye's image. It can be said that with these

²⁴⁷ Nisa Erdem and Suna Ersavaş Kavanoz, "Türkiye'de 'Yerel Diplomasi Yönetimi'ne Dair Bir Araştırma," Kent Ve Çevre Araştırmaları Dergisi 3, no. 1 (2021): 28–49.

²⁴⁸ Esra Çelebi Zengin and Ali Davut Alkan, "Yerel Bir Politika Aracı Olarak Paradiplomasi," Kent Akademisi 15, no. 1 (2022): 440.

city diplomacy activities, a political stance is also put forth, and a different interpretation is made regarding how Türkiye should approach its foreign policy in terms of national interests.

Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, together with Sarajevo Mayor Benjamina Karic, addressed the issue of the B40 established under the leadership of the IMM in an interview with Bosnian FaceTV channel. He highlighted this matter as, "B40 will be a structure where cities can resolve crises between countries through their relationships."²⁴⁹ This goal envisions a "backdoor diplomacy" beyond intercity relations, aiming to resolve negative situations between countries by establishing a systematic approach through city diplomacy and public diplomacy methods converging in a common set. Alger defines intercity relations as "One form of 'citizen diplomacy' is the city twinning movement, now including efforts directed toward the development of sustained relationships through which people from the two cities attempt to cope with issues that have created animosity between their national governments."²⁵⁰

In this regard, IMM, particularly its relations developed with countries like Greece, notably with the capital city Athens, have reached a level that could create an alternative perception among the Greek public. So much so that, amidst the significantly turbulent Turkish-Greek relations in September 2021, Istanbul Mayor İmamoğlu's visit to Athens and his meeting with Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis alongside Mayor Bakoyannis during this visit, stirred reactions in the Greek press while Navtex disputes²⁵¹ between the two countries were ongoing.²⁵²

Public diplomacy emphasizes communication that goes beyond intergovernmental relations and focuses on connections between peoples. In this context, relationships can be established beyond governments even in countries where common ground cannot be found and

²⁴⁹ Face TV Bosnia, "Karić: Sarajevo će biti Centar Svijeta 2025.!, Imamoglu: Tada će Svi Problemi biti Riješeni!," February 6, 2024, <https://face.ba/face-tv/cd/karic-sarajevo-ce-bit-centar-svijeta-2025-imamoglu-tada-ce-svi-problemi-bit-rijesen-2/383961>.

²⁵⁰ Chadwick F. Alger, "The World Relations of Cities: Closing the Gap Between Social Science Paradigms and Everyday Human Experience," *International Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (1990): 506.

²⁵¹ Sabah, "Ege'de NAVTEX Gerilimi," September 22, 2021, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2021/09/22/egede-navtex-gerilimi-yunanistana-telsizden-cok-net-mesaj-girerseniz-mudahale-ederiz>.

²⁵² Hellasjournal.com, "Συνάντηση Του Πρωθυπουργού Με Τους Δημάρχους Αθήνας Και Κωνσταντινούπολης." 21 Sept. 2021, hellasjournal.com/2021/09/sinantisi-tou-prothipourgou-me-tous-dimarchous-athinas-ke-konstantinoupolis.

political dialogue is limited. Cities, where millions of people live today, play a crucial role in coordinating interpersonal relations between societies. Therefore, when we consider public diplomacy as a communication activity beyond governments, we can say that cities have a critical importance in reaching people. Interactions between cities, ranging from education to culture, aid to technical matters, have the potential to influence urban societies.



4.3 Evaluating İmamoğlu's Participation in International Meetings from the Perspective of Public Diplomacy

Mayor İmamoğlu has participated in various internationally recognized meetings, assemblies, conferences, and summits, and has made numerous visits abroad in this context. İmamoğlu's foreign visits have also caused significant reactions in the national media. For example, his invitation to the COP26 Summit held in Glasgow in 2021 was one of them. At that time, it was covered in the national media that Turkish President Erdoğan was also invited to the summit, but it was highlighted in the media that İmamoğlu did not attend this summit, to which he was invited.^{253 254 255}

İmamoğlu also attended the CoE Congress²⁵⁶ and the C40 Summit in 2019²⁵⁷, the Munich Security Conference in 2022²⁵⁸, and COP28 in 2023.²⁵⁹ These international meetings, especially Mayor İmamoğlu's participation in the 37th Session of the CoE Congress in 2019 and the 58th edition of the Munich Security Conference in 2022, hold significant importance in terms of the messages conveyed and the reactions received. İmamoğlu's invitation to the CoE Congress and the statements he made there bear importance for the direction of Turkish politics. Similarly, İmamoğlu's participation in the Munich Security Conference, where many important

²⁵³ Cumhuriyet, "Erdoğan'ın Gitmediği Glasgow'a İmamoğlu Gidecek," November 1, 2021, <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/turkiye/erdoganin-gitmediği-glasgow-a-imamoglu-gidecek-1881336>.

²⁵⁴ Evrim Sabak, "Erdoğan'ın Yerine İmamoğlu Gidecek," Haber 1, November 2, 2021, <https://www.haber1.com/politika/erdoganin-yerine-imamoglu-gidecek/>.

²⁵⁵ Artı Gerçek, "Erdoğan'ın Katılmadığı COP26 İklim Zirvesi'ne İmamoğlu Gidecek," November 2, 2021, <https://artigercek.com/guncel/erdogan-in-katilmadigi-cop26-iklim-zirvesi-ne-imamoglu-gidecek-184611h>.

²⁵⁶ Cumhuriyet, "İmamoğlu Strasburg'da Konuştu: İstanbul Seçimleri Tüm Dünya İçin Öğretici," October 30, 2019, <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/imamoglu-strasburgda-konustu-istanbul-secimleri-tum-dunya-icin-ogretici-1572581>.

²⁵⁷ İklim İçin Kentler, "İmamoğlu C40 Zirvesi'nde: 'Hedefimiz Yeşil İstanbul,'" accessed May 1, 2024, <https://iklimicin kentler.org/imamoglu-c-40-zirvesinde-hedefimiz-yesil-istanbul>.

²⁵⁸ soL, "Münih Güvenlik Konferansı'nda İmamoğlu Sürprizi," February 15, 2022, <https://haber.sol.org.tr/haber/munih-guvenlik-konferansinda-imamoglu-surprizi-326328>.

²⁵⁹ Anka Haber, "İmamoğlu, BM'nin Dubai'de Düzenlediği 2023 İklim Değişikliği Konferansı'nda Konuştu," June 12, 2023, https://ankahaber.net/haber/detay/imamoglu_bmnin_dubaide_duzenledigi_2023_iklim_degisikligi_konferansi_nda_konustu_iklim_adaletini_saglamak_icin_daha_genis_olcekli_kolektif_bir_caba_gerekli_161890.

statesmen and political figures are invited, has sparked reactions from figures in the ruling party in the country, Ak Party.²⁶⁰

In this regard, the importance of the Mayor's participation in these meetings is evident. In this section, the participation in these meetings and the evaluation of the messages conveyed in terms of public diplomacy will also be conducted.

4.4 The Invitation of Istanbul Mayor İmamoğlu as a Guest to the CoE Congress' 37th Session

Operating as an organ of the Council of Europe, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities serves as a structure that brings together the local authorities of member countries of the Council, aiming to enhance cooperation and dialogue.²⁶¹ In this respect, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, as an organ of the Council of Europe, serves as a significant pillar of local diplomacy and is an area directly influenced by national diplomacy in terms of its importance.

The Congress sent observers to the renewed Istanbul elections on March 31, 2019, and thereafter on June 23, 2019.²⁶² After the election, he was invited to the 37th Session of the CoE Congress, scheduled for October 31, 2019, where he delivered a speech. At the beginning of the session, rapporteur Andrew Dawson's statement, "There is a desire and will for a vibrant democracy in Türkiye," is significant in demonstrating the impact of the Istanbul elections on Türkiye's image.²⁶³

İmamoğlu began his speech at this congress with the following words:

²⁶⁰ Son Dakika Haber, "Devlet Bahçeli'den İmamoğlu'na 'Niye Münih'e Gittin' İması," February 22, 2022, <https://www.sondakika.com/politika/haber-devlet-bahceli-imamoglu-icin-bizim-bilmedigimiz-14750107>.

²⁶¹ The Council of Europe was established on May 5, 1949, with the participation of Britain, France, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, and Luxembourg. One of the organs of the Council of Europe, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, was established on January 14, 1994, with its roots stemming from the organization founded on January 12, 1957, as the European Conference of Local Authorities. Türkiye is represented in the Congress with 18 delegates.

²⁶² Gülsüm Alan, "Avrupa Konseyi Gözlemci Heyeti: Sonuçlar Türkiye Demokrasisinin Dirençli Olduğunu Gösteriyor," Euronews, April 1, 2019, <https://tr.euronews.com/my-europe/2019/04/01/avrupa-konseyi-gozlemci-heyeti-sonuclar-turkiye-demokrasisinin-direncli-oldugunu-gosteriyo>.

²⁶³ Cumhuriyet, "İmamoğlu Strasburg'da Konuştu: İstanbul Seçimleri Tüm Dünya İçin Öğretici."

“I bring you greetings from the people on the anniversary of the 96th year of our Republic and democracy. As the mayor of Istanbul, a city that has served as the capital for the Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman empires, hosting 120 emperors, kings, and sultans, the cradle of three great civilizations, bridging two continents, and safeguarding the holy relics of three major religions, I would like to start my speech by sharing the greetings of the 16 million people of Istanbul with you and all brotherly nations, with its unique and enchanting appearance, Istanbul is one of the world's important centers.”²⁶⁴

The message conveyed here focuses on Istanbul's, and thus Türkiye's, multicultural, tolerant, and historically rich cultural structure where multiple civilizations coexist. İmamoğlu's speech sets itself apart from the Turkish government's critical messages towards the West, representing an inclusive and constructive approach.

İmamoğlu continued his speech by emphasizing Türkiye's European identity and democratic foundation. Pointing out that Türkiye is one of the founding members of the Council of Europe, İmamoğlu conveyed an important message to representatives of Western cities about the perspective of the Turkish opposition towards Europe and the adoption of a European identity.

Türkiye's identity has often been a subject of debate. Whether Türkiye is a part of the European family or not has been a topic of discussion since the days of the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman Sultans such as Selim III, Mahmud II, and Abdülmecid endeavored to contribute to Türkiye's Westernization process from the era of Sultan Selim III up to the collapse of the empire.²⁶⁵ The Ottoman sultans, especially those who implemented military reforms, also opened Western-style schools in the country in this regard.²⁶⁶ The Westernization efforts of the Ottomans were also embraced by societies such as the Young Ottomans and the Committee of Union and Progress, and they became an important idea for the generation that founded the Republic. The place that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Türkiye, indicated as the "contemporary civilization level" undoubtedly refers to the West. Indeed, Former Turkish Foreign Minister Necmettin Sadak stated in his speech to the Turkish Grand

²⁶⁴ Cumhuriyet, “İmamoğlu Strasburg’da Konuştu: İstanbul Seçimleri Tüm Dünya İçin Öğretici.”

²⁶⁵ İlyas Doğan, *Türk Modernleşmesi* (Astana Yayınları, 2020).

²⁶⁶ Nursel Gülcü, “19. Yüzyılda Askeri Okullar Ve Askeri Eğitim Sistemi,” *Akdeniz Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, no. 3 (2018): 104–13.

National Assembly regarding the approval of Türkiye's membership in the Council of Europe that geography alone was not the sole factor in Türkiye being considered a European country. He emphasized that the reforms implemented by Atatürk also played a significant role in Türkiye's integration into the European community.²⁶⁷

Although the AK Party government occasionally refers to Türkiye's European identity and has developed many reforms for EU membership, it has primarily focused on becoming a regional power, especially from 2008 to 2016, based on Türkiye's Ottoman heritage, and has continued this emphasis thereafter with different ideological backgrounds. For this reason, particularly among segments of the population close to the AK Party, there is a skeptical attitude towards the US and the EU, and they consider Türkiye not to be a European country. The Republican People's Party (CHP), founded by the founder of the country, lately tends to adopt a more European-oriented stance compared to the AK Party.²⁶⁸

In this respect, the IMM, which was governed by the Welfare Party, the Virtue Party, and subsequently the AK Party from the same tradition, being won by the CHP after 25 years, has also paved the way for adopting a European-oriented approach in the city's foreign relations.

In his speech in Strasbourg, İmamoğlu emphasized that commitment to European values and its family is a goal for Türkiye as a state and society. He did not hesitate to give statements regarding ideas and policies that affect the entire country beyond Istanbul.

Strasbourg Mayor Roland Ries, in his statement during Mayor İmamoğlu's visit, expressed the following:

“Our attention is also drawn to the complex situation of relations between Türkiye and France or the EU. Despite this, Turkish and French local and regional governments should strengthen their relations within a broader framework in Europe to maintain a rich and constructive dialogue among civil

²⁶⁷ Erkan Cevizliler and Ali Servet Öncü, “Avrupa Bütünleşmesi İçin Önemli Bir Adım: ‘Avrupa Konseyi’ ve Türkiye'nin Konseye Üyeliği Meselesi,” *Akademik Bakış* 7, no. 13 (2013): 30.

²⁶⁸ Before the 2023 General Elections, the Joint Consensus Text of the Table of 6 within the CHP outlined adherence to EU norms in various areas such as full membership in the EU, customs union, cyber security, digitalization, procurement law, ethics, and other issues. (“6'lı Masa Ortak Mutabakat Metni.”)

societies and especially among young people. In this context, I am delighted to welcome Mayor İmamoğlu, as we are making an investment together for the future.”²⁶⁹

Mayor Ries emphasized the cooperation between Türkiye and France and expressed his pleasure in hosting İmamoğlu in Strasbourg. As a member of the Socialist Party, Ries also served as the co-President of the European section of UCLG at that time.²⁷⁰ İmamoğlu had also met with Anne Hidalgo, the Mayor of Paris and a member of the Socialist Party, shortly after his election. In this meeting held in 2019, Hidalgo, who was the President of C40 at the time, had invited the Mayor of Istanbul to Copenhagen, where the C40 meeting would take place.²⁷¹

In 2019, Turkish-French relations were strained due to French President Emmanuel Macron's harsh criticisms of Türkiye's Peace Spring Operation²⁷², which was part of Türkiye's Syria policy and involved activating elements of hard power, and his statement regarding the "brain death of NATO."²⁷³ In response, Turkish President Erdoğan remarked that Macron should "check his own brain death."²⁷⁴ These exchanges contributed to tensions in Turkish-French relations, particularly regarding regional issues such as the Eastern Mediterranean dispute.²⁷⁵ Macron openly supported Greece, drawing a reaction from Türkiye.²⁷⁶ In October 2019, Macron also made statements suggesting that Türkiye would be responsible if ISIS were to revive.²⁷⁷ Additionally, Macron announced plans to declare April 24 as a day of remembrance

²⁶⁹ Diken, "İmamoğlu: Vatandaşın İradesi Makam Sahiplerinin Arzusuyla Geçersiz Sayılamaz," October 30, 2019, <https://www.diken.com.tr/imamoglu-vatandasin-iradesi-makam-sahiplerinin-arzusuyla-gecersiz-sayilamaz>.

²⁷⁰ UCLG, "Our Past Congresses," accessed May 1, 2024, <https://www.old.uclg.org/en/UCLG-Past-Congresses>.

²⁷¹ İklim Haber, "Paris Belediye Başkanı İmamoğlu'nu C40 Zirvesi'ne Davet Etti."

²⁷² Euronews, "Macron: Barış Pınarı Harekatı En Hızlı Şekilde Sonlandırılmalı," October 14, 2019, <https://tr.euronews.com/2019/10/14/macron-baris-pinari-harekati-en-hizli-sekilde-sonlandirilmali>.

²⁷³ BBC News Türkçe, "Fransa Cumhurbaşkanı Macron: NATO'nun Beyin Ölümü Gerçekleşti," November 8, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-50342428>.

²⁷⁴ Euronews, "Erdoğan Macron'a NATO Göndermesi," November 29, 2019, <https://tr.euronews.com/2019/11/29/erdogan-dan-macron-a-nato-gondermesi-sen-once-kendi-beyin-olumunu-bir-kontrol-ettir-video>.

²⁷⁵ TRT Haber, "Türkiye'nin Paris Büyükelçisi Refik Ali Onaner TRT Haber'e Konuştu," November 10, 2021, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/turkiyenin-paris-buyukelcisi-refik-ali-onaner-trt-habere-konustu-624308.html>.

²⁷⁶ Çağıl Kasapoğlu, "Doğu Akdeniz: Fransa, Yunanistan'a Destek Vererek Ne Yapmak İstiyor?," BBC News Türkçe, September 16, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-54175399>.

²⁷⁷ Gazete Duvar, "Macron: IŞİD Yeniden Canlanırsa Sorumlusu Türkiye Olur," September 27, 2020, <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/dunya/2019/10/18/macron-isis-yeniden-canlanirsa-sorumlusu-turkiye-olur>.

for the Armenian Genocide in 2019.²⁷⁸ In response to these announcements, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that this decision deeply saddened the 700,000 Turks living in France and strongly opposed the decision.²⁷⁹ At a time of high tension between Türkiye and France, during such a period, the IMM, which has achieved a successful breakthrough in bilateral relations with two important cities (Paris and Strasbourg) of France, appears to reflect an alternative for Türkiye's relations with France through cities.

4.5 The Invitation of Istanbul Mayor İmamoğlu to the Munich Security Conference

The Munich Security Conference, established in 1963 under the name “International Wehrkunde-Begegnung”, has been one of Munich's flagship events for over half a century, bringing together important government officials, business leaders, military and diplomatic officials, and academics.²⁸⁰ While the conference initially served as a platform for security discussions among NATO member countries, it has evolved into a large-scale organization inviting participants from all over the world after the Cold War.²⁸¹

Mayor İmamoğlu was invited to the session "The Role of Cities: Democratic Game Changers?" at the 58th Munich Security Conference held in 2022.²⁸² Alongside Mayor İmamoğlu, mayors from Berlin, Budapest, and Warsaw were also invited to this session.²⁸³ In addition, Türkiye's then Minister of National Defense, Hulusi Akar, also participated in this conference.²⁸⁴

²⁷⁸ BBC News Türkçe, “Fransa Cumhurbaşkanı Macron 24 Nisan’ı ‘Ermeni Soykırımını Anma Günü’ İlan Etti,” February 6, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-47140058#:~:text=Fransa%20Cumhurba%C5%9Fkan%C4%B1%20Emmanuel%20Macron%2C%201915,resmi%20anma%20g%C3%BCn%C3%BC%20haline%20getirmekti>.

²⁷⁹ TRT Haber, “Dışişleri’nden Macron’un Sözlerine Tepki,” February 6, 2019, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/disislerinden-macronun-sozlerine-tepki-404010.html>.

²⁸⁰ Wolfgang Ischinger et al., *Towards Mutual Security: Fifty Years of Munich Security Conference* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 23.

²⁸¹ Munich Security Conference, “History of the Munich Security Conference,” accessed May 1, 2024, <https://securityconference.org/en/about-us/history>.

²⁸² Gazete Duvar, “Ekrem İmamoğlu Münih Güvenlik Konferansı’nda Konuşma Yapacak,” February 15, 2022, <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/ekrem-imamoglu-munih-guvenlik-konferansinda-konusma-yapacak-haber-1553314>.

²⁸³ Murat Yetkin, “İmamoğlu Münih’te: Öğrenilmiş Çaresizliği Aşmak,” Yetkin Report, February 21, 2022, <https://yetkinreport.com/2022/02/21/imamoglu-munih-te-ogrenilmis-caresizligi-asmak>.

²⁸⁴ Ministry of National Defence of Türkiye, “Millî Savunma Bakanı Hulusi Akar, Münih Güvenlik Konferansı Kapsamında ‘Savunma Politikaları ve İnovasyon Forumu’na Konuşmacı Olarak Katıldı,” February 18, 2022, <https://www.msb.gov.tr/SlaytHaber/1822022-45443>.

In the panel he attended at the conference, İmamoğlu made statements regarding democracy and Türkiye's place in the European family.

The Mayor conveyed the following:

"We do not underestimate the struggle for democracy. But we also do not succumb to despair. Democracy may be perceived as flawed in Türkiye, but it is not dead. Institutions may be weakened, but the longing for European values and democratic norms in society has not diminished, it has increased."²⁸⁵

Mayor's emphasis here is that Western criticisms of Türkiye regarding democracy and European values cannot be interpreted unilaterally, and that there is an ongoing democracy in Türkiye.

In an interview with Deutsche Welle Turkish after the conference, İmamoğlu stated:

"We, Istanbul, are the beginning of Europe. Türkiye is an indispensable part of Europe. I say this everywhere: Europe starts from Istanbul. Therefore, Türkiye is the starting point of Europe, an indispensable part. Türkiye's perspective on Europe and the West within the integrity of society continues to have great support. No political party can stand against this societal understanding of Türkiye today. Although there may be those who prefer conflict language in politics sometimes using populist rhetoric, we also know that in general understanding, Türkiye is an indispensable part, a power of Europe or NATO. For world peace, by observing the changes, especially in the 21st century: climate change, the transformation of energy-related needs into clean energy, quality living in cities, perhaps issues far ahead of defense reflexes."²⁸⁶

İmamoğlu's statement emphasizes Türkiye's integration with European and Western institutions and its belonging to Europe. However, he also indicates that the values of the West

²⁸⁵ Independent Türkçe, "İmamoğlu Münih'te Konuştu: Türkiye'de Demokrasi Sakat Görülebilir Ancak Ölmedi," February 19, 2022, <https://www.indyturk.com/node/474471/haber/i%CC%87mamo%C4%9Flu-m%C3%BCnihte-konu%C5%9Ftu-t%C3%BCrkiyede-demokrasi-sakat-g%C3%B6r%C3%BClebilir-ancak-%C3%B6lmedi>.

²⁸⁶ Erkan Arıkan, "İmamoğlu: Türkiye Avrupa'nın Vazgeçilmez Bir Parçası," DW Türkçe, February 20, 2022, <https://www.dw.com/tr/i%CC%87mamo%C4%9Flu-t%C3%BCrkiye-avrupan%C4%B1n-vazge%C3%A7ilmez-bir-par%C3%A7as%C4%B1/a-6084244>.

cannot be defined solely by defense reflexes, referring to contemporary global issues such as climate sensitivity and clean energy that can contribute to world peace.

Furthermore, the Mayor stated:

"I think it is not right for the West to be concerned about these issues or other issues. Of course, it should be in solidarity, of course, it should keep the dialogues at the highest level, and not only follow the government of the Republic of Türkiye as a political power, but also closely monitor other developments and even keep their dialogue with those institutions, parties, and civil society organizations at the highest level. In this context, Türkiye is giving very correct and good signals. There should be no suspicion from the West about Türkiye, nor should Türkiye have doubts about the West. There is only a process due to a lack of dialogue."²⁸⁷

Here, the Mayor criticizes the relationship between the West and Türkiye, emphasizing that the issue cannot be limited to only the Turkish government and that many institutions of society should be involved in the process. In this regard, Mayor İmamoğlu's statement shows the need for a public diplomacy activity between Turkish and European societies, and that this should be done not only within the framework of governments but also within a larger societal context.

4.6 Evaluating IMM's Aid Activities, Technical and Training Supports in terms of Public Diplomacy

The IMM carries out assistance and training activities in many areas. In addition to providing technical support to many cities in these efforts, humanitarian aid is also provided, as will be demonstrated with examples.

Istanbul contributes to the development of urban service experiences worldwide by sharing its knowledge and expertise on the international stage, thereby creating social benefits. In this regard, Istanbul particularly supports cities around the world, especially in firefighting, search and rescue operations, and waste management.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ Arıkan, "İmamoğlu: Türkiye Avrupa'nın Vazgeçilmez Bir Parçası."

²⁸⁸ IMM Department Officials, Foreign Relations. Personal Interview. 22 March 2024.

During the 2019-2024 period, within the scope of the B40 Istanbul Presidency, IMM hosted 86 firefighters from 13 Balkan cities from August 8th to 13th, 2022. The aim was to observe the work of the Istanbul Fire Department, their response to incidents, stations and vehicles, as well as their training methods, and to gather information on various topics. IMM organized the "B40 Fire and Disaster Coordination Workshop" in this regard, which is significant.²⁸⁹ Activities like these conducted by IMM are defined by Foreign relations officials as "contributing to the standard of living of people in cities by providing information and experience transfer to other cities in areas where IMM is competent and successful."²⁹⁰

In addition, IMM provided Disaster, Search and Rescue, and Fire Training to the Nicosia Turkish Municipality, its sister city, from April 12th to 14th, 2023. The training, which lasted for 3 days, was conducted in the rubble area provided by the Nicosia City Center and the Civil Defense Organization of the TRNC.²⁹¹ The Mayor of Nicosia Turkish Municipality, Mehmet Harmancı, who made a statement regarding this training, stated that the organization was carried out within the framework of the sister city protocol signed between the two cities.²⁹²

IMM not only provides such training to personnel from various municipalities but also offers disaster, first aid, and fire training to employees of diplomatic mission representatives located in Istanbul.²⁹³ Furthermore, within the scope of the personnel exchange program between the IMM and the Barcelona City Council, officials from both institutions came together between January 23rd and 26th. Discussions were held on smart cities, geographic information systems, internal and external relations activities of municipalities, educational projects, and EU projects and initiatives.²⁹⁴ The personnel exchange programs carried out by the IMM demonstrate mutual knowledge sharing between cities.

²⁸⁹ İBB, "B40 Balkan Şehirlerinden Gelen İtfaiyecileri Konuk Ediyoruz," August 9, 2022, <https://itfaiye.ibb.gov.tr/tr/haberler/12625/b40-balkan-sehirlerinden-gelen-itfaiyecileri-konuk-ediyoruz.html>.

²⁹⁰ IMM Department Officials, Foreign Relations. Personal Interview. 22 March 2024.

²⁹¹ Nicosia Turkish Municipality, "LTB ile İBB İş Birliğinde Afet, Arama Kurtarma Ve İtfaiye Eğitimi Başladı," April 12, 2023, <https://www.lefkosabelediyesi.org/haberler/ltb-ile-ibb-i-birliinde-afet-arama-kurtarma-ve-itfaiye-eitimi-balad>.

²⁹² Nicosia Turkish Municipality, "LTB ile İBB İş Birliğinde Afet, Arama Kurtarma Ve İtfaiye Eğitimi Başladı."

²⁹³ IMM Department Officials, Foreign Relations. Personal Interview. 22 March 2024.

²⁹⁴ İBB, "Personel Değişim Programı 23-26 Ocak," July 5, 2023, <https://cbsakademi.ibb.istanbul/personel-degisim-programi-23-26-ocak>.

As seen, IMM conducts these technical support and training activities across a wide range of regions, from the Balkans to Europe and from Europe to Northern Cyprus, the capital of the TRNC, which is considered one of Türkiye's most important international issues. In this regard, it is possible to say that IMM conducts an open public diplomacy activity and, in doing so, develops its communication with regions that Türkiye attaches great importance to in a constructive manner.

4.7 IMM's and İmamoğlu's Position on the Ukraine-Russia Conflict²⁹⁵

During the İmamoğlu era, the IMM demonstrated its humanitarian aid activities in regions affected by conflicts. In line with this, aid was sent on behalf of the populations affected by the Ukraine-Russia War, and in addition to this aid, direct visits to refugee camps were made by the Mayor. Here, the Mayor's efforts will be examined, and analyses will be conducted based on his statements.

4.7.1 İmamoğlu's Statements Regarding the Ukraine-Russia Conflict

Istanbul's Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, on his official Twitter account, shared the announcement titled "Announcement for Turkish Citizens Living in Ukraine, February 24, 2022" by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stating, "The occupation and military intervention of Russia in Ukraine is unacceptable. It is important for our citizens living in Ukraine to take note of this announcement made by our ministry."²⁹⁶ İmamoğlu hosted the Ambassador of Ukraine to the Republic of Türkiye, H.E. Vasyl Bodnar, and the Consul General of Ukraine to Istanbul, Roman Nedilskiy, at the White Mansion in Emirgan on June 10, 2022. During this meeting, he declared his support for the Ukrainian people in the Ukraine-Russia War.²⁹⁷ In this meeting, İmamoğlu stated, "In 2022, for one country to invade another and describe it as a legitimate action, regardless of the subject or issue, is not acceptable. We are maritime neighbors with both countries. We have very old historical ties. Therefore, all the sentences we construct are actually expressed with my universal feelings on a global scale. At

²⁹⁵ On February 1, 2022, Russia recognized the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. On February 24, 2022, it launched a military operation in Donbass, Ukraine. Putin stated that they acted to protect people and cleanse from Nazism. Russia's invasion sparked harsh criticism worldwide. Zelensky received support from the Western world and expressed Ukraine's desire to join the EU. As a result of the Russian attack, Kiev remained under threat for about a month.

²⁹⁶ Ekrem İmamoğlu, "Social Media Content," X, February 24, 2022, https://twitter.com/ekrem_imamoglu/status/1496880341625229320?s=61&t=scxZSL1TbIKAVfzMmJekQ.

²⁹⁷ soL, "İmamoğlu Ukrayna'nın Ankara Büyükelçisi'yle Bir Araya Geldi," June 10, 2022, <https://haber.sol.org.tr/haber/imamoglu-ukraynanin-ankara-buyukelcisiyle-bir-araya-geldi-338253>.

this point, I want to express that I am against this invasion and stand with the Ukrainian people."²⁹⁸

In a previous interview with Russian newspaper Kommersant's Marianna Belenka in 2021, İmamoğlu also touched upon the importance of Russian-Turkish relations. In the interview, he stated, "Our relations date back over 500 years. If there are good personal relations between the presidents of the two countries, that's beneficial. However, we don't lose anything from changes in presidents; in fact, new opportunities may arise. In any case, we are neighbors, and both countries are significant players in this region. Therefore, it's important to have good relations, and we do have good relations, but they can be even better if there are good personal relations between the presidents. However, if personal relations are not good, this still does not hinder bilateral relations."²⁹⁹

İmamoğlu, previously mentioning that he visited Moscow twice and Sochi once as a businessman, expressed his willingness to visit Russia as the Mayor of Istanbul to exchange experiences and enhance cooperation.³⁰⁰ With the outbreak of the Ukraine-Russia War, İmamoğlu, in his capacity as the Mayor of Istanbul, pursued a pro-Ukraine policy and refrained from making any visits to Russia.

On February 28, 2022, İmamoğlu held a video conference meeting with Gennady Trukhanov, the Mayor of Odessa, Istanbul's sister city. On March 17, 2022, he also had a video conference meeting with Vitaliy Klychko, the Mayor of Kiev, to assess the situation.³⁰¹

²⁹⁸ Anka Haber, "İmamoğlu, Ukrayna Büyükelçisi Vasyl Bodnar'ı Ağırladı," June 10, 2022, https://ankahaber.net/haber/detay/imamoglu_ukrayna_buyukelcisi_vasyl_bodnari_agirladi_90036.

²⁹⁹ Independent Türkçe, "İmamoğlu, Rus Basınına Konuştu: Bugün İktidardalar Ancak Yarın Orada Olmayacaklar," October 18, 2021, <https://www.indyturk.com/node/425551/siyaset/i%CC%87mamo%C4%9Flu-rus-bas%C4%B1n%C4%B1na-konu%C5%9Ftu-bug%C3%BCn-iktidardalar-ancak-yar%C4%B1n-orada-olmayacaklar>.

³⁰⁰ Independent Türkçe, "İmamoğlu, Rus Basınına Konuştu: Bugün İktidardalar Ancak Yarın Orada Olmayacaklar."

³⁰¹ Cumhuriyet, "Ekrem İmamoğlu, Kiev Belediye Başkanı Vitaliy Klychko ile Görüştü," March 17, 2022, <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/dunya/ekrem-imamoglu-kiev-belediye-baskani-vitaliy-klychko-ile-gorustu-1916712>.

"I had a video conference today with Vitaliy Klychko, the Mayor of Kiev, to express my deepest concerns about the situation in Ukraine and to provide information about IMM's relief efforts. Inter-city cooperation is crucial in times of crisis. Istanbul is ready to do its part."³⁰²

The Odessa Municipality, following the meeting, has requested basic medical supplies, medication, food, and humanitarian aid materials from the IMM in writing.³⁰³

4.7.2 IMM's Aid Activities for Ukraine

Following these meetings and requests, the IMM took action. With the approval of the Istanbul Metropolitan City Council, on March 16, 2022, hygiene and food aid materials totaling 2,123,220 TL and consisting of 85,657 items were delivered to the Cernitvtski Refugee Camp located on the Romania-Ukraine border. Additionally, a mobile catering vehicle was put into service to provide meals to refugees at the same camp.³⁰⁴ The municipalities of Ataşehir, Avcılar, Beşiktaş, Beylikdüzü, Büyükçekmece, Esenyurt, Kadıköy, Kartal, Küçükçekmece, Maltepe, Sarıyer, and Şişli, which are managed by the main opposition party in Istanbul, CHP, also supported the assistance provided by the IMM.³⁰⁵

On April 14, 2022, a total of 12 trucks carrying humanitarian aid materials, 6 of which were destined for Warsaw and 6 for the city of Constanța in Romania, were dispatched by the IMM and delivered to Ukrainian war victims.³⁰⁶

Following these developments, on April 19-21, 2022, İmamoğlu, accompanied by a delegation from the municipality and then CHP Deputy Chairman and Member of Parliament Veli Ağbaba, paid a visit to Warsaw, the capital of Poland, which hosts a significant population of Ukrainian war victims. During the visit, they met with Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski.³⁰⁷ During this trip, İmamoğlu visited refugee camps in Warsaw. Trzaskowski, expressing his

³⁰² Cumhuriyet, "Ekrem İmamoğlu, Kiev Belediye Başkanı Vitaliy Klychko ile Görüştü."

³⁰³ Gerçek Muhabir, "İBB Ukrayna'ya İnsani Yardım Gönderecek," March 17, 2022, <https://www.gercekmuhabir.com/yerel-yonetimler/ibb-ukraynaya-insani-yardim-gonderecek-h130965.html>.

³⁰⁴ Zeynep Kaplan, "İBB, Ukraynalı Sığınmacılara Yardım Gönderdi," Sözcü, March 16, 2022, <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/ibb-ukraynali-siginmacilara-yardim-gonderdi-wp7014805>.

³⁰⁵ Kaplan, "İBB, Ukraynalı Sığınmacılara Yardım Gönderdi."

³⁰⁶ Doruk Çakar, "İstanbul'dan Ukrayna'ya İyilik Köprüsü," PolitikYol, April 15, 2022, <https://www.politikyol.com/istanbuldan-ukraynaya-iyilik-koprusu>.

³⁰⁷ Haberler.com, "İBB, Varşova Belediyesi'nden Gelen Yardım Talebini Geri Çevirmedi," April 21, 2022, <https://www.haberler.com/guncel/ibb-varsova-belediyesi-nden-gelen-yardim-14884731-haberi>.

gratitude to Ağbaba and İmamoğlu for their visits, conveyed his feelings, stating, "There has been a long-standing refugee issue. Statistics tell us that Türkiye is the top country in the world in terms of accepting refugees, and Poland ranks second. Türkiye is a very important partner for us. I believe our friendship has significant potential. As mayors of major cities, Mayor İmamoğlu and I are addressing similar issues to those in other cities in Europe, such as global warming, equality, and refugee integration. However, we are also working under difficult conditions. Both of us are members of opposition parties not particularly favored by the central government. If we are truly talking about democracy, this is a serious problem. Therefore, our situation is very similar to that of Mayor İmamoğlu," he expressed.³⁰⁸

The Consulate General of Ukraine in Istanbul sent a letter to the IMM requesting that 50 children living in Odesa due to the current difficult conditions in their country be accommodated in Istanbul with 5 escorts for rest. Upon the request, relevant institutions initiated the necessary procedures and prepared a rest and cultural program for the young guests. The young Ukrainians, who arrived in Istanbul on August 20th, were accommodated in the completed Gaziosmanpaşa Male Dormitory.³⁰⁹ İmamoğlu hosted these war-affected children aged 8-17 at the Museum Gazhane, which IMM restored and put into operation as a culture-life center, during the "City Day" celebrated by the city of Odessa on September 2, 2022. During this event, he also met with the Ukrainian Consul General in Istanbul. İmamoğlu, who celebrated the City Day of Odessa, Istanbul's sister city, conveyed his best wishes.³¹⁰

When we look at the activities carried out by the IMM, we see messages of support to Ukraine in line with the Western world, while at the same time, relations with Russia have not been severed by staying within the framework of national foreign policy. It is important that Istanbul has activated its city diplomacy activities during the war period by showing solidarity with its sister city Odessa and engaging in contacts with Kiev, while also continuing negotiations with Moscow. It can also be seen that Istanbul has embarked on humanitarian aid activities through city diplomacy, taking a step in foreign assistance that concerns public

³⁰⁸ CHP, "Veli Ağbaba Ve Ekrem İmamoğlu, İBB Yardım Tırlarının Ulaştığı Varşova'da," April 20, 2022, <https://chp.org.tr/haberler/veli-agbaba-ve-ekrem-mamoglu-bb-yardim-tirlarinin-ulastigi-varsovada>.

³⁰⁹ T24, "İmamoğlu, Ukraynalı Çocuklarla Bir Araya Geldi: Sizler İçin Dua Ediyor, Barış Diliyoruz," September 2, 2022, <https://t24.com.tr/haber/imamoglu-ukraynali-cocuklarla-bir-araya-geldi-sizler-icin-dua-ediyor-baris-diliyoruz,1056767>.

³¹⁰ Ahmet Ayvalıoğlu, "Ekrem İmamoğlu Genç Ukraynalıları Ağırladı," Haber İstanbul, September 2, 2022, <https://www.haberistanbul.com.tr/ekrem-imamoglu-genc-ukraynalilari-agirladi>.

diplomacy. Mayor İmamoğlu's visit to Warsaw, where he met with Mayor Trzaskowski and visited refugee camps, has also received media coverage. The Istanbul Metropolitan City Council has also decided to send 10 buses and 41 generators to Odessa, Istanbul's sister city, and indicated that technical training support for operating the buses will be provided by Istanbul Electric Tram and Tunnel Enterprises (İETT).³¹¹

İmamoğlu met with the Head of the EU Delegation to Türkiye, Nicholas Meyer-Landrut, on March 29, 2022, during the early stages of the war, where he emphasized that Russia's attack on Ukraine was "unjust." Imamoğlu stated, "With this war, the division between authoritarian regimes and liberal regimes has become more pronounced. Our desire during this process is for Türkiye to be on the right side of history."³¹² Imamoğlu's statement reflects the opposition's alternative understanding of foreign policy to the government. In the same meeting, Imamoğlu also expressed, "We hope that the EU Delegation and EU countries are already preparing for the change process that is being heard in Türkiye and that the scope of our cooperation will be expanded."³¹³

4.7.3 Evaluating İmamoğlu's Stance on the Russia-Ukraine War in terms of Public Diplomacy and the Attitudes of Other Cities Regarding the Conflict

It is evident that İmamoğlu pursues a Europe-focused approach in his foreign relations, targeting social segments that the government finds difficult to reach. However, there is also an understanding that embraces and implements the principles and values set forth by national foreign policy. Although İmamoğlu has taken a pro-Ukraine stance and made it evident through his rhetoric and actions, he has also continued relations with Russian cities. In this regard, he appears to understand Türkiye's role as a mediator and balancing actor.

Leaders of many important cities around the world have also conducted city diplomacy activities during the Russia-Ukraine War. On April 16, 2022, Mayor Anne Hidalgo of Paris visited Kiev, where she met with Mayor Vitaliy Klitschko and signed a "friendship agreement"

³¹¹ Anka Haber, "İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesinden Odessa'ya Yardım," March 15, 2023, https://ankahaber.net/haber/detay/istanbul_buyuksehir_belediyesinden_odessaya_yardim_kardes_kente_10_otobus_ve_41_jenerator_gonderilecek_132502.

³¹² Anka Haber, "İmamoğlu, AB Delegasyonu İle Buluştu: 'Değişim Sürecine Hazırlanın'," March 30, 2022, https://ankahaber.net/haber/detay/imamoglu_ab_delegasyonu_ile_bulustu_degisim_surecine_hazirlanin_79963.

³¹³ Anka Haber, "İmamoğlu, AB Delegasyonu İle Buluştu: 'Değişim Sürecine Hazırlanın'."

between the two cities.³¹⁴ In 20 April 2023, as part of the International Summit of Cities and Regions, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo and President of the European Committee of the Regions Vasco Cordeiro.³¹⁵ Here, Zelenskyy thanked Hidalgo for supporting tens of thousands of Ukrainians who found refuge in Paris and for assisting them in finding shelter across France, as well as for delivering more than 100 trucks of humanitarian aid to Ukraine.³¹⁶ Hidalgo, maintaining her anti-Russian stance, stated during her visit to Kiev in February 2023 that she did not want to see Russian athletes at the Olympics in Paris in 2024.³¹⁷

Since the beginning of the war, London Mayor Sadiq Khan, who has shown a pro-Ukraine stance, initiated a fund on February 24, 2023, to provide about 600 homes for refugee groups, including Ukrainians, in London.³¹⁸

When looked at, the stances of the City of Paris and the Greater London Authority also resemble their own countries' national policies. In addition, Budapest Mayor Karacsony Gergely, seen as one of the main rivals of Viktor Orbán, who maintains relations with Russia unlike other EU countries in Hungary, visited Kiev together with the mayors of Prague, Warsaw, and Bratislava. There, he met with Mayor Vitaliy Klitschko and criticized the Hungarian government's stance on the Ukraine-Russia War.³¹⁹ In this regard, it is possible to say that cities generally do not deviate from the policies of national governments, but there are

³¹⁴ We Are Ukraine, "Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo Visited Kyiv and Signed a Friendship Agreement Between the Two Capitals," April 16, 2022, <https://www.weareukraine.info/mayor-of-paris-anne-hidalgo-visited-kyiv-and-signed-a-friendship-agreement-between-the-two-capitals>.

³¹⁵ Presidency of Republic of Ukraine, "President of Ukraine Held a Meeting With the Mayor of Paris and the President of the European Committee of the Regions," April 20, 2023, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/prezident-ukrayini-proviv-zustrich-iz-merom-parizha-ta-z-pre-82385>.

³¹⁶ Presidency of Republic of Ukraine, "President of Ukraine Held a Meeting With the Mayor of Paris and the President of the European Committee of the Regions."

³¹⁷ Veronika Melkozerova and Clea Caulcutt, "Hidalgo's Vow in Kyiv: No Russians at Paris Olympics," Politico, February 9, 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/hidalgos-vow-kyiv-russians-at-paris-olympics-olympic-committee-ukraine-russia-emmanuel-macron-belarus>.

³¹⁸ London City Hall, "Mayor Announces Funding for up to 600 New Homes for Ukrainian and Afghan Refugees on Anniversary of Russian Invasion of Ukraine," February 24, 2023, <https://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-announces-funding-600-new-homes-ukrainian-and-afghan-refugees-anniversary-russian-invasion>.

³¹⁹ Hungary Today, "Budapest Mayor Visits Kyiv," January 12, 2023, <https://hungarytoday.hu/budapest-mayor-visits-kyiv>.

also some exceptions. Specifically in Istanbul, Mayor İmamoğlu can be seen to act in a manner that does not harm national politics, but adopts a more pro-Ukraine stance compared to the policies of the current government.

İmamoğlu's statements regarding Ukraine diverge from the more neutral policy pursued by the central Turkish government, which aims to preserve the gains in the evolving Turkish-Russian bilateral relations in recent times and, at the same time, resorts to a balanced policy without being tied to a single pole. While Turkish President Erdoğan recently stated his principled support for the Ukrainian President's 10-point peace plan in a video message sent to the Ukraine-Southeast Europe Summit, he has refrained from making any statements indicating a pro-Ukraine stance in this war.³²⁰

Again, the Mayor of Istanbul has stated,

"If you are the Mayor of IMM, then you are responsible not only for the people awaiting aid in Gaza but also for the victims, the sick, the injured, and the women awaiting aid in Odessa. We are responding to these needs. We must respond."³²¹

This underscores Istanbul's significance as a global city and his commitment to not remain silent on issues that concern the world.³²²

³²⁰ NTV Haber, "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'dan Rusya ve Ukrayna'ya Çağrı: Diplomasiye Şans Verin," February 28, 2024, <https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/cumhurbaskani-erdogandan-rusya-ve-ukraynaya-cagri-diplomasiye-sans-verin,6tfGFa9UjEWg3PA-ozncAg>.

³²¹ Göksel Göksu and Ruşen Çakır, "İmamoğlu: Bir Anne Kürtçe Konuşurken Göğsümü Okşuyor, Nasıl Onunla Benim Arama Parti Girebilir?," Medyascope, March 6, 2024, <https://medyascope.tv/2024/03/06/imamoglu-bir-anne-kurtce-konusurken-gogsumu-oksuyor-nasil-onunla-benim-arama-parti-girebilir>.

³²² Mayor İmamoğlu, in addition to the Ukraine-Russia War, has also made significant statements on the Israel-Palestine conflict and led the way for Istanbul Municipality to send aid convoys to Gaza. On March 5, 2024, five trucks departed from Istanbul to Gaza, and during the send-off ceremony, Mayor İmamoğlu used the following words: "We are now experiencing days where the events there have become commonplace and sadly even lack news value. As the people of Istanbul, we cannot and will not remain spectators or indifferent to the normalization of this humanitarian tragedy. I extend my condolences to the families of those who lost their lives and wish speedy recovery to the injured. Every day, every minute, a crime against humanity is committed in Gaza. According to some experts and jurists, the genocide committed by Israel unfortunately goes down in history as a dark period." According to the decision taken by the Municipal Council, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality has delivered trucks containing food, hygiene materials, mother-baby kits, baby formula, baby food, and clothing to Gaza.

When looked at, similar to the IMM, the ruling party AK Party-affiliated Bursa Metropolitan Municipality and Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality have also engaged in aid activities for Ukraine.^{323 324} However, it can be seen that these activities have been carried out within the framework of the government's humanitarian diplomacy³²⁵, and as seen in the example of Mayor İmamoğlu, statements and discourses that would chart an alternative direction to the government have not been put forward.³²⁶

4.8 Evaluating IMM's Cultural Activities in terms of Public Diplomacy

Istanbul also endeavors to maintain cultural diplomacy activities. The efforts of Istanbul in this area need to be examined in many aspects. Looking at it, due to the technical capabilities held by the IMM, the restoration of cultural assets in surrounding cities is important, especially in terms of preserving historical Turkish heritage. IMM has also established a Cultural Diplomacy Office in this regard.³²⁷

The focus of cultural diplomacy involves working on a basis of mutual benefit rather than gaining unilateral advantages. This forms the basis of a more sustainable and long-term approach in international relations. Soft public diplomacy is essentially created through managing cultural relations in this manner. Cultural diplomacy can manifest in various fields such as art, music, sports, language, education, and more. For instance, a country can influence

³²³Bursa Metropolitan Municipality, "Savaşın Acı Yüzünü Bursa'da Unuttular," June 3, 2022, <https://www.bursa.bel.tr/haber/savasin-aci-yuzunu-bursada-unuttular-31631>.

³²⁴ Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, "Gaziantep Büyükşehir'in İnsani Yardım Tırını Ukrayna İçin Yola Çıktı," March 15, 2022, accessed April 4, 2024, <https://www.gaziantep.bel.tr/tr/haberler/gaziantep-buyuksehirin-insani-yardim-tiri-ukrayna-icin-yola-cikti>.

³²⁵ The Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye's Directorate of Communications states the following in the 65th page of the publication "Türkiye's Helping Hand: Humanitarian Diplomacy": "Türkiye has a strong tradition of humanitarian assistance stemming from its historical and cultural values dating back to the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the Republic of Türkiye sees aiding those in need, regardless of the reason such as wars, natural disasters, or pandemics, as a humanitarian duty and an important element in the stability of the international community."

³²⁶Gaziantep's Mayor Fatma Şahin, stating "We also feel this pain with all our hearts," reminded that they have witnessed the sorrows of "the children of Aleppo" in this region for the past 10 years, saying, "We have experienced this very closely and we understand you very well. Our President is working very closely with all state leaders, and our relevant ministries are showing great interest for the war to end and peace to come as soon as possible. We want the war to end, we want peace to come. That's why we wanted to talk today, to ask about your well-being, whatever you need from brother to brother."

³²⁷ Kozmiktürk, "İmamoğlu.. Kültürel Diplomasi Ofisi.. Artİstanbul Feshane..," January 22, 2024, <https://kozmidturk.com/gundem/-mamoglu-kulturel-diplomasi-ofisi-art-istanbul-feshane--36307>.

the international public opinion by promoting its cultural heritage and artistic products on international platforms. Moreover, international student exchange programs, language courses, and cultural events can strengthen bonds between people. Cultural diplomacy plays a significant role in the external relations activities of IMM.

4.8.1 The General Outline of IMM's Cultural Diplomacy Activities

According to Mitchell, cultural diplomacy involves managing official treaties resulting from negotiations and the cultural relations that emerge as a result of these treaties.³²⁸ Generally, it is carried out through agencies and institutions under state control. However, cultural diplomacy aims not only to formal treaties but also to promote understanding and cooperation between national societies. Louis Belanger defines cultural diplomacy as "foreign policy activities involving culture, education, science, and technical cooperation."³²⁹

The Deputy Secretary General of IMM, Mahir Polat, stated that upon the instruction of Mayor İmamoğlu, they have established a "Cultural Diplomacy Office" within the municipality, through which they collaborate with international institutions and work to promote Istanbul's artists to the world.³³⁰ In an interview about the activities of the Cultural Diplomacy Office, Office Director Şakar stated, "From time to time, we go abroad and meet with leading art institutions. We invite them here. Like in the case of Tate. We have honorary representatives abroad. Our goal is to promote Istanbul through culture and art."³³¹ Through this office, IMM enables many important international exhibitions and cultural events to take place in Istanbul. This allows people from various parts of the world to come to Istanbul and contributes to the promotion of the city. Additionally, it allows for increased communication with international cultural institutions.

One such activity was the purchase of a portrait of Fatih Sultan Mehmet, drawn by Gentile Bellini, by the IMM at an auction held in London in 2020, as a result of negotiations

³²⁸ J. M. Mitchell, *International Cultural Relations* (Routledge, 2017).

³²⁹ Louis Belanger, "Redefining Cultural Diplomacy: Cultural Security and Foreign Policy in Canada," *Political Psychology* 20, no. 4 (December 1, 1999): 678.

³³⁰ Kozmiktürk, "İmamoğlu.. Kültürel Diplomasi Ofisi.. Artistanbul Feshane.."

³³¹ Gila Benmayor, "Kültürel Diplomasi Meyvelerini Veriyor," *Ekonomim*, January 26, 2024, <https://www.ekonomim.com/kose-yazisi/kulturel-diplomasi-meyvelerini-veriyor/726722>.

conducted by the IMM's Foreign Relations Department.³³² With this initiative, the IMM has acquired a cultural asset of great historical significance for Istanbul and Türkiye.

In 2021, during the visit of Sarajevo Mayor Benjamina Karic to Istanbul, the restoration of Bijela Tabija, one of the Ottoman structures in Sarajevo, was discussed by the IMM. Mayor İmamoğlu stated that necessary efforts would be made in this regard.³³³

In a meeting with Barbara Lison, President of the World Libraries Association, in 2022, İmamoğlu expressed Istanbul's desire to become the World Book Capital for the year 2024, stating that achieving this title set by UNESCO would be part of their vision to make Istanbul a book-friendly city.³³⁴

IMM Foreign Relations officials have conveyed the following regarding local cultural diplomacy:

“The restoration of cultural and historical areas is one of IMM’s prestigious projects. After these cultural heritage sites were restored and turned into new and modern facilities, many diplomatic missions started using these areas for national days or special events. In this regard, while we expected countries with relatively limited financial resources to gravitate towards these facilities, the interest from countries like Switzerland, Poland, and Brazil in utilizing these areas also demonstrates IMM’s successful efforts in this regard. Additionally, although we haven't yet set an example in this period, we plan to organize mutual cultural activities to celebrate the anniversaries of sister city relationships. Sister city relationships are generally important for city administrations, but the people in these cities often do not know each other or each other's cultures. Local cultural diplomacy is very important in this regard. For example, organizing an event where a Japanese city is involved helps recognize the culture of that city, society, and country. In this regard, mutual delegations are coming and going.”³³⁵

³³² İBB, “Fatih’in Portresi İstanbul’a Dönüyor,” June 25, 2020, <https://frd.ibb.istanbul/10242-2>.

³³³ İBB, “Başkan İmamoğlu’ndan Karic’e Destek Sözü,” July 8, 2021, <https://frd.ibb.istanbul/10325-2>.

³³⁴ Gazete Duvar, “İstanbul, ‘2024 Dünya Kitap Başkenti’ Adayı Oldu,” March 30, 2022, <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/istanbul-2024-dunya-kitap-baskenti-adayi-oldu-haber-1558512>.

³³⁵ IMM Department Officials, Foreign Relations. Personal Interview. 22 March 2024.

4.8.2 Evaluating Sports Diplomacy as an Element of IMM's Cultural Diplomacy

In our era, sports, which have become globalized and also a popular cultural product, can be seen as part of cultural activities. Especially international sports activities can be considered as cultural diplomacy. In addition, sports are also seen as an important tool for public diplomacy. There are opinions stating that sports contribute significantly to peace in public diplomacy, also known as "soft power."³³⁶

To highlight the cultural dimension of sports and demonstrate its role in cultural diplomacy in foreign policy, it is important to mention not only the Olympics but also the Commonwealth Games. These games, which involve 71 teams from 50 countries that are members of the Commonwealth of Nations formed during the dissolution of the British Empire, promote cultural rapprochement among these countries with a shared history.³³⁷ Yağmurlu commented, "As sports became more popular and international competitions became systematic, its involvement in cultural diplomacy became inevitable."³³⁸

The idea that sports offer an important opportunity to achieve various political objectives is prevalent among various experts.³³⁹ At this point, during Mayor İmamoğlu's term, an intense lobbying effort has been conducted for the Olympics, which can also be evaluated in a cultural context. In line with this, İmamoğlu, who reiterated Istanbul's candidacy for the 2036 Olympics since taking office, also signaled a systematic process in this direction with the "Istanbul Sports Strategy and Future Plan" held on July 13, 2021.³⁴⁰

On September 19-20, 2023, the third World Olympians Forum was held in Istanbul, hosting 150 Olympians from around the world for two days of discussions, meetings, and

³³⁶ Arif Özşari et al., "Sport Diplomacy as Public Diplomacy Element," *International Journal of Sport Culture and Science* : 6, no. 28 (2018): 339–49.

³³⁷ Michał Marcin Kobierecki, "The Commonwealth Games as an Example of Bringing States Closer Through Sport," *Physical Culture and Sport Studies and Research* 73, no. 1 (2017): 37.

³³⁸ Aslı Yağmurlu, "Kamu Diplomasisi Bakışından Spor Diplomasisi," *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences* 18, no. 4 (2019): 1373.

³³⁹ Jan Haut et al., "International Prestige Through 'Sporting Success': An Evaluation of the Evidence," *European Journal for Sport and Society* 14, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 311–26.

³⁴⁰ İBB, "İstanbul, 2036 Olimpiyatları İçin İradesini Ortaya Koydu," July 13, 2021, <https://genclikspor.ibb.istanbul/istanbul-2036-olimpiyatları-icin-iradesini-ortaya-koydu>.

learning opportunities. The aim of the forum, which saw representation from over 100 countries, was to disseminate best practices, listen to global experts, and discuss how Olympians could more effectively promote the values of the Olympic Movement, as well as the benefits of sports and physical activity, and how they could give back to their communities.³⁴¹

World Olympians Forum (WOA) President Joël Bouzou Oly, commenting on this matter, said, "This has been the best World Olympians Forum ever and shows how far we have come in the past eight years, the level of maturity our National Olympians Associations have achieved and the abilities of Olympians all over the world to help with social cohesion, bringing sport to disadvantaged communities, protecting the environment and teaching our young citizens the positive values of sport and the Olympic Movement." He expressed gratitude to Mayor İmamoğlu and the Istanbul city administration.³⁴²

Prior to this, during the preparation phase of the forum, Mayor İmamoğlu met with World Olympians Association President Joel Bouzou Oly on August 9, 2023. İmamoğlu expressed his desire to host a much larger number of athletes in Istanbul in 2036, this time competing for Olympic medals. He stated, "We want to bring the Olympic spirit to Istanbul, Türkiye, and the whole world of 16 million people. We know that our path is as challenging as that of every Olympic athlete." İmamoğlu reiterated Istanbul's Olympic goal.³⁴³

According to Kobierecki, the International Olympic Committee and the Olympic Games play a significant role in the global nature of sporting activities.³⁴⁴ In this respect, the efforts and receptions carried out by the City of Istanbul are diplomatic moves aimed at hosting the globally significant Olympic Games in Istanbul.

³⁴¹ World Olympians Association, "Istanbul Mayor Praises World Olympians Forum 2023," September 19, 2023, <https://olympians.org/news/1790/istanbul-mayor-praises-world-olympians-forum-2023>.

³⁴² World Olympians Association, "Istanbul Mayor Praises World Olympians Forum 2023."

³⁴³ Eskisehir.Net, Yasemin Özçakıl, "Olimpiyat Ruhü İstanbul'da," August 9, 2023, <https://www.eskisehir.net/olimpiyat-ruhu-istanbulda>.

³⁴⁴ Michał Marcin Kobierecki, "Sport In International Relations Expectations, Possibilities And Effects," *International Studies* 15, no. 1 (2001): 49–74.

Müller states that events like the Olympics and the World Cup are the largest events taking place worldwide and should be referred to as "giga-events."³⁴⁵

Size	Visitor attractiveness <i>Number of tickets sold</i>	Mediated reach <i>Value of broadcast rights</i>	Cost <i>Total cost</i>	Transformation <i>Capital investment</i>
XXL (3 points)	>3 million	>USD 2 billion	>USD 10 billion	>USD 10 billion
XL (2 points)	>1 million	>USD 1 billion	>USD 5 billion	>USD 5 billion
L (1 point)	>.5 million	>USD .1 billion	>USD 1 billion	>USD 1 billion
Giga-event				11–12 points total
Mega-event				7–10 points total
Major event				1–6 points total

Figure 4: *The classification of the events, according to Müller.*³⁴⁶

The city of Istanbul sees the Olympics not only beyond the initiatives of the national government but also as a significant global promotional tool for Istanbul and accordingly implements policies. In this regard, the IMM administration views the Olympic Games, referred to as "giga-events," as an important diplomatic element for promoting Istanbul.³⁴⁷

Regarding the matter, IMM Foreign Relations officials state the following:

“The Olympics are the biggest sporting event in the world. There is intense lobbying and diplomatic traffic for the 2027 European and 2036 Olympics. Continuous discussions are held with previous hosts. For example, discussions are being held with Brisbane, the host of the 2032 Olympics, and with Paris. On March 23, 2022, Mayor İmamoğlu visited the capital of Switzerland, Lausanne, to meet with the Olympic Committee. Participation in the European Olympic Committees Executive Committee was ensured. There is intense work underway. Communication with relevant international organizations and cities is ongoing. The Olympics will add a separate prestige to Istanbul, which is a highly regarded matter.”³⁴⁸

³⁴⁵ M Martin Müller, “What Makes an Event a Mega-event? Definitions and Sizes,” *Leisure Studies* 34, no. 6 (2015): 627–42.

³⁴⁶ Müller, “What Makes an Event a Mega-Event? Definitions and Sizes,” 635.

³⁴⁷ IMM Department Officials, Foreign Relations. Personal Interview. 22 March 2024.

³⁴⁸ IMM Department Officials, Foreign Relations. Personal Interview. 22 March 2024.

4.8.3 Evaluating IMM's Cultural Diplomacy Activities

Bulut defines cultural diplomacy as "the transfer of values and social accumulation belonging to a specific community to another community."³⁴⁹ According to her, cultural diplomacy aims not only to provide national, economic, and political benefits through this means, but also to establish trust-based bilateral relations.³⁵⁰ In this respect, many of the efforts made by the IMM can be interpreted as aimed at achieving this goal.

Looking at it, there are multifaceted national cultural diplomacy activities that influence the activities of local governments in Türkiye. Regions in the close vicinity, which could be referred to as Türkiye's hinterland, can be seen as the primary operational area for Türkiye's cultural diplomacy activities. The Turkish government pursues an active policy in the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus through institutions such as TİKA, the Yunus Emre Institute, and the YTB. In parallel with Türkiye's overall policies, many municipalities at the local level also carry out activities in these regions.

In this regard, it is necessary to observe and analyze the consequences of political/ideological differences within the country. For example, in Skopje, where institutions like TİKA and the Yunus Emre Institute have a significant influence, the municipality of Bursa, belonging to the AK Party until 2024, has carried out important restoration works. Similarly, during the period under review, Ekrem İmamoğlu, the social democrat mayor of Istanbul, shifted the axis of Istanbul's city diplomacy towards other social democrat mayors in Europe. Cities such as Budapest, Paris, Florence, and Tirana, where İmamoğlu has had intensive contacts, are governed by left-social democrat mayors.

4.9 IMM's International Projects: B40 and MegaCities

İmamoğlu, is not only developing inter-city relations and participating in existing global city organizations such as C40, but also developing projects to make Istanbul a brand in terms

³⁴⁹ Firdevs Bulut, "Küresel Siyasette Kültürel Diplomasinin Yeri: Türkiye'nin Durumuna Dair Tespit Ve Öneriler," İlke İlim Kültür Eğitim Derneği, 2019, 3.

³⁵⁰ Bulut, "Küresel Siyasette Kültürel Diplomasinin Yeri: Türkiye'nin Durumuna Dair Tespit Ve Öneriler," 3.

of city diplomacy. In this regard, İmamoğlu announced many projects that will add international value to Istanbul during a project launch before the 2024 Local Elections.³⁵¹

In this context, İmamoğlu has pioneered the establishment of the B40, which will bring together Balkan cities on a regional basis. On a global scale, he has ensured that the MegaCities Summit, where cities that can converge on the same common ground as Istanbul, a globally recognized megacity, will take place for the first time in Istanbul.

4.9.1 B40 – Balkan Cities Network

B40 emerged as a regional inter-city platform during İmamoğlu's first mayoral term at IMM. Its significance arises from IMM's leadership in its establishment and its coverage of a region that attracts significant attention from Türkiye.

B40 Balkan Cities Network was established with the Istanbul Declaration signed by 23 mayors at the end of the Istanbul Summit held on 29-30 November 2021 with a “Better Future, Better Cooperation” motto.³⁵² In the city of Istanbul, where the first meeting of the B40 was held, mayors from 24 municipalities across 11 countries participated in the summit, where various mayors engaged in bilateral meetings.³⁵³ At the summit held at the Istanbul Congress Center in Harbiye, which was a first in the history of the IMM, the following mayors attended: Mayor Kostas Bakoyannis of Athens, Mayor Zoran Radojicic of Belgrade, Mayor Emiriana Sako of Durres, Mayor Recep Gürkan of Edirne, Mayor Hasan Azis of Kircaali, Mayor Mehmet Siyam Kesimoğlu of Kırklareli, Mayor Vladimir Jokic of Kotor, Mayor Miroslav Bojic of Laktasi, Mayor Stratis Kytelis of Mytilene, Mayor Konstantinos Peletidis of Patras, Mayor Ivan Vukovic of Podgorica, Mayor Benjamina Karic of Sarajevo, Mayor Danela Arsovska of Skopje, Mayor Ivica Puljak of Split, Mayor Kadir Albayrak of Tekirdağ Metropolitan Municipality,

³⁵¹İmamoğlu introduced these projects under the title "Leader Istanbul in Global Networks and City Diplomacy." These include: International City Networks and Urban Leadership, International City Coalitions and Collaboration Network, Istanbul International Relations Office, and Institute for Negotiation and City Democracy.

³⁵² B40 Balkan Cities Network, “History of B40,” accessed May 1, 2024, <https://b40network.org/history-of-b40-balkan-cities-network>.

³⁵³ The B40 Balkan Cities Summit brought together mayors and officials from a total of 24 cities from 11 countries, including Türkiye, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Albania, Montenegro, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Croatia, and North Macedonia. Participants engaged in discussions over two days aimed at enhancing social, cultural, and economic cooperation among cities and developing jointly implementable and sustainable projects.

Mayor Konstantinos Zervas of Thessaloniki, Mayor Erion Veliaj of Tirana, and Mayor Dimitris Papastergiou of Trikala.³⁵⁴ Speaking about the establishment of the B40 at the first summit, Mayor İmamoğlu said, "For decades, the term 'Balkans' or 'Balkanization' has been used in international literature to describe ethnic divisions, border disputes, and conflicts. However, today, we are here to open a brand new page for our region."³⁵⁵ Emphasizing that crucial issues such as environmental problems, climate, and refugee crises are global-scale problems that transcend national borders, İmamoğlu stated, "We are here today because we know that the solution to these major problems can only be possible through regional cooperation and solidarity."³⁵⁶

Regarding the matter, IMM Foreign Relations officials convey the following:

“During the first B40 Summit held in Istanbul in November 2021, there was a meeting between the Mayor of Sarajevo, Benjamina Karic, and the Mayor of Skopje, Danela Arsovska. Following this meeting, the Mayor of Sarajevo stated, "As Sarajevo, we have come together with Skopje for the first time and developed a dialogue." This is a significant event. It shows that B40 is achieving its purpose. It fosters dialogue and tolerance among Balkan cities."³⁵⁷

In this regard, it can be said that the B40 aims to contribute to stability, peace, and cooperation in the region by bringing together Balkan cities and facilitating dialogue. Indeed, Istanbul Mayor’s Advisor Necati Özkan referred to the importance of B40 in public diplomacy and used the following expressions in a newspaper article:

"In a period where Türkiye is left friendless in the world due to wrong foreign policies and this failure is marketed as 'valuable loneliness,' this outcome towards a new Balkan Pact creates great

³⁵⁴ T24, “İBB Başkanı İmamoğlu, İstanbul’da Düzenlenen B40 Zirvesi’nde Konuştu,” November 29, 2021, <https://t24.com.tr/haber/ibb-baskani-imamoglu-istanbul-da-duzenlenen-b-40-zirvesi-nde-konustu-yepyeni-bir-sayfa-acmak-icin-buradayiz,996926>.

³⁵⁵ Yeni Mesaj, “Yepyeni Bir Sayfa Açmak İçin Buradayız,” November 29, 2021, <https://www.yenimesaj.com.tr/yepyeni-bir-sayfa-acmak-icin-buradayiz-H1417127.htm>.

³⁵⁶ Cumhuriyet, “İmamoğlu, B40 Zirvesi’nde konuştu: ‘Yepyeni bir sayfa açmak için buradayız,’” November 29, 2021, <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/turkiye/imamoglu-b40-zirvesinde-konustu-yepyeni-bir-sayfa-acmak-icin-buradayiz-1888584>.

³⁵⁷ IMM Department Officials, Foreign Relations. Personal Interview. 22 March 2024.

opportunities for our country's interests and soft power in the region. Hopefully, the relevant parties will realize this."³⁵⁸

4.9.2 Other Summits and Meetings of B40

Following the first summit in November 2021, B40, under Istanbul's presidency, held several meetings until 2023. In this regard, Mayor İmamoğlu, in his capacity as the Founding President of B40, met with mayors from a total of 5 member and candidate cities of the B40 Network in the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, in April 2022.³⁵⁹ In this meeting, İmamoğlu stated, "Local democracy, education poverty, refugee issues, climate change, smart cities, initiatives like 'Askıda Fatura' (Pay It Forward) and similar solidarity examples, as well as highly exciting projects such as establishing an 'Open Data Platform' and a 'B40 Network Disaster Information System' among B40 Network cities, are on our agenda."³⁶⁰

In June 2022, in the capital of Bulgaria, Sofia, İmamoğlu met with Bulgarian municipalities, and during this meeting, 10 Bulgarian municipalities were brought into the B40, increasing the number of member cities in the B40 to 49 under İmamoğlu's presidency.³⁶¹

The second summit of the B40 took place in January 2023 in Athens. During this summit, İmamoğlu handed over the B40 Presidency to his counterpart, Mayor of Athens, Kostas Bakoyannis.³⁶² At this summit, mayors from 69 cities in the Balkan countries participated.³⁶³

Mayor İmamoğlu stated, "When I embarked on the journey for B40, my aim was to target the unity and collaboration of this richness and diversity. I said, 'Strength lies in unity.' I said that even if those governing our countries may not be fully aware, the new generation of mayors who prioritize enhancing the quality of life for the millions living in our cities can

³⁵⁸ Necati Özkan, "Yeni Balkan Pakti," Cumhuriyet, January 30, 2023, <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/necati-ozkan/yeni-balkan-pakti-2026394>.

³⁵⁹ HaberMax, "Saraybosna İftarı Boşnak, Hırvat Ve Sırları Bir Araya Getirdi," April 26, 2022, <https://habermax.net/saraybosna-iftari-bosnak-hirvat-ve-sirplari-bir-araya-getirdi.html>.

³⁶⁰ Habermax, "Saraybosna İftarı Boşnak, Hırvat Ve Sırları Bir Araya Getirdi."

³⁶¹ Özkan, "Yeni Balkan Pakti."

³⁶² Christopher Gogos, "Athens Assumes B40 Balkan Cities Network Presidency," Neos Kosmos, January 24, 2023, <https://neoskosmos.com/en/2023/01/24/news/greece/athens-assumes-b40-balkan-cities-network-presidency>.

³⁶³ Mayors of Europe, "Athens Hosts B40 Balkan Cities Network Mayors Summit," January 24, 2023, <https://mayorsofeurope.eu/news/athens-hosts-b40-balkan-cities-network-mayors-summit>.

achieve this. That's why we laid the foundations of a sustainable unity based on equality and democracy. I am very happy because we have succeeded," conveying messages beyond the axis of national foreign policy in his statement.³⁶⁴ İmamođlu also reacted to the burning of the Quran by the far-right politician Rasmus Paludan in Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, stating, "We must collectively and vehemently condemn such provocative attempts. Because such populist and extreme approaches have nothing to do with freedom and democracy. On the contrary, these attempts are hate crimes that can sow seeds of hostility among people and disrupt peace and harmony."³⁶⁵

İmamođlu, in addition, emphasized that the EU represents a multinational, multicultural, and pluralistic model of democracy, which is a common ideal for all of us, highlighting that human rights, rule of law, culture of compromise, and freedom are their common goals.³⁶⁶

The 3rd summit of the B40 was held in January 2024 in the capital city of Albania, Tirana, where the city of Tirana assumed the presidency of the B40. In addition to the mayors, the President of Albania, Bajram Begaj, also participated in this summit.³⁶⁷ At this summit, İmamođlu emphasized the importance and criticality of the Balkans, stating, "The prosperity of our common future depends on sustainable solutions, digital transformation, prioritizing youth, ensuring healthy citizens, and strengthening local democracy."³⁶⁸

4.9.3 Interpreting B40 in Terms of Public Diplomacy

The B40 Balkan Cities Network contributes to the communication among municipal administrations in the Balkans and facilitates interaction for mutual benefit. Istanbul's leadership in this organization has made Istanbul an attractive center for other cities in the

³⁶⁴ Ege'nin Sesi, "İmamođlu, Kur'an-ı Kerim Yakılmasına Atina'da Tepki Gösterdi," January 23, 2023, <https://www.egeninsesi.com/haber/373701-imamoglu-kuran-i-kerim-yakilmasina-atinada-tepki-gosterdi>.

³⁶⁵ Odatv, "İmamođlu'ndan İsveç'e Tepki: 'Özgürlük Ve Demokrasi İle İlgisi Yok,'" January 23, 2023, <https://www.odatv.com/siyaset/imamoglundan-isvece-tepki-ozgurluk-ve-demokrasi-ile-ilgisi-yok-267965>.

³⁶⁶ Bianet, "İmamođlu: AB'nin Çođulcu Demokrasi Modeli Hepimiz İcin İdeal," November 29, 2021, https://bianet.org/haber/imamoglu-ab-nin-cogulcu-demokrasi-modeli-hepimiz-icin-ideal-254032#google_vignette.

³⁶⁷ İBB, "B40 Ađı Dönem Başkanlığı Tiran'a Geçti," January 30, 2024, <https://www.ibb.istanbul/gundem/haberler/b40-agi-d-oe-nem-baskanligi-tiran-a-gecti>.

³⁶⁸ E-Haber Ajansı, "B40 Ađı Dönem Başkanlığı Tiran'a Geçti," January 30, 2024, <https://www.e-haberajansi.com/haber/b40-agi-donem-baskanligi-tirana-gecti-h9919.html>.

Balkans. Türkiye also conducts intensive public diplomacy activities in the region. These activities are considered within the framework of the country's soft power. Yılmaz notes the following on this matter: "With the weakening of soft power areas of EU countries in the Balkans, Türkiye has become more effective in making its own soft power felt in the region. Therefore, Türkiye's most effective soft power area in the Balkans is Turkish culture, which has left its mark on the region for centuries."³⁶⁹

Based on İmamoğlu's statements regarding B40, it can be observed that the scope and ultimate goal of B40 differ from Turkish national public diplomacy. B40 primarily aims to contribute to stability and peace in the Balkans.³⁷⁰ In doing so, it aims to contribute to the regional image of the Balkans by promoting this region, which has been associated with wars and turmoil in the past, with its rich cultural elements and stable structure. İmamoğlu has stated that they are trying to give a positive meaning to the concept of "Balkanization" in this regard.³⁷¹

In this way, B40 serves as a tool for public diplomacy on a regional level. However, in addition, through Istanbul, which undertook the founding of this organization, it also contributes to the image of Türkiye in Balkan cities. When looked at, the messages of democracy, human rights, tolerance, and inclusivity that İmamoğlu delivers during B40 meetings also contribute to the image of both Istanbul and Türkiye in this regard.

4.10 MegaCities Summit

The term "mega city" refers to urban structures that have a population exceeding 10 million.³⁷² With Türkiye's transition to a neoliberal economy, Istanbul experienced significant growth as an industrial and commercial center starting from the 1980s, accompanied by rural-

³⁶⁹ Bayraktar, "Türkiye'nin Balkanlar'daki Yumuşak Gücü Türk Kültürü," 186.

³⁷⁰ Anka Haber, "Ortak Geleceğimizin Refahı, Sürdürülebilir Çözümlere ve Yerel Demokrasinin Güçlendirilmesine Bağlıdır," January 30, 2024, https://ankahaber.net/haber/detay/b40_balkan_sehirleri_agi_zirvesinde_konusan_imamoglu_ortak_gelecegi_mizin_refahi_surdurulebilir_cozumlere_ve_yerel_demokrasinin_guclendirilmesine_baglidir_167165 :

³⁷¹ Alp Selim, "İstanbul'a Güvenebileceğimizi Biliyoruz," Medyascope, December 3, 2021, <https://medyascope.tv/2021/12/03/b40-balkan-sehirleri-zirvesine-katilan-saraybosna-belediye-baskani-karic-medyascopea-konustu-istanbula-guvenebilecegimizi-biliyoruz>.

³⁷² Fred Pearce, "Eco-cities Special: Ecopolis Now," New Scientist, June 14, 2006, <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg19025561-600-eco-cities-special-ecopolis-now>.

to-urban migration, leading to a substantial increase in population. Consequently, Istanbul's population surpassed 10 million in 2000, transforming the city into a mega-city.³⁷³

Today, mega-cities exist on every continent except for the continent of Oceania, where human habitation is limited to smaller urban centers and rural areas.³⁷⁴ The world's largest and most well-known megacities include Tokyo, with a population of over 37,000,000, Jakarta with over 35,000,000, Delhi with over 31,000,000, Guangzhou with over 27,000,000, and Mumbai with over 25,000,000.³⁷⁵ Istanbul is also one of the most populous cities in the world, with a population approaching 16,000,000.

The IMM organized a summit on October 7-8, 2023, bringing together globally significant cities termed as mega-cities in Istanbul.³⁷⁶ This summit was organized in collaboration with the METROPOLIS organization.³⁷⁷

Bogota Mayor Claudia Lopez, alongside Baghdad Mayor Ammar Moussa Kadhum, was joined by Florence Mayor and former President of Eurocities Dario Nardella and Ramallah Mayor Issa Kassis at the summit. Representatives from Buenos Aires, Lahore, Sao Paulo, Guangzhou, Ho Chi Minh, and Dhaka were also present. Alongside city representatives, UCLG Secretary-General Emilia Saiz, METROPOLIS Secretary-General Jordi Vaque, and International Finance Corporation (IFC) Representative Marieme Travaly attended the summit as guests.³⁷⁸

IMM's Foreign Relations Advisor and Retired Ambassador Mustafa Osman Turan, shared his views on the MegaCities Summit in an interview with the newspaper, stating:

³⁷³ Hatice Bayartan, "Geçmişten Günümüze İstanbul'da Nüfus," *Coğrafya Dergisi*, no. 11 (2003): 5–20.

³⁷⁴ Antarctica is devoid of human habitation. Therefore, the continents referred to here are Asia, Europe, Africa, South America, and North America.

³⁷⁵ Wendell Cox, "Jakarta Closing Population Gap With Tokyo," *New Geography* (blog), September 20, 2023, <https://www.newgeography.com/content/007939-jakarta-closing-population-gap-with-tokyo>.

³⁷⁶ *Cumhuriyet*, "Megakentlerin Başkanları İstanbul'da Buluşuyor," October 7, 2023, https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/turkiye/megakentlerin-baskanlari-istanbulda-bulusuyor-2127410#google_vignette.

³⁷⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, "Megakentlerin Başkanları İstanbul'da Buluşuyor."

³⁷⁸ *Son Dakika Haber*, "İstanbul'da Düzenlenen Megaşehirler Zirvesi Sona Erdi," October 8, 2023, <https://www.sondakika.com/guncel/haber-istanbul-da-duzenlenen-megasehirler-zirvesi-sona-e-16410053/>.

"When organizing the summit, we discussed with other cities what issues are important to them. Accordingly, one of the most important problems in mega-cities is to make services more equitable and easily accessible. Financing is crucial for this. Therefore, our main theme is focused on these two issues. Our aim is also to increase bilateral cooperation. Relationships between cities already exist. However, the possibility of meeting in a multilateral platform beyond bilateral relations among these mega-cities will emerge for the first time. Holding the meeting in Istanbul will strengthen its position as a global city and its international relations."³⁷⁹

Regarding the MegaCities Summit, officials from the IMM Foreign Relations Department conveyed the following in the interview conducted on the subject:

"MegaCities Summit was held for the first time. The concept encompasses cities with populations exceeding 10 million. However, for example, the largest city in China has a population of 32 million. There are now many cities with populations exceeding 30 million, and Istanbul officially has a population of 16 million according to official figures. Generally, these cities are similar in terms of density. At the summit, discussions revolved around access to financing and affordable services. Financing was the most important topic. Discussions were held on what can be done collectively. Waste management was discussed. In these mega-cities, waste production is tens of times higher than in a normal city, and water consumption is also very high. Democracy is very important in cities. It is crucial to respond to the views and opinions of citizens. Meeting the needs of citizens within the authority of the municipality in line with the demands of the people is an important issue. This democracy process was emphasized. Common points such as irregular growth and earthquake risks were discussed. Communication and collaboration with cities that develop solutions to these issues were discussed. For example, IMM demonstrates a successful profile in waste management and can provide technical support to another mega-city like Lagos. This is a process where all stakeholders benefit each other. The next session of this summit is planned to be held in Seoul, the capital of South Korea. In addition, giving a special envoy status to the IMM by METROPOLIS is very important for the city. There are, of course, many reasons for this; Istanbul, which initiated MegaCities as an initiative, is an important center due to its geographical location and continental transit points. Investments in transportation-metro, green areas, and waste management, which are important needs of mega-cities, also contributed to the granting of this status."³⁸⁰

³⁷⁹ Cumhuriyet, "Megakentlerin Başkanları İstanbul'da Buluşuyor."

³⁸⁰ IMM Department Officials, Foreign Relations. Personal Interview. 22 March 2024.

Istanbul's identity as a megacity keeps the city open to cooperation and dialogue with cities around the world that share similar structure and population. In this regard, the IMM has been a pioneer in organizing this summit, which brings together megacities from different parts of the world. Mayors and authorized representatives have participated in this summit, engaging in exchanges of ideas regarding the problems faced by megacities in Istanbul.

From this perspective, the similarities between cities and the problems they face under similar conditions, as well as their ability and situation to solve them, fall within the realm of civic engagement. With its population of 16 million, Istanbul experiences the same problems and conditions as cities with similar populations worldwide. In city diplomacy, civic engagement can be defined as the gathering of cities and city officials for mutual exchange of ideas and development of projects, as well as generating solutions around common problems, going beyond engagement among citizens.

The summit organized by the IMM also reveals a civic engagement effort in finding solutions to common problems resulting from interactions between cities. Adler and Goggin describe the concept as follows: "Civic engagement refers to the ways in which citizens participate in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future."³⁸¹ Therefore, initiatives developed by cities to solve common problems also aim to improve conditions.

The MegaCities Summit, as an event held for the first time in Istanbul, has taken a pioneering role in inspiring other cities to host similar summits in the future. In this regard, on the international stage, Istanbul will serve as a figure and a consultation point for other megacity administrations.

Yürekli, in his column highlighting the importance of the summit, made the following comment regarding Mayor İmamoğlu:

"İmamoğlu, who considers local governance as well as an international and global actor, has a vision for Istanbul that is far from being inward-looking; rather, it prioritizes regional and global

³⁸¹ Richard P. Adler and Judy Goggin, "What Do We Mean by 'Civic Engagement'?", *Journal of Transformative Education* 3, no. 3 (July 1, 2005): 236.

connections, networks, and relationships. His current role presents him with an opportunity to represent one of the world's largest and most important metropolises, providing him with high visibility in local, national, and international arenas and the opportunity to make a strong impact within a broad agenda framework. İmamoğlu seems determined to seize this valuable opportunity and make the most of it until 2028."³⁸²

İmamoğlu addressed the then recently initiated Israel-Palestine conflict in his opening speech at the summit, mentioning that the Mayor of Ramallah also attended the summit.³⁸³

İmamoğlu used the following statements:

“Our cities should no longer be places where people look at each other with suspicion and where the seeds of hatred can be sown,” said İmamoğlu, adding, “We all have a responsibility for this. It is up to all of us to transform our cities into living spaces where peace and tolerance flourish. I would like to take this opportunity to express my great sadness and concern about the escalation of violence between Palestinians and Israelis yesterday.”³⁸⁴

İmamoğlu also emphasized that the solution to global problems would begin at the local level and used the following statements:

“I believe that the most effective method of achieving global sustainable development goals is to prioritize local. For a better future, change must start locally. It must attain the power to influence first national and then global policies.”³⁸⁵

Bogota Mayor and METROPOLIS President Claudia Lopez also addressed the Israel-Palestine issue and targeted the UN, emphasizing the role of cities in peace-building:

³⁸² Ayşe Yürekli, “İmamoğlu’nun Mega Adımı,” PolitikYol, October 11, 2023, <https://www.politikyol.com/imamoglunun-mega-adimi>.

³⁸³ RailyNews, “Istanbul Hosted the Megacities Summit,” October 9, 2023, https://www.railynews.com/2023/10/Istanbul-hosted-the-megacities-summit/#google_vignette.

³⁸⁴ RailyNews, “Istanbul Hosted the Megacities Summit.”

³⁸⁵ RailyNews, “Istanbul Hosted the Megacities Summit.”

“We must not only increase the prosperity of our cities by working together, but also ensure that they become sustainable,” said Lopez, adding, “As megacities, we must join our forces. Thus, we must offer more decentralized structures and more inclusive structures. We must work hard to offer greener buildings, more socially and environmentally beneficial structures, regardless of which country or city we are in. We attended the UN meetings within the scope of METROPOLIS and UCLG last week. And we told the UN, whose purpose of establishment was actually to preserve peace and tranquility in the world, to fulfill this duty. They have not been very successful in this field so far.”³⁸⁶

The message delivered by representatives of megacities coming together is significant. In addition, the appointment of Mayor İmamoğlu as the "Special Envoy for Megacities" by METROPOLIS, which brings together megacities around the world, has strengthened Istanbul's position in this regard.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁶ RailyNews, “Istanbul Hosted the Megacities Summit.”

³⁸⁷ Emrah Öztürk, “İmamoğlu ‘Megaşehirler Özel Elçisi’ Oldu,” Cadde Gazetesi, February 20, 2024, <https://www.caddegazetesi.com/haber-imamoglu-megasehirler-ozel-elcisi-oldu-5436>.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. CONCLUSION

Global relations are now transcending traditional forms of communication solely between governments or states. Beyond conflicts, disputes, and problems among states, civil society, companies, interest groups, and media are facilitating contact between peoples. In this regard, cities are emerging as instruments to bring societies closer together, beyond diplomatic activities conducted between governments.

Cities, where half of the world's population resides, can address larger masses than many countries today with their populations numbering in the millions. For example, with a population of 37 million, Tokyo and approximately 16 million in Istanbul, host larger populations than many countries worldwide.

The increasing importance of cities is such that they can create alternatives to national government policies in many areas. Today, cities can have as much influence as governments themselves on issues such as public health, climate crisis, finance, and investment. Additionally, as we have shown, they also provide alternatives to interstate problems and conflicts by creating cooperation activities among people in a social context.

As a country that has faced intense criticism in recent years on issues such as democracy, human rights, and freedom of expression, Türkiye's reputation in the international arena does not seem very positive in this context. However, the opposition administration of Istanbul, the country's largest city, is developing rhetoric that will soften Türkiye's scorecard in this regard, especially in Europe, contributing to Türkiye's international position. So it can be said that, instead of directly accepting the assumption that disputes between countries and governments will create problems among the people, it is also possible to ensure that this permeates the political atmosphere by keeping communication channels open between the people. It is possible to say that the tension in Turkish-Greek relations is not applicable to Athens-Istanbul relations. The warm relations between the cities of Istanbul and Athens directly concern the 16 million population in Istanbul and the 3.5 million population in Athens.

The period of 2019-2024 for the Istanbul city administration has been a time of turmoil in many respects, coinciding with turbulent processes Türkiye has experienced on the international stage. Especially, Türkiye's relations with Western countries, which were its allies during the Cold War era, have encountered disputes concerning Syria, Azerbaijan-Armenia, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Aegean. In addition to this, criticisms have been directed towards Türkiye for moving away from Western values such as democracy, human rights, and freedom of thought and press.

Actually, the very process of İmamoğlu coming to office constitutes one of the reasons for these criticisms. With the annulment and subsequent rerun of the local elections in Istanbul, İmamoğlu won the election again. The situation of these elections being repeated in Istanbul also became an agenda in the international public opinion. Following this, in Türkiye, there was a process where many authorities and various powers and assets within the IMM were transferred to the government through government decisions.

Undoubtedly, İmamoğlu's relations with social democratic municipalities contribute to the governance of cities of equivalent importance to Istanbul in Europe, which are governed by social democratic parties. Cities such as Paris, London, Florence and Sarajevo with which Istanbul has relations, are governed by social democratic parties. While there is no evidence to suggest that İmamoğlu would alter his approach towards these cities if they were led by mayors from different parties, it is possible to say that there has been progress in Istanbul's relations with social democratic municipalities worldwide during the 2019-2024 period.

In addition, although İmamoğlu has conducted almost all of his foreign trips to Western cities, according to information obtained from the IMM's Department of Foreign Relations, there are also intense contacts with cities in China. This could be interpreted in terms of mutual benefit and increasing cultural interaction based on the claim that Chinese cities are similar in size to Istanbul and megacities share common needs and problems.

Nevertheless, regardless of ideologies and shared interests, it is possible to say that democracy, human rights, and the rule of law are influential in İmamoğlu's relations with Western cities. In light of this, the representatives of European cities coming to Istanbul to

support Mayor İmamoğlu and organizing a meeting here after the lawsuit opened against İmamoğlu is a result of a relationship based on these values.

At the end of the day, İmamoğlu emphasizes values such as the rule of law, human rights, and democracy in every international setting he finds himself in, thereby demonstrating the Turkish society's commitment to these values. This can be observed in his speeches at events such as the 37th session of the CoE Congress, as well as at the Munich Security Conference, as we have provided examples of.

The thesis aims to outline an analytical framework with a public diplomacy approach to the works carried out by the IMM under the name of city diplomacy. In this context, findings have been researched through various examples and efforts have been made to reveal different perspectives presented at the point of national public diplomacy policies. For this purpose, articles, books, international publications focused on public diplomacy and city diplomacy, reports of relevant organizations, web pages, news sources, personal observations, and interviews with experts on the subject have been utilized.

The thesis aims to present a conceptual framework related to public diplomacy and city diplomacy. For this purpose, the first chapter of the thesis is dedicated to explaining the purpose, content, and methodology, while the second chapter attempts to outline the conceptual development of public diplomacy, the concept of soft power, and the conventional and new understandings of public diplomacy. In the third chapter, the concepts used in the relations of city diplomacy and sub-national entities are addressed. In this regard, concepts such as paradiplomacy and microdiplomacy are also mentioned. Additionally, the functionalist and neo-functionalist approaches to how cities can be interpreted are discussed, with examples of inter-city organizations operating on a global scale. The fourth chapter of the thesis aims to establish the connections between public diplomacy and city diplomacy. Furthermore, it attempts to illustrate IMM's city diplomacy strategy, the activities conducted within the framework of this strategy, and their analysis as public diplomacy with examples supported by findings.

As a result, an attempt has been made to answer the following three questions:

1- Can city diplomacy activities be interpreted as public diplomacy?

2- Does the city diplomacy activities of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (2019-2024 term) develop a different discourse compared to national foreign policy?

3- Can İmamoğlu's foreign relations activities be interpreted as an alternative public diplomacy activity?

Based on the conceptual framework and examples we presented in our thesis, it can be concluded that city diplomacy can play an important role in conducting public diplomacy activities, and therefore, city diplomacy can be interpreted as public diplomacy.

The city diplomacy activities carried out by the IMM during the 2019-2024 period have been extensively examined, and it has been demonstrated with examples that Türkiye has pursued a different path from its national foreign policy. The examples provided indicate that, without deviating from Türkiye's national security and foreign policy line, a public diplomacy activity aimed at improving the country's image has been conducted by referencing Türkiye's criticized aspects, particularly in terms of democracy, press freedom, and human rights.

İmamoğlu's approach to foreign relations and the principles he has laid out have emerged as a response by the Turkish opposition to Türkiye's long-standing structure of national foreign policy, which has remained unchallenged for years. İmamoğlu has outlined a different vision for the Balkans, such as through organizations like B40, as an alternative to the government's public diplomacy activities carried out through institutions like TİKA, YTB, and the Yunus Emre Institute in Türkiye's immediate neighborhood. Additionally, during this period, the IMM has worked to bridge between peoples during periods of intergovernmental crises. Examples include the relationships between Istanbul-Paris, Istanbul-Athens, Istanbul-Florence, and Istanbul-Berlin. Furthermore, in an atmosphere where Türkiye faced intense criticism, İmamoğlu has contributed to Türkiye's image in this regard by delivering messages on the functioning of democracy in Türkiye on international platforms.

To strengthen the arguments in the thesis, reference has been made to the approach of the city of Budapest towards the Ukraine-Russia War, which contradicts the national government policies. Additionally, attention has been given to other city administrations like Paris, which have undertaken significant initiatives during this war. The foreign policy rhetoric of Türkiye's national government has also been mentioned, and the foreign relations approaches of the national government and the Istanbul city administration have been compared with various

examples. Furthermore, the thesis highlights the "New Balkan Pact" rhetoric through an organization like B40, which constitutes an important pillar of Turkish public diplomacy in the Balkans.

As a result of these studies, it can be said that during İmamoğlu's first term, IMM's participation in global events, invitations to summits, and the organization of large-scale events hosted by the IMM have positively influenced the city's image. The city has opened doors to cultural events, particularly in modern art, and undertaken significant restoration projects that will grant Istanbul a prestigious position on a global scale. Additionally, sports diplomacy efforts focused on the Olympics have contributed to the city's public diplomacy capacity. The IMM's provision of technical support to many different cities and humanitarian aid activities during the Ukraine-Russia War, as seen, also reflect this.



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