

THE POWER OF MUSIC IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS FROM HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES



TARİHSEL VE ÇAĞDAŞ AÇIDAN ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLERDE MÜZİĞİN GÜCÜ

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ABSTRACT: In international relations and cultural diplomacy, music has an important role in many interactions and contexts. It is recognised that music can be used effectively as a part of soft power to trigger people's emotional responses and build meaningful bonds, especially in diplomatic events and visits. This phenomenon has been observed in the historical process from past to present in terms of international relations. An example of this is that music was considered to be effective in bridging the gap between the Eastern Bloc and Western countries during the Cold War. The aim of this research is to investigate the use of music as soft power, the concepts of cultural diplomacy and musical diplomacy in detail, and to examine the role of music in historical and contemporary diplomatic strategies. In this context, it is concluded that music can be used as a diplomatic tool in international relations, it can help to strengthen cultural ties and increase mutual understanding, it has the potential to create bonds between different cultures and promote international cooperation by triggering people's intercultural interaction and expressing their identities. In line with the findings of the research, it is thought that it can help us better understand the role and impact of music in international relations and contribute to future diplomacy strategies by emphasising the importance of musical diplomacy in diplomatic relations.

Keywords: Cultural Diplomacy, International Relations, Music, Music Diplomacy, Soft Power

ÖZ: Uluslararası ilişkilerde ve kültürel diplomaside müzik birçok etkileşim ve bağlamda önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Müziğin tarihte özellikle diplomatik etkinliklerde ve ziyaretlerde insanların duygusal tepkilerini tetiklemek ve anlamlı bağlar kurmak amacıyla yumuşak gücün bir parçası olarak etkili bir şekilde kullanılabileceği kabul edilmektedir. Bu olgu, uluslararası bağlamda ve tarihsel süreç içerisinde geçmişten günümüze gözlemlenebilmektedir. Soğuk savaş döneminde müziğin Doğu Bloku ile Batılı ülkeler arasında köprü kurmada etkili olduğu düşünülmektedir. Bu araştırmanın amacı müziğin yumuşak güç olarak kullanımını, kültürel diplomasi ve müzikal diplomasi kavramlarını detaylı bir şekilde incelemek, müziğin tarihsel ve çağdaş diplomatik stratejilerdeki rolünü incelemektir. Bu bağlamda müziğin uluslararası ilişkilerde diplomatik bir araç olarak kullanılabileceği, kültürel bağların güçlendirilmesine ve karşılıklı anlayışın artırılmasına yardımcı olabileceği, insanların kültürlerarası etkileşimini tetikleyip kimliklerini ifade ederek farklı kültürler arasında bağ kurma ve uluslararası işbirliğini

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teşvik etme potansiyeline sahip olduğu sonucuna varılmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, bu araştırmanın uluslararası ilişkilerde müziğin rolünü ve etkisini daha derinlemesine anlamaya katkı sağlayabileceği; ayrıca müzikal diplomasinin diplomatik ilişkilerdeki önemini ortaya koyarak gelecekteki diplomasi stratejilerine yön verebileceği değerlendirilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültürel Diplomasi, Müzik Diplomasisi, Müzik, Uluslararası İlişkiler, Yumuşak Güç

Introduction

International relations are a broad concept that focuses on effective communication between countries. In modern usage, it is not limited to relations between states, but also includes relations between different constitutions in the context of religious, humanitarian organisations and private companies (Lawson, 2023). Since the interaction between societies is at the forefront in these relations, international relations should be addressed with a broad perspective covering many disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, geography, history and art (Kaşıkçı, 2019). International relations can be established through different elements such as political, economic, religious, social and cultural ties (Lebow, 2008). In light of these diverse elements, states adopt various strategies to strengthen their international presence and promote their interests across multiple domains.

One of the most significant strategies employed by countries is public diplomacy, which serves as a crucial component of cultural diplomacy. Through public diplomacy efforts, countries aim not only to benefit politically or economically but also to enhance their international image and foster deeper connections with global audiences (Saliu, 2017).

Although not explicitly stated as an assumption, it is clear that culture determines our identity and that the concept of culture now embodies or simply represents the idea of difference (Reeves, 2004). For this reason, many scholars argue that culture should receive more attention in international relations (Daniel & Musgrave, 2017). However, the lack of a coherent public-private and inter-institutional strategy for cultural exchange and cultural diplomacy is indicative of the fact that arts, culture and media are often overlooked by policymakers and the philanthropic community, limiting the potential of existing programmes (Schneider, 2009).

Cultural diplomacy refers to a policy area in which states aim to mobilise their cultural resources to achieve their foreign policy objectives (URL-1). Art is one of the easiest cultural products to define. As a physical cultural product, the fact that art is produced, discussed and exchanged makes it easy to observe. Works of art can be experienced through many senses such as sight, hearing, touch and even taste (Oscarson, 2009). For this reason, throughout history, art forms have not been limited to the societies in which they were initially created, but have reached a broader audience.

Among the branches of art, music has an important role in intercultural communication and stands out in terms of its power of expression (Türkmen, 2012). Like a good play, a great art exhibition or an exciting sporting event, music has a mass appeal with its ability to drag listeners into various emotional states (Statler, 2012).

Diplomats came together for musical events, music players performed as national representatives, and music was used as a component of ceremonies and strategies (Ramel & Prevost-Thomas, 2018). Although this type of diplomacy usually arises from state-sponsored events, great diplomatic successes have been achieved through music (Fosler-Lussier, 2015). In 2004, after a concert given by Daniel Barenboim in Ramallah, a Palestinian girl said, 'I am very happy that you are here, because you are the first thing from Israel that is neither a soldier nor a tank', symbolising the rupture, showing that opposing representations can change through music (Ramel & Jung, 2018).

Music stimulates human behaviour and is inevitably present in different cultural contexts. Our social and cultural backgrounds shape the way we interpret, experience and respond to music (Macdonald et al., 2012). In international relations, music is used as soft power to promote respect, cooperation and mutual understanding (Demir, 2017). Especially popular music is recognised as a powerful factor in international relations and plays a prominent role in the international soft power competition (Marc, 2020). In recent years, music's usage as a tool in international relations has been increasing. Despite this fact, cultural diplomacy, especially music diplomacy, has received limited attention in the fields of Political Science and International Relations due to mainstream cultural approaches based on realist and liberal theories (De Souza, 2023). In this study, the function of music in international and diplomatic relations is analysed in detail within the framework of the concepts of soft power, cultural diplomacy and music diplomacy. In this direction, we discuss the diplomatic role of music from historical and contemporary perspectives and analyse its impact on international relations in depth. In addition, we study how different music genres are used in the context of international relations.

The Role of Music as a Soft Power

In the 21st century, the concept of soft power has become one of the most significant determining factors of foreign policy. It is the ability of a state to emotionally connect to the values, beliefs, culture and bureaucratic system of another state (Saeed & Askari, 2021). A quarter of a century ago, when Joseph Nye (Nye, 1990) coined the term of soft power in international relations, there was a huge backlash and the term sparked much debate. Although the concept is quite widespread in public opinion, it is not sufficiently theoretically grounded and is often used intuitively. Joseph Nye first used it in 1990 in his book 'Leading: The Changing Nature of American Power' in 1990. Nye explains the term as 'the ability to get what you want

not through coercion or payment, but through attraction' (Nye, 2004). Nye argues that a country can achieve its desired results in international politics through other countries holding its values in high regard, emulating the example of it or trying to reach its status (Lovric, 2016).

Soft power is a persuasive power based on the attraction of culture, values and a good representation of a country, which is not military or economic in nature (Kunkunrat, 2024). The concept of culture as soft power in international relations is a kind of intellectual power and a significant constituent of a state's national power. At the same time, culture as soft power is closely related to politics, economy and military system. A country's cultural reputation and its ability to set norms, rules and regimes to administer its international actions represent the main sources of its power (Haneş & Andrei, 2015). In general, cultural diplomacy, by guiding or shaping foreign strategy, helps to build inter-communal relations and thus to achieve favourable conditions on the global stage (Khosravishakib, 2017). The growing interest in cultural diplomacy is related to the utility of cultural instruments to support diplomatic objectives. This interest recognises the possible power of culture to intervene in mostly tense political spaces and the lack of success of traditional diplomacy alone to accomplish its goals (Shannon, 2024).

For example, the Beatles, once labelled a 'secret weapon' by the British Prime Minister, were awarded an MBE (a distinguished medal awarded by the Queen for contributions to the arts and sciences) for 'services to export' (Smith, 2003). This was linked to the 'British invasion' in the 1960s, which refers to the phenomenon of British musicians and popular music gaining enormous popularity in the United States (Nisbett, 2016).

The 1950s was a period in which Turkey-US relations developed in different areas. Along with hard power means such as NATO membership, the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Aid, relations between the two states also benefitted from soft power elements. In this process, jazz music became one of the soft power instruments used by the US in public diplomacy to export its cultural values (Doe, 2010). In this context, musicians became key actors of cultural diplomacy thanks to their music and songs, and created a new and distinct 20th century (Çağlı, 2024). Research has also shown that jazz has played a considerable role not only in the foreign policy of the United States but also in the understanding of the State Socialist countries of Eastern Europe (Ritter, 2019).

Diplomatic Role of Music from Past to Present

Throughout history, states have made use of sports and music to convey messages, promote their political, social and cultural values, and especially to send diplomatic messages (Haydari, 2019). Music has also been an element of communication in all areas of human interaction, such as peace and war. Although not possessing a straightforward influence on decision-making or leadership, music has indirect effects in international

relations (Jansen, 2015; Diamond, 2010). Music is a tool for non-verbal communication through musicians and composers who are unofficial representatives of various administrations. Its aesthetic value creates a universal language beyond politics, helping to create a common ground of civility and civilised interaction. The thing that diplomacy and music have in common is their ability of expressing the meanings of war and peace (Hinde, 1972; Ramel & Prevost-Thomas, 2018).

Throughout history, leaders have used music as a tool in diplomatic relations (Toker & Erbay, 2018). For example, it is known that Queen Elizabeth I of England presented an organ decorated with gold jewels to Sultan Mehmed III of the Ottoman Empire (Wood, 2022). This gesture laid the foundation of British-Ottoman music-historical relations and laid the foundation for a relationship with a long history (Shawa, 2024). Similar interactions continued with the modernisation process of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century (Kutlay, 2019). It is known that the last Seljuk ruler, Gıyaseddin Mesud II, gave Osman Bey various musical instruments as symbols of sovereignty. These symbols were accepted as an expression of the sovereignty of Turkish rulers and continued to be used in Turkish states after the adoption of Islam (Sayers & Tahsin, 2016). Apart from the Ottoman Empire and the United Kingdom, different countries gifted musical instruments to each other throughout the history. During the Harris Treaty (1856), King Mongkut of Thailand presented the United States of America with six musical instruments, including a pair of long drums, wooden drums, oboes, gongs, and karen drums (Taylor & Smith, 2017). In the context of the musical diplomacy of international relations, countries did not only gift musical instruments to each other. Musical manuscripts also served an important diplomatic function as gifts until the 16th century (Eichner, 2020).

From the 17th century to the end of the 19th century, European states used the arts effectively with regard to international relations. European countries directed foreign delegations to watch spectacular theatre and opera performances in order to improve international relations. While this practice showed diplomatic courtesy and respect, it was also done to impose European sovereignty on the other side (Aydemir, 2023). For example, for British ambassadors in Venice, attending Italian musical events was an essential part of their diplomatic mission. Likewise, Italian politicians utilised their rich local tradition of sacred music in order to influence, mobilise or threaten distinguished visitors from foreign countries (Mailles, 2022). Opera became a central area of diplomatic activity during this period. Opera not only demonstrates the importance of music as a diplomatic tool, but also indicates how music and theatre interact with politics and culture (Everist, 2021).

Organised in 1932 in Cairo, the Congress of Arabic Music was an important milestone in international relations and world music history. Musicians and academics from Europe and the Near East attended this

congress, thus creating a platform for the exchange of various philosophical and musicological views (Racy, 1991). Musicology has been of strategic importance for expanding the imperial ambitions of countries in the region. Therefore, it seems surprising that Spain, with a relatively small presence in the region, participated with only one delegate, despite its growing imperial ambitions. Spain's participation in the Congress marks a significant change in the dynamics of North African politics. The musicological discourse clearly demonstrates the impact of non-interventionism, not only in the dimension of challenging Arab music, but also by reducing or even weakening the racial understanding of Europeans (Liano, 2023).

Senegal, another colonial country, organised the World Negro Arts Festival in 1966 to celebrate its independence from France and to promote better understanding between 'continents, races and cultures'. With the participation of forty-five countries, this festival centred on music in pursuit of diplomatic objectives. Music not only helped Africans rediscover their pre-colonial heritage. It also promoted intercultural dialogue and cultural development that supported liberation from the colonial past (Grincheva, 2024).

At the end of the 1960s, East Germany took various initiatives to improve its diplomatic relations with Egypt, Syria and Lebanon. Accordingly, it accelerated this process by organising state-sponsored concert tours in the region through well-known ensembles such as the Dresdner Philharmonie (Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra), Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Leipzig (Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra), Gewandhausorchester Leipzig (Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra) and Deutsche Staatsoper (German State Opera) (Kelly, 2019). During the Cold War, music provided an important international platform for the German Democratic Republic. As the state was diplomatically unrecognised by many Western countries until the early 1970s, it relied on artists to shape its international image and allocated a significant budget for this purpose (Müller, 2010). It is also noted that rock and roll music in the 1960s and 70s had a significant and empowering influence in Eastern Europe. This music is argued to be working best when it is free from governmental overtones, in the strength of its honesty, effective means of distribution and the freedom it reflects (Kounalakis & Simonyi, 2011).

It is the universality and adaptability of the Kodaly method that has made its wide appeal as a globally recognised music teaching method and the success of its application to be widespread from Japan to Canada. The flexibility of the Kodaly concept and the creativity of its practitioners made the international promotion of the method far above the practice of disseminating cultural propaganda in the service of 'Hungary that is building a living and existing socialism', as the communist authorities wished for. The Kodaly method was neither a product of the communist regime nor a plot of the Cold War, so it survived both, thanks to its complex history and cultural potential (Laszlo, 2019).

Scholars argue that hip-hop serves as a cultural ambassador for the US, creating sympathy in Middle Eastern youth towards American culture mediated by a musical form identified with a minority group struggling for liberation and civil rights (El-Khairi, 2009). It is also noted that young people in the Middle East are more inclined to identify with music of African American origin, which makes it ironical that the music related to resistance is used to extend America's role as an 'empire' (Khatib & Dodds, 2009). Glusac (2016) has argued that while hip-hop diplomacy appears to be a clever 'new version' of the US cultural diplomacy strategy, it carries the same systemic contradiction as the jazz diplomacy of the Cold War era.

The Role of Music in Diplomacy and Cultural Interactions

Terms such as 'musical diplomacy', 'cultural diplomacy' and 'music and international relations' are just some of the categories that scholars have used to examine the political uses of music that transcend nation-state borders. These concepts provide a framework for analysing the performances of music in its political contexts (Pestel, 2021). Of these concepts, cultural diplomacy remains to attract great interest as a promising way for states to put 'soft power' to use. However, decision-makers and scholars, who argue for the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy in terms of impressing foreign societies and states, seldom recognize how cultural commodities are really received abroad (Shannon, 2024).

In January 1965, the University of Michigan Jazz Band travelled widely in Latin America as part of the State Department's Cultural Presentations Programme. This event can be seen as an example of the extensive impacts of cultural diplomacy. Initially, the State Department planned such cultural and illuminating programmes as a one-sided connection tool, taking concepts from the US to new parts of the world. However, the tours transformed not only the viewers, but also the performers themselves and even the communities to which they went back (Fosler-Lussier, 2010). This can be taken as evidence that music can change intercultural interaction not only in one direction but also in two directions.

The U.S. Air Force Band is committed to helping establish a bond between the United States and the world community through world-class musical presentations and ceremonies. Using music to build bridges between language, culture, community, and socio-economic differences, the Band's concerts enhance worldwide relations and stimulate good and continuous ideas about the US Air Force and the United States (Sartain, 2015).

The Eurovision Song Contest, celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2005, is the biggest and most viewed international celebration of popular music and one of the annual television programmes that has been broadcasted for a long time in the world. Launched in 1956 by the European Broadcasting Union as a live show to unite post-war Western Europe with the help of music, the contest allows participating countries to enter new and original

pop songs (Raykoff & Tobin, 2007). Since its start in 1956, the Eurovision Song Contest has always reflected cultural, economic, social and technological developments as well as political changes in post-war Europe (Vuletic, 2018). The Eurovision Song Contest is not only the biggest song competition around the world, but also possibly the world's biggest voting for a non-political position (Stockemer et al., 2017).

The complexity and ambiguity of the relationship between Spain and Morocco is reflected in the Festival des Andalouses Atlantiques d'Essaouira (Essaouira Atlantic Andalusian Festival), which celebrates cultural elements such as Andalusian music and flamenco through collaboration and performance. It is not only a musical event, but also a means for cultural diplomacy between Spain and Morocco. The festival allows Morocco and Spain to explore their common cultural heritage on the basis of an idealised past and allows artists to redefine notions of identity and authenticity (MacNeil, 2021).

The Eurovision Song Contest was first established in 1956 for the countries of Western Europe and has grown to become one of the world's largest popular music events and one of Europe's leading television programmes. Organised annually by the European Broadcasting Union, it now includes the participation of public broadcasters from almost all European countries (Vuletic, 2018b). Turkey first participated in the Eurovision Song Contest in 1975 (İzmir, 2023). In the 1970s and 1980s, the competition was considered as significant as a national team match or the games of Turkish football teams taking part in the European league, and was followed with excitement and enthusiasm as if it were a 'national issue' (Bekcan & Hançarlı, 2021). However, after the last participation in 2012, the Turkish Government decided not to participate in the competition. In the statement made by the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), reasons such as the voting system being unfair, being heavily dependent on political influences and emphasising certain music styles were cited for not participating in the contest (URL-3).

Since Kim Jong-un came to power, the North Korean state has embarked on an accelerated process of internationalisation (URL-2). One of the key elements in this process is a cultural diplomacy programme, which can be considered quite strong given North Korea's isolated nature. Performing arts are at the centre of these cultural exchanges and events. In 2012, the North Korean Symphony Orchestra travelled to France and North Korea's large-scale 'Sea of Blood' opera troupe toured across China (Cathcart & Denney, 2013). In the same period, a new pop music group called the Moranbong Band, supported by the North Korean regime, was used to influence Western observers on North Korea's 'opening up' policy (Moody, 2019). These initiatives show that North Korea uses music as a means to contribute to its diplomatic and strategic goals.

Conclusion and Discussion

Culture is at the centre of human development and civilisation. Art, literature and music have been elements that united nations long before countries developed economic or commercial ties (Dorbayani, 2021). Cultural events, especially those related to music, generally have the opportunity to showcase the best characteristics of a nation. Indoor and outdoor music festivals, music competitions, musical exchanges, academic music collaborations, educational music programmes, music exhibitions, music fairs, music concerts, music conferences and music symposia all take place on a national or international level (Lianu, 2016). Culture is very significant in social theory construction, as the metaphysical constituent of the theoretical core is mainly created by the background information of a cultural society (Qin, 2016). Music as a cultural and social phenomenon supports intercultural connection by stimulating the desire to learn and establishing a social atmosphere (Parncutt & Dorfer, 2011). Moreover, as a social activity embedded in the socio-political context, music can achieve diplomatic purposes such as representation and communication, as it is filled with symbolic meanings interpreted by the receiving society (Pundziute, 2018).

Academic analyses of international connections show almost no interest in music, ignoring its power in communication (Bleiker, 2005). In contrast, both the political actions for change by pop musicians and the debate of popular culture in international connections have increased in recent years (Franke & Schiltz, 2013). Moreover, the importance of music for international relations scholars has been a secondary research topic that has only received special attention in recent years (Potter, 2020).

From the anti-war message of Joseph Haydn's *Missa in Tempore Belli* to the extraordinary musical artistry that emerged in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the horrifying realities of warfare and the quest for peace have motivated composers over the centuries (Bleiker, 2005). As a reason or consequence of political progresses, music functions as a mirror that reflects beliefs about politics. In this context, music can be considered as an influential element, which forms norms, values and identities (Hawn, 2013).

In his study, Kakegawa (2024) stated that instrumental music, with its emotional and metaphysical dimensions of human experience, offers an innovative method of transforming diplomatic interactions and increasing intercultural understanding. He also stated that by creating a common sharing space through music, increasing mutual understanding by crossing the boundaries of non-verbal communication can contribute to international development. In a similar study, Williams (2020) stated that cultural diplomacy is a well-understood aspect of international relations, but the role of music in geopolitics has not been examined in sufficient detail in this field. He also added that music is not considered in the same field within the scope

of international relations, and that the relations between global political events and music can be a field for analysis when viewed through the lens of cultural diplomacy.

Bolet (1948), in his article evaluating music as a diplomatic tool, stated that the United States at the time could not fully utilise its capabilities and resources to compete with other countries in terms of disseminating their culture and music. He also gave the example of Canada conducting music programmes in Latin America in order to maintain international relations. This situation shows that there were academicians who considered music as a diplomatic tool and evaluated it in this context in 1948. As another example, Mishra (2022) stated that music could be used as soft power in cultural diplomacy between two opposing states, India and Pakistan. Mishra (2022) stated that connecting people through art and cultural exchanges could provide an alternative to the hegemonic and hostile discourses of the two governments. In another study, Shaikh et al., (2022) emphasised that music diplomacy should not be neglected as it contributes to the maintenance of friendship between Pakistan and India.

The conception that music is more likely to promote union among cultural communities in some cases than in others is supported in the wider literature (Crooke et al., 2024). While music provides opportunities for misunderstandings, condescension and other out-of-character communication, it also provides opportunities to build rapport and redefine roles adopted in negotiations (Mahiet, 2018). Due to the construction of harmony as a positive and well-organised power, we can conclude that music can be a tool to help produce good results on a universal scale (Ferraguto & Mahiet 2014). In addition, based on the data obtained from the literature review conducted in this research, we can determine that the diplomatic power of music is realised through phenomena such as composers, music forms, works, music events and instruments.

Recommendations

In light of the results and discussions, several recommendations for future research and practice can be offered:

- The role of music in diplomatic contexts can be systematically investigated, especially in regions where cultural diplomacy has not been extensively studied.
- It is considered important for policymakers and cultural institutions to include music-focused initiatives in official diplomatic strategies to strengthen people-to-people connections.
- It is thought that it would be useful to adapt music as a soft power according to the cultural, historical and political characteristics of target societies to avoid misunderstandings and ensure real interaction.

- Future studies can examine detailed case studies of successful and unsuccessful music diplomacy initiatives to derive best practices and theoretical models.
- Encouraging collaborative music projects involving artists from different backgrounds can serve as practical models of intercultural dialogue and mutual respect.

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