

# **DISSERTATION**

**Cultural Diplomacy as a tool for peace building and  
promoting human rights in the Eastern Mediterranean  
(Country focus: Turkey)**

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## **Executive Summary**

This research paper analyses the concept of cultural diplomacy and what role it could play on promoting Human Rights and building sustainable peace in the Eastern Mediterranean, with a specific focus on Turkey. After the recent events occurred in the Middle East, the so called Arab Spring, Turkey has suddenly seen herself promoted as a good example of successful democracy. Additionally, the prosperous economy and the economic growth that Turkey has been able to achieve lately have also started promoting Turkey as a new regional power. This sounds wonderful and very prosperous. However, the reality is rather different. Turkey has not yet been able to recognise the diversity of her population, as it is the case of the biggest minority group in the country, the Kurds, and she has not been willing to offer her citizens basic human rights nor basic freedoms in terms of freedom of expression and thought. The economic situation of the country is flourishing; however, the main question is: what price should be paid for achieving this growth? The purpose of this report is to analyse the role of cultural diplomacy and how it could help in solving all these issues.

In order to understand what role, if any, cultural diplomacy could play on achieving all the above mentioned objectives, it is crucial to define what cultural diplomacy is, and what the main differences between traditional diplomacy and cultural diplomacy are. For that reason, the report begins with an introduction to what cultural diplomacy means, as well as with a short overview on what role cultural diplomacy plays in international relations and in politics. The first chapter deals with all these issues, while the second chapter focuses on the situation of Human Rights in Turkey, from a historical background, an analysis of the biggest violations of human rights to the recent (almost inexistent) developments in terms of assuring those basic rights.

After offering a concrete overview on what are the issues to be improved and on what the real power of cultural diplomacy is, an extensive conclusion comes in order to explain how cultural diplomacy could help in certain situations. Consequently, a list of recommendations is given, in order to explain clearly what should be done in order for cultural diplomacy to be effective in terms of attending all those issues.

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## **Preface**

This research paper has been realised in 2012 as a bachelor thesis (dissertation) at The Hague University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands. More specifically, it was delivered to the Faculty of European Studies and Communication Management (department of European Studies).

The main purpose of this paper is to analyse what is cultural diplomacy and what role it could play in terms of promoting human rights and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean, as an answer to the recent events occurred during the Arab Spring. The paper focuses specifically on the situation of human rights in Turkey, a country that has been rising as a new regional power and that has been appointed as a model for the new democracies in the region. Secondly, a different goal of this dissertation is to inform the public about the situation of human rights in Turkey, generally speaking, and to inform about the potential role that cultural diplomacy, as a mean of soft power could play in terms of strengthening human rights.

This report does not include any deep analysis of specific cases of violations of human rights in Turkey; however, it introduces the main issues from a historical and moral point of view. It includes a critical overview on the inexistent interest of the Turkish government in terms of assuring human rights, as well as recommendations on what could be done and how cultural diplomacy could play an important role in Turkish politics and society.

This research paper, or dissertation, should be of interest to professors and academics, as well as to NGOs, promoters of peace, Human Rights organisations, research institutes, cultural diplomats, civil society representatives, students and any person with interest in human rights issues.

### **Abbreviations**

**AKP:** Justice and Development Party

**ECHR:** European Court of Human Rights

**EU:** European Union

**HRF:** Human Rights Foundation

**HRA:** Human Rights Association

**HRW:** Human Rights Watch

**ICD:** Institute for Cultural Diplomacy

**PKK:** Kurdistan Workers' Party

**UNCAT:** United Nations Commission against Torture

**USA:** United States of America

## Introduction

Turkey has continuously been on the focal point of the Western countries regarding the incessant violations of human rights. No matter the cause of the violations (ethnic, political, gender, religious, etc.), with Turkey's expectations to become a member of the European Union, these problems have gained loads of attention from the international community. It is obvious that for the European Union human rights are playing very important roles within, as well as outside, the Union. According to a *Guideline on Human Rights* drafted by the Council of the EU in 2009, "when the Union agreed on establishing a common Foreign and Security Policy, placed Human Rights at the heart of this policy". Therefore, it is a big challenge for Turkey to achieve those objectives. A CRS Report for the American Congress reveals that no new chapters of the *acquis communautaire* were opened for negotiation in 2011, as well as no new chapters were closed.

Following the recent events occurred very close to Turkey's borders, the democracy building process called the Arab Spring, Turkey has involuntarily been appointed as a role model for all those countries. Turkey has been promoted by other countries as a follow-up example of what democracy in a Muslim state should look like. However, Turkey, and her strong insistence on the concept of secular country, may not be the best example for all those new democracies. Before having an impact and the power to influence the region, there are many issues that the country should address. There are several ongoing conflicts within her territory that have been the cause of the embarrassing numbers of deaths and imprisonments.

Traditional methods of reconciliation have proved to be outdated and ineffective, while the pressure from the "West" require Turkey not only to stop violations of Human Rights and to promote equal opportunities for every citizen, but also to achieve sustainable peace. Traditional methods involve, in most of the cases, the use of "hard power" which is the power to coerce (intimidate), according to Joseph S. Nye Jr. (Dean of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, until 2004). History has shown the entire world that the use of hard power, or intimidation, is definitely not a sustainable way for achieving peace and promoting Human Rights. Practices of hard power have been devastating; looking not far away, in the continental Europe, the use of hard power in former Yugoslavia has been the cause of Europe's most horrible genocide in the 1990's. The idea of putting one culture above another and trying to convince everyone that this culture is the best than the other is an outdated initiative which has no space in today's globalised world. We are continuously experiencing foreign influence in every country around the globe, in every sector of any industry. Therefore, a new method should be used for promoting equality of cultures.

The creation of diplomatic institutions can be seen as an attempt of some countries of promoting their own culture abroad; however diplomacy usually focuses on promoting one

country's main culture, with very little impact on the other cultures in within that country. A new trend, cultural diplomacy, goes beyond the trends of traditional diplomacy, and focuses on the importance of culture and diversity of cultures. According to Yasar Yakis, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Cultural Diplomacy "*should be an exercise of give and take and not a one way traffic*".

Therefore, given the current situation of human rights in Turkey, the problems that minorities are facing in this country and the recent political developments in the region, it should be analyses what opportunities are available for cultural diplomacy in order to gain more importance among all Turkish political and civil actors. There is a great scope of research to examine how cultural diplomacy could be used as a tool for promoting equal opportunities and Human Rights in the region; especially in within the territory of Turkish Republic, where several ethnic groups cohabit. Turkey, as a country located at the border between Europe and Asia, as a meeting point of different cultures and on a strategic position between the Islamic and Christian world, is a great challenge for achieving peace in a sustainable way. Therefore, there is a vast need for all Turkish citizens to cooperate with and understand each other in order for Turkey to continue being successful and increase its importance in the region.

With the low interest that the current government has shown regarding the demoralizing situation of basic freedoms and human rights, the political role of cultural diplomacy and the political willingness towards development should also be investigated. However, the most important question is: can cultural diplomacy be used as a tool for bringing cultures together, in Turkey, and therefore help promoting Human Rights? The following chapters follow a logic structure aimed to give an answer to the most relevant questions and to offer an overview of the current situation of human rights in Turkey, on what cultural diplomacy means and what power does it have. Ultimately, the main research question is being offered an answer in a very critical and objective manner, and several recommendations are given.

## Chapter I: Cultural Diplomacy

### What is cultural diplomacy?

Before analysing how cultural diplomacy could be used as a tool for promoting human rights in Turkey, it should be firstly defined what is meant by the term of cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy is more than what traditional diplomacy is or it used to be. Traditional diplomacy, generally, deals with political relations between different countries; that is to say, economic and political interests of one country in the territory of another (Mark Donfried, Institute for Cultural Diplomacy). However, there is no specific definition on what cultural diplomacy is. According to Mark Donfried, director and founder of the ICD, Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, *“For a long time, cultural diplomacy, had the reputation of winning the hearts and minds of foreign audiences; how do we persuade others to like us; how do we attract the others”*. It is indeed a form of traditional diplomacy that has gained more importance throughout the years. In 1996, Willy Brandt stated that culture was *“the third pillar of foreign policy”*. The definition offered by the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, the main institutional body working on the field of cultural diplomacy, defines cultural diplomacy *“as the initiation or facilitation of the exchange of ideas, values, traditions and other aspects of culture or identity, whether they promote national interests, build relationships or enhance socio-cultural understanding”*.

Therefore, it could be said that the main difference between cultural diplomacy and traditional diplomacy is that the first one pays greater attention to cultural relations between communities or groups rather than between countries. However, the main question still stands up: what is really cultural diplomacy? A good example of what cultural diplomacy used to be, and who the cultural diplomats were in the past, is one given by the ICD: explorers, travellers, traders, artists and teachers were the first persons to export culture to new territories. Cultural Diplomacy is not only about relations between countries, it is also about individuals interacting with other individuals from a different cultural background. For that reason, those first explorers in the 15<sup>th</sup> century were, involuntarily, cultural diplomats. Nevertheless, it could certainly be argued that, at that time, the methods of exporting culture were not the most appropriate and even more it was a one-way exchange system. Cultural diplomacy does, indeed, recognise the *“tragedy of these events”* that created *“adversity, displacement, forced migration, slavery, conflict and state-sponsored expansion, and have often resulted in forced assimilation”*, as it is described by Mark Donfried. However, the main goal of cultural diplomacy, as it is stated by the Institute, is to prevent those tragedies happening in nowadays' society and to *“articulate their influence in shaping contemporary societies”*. One of the main principles of cultural diplomacy is *“respect and recognition of cultural diversity & heritage”*, and there is no doubt

why cultural diplomacy is a very good tool for nowadays' society. As it was mentioned by Yasar Yakis, former Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, "*cultural diplomacy has become important in the contemporary world because the contacts between the adherents of different cultures have become much more intensified in the present globalized world*". Therefore, in a globalised environment, when the interaction between different cultures is completely unavoidable, the use of cultural understanding is a must.

Moreover, cultural diplomacy is also a very important instrument for enforcing and promoting Human Rights. In addition to the above mentioned principle of respect of diversity, other important principles are "*the protection of International Human Rights, Global intercultural dialogue, Justice, Equality & Interdependence and Global Peace & Stability*" (*What is Cultural Diplomacy?* ICD). For that reason, it could be resumed that cultural diplomacy is a new tool for the 21<sup>st</sup> century that is to be used for bringing cultures together and creating a common ground by promoting mutual understanding.

### **What is the connection between cultural diplomacy and International Relations?**

A report offered by the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy, realised by the U.S. Department of State, clearly declares that "*cultural diplomacy reveals the soul of a nation*". The same report analyses how cultural diplomacy could play a major role on improving the image of the USA abroad by promoting arts and music. It is not a surprise that the image of the United States of America, in the international stage, has suffered tremendously from the States' involvement in recent wars, the situation of detainees in Guantanamo, etc. Therefore, the Advisory Committee on cultural diplomacy recommends the US government to be more active in promoting the American culture abroad with the main objective of improving the image of the country. This example clearly reflects what the purpose of cultural diplomacy is in terms of international relations; and what role cultural diplomacy could play in promoting not only economic interests, but also in promoting the image of one country or culture that has been involved in hostilities or other controversial activities.

In order to understand how much influence or power does cultural diplomacy have in international relations, it is fundamental to define what is power. According to Joseph S. Nye Jr. (until recently the dean of Harvard's Kennedy School), "*power is the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcomes one wants*". There are different ways in which power can be enforced. The same author mentions three examples on his publication "*The benefits of Soft Power*": coercing with threats, inducing with payments (bribing) or attracting and cooperating. In politics "*practical politicians and ordinary people often simply define power as the possession of capabilities or resources that can influence outcomes. Someone who has authority, wealth, or an attractive personality is called powerful*" as it is stated by J. Nye Jr.

In international relations, power is traditionally measured on all the resources of one country (i.e. army, economic resources, etc.). However, by measuring power in resources, one country may not achieve the results that she wants. “*Power resources cannot be judged without knowing the context*” (J. Nye Jr.), and the relevance of this statement is that throughout the history, the humanity has learned that every time there is a conflict, there is always a new resource that has more relevance than other (i.e. oil before the Industrialisation was not a very important resource). The process of coercing and achieving one’s objectives through military intervention is called hard power. On the other hand, the process of achieving one’s objectives without threats or conflict is called soft power (J. Nye Jr., *The benefits of soft power*). It is also known as “*the second face of power*”.

The concept of soft power has been introduced very recently in international relations, in 1990, by the above mentioned author, Dr. Joseph Nye, Jr. a foreign policy practitioner and Assistant Secretary of Defence during Bill Clinton's administration. The idea of using soft power instead of the traditional hard power may be seen as a new trend of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as an answer to the World’s continuous process of democratisation and liberalisation. Similarly, the author of the concept of soft power relates: “*Soft power is a staple of daily democratic politics*”. Soft power has a more practical approach of daily situations; as it is in business, a good leader knows that the best way he can make his employees work more effectively is by keeping them contented and having them working for the same goal. The same rule applies for international relations and foreign policy: if one country is pleased with the overall activities of another, and it benefits from mutual cooperation, it will be easier for the other country to pursue cooperation in different areas. Additionally, the journalist Steve Jones also argues that “*soft power programs can often influence that without the expense -- in people, equipment, and munitions -- and animosity that military power can create*” (Soft Power in U.S. Foreign Policy).

### **The role of cultural diplomacy and soft power in Politics**

It is indeed a challenge for soft power and cultural diplomacy to be used in a sustainable way in a globalised and diverse world. If managing diversity is a big challenge in daily life; a bigger challenge is it in politics. In democratic systems, especially in the so called *Western* world, political diversity is a fact: different political parties with different ideologies share periodically the “chair of power”. Ideologies differ from one political party to another; and, on the same way, soft power plays more or less important roles in the different political agendas. Liberalism is the political theory that pays more attention to soft power. It is one of the principles of Liberalism that society should not be designed nor planned; society should rather be as it works the best in the moment: “the process should determine outcome” theory (*Neoliberalism: origins, theory, definition*). It is rather difficult to imagine a free market area without

the existence of the Liberalist ideology; and that is because “*the modern free market came into existence primarily because liberalism demanded its existence*”, as it is explained by “*The Theory of the Free Market*”. Andrew Vogt relates that wherever realists would see an opportunity for conflict or competition, liberals will see a good opportunity for cooperation (*Idealism and Liberalism: International Relations Theory in Brief*, A. Vogt).

That is to say, that cultural diplomacy and liberalism are closely connected from the point of view that they both are in favour of cooperation rather than conflict. It is also one of the most important goals of liberals to promote international laws and peace; since they believe that those should be the main goal of a country’s foreign policy (*International Relations Theory in Brief*, A. Vogt). However, liberals may still be in favour of the principle “the goal justifies the means”, and, as it mentioned by Andrew Vogt, they may accept the idea that wars are unavoidable when peace is the main and ultimate goal. On the other hand, cultural diplomacy does not fully agree with that statement, and, as it is recognised by the founder of the Institute for Cultural diplomacy, the most important challenge for cultural diplomacy is to be an alternative to conflicts, to find a peaceful way of cooperation (Mark Donfried).

Furthermore, the idea of global peace that the liberals defend is also strongly connected to the European Enlightenment period, when renamed philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, John Locke and Hugo Grotius started introducing the concepts of peace, law and civil government (i.e. I. Kant “*Perpetual Peace*”, John Locke “*Two treatises of Civil Government*”).

*But the homage which each state pays (at least in words) to the concept of law proves that there is slumbering in man an even greater moral disposition to become master of the evil principle in himself (which he cannot disclaim) and to hope for the same from others...For these reasons there must be a league of a particular kind, which can be called a league of peace (foedus pacificum), and which would be distinguished from a treaty of peace (pactum pacis) by the fact that the latter terminates only one war, while the former seeks to make an end of all wars forever.*

*Immanuel Kant*

This important quote from Immanuel Kant reflects the idealistic theory of liberalism, where international politics are seen from an optimistic perspective, and where global peace is achievable. Additionally, according to professor E. Van de Haar, Manila University, the ideas of I. Kant and W. Wilson

*Inspired calls for a world federation of the brotherhood of man, cosmopolitanism, a belief in the goodness of people and the possibility of abolishing war, optimism about the peace-enhancing outcomes of increased intergovernmental international organisation, international free trade, and so forth.*

*(Classical Liberalism and International Relations Theory, p. 4)*

All these important philosophers recognised the need of global peace as well as the unavoidable need for cooperation between all cultures around the world.

According to Kegley & Wittkopf (*World Politics: Trends and Transformation*, 2006, p. 28), liberals are believers of global cooperation and even more, that global cooperation would bring “*absolute gains*” to all. Additionally, liberals are of the opinion that not only states are the most important actors, but also “*non-state actors such as multi-national corporations, intergovernmental organizations, and governmental organizations*” (Kegley & Wittkopf, p.28). However, global cooperation can only be achieved by assuring mutual understanding and avoiding cultural differences that could interfere with the process of cooperation between different cultures of the world. This is where both liberals and cultural diplomats find themselves in a situation where they share a common goal and understand that, in order to achieve certain objectives, the power of understanding each other is really important.

## Chapter II: Human Rights in Turkey

### What is the situation of human rights in Turkey?

With the Ottoman Empire as the precedent of the current Republic, Turkey has continuously been challenged to recognize and accept the diversity of its own population. It is fundamental to understand what the origins of the current (ethnic) conflicts in Turkey are, in order to understand what the current situation of Human Rights in the republic is.

The creation of the Modern Turkish Republic started after the First World War, with the political rebirth of Atatürk. Until then, Turkey has been a country trying to imitate the West; however, the political changes in the *West*, involuntarily located Turkey in a position between Bolshevism and Fascism (*Republic and Anthropology from Darwin to Dersim*; Dr. Z. Toprak). Atatürk had the idea of establishing a new identity for Turkey's citizens; however, the means by which this would be done were relatively controversial: by disconnecting the citizens from the past. The main reason why he decided to use this method was due to the strong connection of all Turkish citizens to the Ottoman Empire. Atatürk's ideal Turkey was a secular state with a common identity, and he used anthropology in order to explain to its citizens that they all share the same identity and, even more, that they are Europeans. According to Prof. Toprak, director of Atatürk Principle and revolutions Institute, "*the first reason for Atatürk to bring anthropology into agenda was to be able to tell the West we are like you too*".

Since Atatürk was a great supporter of secularism and of a state with shared identity, it was necessary for him to demonstrate that the idea of a secular state is not utopian. He used anthropology and history, and analysed the situation of the Turkish nation before the Islam and the Ottoman Empire in order to prove that "*religion was not among factors that built the nation during 30's*" (*Republic and Anthropology from Darwin to Dersim*; Dr. Z. Toprak). The study of anthropology also revealed that all the minorities living in Turkey have a common background: Turks, Kurds and Armenian are, according to Atatürk's study of anthropology, all brachycephalic (considered being the descendents of Asian immigrants). Therefore, it could be understood that the nationalistic movement of Atatürk was one of the biggest attempts of the modern Turkish Republic for creating a common identity and a homogenous state. Anatolia, the central/eastern part of Turkey was the most vulnerable region, since the majority of all ethnical minorities were located in this region. However, at the beginning of Atatürk's process of nationalisation and state building, and during the first years of the Turkish Republic, the identity of the Kurdish minority was not rejected, as it is recognised by Dr. Z. Toprak. Additionally, Atatürk argued that all residents of the Anatolian region were immigrants, and therefore the mission of the new Republic was to combine and "*melt all these different factors in one pot*". With the problem of religion versus secularism, the first years of Atatürk's government paid

more importance “*to take people apart from caliph feature*” rather than persuading ethnic minorities.

However, the position of the Turkish government regarding the identity of national minorities changed in 1924, with the banning of the Kurdish language and identity (*Turkey and the Armenian Genocide*; R.P. Adalian). Ankara’s homogenisation process began, and the position of the Turkish government regarding minorities in the Republic “*oscillated from neglect to repression*”. Rouben Paul Adalian, an expert on the Armenian Genocide, relates that Turkey used the *opportunity* of the Second World War for pursuing its homogenization process. During the war, Turkey had a neutral position, with no official support towards any confronting side; however it continued having good relations with Nazi Germany. Additionally, during that period of time it started charging huge amounts of taxes upon the Armenians, Jews and Greeks living on its territory. In 1995, the government took the decision of expulsing most of the Greeks in the country. Consequently, the Jews migrated to Israel and the Armenian population experienced a dramatic decrease: from 150.000 to less than half (*Turkey, Armenia and the Genocide*).

Ever since then, the Turkish government has never recognised the Armenian Genocide; even more it has tried to use its power to persuade other allied countries (i.e. members of NATO) to neither recognise the occurrence of those events. Additionally, the Turkish government has been actively involved in banning international conferences (Israel 1982), in destroying memorial sites; as well as in misinforming the Turkish youth on Armenian activities. Furthermore, traditional sites that were thousands of years old were subject of vandalism and destruction, as it is related by R.P. Adalian.

*While Ottoman Turkey persecuted and sought to destroy the living Armenian population, Republican Turkey has been methodically erasing the physical record of an extinguished civilization with the goal of blotting out even the memory of its existence.*  
- Rouben Paul Adalian

Therefore, after expulsing the Greeks, after the feeding of the Jews and the controversial extermination of the Armenians, the Kurds were the only considerably large ethnic group left in the country. As it was already mentioned, Ataturk believed that Turks and Kurds had the same historical background and, for that reason, he did not see, or did not want to see, differences between those two groups. However, Ataturk, following his ideas of homogenisation of the Turkish state and laicism, treated every single citizen of the Republic as a Turk and forced assimilation of all the minorities into what he considered to be the common Turkish identity and

promoted Turkish as the only official language in the Republic. Starting with the banning of the Kurdish language and identity in 1924, the situation of the Kurdish minority embarked on a very depraving situation towards nowadays' status of the Kurds in Turkey.

### **What are the main issues to be solved?**

As it was already mentioned, the situation of minorities in Turkey varies from unfair to unlawful. The largest ethnic group, the Kurds, is still suffering discrimination from different perspectives. The few recent opportunities for progress towards recognizing the Kurdish Language took place in the year 2007, when the current Justice and Development Party (AKP) took the power under the presidency of Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The government approved the campaigning in other languages, including Kurdish. However, language is not the only problem and it is not the main issue to be solved in Turkey regarding human rights.

A *Human Rights report on Turkey*, realised by the US Department of State, reveals that there are several human rights problems and violations in Turkey: "*During the year 2010 human rights organizations reported cases of torture, beatings, and abuse by security forces*". Moreover, the same report denounces the conditions on which detainees are imprisoned, the overcrowding of prisons and the access to lawyers. Additionally, the impartiality of judges is also strongly questioned, as well as it is the freedom of expression and of press. It is assured that the Internet freedom had declined and that telecommunications providers have been forced to block access to certain Web sites. Other types of violations are also included on the report such as violence against women, honour killings and rape.

On one hand, a deepen analysis of the above mentioned issues reveals the apparent innocence of the government in terms of directly ordering politically motivated killings. On the other hand, the same report denounces the killings committed by the security forces of Turkey. The main targets of those killings were Kurdish individuals, from demonstrators in front of Universities to civilians who refused to stop at the signal of the police at different checkpoints throughout the country. The Human Rights Foundation of Turkey reported 29 deaths related to the refusal to stop at security barriers (in 2010), while the Turkish Jandarma (Gendarme) denies any killing at checkpoints. Other horrifying examples of unlawful killings show that the security forces have had no sorrow in stopping illegal demonstrations. The main targets among the Kurdish protesters are the members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The armed PKK, is the biggest confronting side of the Turkish Police and the military forces, Jandarma. Those two security forces, according to their own reports, have also suffered from the incidents occurred in the country, with approximately 108 members killed in 2010, contrary to the 149 terrorist killed and 25 civilians (*Human Rights Report: Turkey*, p.3). If the increasing confrontations between protesters and security forces were not enough, in some regions of the country

landmines have caused the death of five civilians and caused 31 wounded, according to the Human Rights Foundation (HRF). Meanwhile, for over 30 years of conflict between the armed PKK and the Turkish security forces, more than 40.000 people died, according to Emma Sinclair, Turkey researcher at Human Rights Watch. Furthermore, Human Rights Watch reveals that “*the conflict with the PKK in Turkey escalated during 2011*”. The Turkish penal codes, with mainly the Article 301, “*criminalises insults to the Turkish nation*”, as well as other legal provisions severely punish insulting the founder of the Republic, Atatürk. Therefore, there is no wonder why Kurdish nationalists are heavily punished by the national Courts who make a wrong use of the legal provisions, and assume that protesters against the current government are insulting the Turkish nation.

*Individuals in many cases could not criticize the state or government publicly without risk of criminal suits or investigation, and the government continued to restrict expression by persons sympathetic to some religious, political, and Kurdish nationalist or cultural viewpoints.*

- *Human Rights Report on Turkey*, 2010 (p. 15)

US Department of State

Regarding the situation of detainees, the UNCAT, UN Committee against Torture, reported in November 2010 that it was “*gravely concerned about numerous, ongoing, and consistent allegations concerning the use of torture, particularly in unofficial places of detention*”. The use of torture has slightly been decreasing during that year, according to the NGO Human Rights Association. Consequently, when it comes to the fairness of the trials, the impartiality of judges has strongly been questioned by both human rights organisations and by the European Union. The US Department of State reveals that the structure of the courtroom “*gave an unfair advantage to the prosecution*”. Turkey is a party to the European Court of Human Rights and has signed the European Convention on Human Rights. The prevalence of the ECHR to national courts is mentioned in Turkey’s Constitution, Art. 90: “*in the case of a conflict between international agreements in the area of fundamental rights and freedoms...the provisions of international agreements shall prevail*”. With thousands of cases outstanding at the European Court, more than 2500 in 2011, Turkey does not seem to make great progress towards assuring human rights to its citizens. A recent report of the European Court of Human Rights, from January 2012, reveals that Turkey was the country with the biggest amount of cases during the previous year; more than 15% of the total amount of cases that the Court had to deal with.

Nevertheless, the status of women rights in Turkey is also under a worrying situation, far away from the ideal situation. A report realised by Human Rights Watch in 2011, “*He Loves You, He Beats you’: Family Violence in Turkey and Access to Protection*”, reveals cruel violence against girls and women by family members. The existing domestic violence law is suffering from significant fissures, making the implementation by the police unfeasible. However, a draft version of a new women rights policy has been prepared, based on the *Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* (also known as the Istanbul Convention because of Turkey hosting the event). According to Gauri van Gulik, a global women’s rights advocate, the draft law has been negotiated between several women rights organisations and the Family and Social Policies Ministry of Turkey; having finalised it on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012 and submitted it to the council of ministers. However, the minister’s office prepared a revised version of the draft, reducing obligations to launching the violence prevention “*and removed all references to gender equality*”, says van Gulik.

*“The government has to show it cares about women as individuals with rights, not just as members of families.”*

- Gauri van Gulik

Hence, it could be said that the situation of human rights in the Turkish Republic is deplorable. With no strict laws and with the historical adversity regarding the roles of minorities and of women in Turkish society; with controversial actions carried out towards limiting the freedom of press and opinion; with many cases of violations of basic human rights all around the nation, Turkey is a country with high expectations towards a European Union membership but with low interest on achieving Union’s main freedoms and ideals. Even though the current government (Erdogan and the AKP) includes the European standardisation process at the core of the Party’s programme, no major developments were made in that sense, nor major improvements in terms of human rights occurred. “*Turkey shall rapidly fulfil its promises in its relations with the European Union and the conditions, which the union demands of other candidate nations as well*”, says the Party’s programme. However, the party does not seem to seriously involve itself in any way into the development and progress of human rights and on the process of peace building.

### **Chapter III: Turkey as a regional power**

#### **How could Turkey's ideal to become a regional power be used in order to promote human rights?**

Located in a strategic location, with a prosperous economy given the current situation in Europe, Turkey has a great potential of becoming a new regional power, with an important sphere of influence between both the Western World and the Middle East. According to Emma Sinclair (Human Rights Watch), Turkey is generally seen as a successful mixture between modernization and Islam. With the recent events occurred in the “Arab Spring” and Turkey’s general support towards the democratic process of those countries, the European Union and the United States of America have actively supported the image of Turkey as a regional power. However, the fact that there are several conflicts in within her territory, the credibility of the country is dramatically reduced. On her critical analysis of Turkey as an important regional actor, Sinclair states:

*But whatever the wisdom of a search for the best ‘Muslim’ model for Arab countries, Turkey's international credibility should be in doubt as long as it fails to address its domestic human rights record, especially in regard to the large Kurdish minority.*

The geopolitical interest of the European Union, and also of the USA, and its military strategic partnership with Turkey, have made possible that such important issues as assuring human rights have been secreted and ignored. “*The U.S. and Europe also should remember that a vibrant economy and popularity in the region are no substitute for basic rights*” pronounces Sinclair. If the previous quote made reference to Turkey’s contradiction in supporting human rights abroad while not doing the same at home, the opposite idea could be applied to Europe and the USA. If these two powers are actively involved in promoting themselves as a cradle of freedom and human rights (which may also be questionable), and if they promote human rights all around the world, they should do the same in Turkey. As Sinclair said, human rights and economic growth are not exchangeable; you cannot leave behind human rights on exchange with economic and regional power. It would be more logical for both the USA and the EU to promote Turkey as an important regional actor only when the situation in the country, regarding human rights, has improved to the western standards.

*“The West does not seem to notice the steady deterioration in human rights in Turkey, instead extolling it as a model for the Arab spring.”*

*- Turkey and human rights, November 2011*

Conclusively, in order for Turkey to become the regional power that she is dreaming about, it is fundamental to address those controversial issues and bring an intelligent solution to those problems. Turkey cannot be seen as a role model for other countries while human rights in within her territory are in such a neglected situation. There is no moral behind promoting herself as an emerging regional power given the current situation of her minorities, human rights and freedom of expression. Therefore, it is highly questionable what kind of example should Turkey be to other countries in the region that are slightly learning to adopt democracy. Democracy involves rights and freedoms, while those are not fully offered equally to all the citizens in Turkey.

## Conclusion

As it was already mentioned, in several occasions, the situation of human rights in Turkey is deplorable. After the rule of the Ottoman Empire; after Ataturk's homogenisation process and the idea of creating a common Turkish Identity, the situation of the minorities in the country has been developing from bad to worse. Additionally, with a strong control over the media and very few developments in terms of freedom of speech and thought, the Turkish Republic of the 21<sup>st</sup> century stands behind all the ideal situations that it would have liked to achieve. Therefore, there is a great scope of trying to find a new tool, a new instrument, that could help promoting human rights and creating a dialogue between all the confronting groups in within the Turkish society.

As it was revealed by Prof. Dr. Thala Köse, researcher at Istanbul Sehir University, for a long period of time, *"Turkey did not have an economic potential as well as it had its own internal problems"*. Therefore, it was a challenge for the country to get in touch with its neighbours. This may have been the cause of the slow process towards recognition of diversity in the country, even though, given the circumstances of its neighbours (i.e. Caucasus, Balkans) the situation could have gotten even worse if Turkey followed the same example of "managing diversity" that was used in those countries. Additionally, Dr. Köse is a supporter of the idea that Turkey is mature enough and it has the capacity for starting addressing cultural challenges, as he states during an interview: *"Turkish democracy and society are mature enough to address those cultural challenges; that is why we now understand that we can only strengthen our economy and democracy by integrating the other cultures"*.

Cultural diplomacy, as a potential new mechanism, could definitely help developing dialogue and social programmes. However, it is obvious that cultural diplomacy cannot do everything on its own. As a mean of soft power, with no military intervention (as opposed to hard power), cultural diplomacy is a very important tool for nowadays' globalised and partially liberalised world. Economic growth cannot be achieved if acting alone, it is important to have strategic partners and strategic agreements. Nevertheless, this has been recognised since long time ago, by an important philosopher, Immanuel Kant, that *"the spirit of free commerce is incompatible with wars"*. That is to say, that in order to achieve a free market that would benefit everyone, wars and conflicts should totally be void. The liberal political agenda is very much in favour of the free market and the liberalisation of the trade. With a central-right government, the Islamic AKP, Turkey does not progress fast enough in terms of recognising the diversity in within her territory nor to solve conflicts. Controversially, the ruling AKP does recognise the need to stop atrocities, as it is stated by their political programme:

*Our party believes that the only way to urgently stop the flow of  
blood and tears, no matter whom they belong to, is a lasting*

*peace. In this framework, Turkey shall continue to support the  
efforts towards the achievement of the peace.* - AKP

Yasar Yakis, one of the founders of the AKP, affirmed during a lecture at the Ankara Conference on peace building and conflict resolution, that there are three important factors for achieving sustainable peace (and therefore assuring human rights): political willingness, economic factors and cultural diplomacy. He continued the lecture with the following statement: *“cultural diplomacy is a must to achieve sustainable peace; however, if other components of sustainable peace (political willingness, economic interdependence) are not there, cultural dialogue alone will not be enough to secure sustainable peace”*. In other words, the current government, or at least the ruling political party, does indeed recognise the diversity of Turkey and the potential role that cultural diplomacy could play in the country. However, they do not demonstrate enough capacity or willingness towards improving the situation in Turkey. As Yakis mentions, political willingness is one of the most important factors for achieving peace, and it is obvious that the current government is not completely willing to achieve this, as proven by the almost inexistent reforms carried out towards promoting human rights, for example the Women rights draft proposal that has been modified by the Minister’s office. For this reason, Turkey’s candidature to become a regional power and a role model for other countries in the region should be considered as an opportunity for the international community to strengthen the importance of human rights in the country. If Turkey really wants to be a role model for the recent democracies after the Arab Spring, it should certainly *lead by example*. By assuring human rights and recognising the cultural diversity of the country, Turkey could improve the existing relations with its neighbours. This has also been recognised by Yakis and professor Kose. As professor Kose states, *“I think it is one of the biggest barriers for Turkey for strengthening its importance in the region”*. In a similar context, Yasar Yakis continues declaring that *“if countries cannot achieve this dialogue within their own territory, they should not make an effort to promote their culture in another countries; it will not be fair”*. The unacceptable situation of human rights in Turkey is also a very important factor that is tracking back the negotiations between Turkey and the European Union. As it was already recognised by the EU, until Turkey will not prove that it is able to respect its citizens, the negotiations will not go any further. Therefore, that could also be used as a reason for pursuing Turkey towards more human rights.

During the Ankara conference on peace building and conflict resolution, loads of positivism has been showed by all the speakers (including influential members of the Turkish Parliament, both from AKP and from the opposition; as well as important professors and

specialists on human rights and reconciliation). The positivism of the speakers has been showed both during lectures and interviews; and some of the most relevant notes were:

*Nowadays it is clear that democracy is the only option for Turkey but we still have this (domestic) issue. I think this is one of the biggest barriers for Turkey, but I do not think that it will last long.*

*-Thala Kose*

According to Kose, it is crucial for Turkey to address her domestic issues in order to be more successful and convincing. That is the only way on which Turkey could play a major role as a regional power.

*“If I have to make an objective comparison, Turkey is at a better state now than ten years ago when the current government started to rule”* reacts Arda Batu when asked about essential freedoms in terms of freedom of speech and expression. Even though he does not deny the existence of political detainees, Mr. Batu reveals that nowadays you can certainly discuss many issues that in the past were completely taboo. A good example is the Armenian Genocide, which is still denied by Turkey, but which has slightly been introduced into the topics of discussion of the Ankara conference. Regarding the Kurdish issue, Batu also mentions that today there are many debates about this problem and talking about this subject is not as *criminal* as it used to be in the past. At the same time, Batu, refers to the unacceptable situation of Turkey in regarding human rights by saying that *“there is no excuse for lacking so much behind in terms of the universal standards that you can see in Europe, in the USA”*. Finally he agrees that the situation of freedom of expression is far away from *“the ideal state”*.

Regarding the role of cultural diplomacy, and referring to the main research question of this report, cultural diplomacy could indeed play an important role on promoting human rights and peace building in the region. It could certainly help Turkey gain credibility among her neighbours and become the real example that it wants to be for the emerging democracies in the Middle East. By assuring stability on her own territory, Turkey could start promoting stability abroad; and, as it was mentioned before, before worrying about the situation of human rights and peace abroad, she should be worried about her own citizens and provide them with the freedoms that they deserve as human beings. By promoting intercultural dialogue, both in Turkey and abroad, Turkey could definitely improve her image as a regional role model and strengthen her relations with her neighbours and her strategic allies (EU and USA). Additionally, by using cultural diplomacy, as a mean of soft power, Turkey could also show the entire world that she cares about her citizens and that she is mature enough (as professor Kose stated) for becoming an influential actor in the region. *“One should not exaggerate the importance of cultural diplomacy, but it should not be minimised neither”* says Yakis when regarding the role of cultural diplomacy in international and domestic relations.

It is clear that cultural diplomacy itself will not be the ultimate solution to all the issues revealed by this report; however, it could definitely play a major role in achieving these goals. “*Cultural diplomacy is not a pill that cures all diseases*”, continues saying Yakis. However, cultural diplomacy will be an extremely important tool when the current government will be willing to solve the conflicts and when the economic interdependence will start playing a major role. “*When there is the right moment in the high politics and the other track of diplomacy, civil diplomacy and cultural diplomacy will be very fundamental*”, says Batu.

### **Recommendations**

“*When you have contact to people, when you get to know people; the perceptions that you may have had before meeting them may be very float.*” (Arda Batu). This statement is crucial for the purpose of this research report. Cultural diplomacy, as an instrument for bringing people together and promoting dialogue and mutual understanding should totally be considered and put in practice by Turkish officials. Without being able to understand and address her own problems, Turkey will never be able to continue expanding her relations with other countries, as well as it will be really difficult for her to survive for long time in this situation in a continuously globalised world. Diversity is a fact, and it cannot be neglected any longer; the current government should start putting cultural diplomacy into practice. The official statements given by Yakis, as one of the founders of the ruling AKP, seem very positive and encouraging; however, the reality shows that the use of cultural diplomacy is not really on the political agenda, as well as human rights and freedom of expression are neither. As Yakis says, there are three factors for achieving sustainable peace (directly linked to human rights): political willingness, economic interdependence and cultural diplomacy. Economic interdependence is obviously present all around the world, especially in the region and in Turkey as a connector between Asia and Europe. Therefore, the only missing aspect is political willingness. When there will be political willingness to improve human rights, then cultural diplomacy will be a really useful tool for achieving that objective. However, as long as the current government does not change its position and does not show real interest on improving human rights, cultural diplomacy cannot work on its own. It could help partially, at lower level, by improving people to people connections and promoting mutual understanding; however, it will not be able to make a big change that will bring a solution to all the conflicts and assure basic freedoms and human rights.

To conclude, it is a good opportunity to return to quote from Arda Batu, “*When there is the right moment in the high politics and the other track of diplomacy, civil diplomacy and cultural diplomacy will be very fundamental*”. It seems that Turkey has been waiting for the right moment for very long time and it seems that the right moment is never arriving. Therefore,

Turkey should stop waiting for the right moment and should start acting. Cultural diplomacy, as well as civil diplomacy should be considered as a priority for the country's government, and citizens' voice should be raised up in order to promote the basic human freedoms and rights. That is the only way on which cultural diplomacy could be effective and that is the only way on which Turkey can become a role model for the Middle East as it is desired.

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## **Appendix**

### **Interviews**

#### **Prof. Dr. Talha Köse**

Assistant Professor of International Relations and Political Science – *Istanbul Sehir University*

*Good afternoon, today we have the opportunity to interview Dr Talha Köse, an assistant professor at the Istanbul Sehir University. The first question that I would like to ask you is regarding the image of the bipolar world since 1990. The relationship between Turkey and its neighbors has significantly changed since then. What were the major changes according to you?*

I think Turkey has been for so long period detached from its neighbours. During the Colonial era, the Turkey's relations with its neighbours, especially in the Balkans and Middle East and Caucasus have been done through the big powers and during the Cold War era, Turkey was the Eastern wing of the NATO block, so Turkey was at the same time the border between the east and the west; so it was a security barrier between the Eastern and Western blocks. In that sense, Turkey has experienced too many problems: Turkey did not have an opportunity to integrate culturally, economically and to develop positive relations because it has seen its neighbours as security threats. So, transformation of the bipolar world into a multi polar world or the collapse of the ideological barriers has opened Turkey to integrate and develop more positive relations not only based on security but also on cultural and economic fields. This was a great transformation, and unfortunately for a period of time (at least 10-20 years) Turkey did not have an economic potential as well as it had its own internal problems and could not get in touch with its neighbours and for a period of time this did not work but Turkey rediscovered its neighbours, especially in the Balkans, Middle East and Caucasus. This went parallel with Turkey's economic growth and cultural self esteem and Turkish diplomacy became much more successful on those bases.

*According to you, why could Turkey be suitable for playing a major role in stabilizing the Mediterranean?*

I think Turkey has the ability to talk to various kinds of actors, which means that we have historically strong ties with almost all the actors in the region. Ottoman experience, Ottoman legacy has often been considered as a barrier to Turkey's positive relations with its neighbours but at least we know that we have long relations with all the communities, religious groups; and those relationships have often been considered as negative for a very long time. On the other hand, Turkey neighbouring those countries can develop positive economic relations, so I think that these are many important advantages of Turkey, so Turkey knows the culture, language and both have a historical background; on the other hand, because of our geographical

proximity, we can develop positive economic relations with all those regions, so these are all advantages of Turkey.

What changes can we expect from Turkey in the future?

I think that stabilization of the region can only be addressed through further regional integration, so we know that borders, territories in those regions, especially in the Middle East and Caucasus are artificial boundaries, so when you look at Iraq you have a multiplicity of sectarian groups, ethnic groups; when you look at Lebanon, loads of sectarian and ethnic groups and they could not get on well because the political structures could not fit with the culture and ethnic structures, so I think that the most important thing for this region is to further (strengthen) integration of the communities, cultures and economic ties. And I think, I do not see any possibility of stability other than further integration, so that is the only chance of this region. Since the political boundaries do not fit with their own culture, we have to develop further regional ties.

*As you are experts in conflict resolution methods: Which technique would you suggest for the future to solve conflicts in the future, especially related to the Mediterranean area?*

I think that whenever there is some kind of crisis and possibility of violence it has long term consequences. We have experienced the civil war in Iraq, and those wars will have a long term influences; and we have seen problems in Syria. I think the region should have some way to address the violence from the beginning. In the United Nations, the processes of addressing genocide, ethnic conflicts is very slow, and I think that there should be some regional mechanisms to address violence; that is the first thing. The other thing is that I believe that there is a transition in this region, authoritarian regimes are collapsing.

The possibilities are that we will probably see different leaders, different leadership in the region; so we have to strengthen the interrelations between people, the civilian communities saw that in the future, whoever the leader will be, they should develop positive relations between the countries, so we have to invest into the civilian potential, civilian actors, so that civilian actors should press their leaders for strengthening the economic ties because it is in the benefit of all the actors in the region. Political leaders should be pressed with these communities for further tourism and cultural interaction. I think we have to invest in civilian dimension so we cannot guess what will happen in the future but probably in the next couple of generations we will see more democratic regimes in the region and those regimes should take into consideration the priorities of the people. People should be empowered and people's ties with each other should be strengthened, so Syrian and Turkish people or Iraqi and Syrian people's ties should be strengthened in order to have more sustainable long term relations.

*Where do you see the role of cultural diplomacy in conflict resolution?*

The starting point is preventing violence, but it is not enough because the main objective of conflict resolution is not to have negative peace, which means the lack of conflicts, but to develop positive peace. Positive peace means strengthening the cultural economic ties emphasising further cultural understanding, developing a common language of understanding; and I think that the only way we can reach the positive peace is by strengthening cultural understanding and cultural diplomacy. It can be done through films, movies, common cultural projects, but I believe that positive peace can only be strengthened through cultural diplomacy. It is not just at the leadership level but at the grass roots level and the second level so we have to focus on other levels as well.

*You wrote an article about the Alliance of Civilisations, which discusses the possibilities of Conflict Resolution at Civilisation Level. Is the Turkish Civil Society prepared for that challenge?*

We have to understand that the Turkish Republic has been established as the result of the Ottoman Empire, so we have experienced for a long time ethnic conflicts, separatist movements and the nationalism in the Turkish is the outcome of those negative experiences. I think that nowadays Turkey is mature, Turkish democracy and society are mature enough to address those cultural challenges; that is why we now understand that we can only strengthen our economy and democracy by integrating the other cultures, so that is why I think this is also good for Europeans and for the Western cultures. I think that Turkey is nowadays mature, Turkish society and economy are mature to address those challenges. It is very difficult because we have been socialised within these context. We have been socialised in such context that we are surrounded by enemies all over and nowadays we are trying to change this, so nowadays all our neighbours can possibly be our friends and this is changing within the young generation, through education. I think the “Alliance of Civilisations” is a possible venue, a long term process and project that can also facilitate this process.

*The Kurdish minority has been suffered discrimination in Turkey for such a long time. How does that contribute to Turkey's national Identity?*

As I said, Turkish nationalism did not have a positive idea about all nations, so all other identities. It tried to have a notion of homogenisation, a homogenous identity: Turkish speaking, ethnically Turk and culturally Muslim. That was the main idea when Turkish republic was being established. It excluded all the different sources of diversity; it excluded religious people (groups), the Alawis, the Kurds and it excluded religious minorities. The main objective of the Turkish nation, in the beginning, was to create a homogenous society, but this project failed. Nowadays, everybody in Turkey understands that this project will not be sustainable, so we need to have a more multicultural, multiethnic society. I see this as a transition period, transition

periods are painful and we have to adjust our political system, we have to adjust our legal system, we have to adjust our culture and we have to adjust our society towards it, so it is a painful process but it is going on the right direction. I think nowadays Turkish republic understood that we cannot maintain this homogenising notion of nationalism and I think that it is a positive process in that sense.

*How does in your opinion, the Kurdish issue, affect the role of Turkey as an emerging regional power?*

I think it is one of the biggest barriers for Turkey for strengthening its importance in the region. Whenever we say that we have our peace, we have our reconciliation, we are for regional integration, and people put in front of you like this: “Ok, we are for peace, but you have the Kurdish issue”. I think that in order to be more convincing and successful in the peace process in other parts of the world, you have to address your domestic issues, and it is not a difficult issue with this understanding; nowadays it is clear that democracy is the only option for Turkey but we still have this issue. I think this is one of the biggest barriers for Turkey, but I do not think that it will last long.

*Thank you very much Dr. Talha Köse. We are really happy to have you here today and that you offered you share your time with us.*

*Available online: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNaP\\_pyXVQ4&feature=plcp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNaP_pyXVQ4&feature=plcp)*

**Arda Batu**

Vice-chairman of ARI Movement (civil society think tank based in Istanbul)

*Good Morning Mr Batu, thank you very much for being with us today. How cultural diplomacy could be used by your organisation (ARI Movement) in order to achieve the main goals and objectives?*

Thank you, it is my pleasure to be here, it is a pleasure to be a part of this noble project. The Institute for Cultural Diplomacy's international relations are a promotion of the notion of cultural diplomacy, in a way to bring societies that are either pro to conflicts or using cultural diplomacy as a preventive method to prevent conflict; which is very much in contact with my organisation's mission and vision. Besides our youth scratch, which has an element of cultural diplomacy, we are dealing with cultural diplomacy at the domestic level between the different sectors of society, whether Kurdish and Turkish or the Armenian minority. We have some minorities in Turkey and there is an element of conflict between these minorities. Cultural Diplomacy we use it both as a tool between Turkey at a domestic level, as well as for our international branch, where we deal with Turkey's neighbours, I mean Turkey's Southern neighbours such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia where there are some conflicts going on, both between themselves and between these countries and Turkey, especially in the case of Armenia; and also in the Middle East and in the Balkans. Because of the Ottoman Empire, there are some misperceptions about Turkey, and of course, within Turkey about our neighbours. What we do is that we use cultural diplomacy in projects very similar to this one (Ankara Conference), conducting projects as such to bridge the gap between the societies of these countries. We try to prepare the ground for peace for the future. I am not saying that cultural diplomacy itself will be the sole solution for peace between these countries, let's say between Turkey and Armenia, but when there is the right moment in the high politics and the other track of diplomacy, civil diplomacy and cultural diplomacy will be very fundamental, very important element in enforcing the peace and understanding between conflict countries.

*What is your opinion about the power of cultural diplomacy in the field of conflict resolution - in the case of Libya or Egypt, for instance?*

When I finished my answer to the previous question, I actually made an allusion to the answer for this question. Cultural diplomacy itself, as I emphasised in the first question, is not the solution of conflicts; and I am not going to talk just about Libya or Egypt. As a general rule, cultural diplomacy itself may not be and will probably not suffice to hinder the conflicts or to resolve them, but it can be a very instrumental tool. I am not speaking as an academic or as a civil society representative; I am speaking as a regular citizen of the world, as a human being. When you have contact to people, when you get to know people; the perceptions that you may have had before meeting them may be very float. For example, when I look at you, I may have a very totally different image of the person that you are, but after a small engagement, then I can see the true person or the true human being that you are. In that sense, to bring two persons at a common human level, cultural diplomacy programmes function as such: bringing people together so that they see basically that they are no monsters, that they are just human beings. The same can be applied to Libya, Egypt or across the globe.

*One of ARI's main goals is promoting the participation of the Turkish youth in the democratic agenda. What are the main tools that are being used for attracting or promoting democracy among the future generation of Turkey?*

When you look at Turkey, you see that especially the Eastern part of Turkey, the economically less developed part of Turkey, the part of Turkey where the education is also lower you see that the youth in those areas are not very exposed to the knowledge of how can they be politically orientated; how can they be participants in a society, in politics. We conduct projects; one of the projects, for instance, is called "Political Café", where we have young politicians and some senior politicians going to Anatolia and talking about how the young people can be members of political parties and how can they be active members of society and civil society organizations. One side of the story is providing young people with practical information on how they can be active in political parties and civil society organisations. That is because they need to have the knowledge of how to go to register for a political party, how to be members of certain community; and the same goes for civil society organisations: what kind of civil society organisations are there available for their interest. This is the kind of information that we try to deal with in the less developed parts of Turkey, so that the people over there can be exposed to knowledge and perhaps be more active members of society.

*Education and Information are two of the most important points of focus for the ARI Movement. How does the Social Media or the Mass media interact with the activities of ARI?*

Social Media is of course, needless to say, extremely important and it is becoming more important every day, not only for Turkey, but for the entire world. Anyone who has been following the events in Libya, Egypt, Iran, when you look at the social events in those countries, you see the instrumental way on what social media has been used. Conjugating and getting across the message, and basically creating a movement on democracy, better standards of life, rule of law; in order to bring these countries to a higher level of civilization. We, as ARI Movement, try to use this very critical instrument on the same way that it has been used across the globe, mainly to get our message across to young people, the ones with a smart phone or using Facebook or using Twitter which we try to deliver our message with the projects that we are conducting through this medium of communication.

*From your point of view, is it easy for isolated communities (i.e. far from big cities) to interact with important actors in the political scene?*

It is difficult, but it is also a difficult question because in isolated communities, all sources of communication are restricted. In the big cities it is not any easier because life in big cities is a lot hectic, people do not get any chance on meeting political figures or political actors. I will give you an example: in the projects that we conduct in the big cities in Turkey, for instance, Istanbul and Ankara, but especially Istanbul, we increasingly see a loss of interest among the young population as opposed to the projects that we conduct in Anatolia. Why? Because Anatolia is more the Eastern part of Turkey, more isolated and there are hungrier, they have more appetite let's say, to meet important people, to get to these opinion leaders, political leaders. But in Istanbul or Ankara these leaders are easier to be accessed. It is like classical Economical theory: when something is supplied in big amounts, then it is not so demanded.

*What does the ARI Movement do in order to offer equal opportunities for everybody to participate or to be active or updated with all the news regarding democracy Turkey?*

I do not want to be redundant; it goes again to the question of equality within the territory of Turkey. Now we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and everyone has access to internet, so people do have access to information. The young people, more often than not, are not being taught in this political culture of going to the right address where to get political information or self developing information. You may have the same access to internet in territory A and territory B, but in territory B there is more of an interest because of the uprising, because of the less exposure of information and education, they play internet games or watch other things as opposed to looking at educational informative materials. It is actually a whole: the level of education, the level of exposure, they have to be equally raised in these regions.

*Did you lead any actions in those areas?*

Yes, that is why we try to go more to the more isolated areas; if that was the answer you were looking for, yes. We go more to these isolated areas because simply they need more access. It is not really special to give access to people who already have access. It is more important to try to go to people in areas where there is less access.

*How do you provide access?*

By simply going there and conducting programmes, projects, workshops, the political café I gave the example before, it was a good one. We would like to do more, ideally, but also the government and the states to give importance, they have to give more importance and push the idea of penetrating this area. We were doing a number of projects, from cultural diplomacy projects to the constitutional reform process in Turkey. The constitutional reform process in Turkey is also very important in the Eastern part of Turkey who has less access to what the constitution is, they simply don't have the information. Some of the villages, some of the areas do not even have newspapers, no internet maybe; but if you do not have the culture to use the information, to look for information. A very critical issue in Turkey out of the constitutional reform is that we, as the ARI movement are going to Anatolia, the Eastern part of Turkey, to give information with booklets and to provide with information the people over there, try to help them to better understand what the constitutional reform is, what they should demand, what is missing for them, what they would want.

*Your foundation is also trying to promote freedom of thought and expression. How would you define the current situation of the freedom of expression in Turkey?*

It is not a surprise that Turkey is not a cradle of democracy, human rights or freedom of speech or expression. We have had major problems in this area and, to look the positive sights, they have had some significant improvements in terms of Human Rights and freedom of speech, but this is obviously far from the ideal state of being. Maybe ten years ago, fifteen years ago, some of the issues that we freely now discuss on television and on the press could not be discussed. Now you can talk about some of these issues, the Kurdish issue, women and children issues, we can talk about everything. At the same time, we still have a bad record in terms of freedom of speech and expression; we have a certain number of journalists now in jail, there is a problem in terms of the time that we keep these journalists in custody, because you have to understand that these people have not been charged nor officially prosecuted with a crime, they have been tried

as we speak, but they have been tried in prison and these are writers, journalists, and this, of course, is a shameful situation, and there is absolutely no excuse for it. The current government has had some reforms in this respect. As I said, ten years ago, if I have to make an objective comparison, Turkey is at a better state now than ten years ago when the current government started to rule. Again, there is no excuse for lacking so much behind in terms of the universal standards that you can see in Europe, in the USA. In a nutshell, we are far from the ideal state in terms of freedom of speech and expression.

*Thank you very much for speaking with us today.*

**Ankara Conference on Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution**  
**Lecture on Cultural Diplomacy**

Mark Donfried - Director and Founder of the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy

What is cultural Diplomacy?

Cultural diplomacy is a field which is rapidly developing. Many of you may be familiar with the classical forms of cultural diplomacy, such as the Alliance Française for France or the Goethe Institute for Germany or the British Council for Britain. For long time, cultural diplomacy was dominated by governments, by the public sector. For a long time it had the reputation of winning the hearts and minds of foreign audiences; how do we persuade others to like us; how do we attract others, how do we get a positive image of the United States or a positive image of Germany. In particular the Cold War period it was really the high point of this, when it was really one way of life kind of competing against the entire way of life and really cultural diplomacy, in many ways that we could argue, was propaganda, it was advertising. That is what we would classify at the institute as old school or classical cultural diplomacy. As we look at the conference title “Peace building and Conflict resolution” it is hard to imagine propaganda or persuasion in helping us on peace building or conflict resolution (i.e. If I am telling you how great I am, if I am just telling you about my strengths, that is not really good for building trust). At the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy we feel that relationships whereas between a man and a woman or two countries need three things in order to be sustainable: Dialogue, understanding and trust. And for us, that is the most important; if we want to do peace building, if we want conflict resolution, if we want to strengthen any kind of relationship, we need trust. It does not mean that we have to agree with each other, we can have different opinions, but we have to understand each other and we have to trust each other. That is why at the Institute we are always asking ourselves: if the goal is to build trust, how do we do it? Here we need to rethink the mechanisms, we need to rethink the strategies; maybe it is not enough just to tell people how great we are, to talk about our strengths, to talk about our successes. Maybe we should also talk about our weaknesses, maybe we should also talk about our failures; maybe we should also discuss difficult things: human rights, etc. things that very often were taboo. Usually, when we talk about cultural diplomacy is just the nice things that come out, like music or design or culture this and that which is wonderful and fully legitimate, but there is a real need for more.

(Continues with the agenda of the conference)

What can cultural diplomacy be? We really need strategies that fit to today’s interdependent world. For a long time countries’ end goal was fighting for independence. Once you were independent, you were free and that was the end of the history. We are quickly learning that it is the beginning of history; if you want to fight for your independence, great, go for it but as soon as you are independent, you realise that you are in an interdependent world and as much as you want to be free and do your own thing, you cannot. If you want to make any common progress when it comes to peace building, when it comes to climate change or poverty then you have the global challenges facing us, the only way you can make progress is together by collecting our strategies. In that context, cultural diplomacy also takes a very specific meaning. It is no longer just promoting my own goals or culture, but it is much more about humanity, much more about listening and speaking, much more about really building understanding and trust . I am just mentioning this to you in order to clarify that we are talking about cultural diplomacy, at the institute; we are thinking much more than just the classical forms. I think that we want

obviously to embrace those classic forms, use those mechanisms and those ways on the best way we can. Our ultimate goal, though, is really helping to educate, how can we enhance, how can we sustain relationships by educating, enhancing and sustaining relationships because if we come closer to relationships that do have sincere understanding and sincere trust. I think especially when talking about the Mediterranean region, here we are also in Turkey, I think Turkey has a special responsibility especially now since the Arab Spring, really the entire world is looking to Turkey, many countries also as a monitor in terms of how new democracies that are just emerging around the world whereas in Northern Africa or elsewhere, they are looking at why is it that Turkey is still successful, why is it that Turkey really has accomplished so much when it comes to peacekeeping, but also in terms of economics and beyond. I think in that sense, the whole of this conference here in Ankara, is also a special honour, especially right now, at this moment in history, when many eyes are looking to Turkey, so for many reasons, I am really honoured and grateful to have the chance to host this conference here in Ankara.

(Logistical information about the conference)

Arda Batu - Vice-chairman of ARI Movement, Turkey

Civil diplomacy is a key component of the NGO that I represent, ARI Movement, we are based in Istanbul and working for expanding the ideals of diplomacy and exporting the ideas of civil diplomacy in Turkey, a notion that we learn not only for Turkey but also for the neighbours in the region surrounding Turkey. We conduct a number of programs, we do programmes with the United States' State Department for ten years now; we are now focusing on the South-Caucasus, basically with Armenia and the Middle East and Europe. We are looking into three contexts of our diplomacy programme. It is a great diverse group and I am very excited to be here, in partnership with the ICD, and to host you (thanks to ICD and Yasar Yakis).

As an NGO representative I will be certainly keen on stressing the importance of the multi-track, pushing diplomacy at the civil level, at the cultural level, forging friendships and cultural links across cultures, so that when there is the right moment, when the international conjunction is right, the societies are also right, the leaders are also ready to move forward. This is a vision which we have when we are doing our diplomacy programs, for instance with Armenia: we are two states with a very tense dialogue between the leadership and politicians, so what we are doing is conducting programs between journalists, young academics, young politicians between the two countries, and when the international conjunction is right, the people of those two countries will have a better understanding of the other culture, a better understanding of the other system, etc. We are just waiting for the right moment in the countries that we are dealing with, Armenia was just an example. We are hoping to expand our diplomacy programs across the globe, hopefully with the help of ICD.

Anecdote Mark Donfried: *"I teach at the Humboldt University, and the professors there very often told me a story about Professor Einstein: when Einstein was teaching a graduate programme at Humboldt, he was giving a final exam to his graduates students. At this time there was much more formality in the class: students were wearing suits and ties. Professor Einstein distributed the exam and for the first five minutes there was silence, everyone was taking their exam. All of the sudden, something very shocking happened: in the middle of the exam, one of the students raised his hand and he had a question. He interrupted the exam; the professor saw the student, recognised him and asked him to raise his question. The student*

*stood up and asked: Professor Einstein, correct me if I am wrong, but I looked at the questions on this exam and there are the same questions as you asked last year in the exam. Did you make some mistake or is this the wrong exam? All the students started whispering: could it be that the great professor Einstein had made a mistake, by giving us the wrong exam? The professor, sitting on his chair, with a smile on his face, says: Yes, you are right. This year the questions are the same as last year; however, this year, the answers are different. Please continue taking the test.”*

**Yasar Yakis** - Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey

The Institute for Cultural Diplomacy (ICD) is an initiative for the future because Cultural Diplomacy is very important for the future, it is developing, it is a new concept and the units of it are not properly determined. A proper definition of cultural diplomacy is not yet made; there are several definitions on what cultural diplomacy consists of and we are trying to contribute to this evolution.

Turkey could be a very properly designated candidate as part of real cultural dialogue because Turkey is a mixture of cultures, Turkey is predominated by Muslim population but it is a secular country, located in Asia at the junction of Asia and Europe. In Istanbul, you cross from Asia to Europe five times a day across the Bosphorus and we are also close to Africa: it is the joining point of three continents. It is at the same time a Middle Eastern country, a European country (negotiating with the EU), a Mediterranean country, a Caucasus country, part of the Islamic organisation so with all these characteristics, Turkey is a country where cultural diplomacy has got more importance than in many other countries.

### **What is Cultural Diplomacy?**

There is no universal definition accepted for Cultural Diplomacy. It is good that we do not have a general definition for that, because, if we have a definition, we may fall captive of this definition and we may not be able to go beyond it. For this reason, we have time to develop a proper definition. In my several definitions of cultural diplomacy, I repeat a definition which fits better the purpose of today's topic "Cultural Diplomacy as a tool for building sustainable peace". Sustainable peace, you cannot reach only with cultural diplomacy. It means, firstly political willing of the leaders in different countries; secondly if major stakeholders have economic and commercial interest, then there are better chances for cultural diplomacy to contribute for the sustainable development. I have my own definition of cultural diplomacy, but today I will not use it. I will use the definition of an American political scientist and author, Milton C. Cummings "*the exchange of ideas, information, values, systems, traditions, beliefs, and other aspects of culture with the intention of fostering mutual understanding*". My own definition was "*an effort of better mutual understanding and eliminating differences on perceptions between nations or as a mean to support the foreign policies with activities in cultural areas*". The main idea of this definition is that cultural diplomacy, in this sense, differs from the exercise of exporting the values of a country by another country. In the golden times, this was the main purpose of cultural diplomacy: to try to export the values whereas now, the cultural diplomacy moved to another area: to create trust and to make an effort to understand the other countries' culture as well. Another goal of cultural diplomacy is that one country should not be presented as superior to the other culture or cultures in their merits. We have to

understand the good side of another culture before rejecting it. On the contrary, the actors of the exercise should regard the culture of the other side as valuable as their own culture.

There are two types of components of sustainable peace:

#### 1 – Components that contribute to the creation of sustainable peace

Political willingness, economic and commercial interdependence and the efforts to be made by cultural diplomacy: if there is no political willingness to solve conflicts, the other components will not have any proper effect. In dictatorial countries, political willingness is the decision of one person. In democratic regimes, the political willingness is not only expressed only by the leader or a small inner circle, the majority of the public opinion has to be persuaded. Despite the fact that it looks as a more difficult task, in practice it is not. It is easier to persuade many people to the need for peace rather than persuading one dictator. People are, by definition, in favour of peace. Nobody wants to send young people to be killed in wars. Sometimes you may see an exception to this rule, even in countries with transparent democracy like the United States. If the arms industry lobby becomes influential in the Congress, in the Pentagon, in the White House, they may change the course of events and persuade the US Administration to go to war, as we have seen in the case of the Iraqi war. However, the transparency in the American democracy allows the voters to make their choices in cognisance of this fact, in other words, they know beforehand that if they vote for a political party, this party will be more or less inclined to involve the USA in armed conflict. If they choose, they do it in cognisance of this fact.

I mention economic and commercial interdependence as a second component, even if it is sometimes even more important than the political willingness because when you are connected to your neighbours economically, you try more to preserve peace. Sometimes, the hostilities between third countries could boost jobs in the countries that have strong defence industry. It is even claimed that wars between countries are incited by countries that have strong defence industry, but we have to regard this as an exceptional case and also an effect of life. However, the main subject of our debate, here, is the interdependent economy. The third element, cultural diplomacy, could play a complementary role if the previous two components are present, otherwise cultural diplomacy cannot establish peace only by itself. This explanation should not give the impression that Cultural Diplomacy should be suspended if the previous components are not present. On the contrary, Cultural Diplomacy should continue to prepare the ground for when the circumstances will be appropriate. These were the components that contributed to the establishment of peace.

#### 2- Components that distinguish cultures of countries

There are two different types, one at the international level, and the other at national level. At international level, three components are important to distinguish nations from each other: race, language and belief. This may not apply to countries like USA or such as melting points of language, beliefs, etc. The general rule, in the nation states, is that we can distinguish countries on these three main components. As far as cultural diplomacy is concerned, these three components are subject to three different rules than the other components such as: culture, ideas, thought, administration, etc. When we come to race, race cannot be a subject of cultural diplomacy because you cannot change race, you cannot export it; however deleting a race or

defaming a race or praising a race, as compared to the other, are examples of wrong practices of cultural diplomacy. A second distinctive component of the culture was language. Exporting language to another country is regarded as a non harmful effort by both the recipient and exporting country because it is a vehicle for better understanding of culture of other countries; furthermore, it produces agents that facilitate the communication, interpretation. By learning a new language, for economic actors it will be easier to conduct their activity and to create better interdependence in the economic and commercial fields. The third distinctive component of culture was religion. In religion, missionary activities, as tools for propagating religion, are ambiguous issues in certain countries while it is tolerated in other countries. If a country does not allow missionary activities in its own territory, it should not criticise other countries for not allowing its own country to propagate its own religion there. If you allow other religions to be subject of missionary activities in your country, then you could do it in other countries; if you do not allow it in your own country, then you should not try to do it in other countries. These were three components that distinguished the culture of one country from the culture of another country. There are other components that distinguish the cultures of two countries, such as ideas, information, values, systems, traditions and beliefs. However, these components are not like the previous three components that deserved special care. These last components do not create any serious problems in the practice of cultural diplomacy.

The globalisation, in almost all fields, and the spectacular development in the field of telecommunications, made cultural diplomacy easier but also more important. Easier, because the contact with other cultures has become easier, people living in remote rural areas or in the islands have now easy access to the information regarding other parts of the world and easy contacts with people in other places. It is also more important because they are now more exposed to different cultures. Without using cultural diplomacy, or without engaging in dialogue, people that are exposed to other cultures may develop a distorted image about the culture that they do not understand properly. Cultural diplomacy will help them to understand the cultures of other countries better. The globalised world and the amazing development in the field of telecommunications offer extensive opportunities for cultural diplomacy and compile the actors in this field to adjust themselves to this big increase of the demand for cultural diplomacy. My observation will not be complete if I do not mention the need for dialogue, if not cultural diplomacy, at the domestic level. At the domestic level, we may not call it cultural diplomacy, because diplomacy deals with relations between countries, but you could also use diplomacy to gain the heart of your girlfriend. Diplomacy is a way of handling things. Despite the fact that cultural diplomacy has a connotation that it should take place between countries, sometimes it is also necessary to apply cultural diplomacy at a domestic level, between different cultures in one country. If sustainable peace has to be established, it has to be established both at international and domestic level. Therefore, the need for engaging in intercultural dialogue is valid both at national and international level. If countries cannot achieve this dialogue within their own territory, they should not make an effort to promote their culture in another countries; it will not be fair. Cultural and linguistic differences are sometimes a pretext to hide other interests. In countries like Belgium and Northern Ireland, they enjoy the same culture but there are still differences but it is not a subject of this meeting. I would like to conclude by saying that in light of the explanation that I gave, one should not exaggerate the importance of cultural diplomacy, but it should not be minimised neither. Cultural diplomacy is not a pill that cures all diseases, because not all hostilities stand from misunderstandings and misperceptions. There are other reasons for conflicts, where cultural diplomacy cannot do anything for it. Many conflicts

may persist despite the fact that the parties of a conflict understand each other and each other's culture to a great extent, but despite this, the conflict is still there. To conclude, cultural diplomacy is a must to achieve sustainable peace; however, if other components of sustainable peace (political willingness, economic interdependence) are not there, cultural dialogue alone will not be enough to secure sustainable peace. If other components are secured, then cultural diplomacy as a result of mutual understanding will definitely make peace more sustainable.