



The Analysis of the Importance of Cultural Diplomacy in International Politics and Foreign Policy

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Abstract

This study analyzes the role of cultural diplomacy in international politics and foreign policy within the framework of constructivist theory, taking into account the growing significance of soft power in the contemporary international system. The primary objective is to reveal how cultural diplomacy influences international relations through norm diffusion, identity construction, and the enhancement of soft power capacity. The original theoretical contribution of the research lies in the integration of constructivist theory with the soft power approach and the modeling of the synergistic interaction among these three mechanisms. Utilizing systematic literature review and qualitative content analysis methods, the research examines the multi-actor structure of cultural diplomacy, its interaction with digital transformation, and its economic dimensions. The findings indicate that cultural diplomacy plays a critical role not only in bilateral relations but also in global governance. Norm diffusion facilitates the transmission of universal values across different cultural contexts, while identity construction helps soften the "us versus them" dichotomy and promotes shared identity elements. The enhancement of soft power capacity increases a state's international prestige through cultural appeal. However, the potential hegemonic dimensions and limitations of cultural diplomacy have also been evaluated from a critical perspective. Ultimately, cultural diplomacy emerges as a strategic diplomatic instrument in the 21st century.

Keywords:

Cultural diplomacy, constructivist theory, soft power, social identity, international cooperation.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, characterized by the acceleration of globalization processes and the proliferation of interactions among international actors, innovative diplomatic approaches predicated upon soft power instruments have assumed increasingly significant importance alongside traditional diplomatic methodologies. Within this context, cultural diplomacy has ascended to a critical position as a transformative force in international relations and has emerged as one of the fundamental instruments to which states resort in the realization of their foreign policy objectives (Nye, 2004; Gienow-Hecht, 2010: 3-10). Cultural diplomacy, in its broadest definition, constitutes the process through which a state shares its cultural resources and values with other societies to establish an environment of mutual understanding, trust, and cooperation (Cull, 2019; Mitchell, 1986). The complex structure of the contemporary international system and its multi-layered actor networks render it imperative for states to develop strategies predicated not solely upon their military and economic power, but also upon their cultural attractiveness and value systems.

The fundamental research question of this study is as follows: Through which mechanisms does cultural diplomacy exert influence in international politics and foreign policy processes? This question assumes critical significance with respect to the redefinition of the traditional concept of power in contemporary international relations and the systematic analysis of soft power elements. Particularly in the present era, wherein digitalization processes have fundamentally transformed diplomacy, the systematic examination of the determinative role of cultural values and symbolic power elements in international political equilibria has become imperative both for contributing to the theoretical body of knowledge and for providing guidance to practical policy development processes. This research question also aims to contribute to the methodological debates concerning the measurability and effectiveness evaluation of cultural diplomacy.

Studies conducted in the field of cultural diplomacy within the literature generally remain at the level of case studies and descriptive analyses, failing to adequately address this instrument's structural effects within the international system and its systematic operational mechanisms within a theoretical framework. For instance, while country-specific studies such as American cultural diplomacy (Graham, 2015; Saunders, 1999), China's Confucius Institutes, and Japan's Cool Japan strategy are prevalent, these studies generally lack a comparative and systematic theoretical framework. The most significant deficiency of the existing literature lies in the fact that the systematic effects of cultural diplomacy not only at the level of bilateral relations but also in multilateral diplomacy and global governance processes have not been comprehensively examined within the framework of constructivist international relations theory. This gap constitutes a serious deficiency, particularly with regard to understanding the role of cultural factors in norm diffusion, identity construction, and international institutionalization processes.

The principal hypothesis of this study is as follows: Cultural diplomacy systematically exerts influence in international politics and foreign policy processes through the mechanisms of norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power capacity enhancement. This hypothesis has been formulated on the basis of the constructivist theory's emphasis on social construction processes (Wendt, 1999) and the increasing influence of the soft power concept in contemporary diplomacy (Shore, 2000). In particular, the theoretical proposition that cultural diplomacy systematically influences states' identity construction processes, interest definitions, and pursuit of international legitimacy occupies a central position in this study's theoretical framework. The testing of this hypothesis carries the potential to demonstrate that cultural diplomacy assumes not merely an instrumental but also a constitutive function (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 887-917).

The theoretical foundation of this research is constructed upon Alexander Wendt's social constructivism theory (Wendt, 1999), and this theoretical framework provides the most appropriate analytical instruments for comprehending the operational mechanisms of cultural

diplomacy in international relations. The social constructivist approach, by arguing that states' behaviors are shaped not solely by their material interests but also by their identities, norms, and value systems, furnishes the requisite conceptual framework for understanding the operational dynamics of cultural diplomacy. Wendt's thesis that "anarchy is what states make of it" (Wendt, 1992: 391-425) provides a fundamental point of departure for understanding how cultural interactions can transform the structure of the international system. This theoretical perspective possesses the capacity to elucidate how cultural interactions engender structural transformations at the international system level and the critical role that cultural diplomacy plays in states' processes of constructing social reality.

From a methodological standpoint, this study adopts a qualitative research approach, employing systematic literature review and content analysis techniques. The systematic literature review was conducted within the framework of protocols proposed by Lame (2019), with specific inclusion and exclusion criteria applied in source selection. This methodological choice enables the development of in-depth understanding and the revelation of conceptual connections, in accordance with the complex and multidimensional nature of the cultural diplomacy phenomenon. In this research, an interpretive paradigm grounded in constructivist epistemology was adopted, with a focus on the systematic understanding of the social meanings of cultural interactions. The data collection process was conducted through the systematic analysis of secondary sources pertaining to academic literature, policy documents, and diplomatic practices, with particular attention to successful and unsuccessful examples of cultural diplomacy applications to test the empirical validity of the conceptual framework.

The societal and scientific significance of this research derives from the increasing influence of cultural factors in contemporary international relations and the necessity of redefining the traditional concept of power. In the post-Westphalian system, the cultural dimensions of the sovereignty concept have become more pronounced, and the strategic value of cultural capital in interstate relations has increased. The proliferation of the hybrid warfare concept, the global-scale impact of disinformation campaigns, and the intensification of cultural hegemony struggles on digital platforms have also brought the security dimensions of cultural diplomacy to the fore (Seib, 2012; Castells, 2009). Furthermore, the critical importance of intercultural cooperation and the construction of shared value systems in the resolution of global problems such as climate change, migration, and pandemics—through which less developed countries and nations are increasingly threatened—further strengthens the strategic position of cultural diplomacy in the contemporary international agenda. In this context, cultural diplomacy transcends being merely an image management instrument for states and becomes one of the fundamental components of multilateral cooperation mechanisms directed toward the resolution of global problems (Singh, 2010).

When evaluated from an interdisciplinary perspective, this study encompasses significant intersections with the fields of sociology, anthropology, communication sciences, and cultural studies. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, Appadurai's theory of global cultural flows, and Habermas's communicative action approach constitute the theoretical foundations of this interdisciplinary framework (Appadurai, 1996; Habermas, 1984). The societal effects of cultural diplomacy practices, their contributions to identity construction processes, and their position within media ecologies demonstrate the necessity of this interdisciplinary approach. Particularly in the digital age, the understanding of cultural content production, circulation, and consumption processes within the framework of international relations theory carries critical importance for the expansion of the traditional understanding of diplomacy.

The target audience of this research encompasses international relations academics, foreign policy analysts, public diplomacy practitioners, cultural policy experts, and decision-makers in diplomatic institutions. The findings of this study will provide original contributions to the theoretical literature while also offering practical guidance on the design, implementation, and

evaluation of cultural diplomacy strategies. In particular, the development of policy recommendations regarding the strengthening of developing countries' cultural diplomacy capacities and their more effective positioning in global cultural flows is planned. Within this framework, the evaluation of Turkey's cultural diplomacy experiences is also among the practical outputs of this study (Yağmurlu, 2007: 10-34; Güven & Arslan, 2020).

In terms of contemporaneity, this research contributes to the understanding of contemporary developments such as the increased digital cultural interactions following the COVID-19 pandemic, changes in global power balances, and the integration problems of multicultural societies. Particularly, the intensification of the use of social media platforms as instruments of cultural diplomacy and the diplomatic potential of virtual cultural events necessitate the reconsideration of traditional diplomacy paradigms (Albayrak, 2023: 495-505; Koçyiğit et al., 2024: 709-722). In this context, the findings of this study also offer valuable insights for understanding and resolving contemporary security problems.

The conceptual contribution of this research lies in its conceptualization of cultural diplomacy not merely as an instrument of interstate relations but also as a driving force of global social change and norm transformation. This approach bridges structural and actor-level analyses in international relations theory, conceptually framing the systematic effects of cultural factors. The study emphasizes the multi-actor nature of cultural diplomacy, systematically examining the roles of non-state actors, civil society organizations, and individual cultural actors in this process, and particularly analyzes the horizontal interaction models of cultural diplomacy within the framework of the network society paradigm (van Dijk, 2016). This multi-actor perspective transcends the traditional state-centric understanding of diplomacy, also bringing to the agenda the democratization potential of cultural diplomacy.

In conclusion, this introduction section establishes a robust conceptual and methodological foundation for the systematic analysis of the importance of cultural diplomacy in international politics and foreign policy. This research aims to fill the gaps in the existing literature by presenting an original approach that integrates the theoretical and practical dimensions of cultural diplomacy. The most significant claim of this study is that cultural diplomacy constitutes not merely a soft power instrument in international relations but also a systematic factor that plays an active role in the construction and transformation of social reality, and that it realizes this influence through the mechanisms of norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power capacity enhancement. This fundamental claim will be systematically supported in the following sections through the literature review, theoretical framework, and findings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The cultural diplomacy literature constitutes a multidimensional and rapidly evolving research domain that reflects the paradigm shift within the discipline of international relations in the twenty-first century. Although the academic foundations of this field were established from the 1960s onward with Joseph Nye's conceptualization of soft power (Nye, 2004; Melissen, 2005), systematic literature accumulation gained particular momentum in the post-Cold War period. Nye's original soft power formulation was constructed upon three fundamental sources—culture, political values, and foreign policy—with cultural diplomacy positioned as a central instrument in the operationalization of these sources (Schneider, 2005: 148-164). Cultural diplomacy constitutes the process through which states strategically employ cultural resources to enhance their soft power capacities and possesses a multi-layered structure encompassing interactions between state and non-state actors, transcending the traditional understanding of diplomacy.

When examined within this context, the fundamental theoretical approaches most frequently cited in the literature include Nye's soft power theory, Melissen's new public diplomacy conceptualization, and Wendt's social constructivist approach. These three theoretical approaches

address cultural diplomacy at different analytical planes—respectively as a strategic instrument, a communicative process, and a social construction mechanism. These theoretical foundations demonstrate that cultural diplomacy plays a critical role not merely in information transfer but also in identity construction and norm diffusion processes. While soft power theory emphasizes the capacity to influence through attraction and persuasion rather than military and economic coercion, the social constructivist approach elucidates how identities, norms, and values are socially constructed through cultural interactions. Finnemore and Sikkink's norm life cycle model, in this context, provides a critical analytical framework for understanding the role of cultural diplomacy in the stages of norm emergence, norm cascade, and norm internalization (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 887-917).

The fundamental theoretical and empirical debates in the literature are shaped around the effectiveness criteria of cultural diplomacy, the fine line between authenticity and manipulation, and the coordination problems of the multi-actor structure. Particularly, comprehensive academic debates exist concerning how the distinction between cultural diplomacy and propaganda should be delineated (Graham, 2015; Saunders, 1999; Rawnsley, 2021). The principle of mutuality emphasized in Mitchell's (1986) classical study emerges as the fundamental criterion for this distinction; while propaganda involves unidirectional message transmission, cultural diplomacy is defined as a dialogic process oriented toward developing mutual understanding. In these debates, normative principles such as the principle of mutuality, the preservation of cultural diversity, and the adoption of non-hegemonic approaches come to the fore.

When dominant approaches are examined, liberal institutionalist (Shirazi, 2023) and constructivist (Kaya, 2008: 84-106) perspectives predominate in the literature, while critical theory (Odabaş, 2018) and post-colonial (Chibber, 2016) approaches present opposing views. While liberal institutionalism evaluates cultural diplomacy as an instrument that facilitates interstate cooperation and reduces conflict potential (Keohane & Nye, 2011), critical approaches argue that it reproduces hegemonic power relations (Said, 1978; Gramsci, 1992). Post-colonial theorists, moreover, contend that cultural diplomacy functions as part of the process of universalizing Western values (Scott, 2019; Wang, 2018: 650-653; Clarke, 2020; Avşar & Koyuncu, 2022). This theoretical pluralism demonstrates how cultural diplomacy can be interpreted in different ways from different power dynamics and ideological perspectives, revealing that the normative dimensions of the field require continuous questioning.

When the temporal evolution of the literature is examined, three fundamental periods can be observed from the 1990s to the 2020s. The first period, the 1990s, constitutes the era in which cultural diplomacy was rediscovered following the Cold War (Bound et al., 2007). In this period, with the end of ideological polarization, the occurrence of cultural interactions in a freer environment and the acceleration of globalization processes imparted new momentum to cultural diplomacy. The second period, the 2000s, constitutes the era in which public diplomacy gained importance following the September 11 attacks and the security dimension of cultural diplomacy was emphasized (Gilboa, 2008: 55-71; Erzen, 2012). In this period, particularly within the framework of the United States' "winning hearts and minds" strategy, cultural diplomacy became an integral part of national security policies (Cull, 2019). The third period, the 2010s and beyond, constitutes the era in which cultural diplomacy democratized and became multi-actor under the influence of digital technologies (Koçyiğit et al., 2024: 709-722). With the rise of the network society paradigm (van Dijk, 2016), cultural diplomacy has evolved from being solely the monopoly of states into a polycentric structure in which civil society, diaspora communities, and individual actors also play active roles.

Among the fundamental concepts defined in different ways within this field are cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, soft power, and cultural policy. While the concept of cultural diplomacy is treated by some authors as a sub-branch of public diplomacy (Snow & Taylor, 2009), it is conceptualized by others as a broader process (Shore, 2000). Cull (2019), in order to

resolve this conceptual complexity, positions cultural diplomacy as one of the five fundamental components of public diplomacy, while Anholt (2007), from the nation branding perspective, evaluates cultural diplomacy as a strategic instrument of national image management. This conceptual ambiguity can be evaluated as an indicator that the field has not yet attained paradigmatic maturity.

Among the deficient, contested, or limited topics in the literature are the measurability problem of cultural diplomacy, effectiveness evaluation criteria, and the systematic analysis of its long-term effects. Particularly, methodological difficulties are encountered regarding how to measure the changes that cultural diplomacy activities create in the attitudes and behaviors of target societies. This measurement problem stems from the generally indirect, long-term, and multifactorial nature of cultural effects; a combination of different methodological approaches such as public opinion research, media analysis, and social network analyses is recommended (Gilboa, 2008: 55-71).

While extensively studied topics include American cultural diplomacy, the European Union's cultural programs, and the soft power strategies of great powers, neglected topics include the cultural diplomacy experiences of middle-sized states, the Global South perspective, and the impact of cultural diplomacy on local communities. This asymmetry indicates that the literature has been shaped from a Western-centric perspective; the systematic analysis of cultural diplomacy experiences in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia constitutes a significant research gap. Although Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions theory offers important insights regarding how cultural diplomacy strategies should differentiate in different cultural contexts, this perspective has not yet been sufficiently integrated.

The literature possesses a multidisciplinary character, drawing from different disciplines such as international relations, sociology, anthropology, communication sciences, cultural studies, and art history. Appadurai's (1996) theory of global cultural flows, Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, and Hesmondhalgh's (2019) cultural industries analysis enrich the theoretical foundations of this interdisciplinary perspective. This multidisciplinary approach provides the holistic perspective necessary for understanding the complex nature of cultural diplomacy. Particularly, the integration of the cultural economics perspective (Throsby, 2014) into cultural diplomacy analysis carries critical importance for understanding the economic dimensions of this field.

When the literature is examined in the Turkish context, although the balance between national and international sources has generally been achieved, descriptive studies predominate in Turkish academic writing. Yağmurlu's pioneering studies on public diplomacy (Yağmurlu, 2007: 10-34), Güven's conceptual and institutional analysis (Güven & Arslan, 2020), Bulut's strategic communication approach (Bulut, 2019: 3-25), Kömür's perspective from the soft power element standpoint (2020: 90-110), and Ökten's multifaceted approach (Ökten, 2022: 99-136) constitute some fundamental contributions in Turkish academic literature. These studies analyze the position and potential of cultural diplomacy among Turkey's foreign policy instruments. Although empirical studies concerning the effectiveness of Turkey's cultural diplomacy instruments such as the Yunus Emre Institute, TİKA, and the global dissemination of Turkish television series have increased in recent years, these studies require support from systematic theoretical frameworks (Albayrak, 2023: 495-505).

The literature encompasses both theoretical and empirical studies, with the weight of empirical research increasing in recent years. Particularly, case studies and comparative analyses evaluating the effectiveness of specific cultural diplomacy programs occupy an important place in the literature. However, the majority of empirical studies are based on single-case designs, and the number of comparative and multi-country studies remains limited.

This article establishes a multidimensional relationship with the existing literature. First, by emphasizing the explanatory power of constructivist theory in cultural diplomacy analysis, it

systematically examines its role in identity construction and norm diffusion processes. The application of Wendt's (1999) social constructivist approach to cultural diplomacy analysis provides the opportunity to understand how states redefine their identities and interests through cultural interactions. Second, by filling the gap concerning the operationalization of soft power theory, it analyzes the mechanisms through which cultural diplomacy is transformed into soft power capacity. This operationalization effort aims to transform Nye's (2004) conceptual framework into empirically testable hypotheses.

The most significant gap in the literature is the absence of a systematic theoretical framework for cultural diplomacy and the insufficiency of interdisciplinary approaches. While existing studies generally adopt unidimensional approaches, systematic analyses that holistically address the multi-layered nature of cultural diplomacy are limited. Particularly, the question of how the mechanisms of norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power capacity enhancement interact with one another and create synergistic effects has not been sufficiently researched.

This study aims to develop a multidimensional analysis framework based on constructivist theory in the context of contributing to filling the aforementioned gap. Consequently, it systematically demonstrates that cultural diplomacy is not merely a state-centric activity but also plays an active role in the transformation of norm and value systems at the global level. This approach provides literature-based support for the principal hypothesis set forth in the Introduction section—that cultural diplomacy systematically exerts influence through the mechanisms of norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power capacity enhancement.

The literature review combines chronological and thematic organizational principles with the aim of imparting a systematic structure to the subject. The sources employed consist of international journals with high Impact Factor values, books from prestigious academic publishers, and works of esteemed academics in the field. Currency, reliability, and citation value were adopted as fundamental criteria in source selection. Within the framework of the systematic literature review protocol (Lame, 2019), studies published between 1990 and 2024 containing the keywords cultural diplomacy, soft power, and public diplomacy were included.

Among the approaches criticized and limited are traditional realism, which views cultural diplomacy merely as a propaganda instrument, state-centric approaches, and the cultural imperialism perspective. The limitations of these approaches lie in their disregard for the multi-actor and reciprocal interaction-based nature of contemporary cultural diplomacy. While realism's power-focused perspective underestimates the autonomous influence of cultural factors in international relations, the cultural imperialism approach fails to adequately consider the resistance and adaptation capacities of local actors.

When the literature is examined in terms of methodological trends, qualitative research methods predominate, with case study, discourse analysis, and ethnography techniques being widely employed in particular. In recent years, mixed methods approaches have also been observed with increasing frequency in the literature. In studies within the field of digital diplomacy, the use of innovative methodological approaches such as social network analysis, big data analytics, and content analysis is increasing (Seib, 2012).

The literature section, by presenting different theoretical approaches in a comparative manner, enables readers to comprehend the theoretical diversity within the field. The differences and similarities among liberal institutionalism, constructivism, critical theory, and post-colonial approaches are systematically addressed. This theoretical pluralism enables the evaluation of the cultural diplomacy phenomenon from different analytical lenses and contributes to transcending the limitations of a single theoretical perspective.

In terms of representativeness and diversity, the literature geographically encompasses examples from North America, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific regions; theoretically adopts a pluralist approach; and historically addresses the period from the pre-Cold War era to the present.

However, it should be noted that cultural diplomacy experiences from the regions of Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America are not sufficiently represented in the literature.

Among current debates and new orientations are digital diplomacy, virtual cultural exchanges, the effects of the pandemic on cultural diplomacy, and the integration of cultural diplomacy with sustainable development goals. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the digital transformation of cultural diplomacy, giving rise to new formats such as virtual museum tours, online concerts, and digital cultural festivals (Koçyiğit et al., 2024: 709-722). Furthermore, the entry of climate change and environmental sustainability issues onto the cultural diplomacy agenda is expanding the normative framework of this field.

Among important empirical studies, the effectiveness evaluation of the European Union's cultural diplomacy programs (Bekemans et al., 2007; European Commission, 2008; Nye, 2004), China's Confucius Institutes project, Japan's Cool Japan strategy, and Turkey's cultural diplomacy experiences are presented with examples (Wang, 2025; Liu, 2025; Ang, 2015). The cultural dimensions of China's Belt and Road Initiative, South Korea's Hallyu (Korean Wave) phenomenon, and India's yoga diplomacy are also empirical research areas that have attracted increasing interest in recent times (Binark, 2019; Boz, 2020; Mirshahi, 2021).

The conclusions drawn from the literature guide the constructivist theoretical infrastructure of this study and reveal the necessity of systematic analysis of the role of cultural diplomacy in identity construction, norm diffusion, and social reality creation processes. These conclusions support that cultural diplomacy is not merely a foreign policy instrument but also a constitutive factor that shapes the normative structure of the international system.

This literature review supports the originality and necessity of the study, clearly demonstrating where the existing body of knowledge stands and what contribution this research will make. Filling the systematic gap in the literature will make an important contribution both to the academic literature and to policy development processes. Particularly, the treatment of the mechanisms of norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power capacity enhancement within an integrated analytical framework constitutes the fundamental original contribution of this study.

In conclusion, this literature review enables readers to view the subject of cultural diplomacy from a holistic and critical perspective, presenting the theoretical diversity, methodological approaches, and empirical findings within the field in a systematic framework. The rich academic accumulation that the literature offers constitutes a solid foundation for the development of this study's constructivist theoretical framework and the realization of a multidimensional analysis of cultural diplomacy. In the following Theoretical Framework section, the conceptual tools derived from this literature review will be systematically developed within the framework of the synthesis of constructivist theory and the soft power approach.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this research is shaped around the principal axis of constructivist international relations theory for the comprehension of the systematic effects of cultural diplomacy in international politics and foreign policy, and is supplemented by the soft power approach. The fundamental rationale for the selection of constructivist theory derives from its provision of the most appropriate analytical instruments for understanding the determinative role of cultural diplomacy in norm diffusion, identity construction, and value transfer processes. This theoretical preference simultaneously constitutes the theoretical foundations of the principal hypothesis set forth in the Introduction section—that cultural diplomacy systematically exerts influence through three fundamental mechanisms. This theoretical approach possesses the capacity to elucidate how cultural interactions affect structural transformations within the international system and the critical role that cultural diplomacy plays in states' identity

formation processes.

Constructivist theory, proceeding from the assumption that international relations are socially constructed, argues that states' behaviors are shaped not solely by their material interests but also by their identities, norms, and values (as stated in Alexander Wendt's thesis "Anarchy is what states make of it" (Wendt, 1992: 392-417). This perspective, unlike realism's material power-focused approach and liberalism's emphasis on institutional cooperation, foregrounds the constitutive role of ideas and cultural factors in international relations (Katzenstein, 1996). This perspective provides a fundamental ground for understanding the operational mechanisms of cultural diplomacy, for cultural interactions lie precisely at the center of these social construction processes (Melissen, 2005; Gienow-Hecht, 2010: 3-10). Cultural diplomacy shapes the normative structure of the international system by transforming the mutual perceptions, expectations, and behavioral patterns of states and societies. This process directly corresponds with the meaning-making and identity construction dynamics emphasized by constructivist theory.

The critical importance of the constructivist approach in cultural diplomacy analysis becomes even more pronounced through this theory's emphasis on intersubjective meaning structures. Cultural diplomacy instruments such as culture, language, art, and education, by creating shared meaning worlds among societies, prepare the ground of trust and mutual understanding necessary for international cooperation (Miller & Yudice, 2002; Bound et al., 2007). This process follows the stages of norm emergence, norm cascade, and norm internalization in accordance with the constructivist theory's norm life cycle model. The concept of "tipping point" (critical mass threshold) emphasized in Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998: 887-917) model is particularly valuable for understanding the role of cultural diplomacy in norm diffusion, for cultural actors assume critical functions as norm entrepreneurs in surpassing this threshold. Cultural diplomacy plays a critical role particularly in the norm cascade stage and ensures the dissemination of new values within the international system through cultural actors functioning as normative entrepreneurs.

The second theoretical component of the study, the concept of soft power, is a strategic type of power developed by Joseph Nye that denotes states' capacity to influence through attraction. Soft power, unlike hard power, represents a form of influence predicated not upon coercion but upon rendering attractive (Nye, 2004; Cull, 2019). The concept of "smart power" that Nye subsequently developed denotes the strategic combination of hard and soft power, providing an additional analytical framework for understanding the position of cultural diplomacy within this integrated power approach (Nye, 2004; Nye, 2011). Cultural diplomacy functions as the fundamental mechanism that operationalizes cultural attractiveness, one of the most important sources of soft power. In this context, cultural values, lifestyles, artistic productions, and education systems become strategic assets that enhance states' soft power capacities.

The value of soft power theory in cultural diplomacy analysis derives from the direct correspondence of this concept's three fundamental sources with cultural diplomacy activities. These are culture, political values, and foreign policy practices (Throsby, 2014; Yağmurlu, 2007: 10-34). Cultural diplomacy aims to influence the value systems, preferences, and behavioral patterns of target societies by systematically employing these three sources. In this process, cultural attractiveness, as Schneider (2005: 148-164) emphasizes, functions as a more effective instrument of influence than direct communication, for cultural experiences create emotional and aesthetic bonds beyond rational arguments. This process activates the capacities of attraction, persuasion, and agenda-setting that are located within the behavioral spectrum of soft power. Particularly in the age of digitalization, the acceleration of the global circulation of cultural contents is expanding the sphere of influence of soft power sources and enhancing the strategic importance of cultural diplomacy.

The synthesis of constructivist theory and the soft power concept enables the comprehension of

both the structural and instrumental dimensions of cultural diplomacy. While the constructivist perspective elucidates how cultural diplomacy transforms the social structure of the international system, the soft power approach reveals how states realize their strategic objectives in this transformation process (Keohane & Nye, 2011; Snow & Taylor, 2009). This theoretical synthesis constitutes the original theoretical contribution of this study; the integration of these two approaches, which are generally treated separately in the literature, enables the simultaneous analysis of both the structural-constitutive and instrumental-strategic dimensions of cultural diplomacy. The combination of these two theoretical approaches provides the opportunity to conceptually explain the role that cultural diplomacy plays not only in interstate relations but also in global governance processes.

The concept of identity, to which particular importance is accorded within the theoretical framework of this study, occupies a central position in both constructivist theory and the soft power approach. Identity shapes the ways in which states define their interests while also determining which soft power sources will be effective (Appadurai, 1996; Anholt, 2007). As Katzenstein (1996) emphasizes, the relationship between national identity and security policies necessitates understanding cultural diplomacy not merely as image management but also as a component of national security strategy. Cultural diplomacy plays an active role within these identity dynamics in both the presentation of national identity in the international arena and the development of identity sharing with other societies. This situation leads cultural diplomacy to assume a dual function: while strengthening national identity on the one hand, it contributes to international identity formation on the other. Bhabha's (2015) concept of cultural hybridity offers a valuable perspective for understanding the hybrid identity forms that emerge in this process.

The norm diffusion process constitutes another critical component of the study's theoretical framework. In this context, Finnemore and Sikkink's norm life cycle model provides valuable analytical instruments for understanding the role of cultural diplomacy activities in the dissemination of norms within the international system (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 887-917; Finnemore, 1996; Singh, 2010). Checkel's (1998: 325-345) analysis of socialization mechanisms elucidates how different mechanisms such as strategic calculation, role-playing, and normative persuasion operate in this process; it can be stated that cultural diplomacy particularly strengthens the normative persuasion mechanism. Cultural diplomacy prepares the cultural ground necessary for the acceptance of new norms by supporting the activities of norm entrepreneurs. This process can be observed particularly in the dissemination of universal values such as human rights, democracy, environmental protection, and cultural diversity. Cultural diplomacy instruments, by ensuring the transmission of these values through concrete experiences and emotional connections, enable the emotional internalization of norms beyond their cognitive acceptance.

The concept of public diplomacy, which is situated within the conceptual framework of this study, represents an analytical level that is closely related to yet distinct from cultural diplomacy. While public diplomacy encompasses states' processes of communicating directly with foreign publics, cultural diplomacy focuses on the content and methods of this communication (Gilboa, 2008: 55-71; Erzen, 2012). In Cull's (2019) five-component public diplomacy model—listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting—cultural diplomacy is positioned as the component possessing the deepest and most long-term effects. This distinction demonstrates that cultural diplomacy is not merely a sub-field of public diplomacy but rather its most effective instrument. Cultural diplomacy possesses the potential to create deep and lasting effects in the process of winning hearts and minds that public diplomacy targets, for cultural bonds are perceived as longer-lasting and less manipulative than political messages.

When evaluated from the perspective of international society theory (Viotti & Kauppi, 2016), cultural diplomacy contributes to the formation of an international society founded upon shared

values and norms among states (Shore, 2000). The English School's concept of international society, by emphasizing that states interact not solely on the basis of material interests but also on the basis of shared rules, institutions, and values, provides a theoretical framework for understanding the role of cultural diplomacy in the construction of these shared value systems (Stirk, 2012: 641-658). This contribution occurs not only at the level of bilateral relations but also at the global scale. The cultural programs of UNESCO, the European Union, and other international organizations constitute the institutional dimension of this process. Within these institutional frameworks, cultural diplomacy builds bridges of dialogue between different civilizations and serves the development of the common understanding necessary for the resolution of global problems.

The interdisciplinary character of the study's theoretical framework provides the multidimensional perspective necessary for understanding the complex nature of cultural diplomacy. Conceptual tools drawn from disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, communication sciences, psychology, and economics illuminate different dimensions of cultural diplomacy (Castells, 2009; Taylor, 2009). Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital provides critical perspectives for understanding how cultural resources are transformed into strategic assets; Habermas's (1984) communicative action theory offers critical perspectives for comprehending the dialogic and mutual understanding-oriented dimension of cultural diplomacy (Goldthorpe, 2007). This interdisciplinary approach demonstrates that cultural diplomacy is not merely a political phenomenon but also a comprehensive process possessing social, economic, and psychological dimensions. This perspective enhances the analytical depth of the study and provides the opportunity to systematically examine the multifaceted effects of cultural diplomacy.

The congruence between the study's methodological approach and theoretical framework demonstrates that the qualitative research method derives from constructivist epistemology. Since constructivist theory argues that social reality is constructed through subjective experiences and meaning-making processes, the use of interpretive methods to understand this reality is imperative for methodological consistency (Maxwell, 2013). This epistemological-methodological congruence enables transcending the limitations of positivist approaches in understanding complex social phenomena such as cultural diplomacy and conducting meaning-focused analysis (İlerisoy, 2023: 511-523). Qualitative analysis provides the most appropriate methodological instruments for comprehending the meaning-making dynamics in cultural diplomacy processes, actors' motivations, and the profound effects of cultural interactions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The sensitivity of the theoretical framework to contemporary developments is ensured through the systematic treatment of the effects of digitalization and globalization processes on cultural diplomacy. Network society theory (van Dijk, 2016) and digital diplomacy (Albayrak, 2023: 495-505) concepts provide the opportunity to re-evaluate traditional cultural diplomacy approaches in light of new technological possibilities (Hesmondhalgh, 2019). Castells's (2009) network society paradigm provides a theoretical framework for understanding that cultural diplomacy is no longer solely the monopoly of states but has transformed into a process occurring through polycentric and horizontal networks. This updated theoretical perspective carries critical importance for understanding the evolution of cultural diplomacy in contemporary international relations and for anticipating potential future developments.

The critical dimension of the theoretical framework also systematically addresses the potential negative effects and limitations of cultural diplomacy. Said's critique of orientalism (Said, 1978) and Gramsci's hegemony theory (Gramsci, 1992) expose the risks of cultural diplomacy reproducing power asymmetries and serving cultural imperialism. When evaluated from a post-colonial perspective (Scott, 2019; Wang, 2018: 650-653), the risk of cultural diplomacy functioning as an instrument in the process of universalizing Western values is a matter requiring

careful evaluation, particularly from the standpoint of Global South countries. This critical perspective emphasizes that the ethical dimensions of cultural diplomacy practices require continuous questioning and underscores the importance of implementing the principles of mutuality, authenticity, and the preservation of cultural diversity. Robertson's (1992) dialectic of globalization and localization, in this context, provides the opportunity to understand both the homogenizing and diversity-supporting potentials of cultural diplomacy.

In conclusion, the theoretical framework of this study provides a robust analytical foundation constructed upon the synthesis of constructivist international relations theory and the soft power concept. This theoretical approach enables the systematic understanding of the multidimensional role of cultural diplomacy in international politics while simultaneously providing the conceptual tools necessary for evaluating this field's future development potential. The interdisciplinary character and sensitivity to contemporary developments of the theoretical framework strengthen the academic contribution of this study and add an original perspective to the cultural diplomacy literature. This framework not only analyzes the current state of cultural diplomacy but also brings to the agenda new research questions and approaches for the theoretical and practical development of this field. In the following Research Methodology section, the methodological counterparts of this theoretical framework and the details of the research design will be addressed.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative research approach with the aim of seeking answers to the fundamental research question of through which mechanisms cultural diplomacy exerts influence in international politics and foreign policy, and what the systematic dimensions of this influence are. This research question has been formulated for the purpose of testing the principal hypothesis that cultural diplomacy systematically exerts influence through the mechanisms of norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power capacity enhancement. The fundamental rationale for preferring qualitative methodology lies in the fact that the multidimensional, complex, and contextual nature of cultural diplomacy encompasses social, political, and cultural interactions of a depth that cannot be fully comprehended through quantitative measurements (Maxwell, 2013; Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 887-917). This study, shaped within the framework of constructivist theory, proceeds from the assumption that social reality is constructed by actors and that cultural factors play a critical role in this construction process. This epistemological position renders imperative the use of interpretive methods for understanding the profound meanings of the phenomenon, actors' motivations, and the systematic consequences of cultural interactions in international politics.

The fundamental design of the research is a qualitative case study approach that combines systematic literature review and content analysis (Metin & Ünal, 2022: 275-290) techniques. The systematic literature review was conducted within the framework of protocols proposed by Lame (2019), encompassing the processes of identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing academic sources directly related to the research question. This methodological choice, as George and Bennett emphasize, enables the making of theoretical generalizations while simultaneously permitting the application of multiple validity strategies (George & Bennett, 2005; Bennett & George, 1997). The case study method constitutes the most appropriate research design for understanding the operation of cultural diplomacy in different contexts and for testing theoretical predictions with empirical findings. Particularly, the evaluation of constructivist theory's hypotheses concerning social construction processes within the context of cultural diplomacy practices necessitates benefiting from the analytical power of this methodological approach. In this context, the synthesis of constructivist theory and soft power constitutes the theoretical foundation of the research design.

The data collection process was systematically conducted in three fundamental stages. In the first stage, a comprehensive review of the theoretical and conceptual literature in the field of cultural diplomacy was undertaken, with an interdisciplinary approach adopted by drawing upon the disciplines of international relations, sociology, anthropology, and communication sciences. In this stage, searches were conducted using the databases Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar with the keywords "cultural diplomacy," "soft power," "public diplomacy," "norm diffusion," and "identity construction." In the second stage, official documents, policy documents, and institutional reports pertaining to states' cultural diplomacy strategies were systematically examined to form a general understanding. Reports published by UNESCO, the European Union, and cultural diplomacy institutions of various countries were evaluated within this scope. In the third stage, academic evaluations and impact analysis reports concerning the outcomes of cultural diplomacy practices were assessed. This multi-layered data collection strategy aimed to enhance the validity of the research through the triangulation of different data types.

In sample selection, purposive sampling method (Rai & Thapa, 2015) was employed, with studies providing theoretical and empirical contributions in the field of cultural diplomacy included within the research scope. Purposive sampling ensures the selection of sources most appropriate to the research question and rich in information; in this study, a maximum variation sampling strategy was adopted. In the sample construction process, source quality and reliability were adopted as fundamental criteria; articles published in peer-reviewed journals, books from prestigious academic publishers, and official reports of international organizations as indirect information sources were prioritized. In this sense, the requisite number of scientific sources were systematically examined until complete penetration of the subject was achieved; in the selection of these sources, the criteria of being directly related to constructivist theory, centrally addressing the concept of cultural diplomacy, and containing empirical findings were applied. Inclusion criteria were determined as: (1) having been published between 1990 and 2024, (2) having been published by a peer-reviewed journal or academic publisher, (3) centrally addressing the topics of cultural diplomacy, soft power, or norm diffusion. Exclusion criteria were determined as: (1) studies remaining at merely descriptive levels, (2) popular writings lacking theoretical framework, (3) studies written in languages other than English or Turkish. Sample size was determined so as to reflect the theoretical diversity in the cultural diplomacy literature and to achieve theoretical saturation.

In the data analysis process, systematic content analysis (Sağbaş et al., 2022: 238-252) and thematic analysis (Çarıkçı et al., 2024) techniques were employed in combination. While content analysis enabled the categorization of concepts, themes, and arguments in documents, thematic analysis assisted in revealing the theoretical frameworks and ideological structures underlying cultural diplomacy practices. Braun and Clarke's (2006: 4-30) six-stage thematic analysis model was used as a guide in this process: (1) familiarizing oneself with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, (6) producing the report. During the analysis process, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding techniques were systematically applied. In the open coding stage, fundamental concepts and themes were extracted from the data; in the axial coding stage, the relationships and connections among these concepts were identified; in the selective coding stage, main categories and the theoretical framework were established. As a result of this coding process, three main categories emerged: (1) norm diffusion mechanisms, (2) identity construction processes, (3) soft power capacity enhancement dynamics. These categories directly correspond to the three fundamental mechanisms in the research's principal hypothesis. This systematic coding process ensured that the data were rendered into a meaningful whole and that the fundamental hypotheses of constructivist theory were tested.

The epistemological foundation of the research (the fundamental philosophical understanding concerning how this research arrives at knowledge, what it regards knowledge as, and upon what

it bases the validity of this knowledge) rests upon the interpretive paradigm (İlerisoy, 2023: 511-523). This paradigm accepts that social reality is constructed through actors' subjective experiences and interpretations, and requires that different perspectives be taken into consideration in the process of meaning-making regarding cultural diplomacy practices. This epistemological position is in full congruence with the ontological assumptions of constructivist theory, for both approaches accept that social reality is rendered meaningful by actors and that these meaning structures shape behaviors. This approach, in accordance with the dialogue and negotiation principles in Habermas's (1984) communicative action theory, aims at understanding the social meanings of cultural interactions through interpretive methods. In the research process, a pluralist viewpoint was adopted, and different dimensions of cultural diplomacy were evaluated from various theoretical perspectives.

Multiple strategies were applied for the validity and reliability of the research. Within the scope of the triangulation strategy (Thurmond, 2001: 253-257), the reliability and comprehensiveness of findings were ensured through the combination of different data sources, theoretical perspectives, and analysis methods. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) reliability criteria for qualitative research—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability—were systematically applied in this study. Within the scope of data source triangulation, different types of data such as academic literature, official documents, and policy reports were analyzed comparatively; through theoretical triangulation, the predictions of constructivist, realist, and liberal approaches concerning cultural diplomacy were compared. Within the framework of methodological triangulation, content analysis and thematic analysis techniques were employed together, with the aim of multifaceted verification of findings. Additionally, through peer debriefing, alternative perspectives were evaluated in the interpretation of findings.

Methodological reflexivity (Walsh, 2003: 52-61) constituted an integral part of the research process. Continuous self-evaluation was conducted to ensure that the researcher was aware of their own biases and assumptions and to minimize their effect on the research process. This reflexive process was realized through keeping a research diary and systematically questioning assumptions that emerged during the analysis process. This reflexive approach ensured that the research was objective and balanced, contributing particularly to the avoidance of ideological biases in the evaluation of the normative dimensions of cultural diplomacy. In the process of researcher positioning, the academic background and theoretical tendencies in the field of cultural diplomacy were explicitly stated, and the possible effects of these factors on the analysis process were evaluated.

Ethical considerations were meticulously applied at every stage of the research. In accordance with ethical responsibility principles in qualitative research (Shaw, 2008: 401-411), copyrights were protected in source usage, original authors' views were conveyed without distortion in citations, and citation standards were meticulously applied. Particularly in the evaluation of examples from different cultures, the principle of cultural relativism was adopted, and a multi-perspectival analysis was conducted by avoiding Western-centric biases. The deficiency of the Global South perspective identified in the literature was consciously taken into consideration in this study, and care was taken to include examples from different geographical contexts. In the presentation of research findings, objective comparison of different countries' cultural diplomacy practices was ensured, and ideological evaluations were avoided.

The fundamental methodological limitations of the research have been explicitly stated. By virtue of the nature of qualitative research method, the generalizability of findings is limited, and theoretical generalization rather than statistical generalization has been targeted. As Yin (2018) emphasizes, the aim in case studies is not statistical generalization but analytical generalization; that is, findings can be generalized to specific theoretical propositions. Furthermore, due to the great diversity of cultural diplomacy practices, it was not possible to cover all variations, and the research remained limited to a specific sample. Limited access to direct primary data sources

caused the study to remain restricted to an analysis method based on secondary and tertiary sources. This limitation means that diplomatic actors' motivations and decision-making processes could not be directly analyzed; this situation can be overcome in future research through interview and ethnographic methods. Nevertheless, through systematic literature review and the use of multiple sources, efforts were made to minimize the effect of this limitation.

When the effect of field conditions on the research process is evaluated, some difficulties were experienced in collecting data on current practices due to the COVID-19 pandemic affecting diplomatic activities and cultural events. However, the increase in digital diplomacy practices and the proliferation of online cultural events presented new opportunities for understanding the transforming nature of cultural diplomacy. This transformation was addressed through the inclusion of the digital diplomacy literature (Albayrak, 2023: 495-505; Koçyiğit et al., 2024: 709-722) within the research scope. The scientific adequacy of the method used in the research process was ensured through comprehensive literature review, systematic analysis techniques, and the application of multiple validity strategies.

In terms of methodological originality, this research develops a constructivist theory-based multidimensional analysis approach that has not previously been systematically applied in the field of cultural diplomacy and tests the explanatory power of this approach in understanding the cultural diplomacy phenomenon. This methodological approach represents one of the first systematic attempts to address the mechanisms of norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power capacity enhancement within an integrated analytical framework. This methodological innovation, while offering an original contribution to the literature, also opens new methodological possibilities for future research. Additionally, the systematic application of the interdisciplinary approach and the integration of multiple analysis techniques enhance methodological diversity in this field. For future research, testing the analytical framework developed in this study with quantitative methods and adopting mixed methodology approaches are recommended.

The methodological approach adopted in this study is in full congruence with the nature of the research question and the constructivist theoretical framework. For understanding the role of cultural diplomacy in social construction processes, comprehending how actors form identity and interests through cultural practices, and explaining the systematic effects of these processes in international politics, qualitative methodology offers the most appropriate approach. This methodological congruence strengthens the internal consistency of the research and enhances the reliability of its findings. In conclusion, the systematic qualitative method employed in this research provides the analytical depth necessary for understanding the complex and multidimensional nature of cultural diplomacy and offers appropriate methodological tools for testing the explanatory capacity of constructivist theory in this field.

5. FINDINGS

The findings obtained through systematic literature review and qualitative content analysis in this research provide comprehensive answers to the fundamental research question of "through which mechanisms does cultural diplomacy exert influence in international politics and foreign policy processes." The scientific sources analyzed within the framework of constructivist theory reveal the systematic effects of cultural diplomacy through the mechanisms of norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power capacity enhancement. These findings were obtained as a result of a systematic analysis process consisting of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding stages, and were categorized in observance of the principle of theoretical saturation. The findings obtained pertaining to our principal hypothesis—"cultural diplomacy systematically exerts influence in international politics and foreign policy processes through the mechanisms of norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power capacity enhancement"—have been categorized

around three fundamental mechanisms: norm diffusion mechanisms, identity construction processes, and soft power capacity enhancement dynamics.

The first fundamental finding of the research demonstrates that the norm diffusion mechanisms of cultural diplomacy systematically exert influence in international politics processes. When evaluated within the framework of norm life cycle theory (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 887-917; Checkel, 1998: 325-345), it has been demonstrated through literature analysis that cultural diplomacy plays an active role in each of the stages of norm emergence, norm cascade, and norm internalization. For instance, in the process of global adoption of UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, it is observed that cultural diplomacy activities assumed the function of norm entrepreneurship and played a determinative role in surpassing the critical mass threshold. Cultural diplomacy instruments assume critical functions in rendering universal norms comprehensible and acceptable in different cultural contexts, providing effective mechanisms particularly in the diffusion of human rights, democracy, environmental protection, and cultural diversity norms. Instruments such as art, music, literature, cinema, and cultural festivals contribute to ensuring not only cognitive but also emotional acceptance by supporting normative messages with emotional and aesthetic dimensions. This finding strongly validates the norm diffusion mechanism dimension of the principal hypothesis.

The second fundamental finding reveals that the mechanisms of cultural diplomacy in identity construction processes create systematic effects in international politics and foreign policy processes. When evaluated from the perspective of social identity theory (Wendt, 1999; Katzenstein, 1996), it is observed that cultural diplomacy plays an active role in both national identity consolidation and international identity formation processes. When evaluated within the framework of Bhabha's (2015) concept of cultural hybridity, it has been determined that cultural diplomacy activities prepare the ground for the development of hybrid and pluralist identity forms by softening rigid identity boundaries. Cultural diplomacy activities provide effective instruments in the processes of softening the "us" and "them" distinction, discovering common identity elements, and developing multiple identity belongings. Language teaching, educational exchange programs, cultural heritage projects, and diaspora networks function as concrete instruments of identity construction processes and prepare the cultural ground for long-term diplomatic relations. Institutional structures such as China's Confucius Institutes, Germany's Goethe Institute, France's Alliance Française, and Britain's British Council represent the institutional dimension of these identity construction processes. Particularly, identity bridges realized through diaspora communities are becoming important resources that expand states' foreign policy capacities. These findings systematically validate the identity construction mechanism dimension of the principal hypothesis.

The third fundamental finding demonstrates that the soft power capacity enhancement mechanisms of cultural diplomacy create measurable and systematic effects in international politics processes. It has been determined that cultural diplomacy provides strategic contributions in each of the three fundamental sources—culture, political values, and foreign policy practices—specified in Nye's soft power (Nye, 2004; Schneider, 2005: 148-164) conceptualization. Anholt's (2007) nation branding index and similar measurement instruments reveal with concrete data the effects of cultural diplomacy activities on country image. Cultural attractiveness elements enhance states' international prestige, strengthen brand values, and provide advantage in diplomatic negotiations. Fields such as cultural industries, creative-innovative economy, and cultural tourism contribute to soft power capacity while simultaneously creating economic value (Throsby, 2014; Hesmondhalgh, 2019). The international successes of the film industry, music, fashion, and gastronomy positively influence the general perception of those countries and provide advantage in diplomatic processes. South Korea's Hallyu (Korean Wave) phenomenon, Japan's Cool Japan strategy, and India's Bollywood exports can be evaluated as successful examples of the transformation of cultural industries into soft power capacity. This mechanism creates alternative spheres of influence in areas where traditional

power elements are insufficient, particularly for middle powers and developing countries. These findings strongly validate the soft power capacity enhancement mechanism dimension of the principal hypothesis.

The fourth finding reveals that the mechanisms of norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power capacity enhancement operate in mutual interaction and create synergistic effects. The systematic connections among these three mechanisms demonstrate that cultural diplomacy constitutes an integrated effect system. While norm diffusion processes support identity transformation, identity construction processes enhance soft power capacity, and the increase in soft power creates new norm diffusion opportunities. This cyclical relationship validates Wendt's (1992: 391-425) thesis that "structure and agent mutually constitute each other" in the context of cultural diplomacy. This cyclical and mutually reinforcing effect proves that cultural diplomacy operates not merely as singular mechanisms but as an integrated system. For example, the European Union's cultural diplomacy programs simultaneously realize the objectives of diffusing the norm of democratic values, strengthening European identity, and enhancing the EU's global soft power capacity. This systematic interaction strongly supports the expression "systematically exerts influence" in the principal hypothesis.

The fifth finding systematically reveals that digital technologies strengthen each of these three fundamental mechanisms and create new modes of operation. Social media platforms, digital art projects, online cultural events, and virtual museum tours are accelerating and expanding the processes of norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power enhancement (Castells, 2009; Seib, 2012). When evaluated within the framework of the network society paradigm (van Dijk, 2016), digitalization enables the democratization and polycentralization of cultural diplomacy. Digital platforms transcend traditional geographical boundaries, enabling the instantaneous global circulation of cultural messages and providing effective instruments particularly in reaching younger generations (Albayrak, 2023: 495-505; Koçyiğit et al., 2024: 709-722). Virtual cultural diplomacy practices, accelerated by the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, have proven the effectiveness of these mechanisms in the digital environment. Virtual museum tours, online concerts, digital film festivals, and social media campaigns have been critical instruments ensuring the continuity of cultural diplomacy during the pandemic period. This digital transformation strengthens the validity of the principal hypothesis under contemporary conditions.

The sixth finding demonstrates that the multi-actor nature of cultural diplomacy shows that non-state actors assume critical roles in each of the mechanisms of norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power enhancement. Civil society organizations, artists, academics, media organizations, and individual cultural actors provide autonomous and complementary contributions to the operation of these three mechanisms (Singh, 2010; Cooper, 2021). The importance of informal channels emphasized in the Track II diplomacy literature becomes even more pronounced in the context of cultural diplomacy, for cultural actors can provide access to societal segments that official diplomatic channels cannot reach. Artists' social messages, academics' scientific diplomacy, NGOs' cultural projects, and the media's cultural contents create influence by supporting and sometimes transcending official diplomatic channels. This multi-actor structure strengthens the democratic and participatory quality of cultural diplomacy while supporting the systematic effectiveness dimension of the principal hypothesis.

The seventh finding reveals that the economic dimension of cultural diplomacy particularly strengthens the soft power capacity enhancement mechanism and produces concrete results. The increase in the share of cultural industries, creative-innovative economy sectors, and cultural tourism in international trade transforms cultural diplomacy from being merely a symbolic activity into a strategic investment area that produces measurable economic value (Throsby, 2014). The concept of knowledge structure in Strange's structural power theory (May, 1996) provides a valuable framework for understanding the economic and political power dimensions

of cultural production. International successes in the fields of film, music, fashion, gastronomy, and design directly enhance those countries' soft power capacities and provide advantage in diplomatic processes. The annual volume of the global cultural industries market exceeding trillions of dollars concretely demonstrates the strategic importance of the economic dimension of cultural diplomacy (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2022; Hesmondhalgh, 2019; Flew, 2012). This economic dimension strengthens the practical validity of the principal hypothesis.

The eighth finding demonstrates that the role of cultural diplomacy in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes is realized through three fundamental mechanisms. In conflict regions, cultural diplomacy activities contribute to reconciliation processes through the reminder of shared norms, the discovery of shared identity elements, and the use of soft power based on mutual respect. For instance, the EU's cultural cooperation programs in the Western Balkans support social reconciliation processes following ethnic conflicts; art and music projects in the Middle East open channels of inter-societal dialogue. In situations where official diplomacy channels are blocked, cultural actors open alternative communication lines, preparing the ground for long-term peacebuilding processes. Sports diplomacy, music festivals, and joint cultural heritage projects function as important instruments of trust-building in post-conflict societies. These findings support the validity of the principal hypothesis in the areas of peace and security.

The ninth finding systematically reveals that the role of cultural diplomacy in global governance processes is strengthened through the norm diffusion mechanism. The cultural programs of international organizations assume critical functions in the localization of global norms and in rendering them comprehensible in different cultural contexts (Shore, 2000; Clarke, 2020). UNESCO's cultural diversity programs, the EU's cultural diplomacy initiatives, and similar multilateral cultural projects facilitate the local acceptance of global norms and enhance the effectiveness of multilateral diplomacy. When evaluated from the perspective of international society theory (Viotti & Kauppi, 2016), cultural diplomacy contributes to the formation of an international society founded upon shared values and norms. This finding demonstrates the validity of the principal hypothesis at the global level.

The tenth finding demonstrates that cultural diplomacy is effective in the field of sustainability and environmental diplomacy by activating all three fundamental mechanisms. In global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development goals, the integration of traditional cultural knowledge and practices into diplomatic processes ensures norm diffusion; the convergence of local identity emphasis with global identity ensures identity construction; and the transformation of environmental values into elements of cultural attractiveness ensures soft power enhancement. The inclusion of indigenous peoples' traditional ecological knowledge in international environmental negotiations is a concrete example of the role of cultural diplomacy in the sustainability agenda. These developments strongly validate the validity and adaptation capacity of the principal hypothesis in contemporary global challenges.

The eleventh finding reveals that Turkey's cultural diplomacy experiences provide important examples that concretize the operation of the three fundamental mechanisms. The language teaching and cultural promotion activities of the Yunus Emre Institute, TİKA's development cooperation programs, and the global dissemination of Turkish television series demonstrate the operation of the mechanisms of norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power capacity enhancement in the Turkish context (Yağmurlu, 2007: 10-34; Güven & Arslan, 2020; Kömür, 2020: 90-110). Particularly, the popularity that Turkish television series have achieved in the Middle East, the Balkans, and Latin America constitutes a striking example of the transformation of cultural industries into soft power capacity. The use of Ottoman cultural heritage as a diplomatic instrument demonstrates how historical identity elements can be integrated into contemporary foreign policy objectives (Ökten, 2022: 99-136). These findings reveal that the cultural diplomacy potential of developing countries requires systematic evaluation.

The twelfth finding demonstrates that the potential limitations and critical dimensions of cultural diplomacy also require systematic evaluation. When evaluated from a post-colonial perspective (Said, 1978; Scott, 2019; Wang, 2018: 650-653), there exists a risk that cultural diplomacy may function as an instrument in the process of universalizing Western values. Within the framework of Gramsci's (1992) hegemony theory, the potential of cultural diplomacy to reproduce existing power asymmetries must be taken into consideration. Furthermore, the risk of the boundary between cultural diplomacy activities and propaganda becoming blurred reveals the necessity of observing the principle of mutuality (Mitchell, 1986; Rawnsley, 2021). These critical findings demonstrate that ethical principles and the principles of preserving cultural diversity are of central importance in the design of cultural diplomacy strategies.

When these twelve fundamental findings are systematically evaluated, a clear answer is provided to the research question of "through which mechanisms does cultural diplomacy exert influence in international politics and foreign policy processes": cultural diplomacy systematically exerts influence through three fundamental mechanisms, namely norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power capacity enhancement. The principal hypothesis—"cultural diplomacy systematically exerts influence in international politics and foreign policy processes through the mechanisms of norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power capacity enhancement"—has been strongly and comprehensively validated by the findings obtained. However, the findings also present a balanced and objective evaluation by revealing the potential limitations and critical dimensions of cultural diplomacy. This validation empirically demonstrates not only that each mechanism operates separately, but also that these mechanisms produce synergistic results in mutual interaction and exhibit systematic effectiveness in various areas of contemporary international politics.

6. DISCUSSION

The findings of this research provide comprehensive answers to the fundamental research question of "through which mechanisms does cultural diplomacy exert influence in international politics and foreign policy processes" and strongly validate the principal hypothesis that "cultural diplomacy systematically exerts influence in international politics and foreign policy processes through the mechanisms of norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power capacity enhancement." The systematic evaluation of the twelve fundamental findings reveals that this hypothesis is valid both at the level of each individual mechanism and at the level of inter-mechanism interaction. These findings, in congruence with the fundamental predictions of constructivist international relations theory, systematically demonstrate the critical role that cultural factors play in shaping the social structure of the international system. Particularly, the findings obtained concerning how the identity-interest relationship emphasized by the social constructivist approach operates in the context of cultural diplomacy support the theoretical predictions in the literature at the empirical level.

The findings pertaining to the norm diffusion mechanism substantially support Finnemore and Sikkink's norm life cycle model while simultaneously offering original contributions that enrich the cultural dimension of this model. The research findings demonstrate that cultural diplomacy plays an active role in each of the stages of norm emergence, norm cascade, and norm internalization, and particularly provides a critical infrastructure supporting the activities of norm entrepreneurs. How the processes of strategic calculation, role-playing, and normative persuasion emphasized in Checkel's (1998: 325-345) analysis of socialization mechanisms are strengthened through cultural diplomacy instruments constitutes one of the original contributions of this study. This finding extends the existing approaches in the literature and reveals that cultural diplomacy not only facilitates norm diffusion but also creates deeper and more lasting acceptance by ensuring that norms are supported with emotional and aesthetic dimensions. The role of cultural expression forms such as art, music, literature, and cinema in the dissemination of human rights, democracy, and environmental protection norms demonstrates that normative change is not

merely a political but also a cultural process. This situation provides an analytical depth that transcends the approach of realism that treats normative factors as secondary and the perspective of liberal institutionalism that addresses norms solely within an institutional framework.

The analysis of findings in identity construction processes validates the fundamental propositions of social identity theory while simultaneously systematically demonstrating the potential of cultural diplomacy to soften traditional in-group-out-group distinctions. The findings that cultural interactions redefine the categories of "us" and "them" and create hybrid identity forms exhibit strong congruence with Bhabha's concept of cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 2015; Shore, 2000; Katzenstein, 1996). The comparative analysis of institutional structures such as the Confucius Institute, Goethe Institute, Alliance Française, and British Council reveals the diversity in different countries' identity construction strategies and the different outcomes of these strategies on diplomatic effectiveness. This situation reflects the multi-layered and dynamic nature of identity formation particularly in the age of globalization. The findings that language teaching, educational exchange programs, and cultural heritage projects prepare the cultural ground for long-term diplomatic relations demonstrate that deep and sustainable relationship building is possible beyond the short-term and instrumental approaches of traditional diplomacy.

The findings pertaining to the soft power capacity enhancement mechanism substantially fill the gap in the literature concerning the operationalization of Nye's soft power theory. The evidence obtained concerning the systematic role that cultural attractiveness elements play in enhancing states' international prestige and providing advantage in diplomatic negotiations offers valuable insights for the practical application of soft power theory. Examples such as South Korea's Hallyu phenomenon, Japan's Cool Japan strategy, and the global dissemination of Turkish television series concretely demonstrate how cultural industries are systematically transformed into soft power capacity. Particularly, the findings that cultural industries, creative-innovative economy, and cultural tourism contribute to soft power capacity while producing economic value validate the importance of knowledge structure in Strange's structural power theory (May, 1996). The positive influence of the international successes of the film industry, music, fashion, and gastronomy on those countries' general perception demonstrates the strategic value of cultural capital. Anholt's (2007) nation branding perspective provides a valuable framework for how these findings can be transformed into practical policy applications.

The synergistic interaction among these three fundamental mechanisms constitutes one of the most important theoretical contributions of the research. The findings that norm diffusion processes support identity transformation, identity construction processes enhance soft power capacity, and the increase in soft power creates new norm diffusion opportunities demonstrate that cultural diplomacy constitutes an integrated effect system. This synergistic model concretizes Wendt's (1999) thesis of mutual constitution between structure and agent in the context of cultural diplomacy and offers an original contribution to international relations theory. This cyclical and mutually reinforcing effect demonstrates that cultural diplomacy must be evaluated not merely as singular instruments but as a comprehensive strategy. This finding transcends the fragmented approaches in the literature, emphasizing the systematic nature of cultural diplomacy. The analysis of the European Union's cultural diplomacy programs provides a concrete example of how these three mechanisms can be integrated at the institutional level.

The findings pertaining to the transformative effects of digitalization processes on cultural diplomacy support Castells's network society paradigm (Seib, 2012; Castells, 2009) while simultaneously demonstrating the necessity of re-evaluating traditional cultural diplomacy approaches. When evaluated within the framework of van Dijk's (2016) network society theory, digitalization eliminates the spatial and temporal boundaries of cultural diplomacy, enabling instantaneous and global-scale cultural interactions. The findings that social media platforms, digital art projects, and virtual cultural events fundamentally transform traditional diplomacy spaces and times while simultaneously enabling the democratization of cultural diplomacy and

its reach to wider audiences present a balanced perspective between technological determinism and social shaping approaches. However, among our findings is also the fact that this digital transformation simultaneously creates new inequalities and digital divide problems. Digital cultural diplomacy practices accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic (Albayrak, 2023: 495-505; Koçyiğit et al., 2024: 709-722) have concretely revealed both the opportunities and limitations of this transformation.

The findings pertaining to the role of the multi-actor structure in cultural diplomacy processes correspond with Cooper's multi-actor diplomacy analyses (Cooper, 2021). The increasing role of civil society organizations, artist communities, academic institutions, and diaspora networks in cultural diplomacy processes carries critical importance for the democratization and pluralization of international relations (Singh, 2010). This situation demonstrates that new governance models transcending the traditional Westphalian understanding of sovereignty are being formed (Stirk, 2012: 641-658). The elements of listening, advocacy, and exchange diplomacy emphasized in Cull's (2019) five-component public diplomacy model provide a valuable framework for analyzing the different dimensions of this multi-actor structure. Particularly, the findings that non-state actors assume complementary and sometimes alternative functions to official diplomacy channels offer valuable contributions to the Track II diplomacy literature.

The most significant point that the theoretical models of the research have difficulty explaining is the tension-laden relationship between the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dimensions of cultural diplomacy. The dynamics of cultural representation and power relations emphasized in Said's critique of orientalism (Said, 1978) are still observed in contemporary cultural diplomacy practices, yet simultaneously the efforts of rising powers to develop alternative cultural narratives are also observed. When evaluated from a post-colonial perspective (Scott, 2019; Wang, 2018: 650-653; Chibber, 2016), the claim of universal validity of Western cultural diplomacy models is questioned, and the autonomous diplomatic potential of local cultural value systems is emphasized. This situation demonstrates that cultural diplomacy simultaneously possesses the potential both to reproduce existing power structures and to challenge them, revealing the necessity of a more nuanced approach to the subject. Gramsci's (1992) hegemony theory provides a critical analytical framework for understanding this tension-laden relationship, demonstrating that cultural diplomacy can function both as an instrument of consent production and as an instrument of counter-hegemonic struggle. This contradictory nature emphasizes the importance of integrating critical international relations theories into cultural diplomacy analysis.

When the contextual limitations of our findings are evaluated, it is observed that particularly Western-centric theoretical frameworks may possess limited explanatory power in other cultural contexts. The localization dynamics emphasized in Robertson's globalization paradoxes (Robertson, 1992; Hofstede, 2001) demonstrate that cultural diplomacy acquires different meanings in different geographical and cultural contexts and that universal generalizations must be made carefully. Particularly, the question of how local cultural value systems such as the *guanxi* (relationship, connection) culture in East Asia, the *ummah* understanding in the Islamic world, and the *ubuntu* philosophy in Africa shape cultural diplomacy practices poses important questions for future research. Turkey's cultural diplomacy experience, in this context, offers an original model functioning as a bridge between East and West; the use of Ottoman cultural heritage as a contemporary diplomatic instrument demonstrates how historical identity elements can be reinterpreted (Ökten, 2022: 99-136; Güven & Arslan, 2020).

In terms of interdisciplinary connection, our findings demonstrate that cultural diplomacy falls within the domain of interest not only of the international relations discipline but also of sociology, anthropology, communication sciences, and art history. The synthesis of Bourdieu's cultural capital theory (Goldthorpe, 2007) with Habermas's communicative action approach (Habermas, 1984) reveals that cultural diplomacy possesses a wide sphere of influence from micro interactions to macro structural transformations (Appadurai, 1996; Miller & Yudice,

2002). Throsby's (2014) cultural economics perspective and Hesmondhalgh's (2019) cultural industries analysis provide critical contributions to understanding the economic dimensions of cultural diplomacy. This interdisciplinary perspective carries critical importance for the methodological enrichment and conceptual deepening of cultural diplomacy research.

The comprehensive findings that social psychological mechanisms play a critical role in the processes of formation and diffusion of international norms enrich the theoretical contributions of the research. It has been determined that social psychological factors such as social learning, imitation behavior, and group pressure create significant effects in the processes of acceptance and internalization of international norms, and that social influence mechanisms operate in the role of norm entrepreneurs and in surpassing the critical mass threshold. The concept of "critical mass threshold" in Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998: 887-917) norm life cycle model provides a valuable analytical tool for understanding how cultural diplomacy functions as a catalyst in surpassing this threshold. Particularly, the analysis of the global diffusion processes of human rights, environmental protection, and disarmament norms reveals the effects of social psychological factors on international law and institutional development.

When the connection between our methodological preferences and our findings is evaluated, it is observed that the qualitative research approach is appropriate for understanding the complex and multidimensional nature of cultural diplomacy. Systematic literature review and thematic analysis techniques (Lame, 2019; Çarıkçı et al., 2024) have ensured the systematic categorization of the mechanisms of norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power capacity enhancement in cultural diplomacy. However, for the quantitative validation of our findings and cross-cultural validity tests, the use of mixed methodological approaches in the future is recommended. Particularly, the evaluation of the long-term effects of cultural diplomacy activities through longitudinal studies and the conduct of multi-country comparative analyses will significantly enhance the body of knowledge in the field. Additionally, in-depth interviews with diplomatic actors and ethnographic field studies can contribute to the validation of findings by providing access to primary data sources.

Concerning the preservation of data context while making theoretical generalizations, our findings should be evaluated within the framework of globalization dynamics in the first quarter of the twenty-first century. The fact that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on cultural diplomacy have not yet been fully analyzed constitutes one of the temporal limitations of our findings. The development of digital diplomacy accelerated with the pandemic process poses new questions for future research. The pandemic's transfer of cultural diplomacy from physical spaces to digital platforms necessitates the systematic evaluation of the diplomatic effectiveness of new formats such as virtual museum tours, online concerts, and digital cultural festivals.

When the applicability of our findings to different contexts is evaluated, it is observed that particularly the systematic analysis of developing countries' cultural diplomacy capacities and strategies is required. The focus of existing literature on the cultural diplomacy experiences of great powers has led to the insufficient analysis of the potential of middle-sized and small states in this field. The cultural diplomacy model that Turkey has developed through the Yunus Emre Institute and TİKA provides a concrete example of developing countries' potential in this field and emphasizes the importance of integrating the Global South perspective into the literature (Yağmurlu, 2007: 10-34; Bulut, 2019: 3-25; Kömür, 2020: 90-110). This situation necessitates being cautious about the universal validity of cultural diplomacy theories.

The comparison of our findings with alternative theoretical perspectives more clearly reveals the originality and limitations of the study. When evaluated from the realism perspective, cultural diplomacy can be viewed merely as an instrumental activity serving states' national interests; however, our findings transcend this reductionist approach by emphasizing the constitutive and transformative dimensions of cultural diplomacy. While liberal institutionalism (Keohane & Nye, 2011) emphasizes the potential of cultural diplomacy to facilitate international cooperation,

our findings expand this perspective with identity construction and norm diffusion mechanisms. Critical theory and post-colonial approaches (Said, 1978; Odabaş, 2018), by revealing the hegemonic dimensions of cultural diplomacy, contribute to the balanced and objective evaluation of our findings.

In light of the findings, the originality of our study lies in the establishment of the systematic theoretical framework of cultural diplomacy and in the productive-innovative-transformative synthesis of constructivist theory with the soft power approach. This synthesis, by integrating these two approaches that are generally treated separately in the literature, enables the simultaneous analysis of both the structural-constitutive and instrumental-strategic dimensions of cultural diplomacy. Particularly, the modeling of the synergistic relationship among the three fundamental mechanisms and the systematic analysis of the effects of digitalization processes on this field offer original contributions to the literature. This originality provides valuable insights not only at the theoretical level but also for practical policy development processes. The systematic analysis of the cultural diplomacy experiences of Turkey and other developing countries contributes to filling the Western-centric gap in the literature in this field.

In conclusion, this discussion contributes to the development of the discipline from both theoretical and methodological perspectives by revealing the multidimensional role of cultural diplomacy in international politics. Our findings, while emphasizing the innovative potential of cultural diplomacy that transcends traditional understandings of diplomacy, simultaneously present a rich agenda for future research in this field. The integrated analysis of the mechanisms of norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power capacity enhancement conceptually frames the strategic importance of cultural diplomacy in twenty-first century international relations. The increasing importance of cultural diplomacy in twenty-first century international relations demonstrates that studies to be conducted in this field carry critical value from both academic and practical perspectives.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research has provided comprehensive and systematic answers to the fundamental question of through which mechanisms cultural diplomacy exerts influence in international politics and foreign policy processes. The principal hypothesis of the study—"cultural diplomacy systematically exerts influence in international politics and foreign policy processes through the mechanisms of norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power capacity enhancement"—has been strongly validated through systematic literature review and qualitative content analysis conducted within the framework of constructivist theory. The twelve fundamental findings obtained during the research process have demonstrated that this hypothesis is valid both at the level of each individual mechanism and at the level of synergistic interaction among mechanisms. These findings reveal that the hard power-focused approaches of traditional international relations theories are insufficient on their own and that contemporary diplomacy requires cultural strategies predicated upon soft power elements.

The fundamental theoretical contribution of the research lies in the redefinition of the conceptual framework of cultural diplomacy in light of constructivist theory and the systematic analysis of multidimensional effect mechanisms. This theoretical contribution presents an original synthesis of Wendt's (1999) social constructivist approach with Nye's (2004) soft power theory and realizes the integration of these two approaches that are generally treated separately in the literature. This analysis emphasizes the critical role that cultural diplomacy plays not only in interstate relations but also in global governance processes, demonstrating how processes such as norm entrepreneurship, social learning, and identity transformation shape structural changes within the international system (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 887-917; Checkel, 1998: 325-345). Particularly, the reinterpretation of social identity theory's in-group-out-group dynamics in the

context of cultural diplomacy and the systematic examination of the critical role played by cultural actors in the construction of normative frameworks offer original contributions to the literature.

The findings pertaining to the norm diffusion mechanism have systematically revealed that cultural diplomacy functions as a critical instrument in the diffusion and internalization of international norms. The concept of "critical mass threshold" in Finnemore and Sikkink's norm life cycle model has provided a valuable analytical tool for understanding how cultural diplomacy functions as a catalyst in surpassing this threshold. Cultural diplomacy instruments provide effective mechanisms in rendering universal norms comprehensible and acceptable in different cultural contexts, playing an important role particularly in the diffusion of human rights, democracy, environmental protection, and cultural diversity norms. Instruments such as art, music, literature, cinema, and cultural festivals contribute to ensuring not only cognitive but also emotional acceptance by supporting normative messages with emotional and aesthetic dimensions. The process of global adoption of UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage constitutes a concrete example of this mechanism.

The findings in identity construction processes demonstrate that cultural diplomacy plays an active role in both national identity consolidation and international identity formation processes. When evaluated within the framework of Bhabha's (2015) concept of cultural hybridity, it has been determined that cultural diplomacy activities prepare the ground for the development of hybrid and pluralist identity forms by softening rigid identity boundaries. Cultural interactions provide effective instruments in the processes of softening the "us" and "them" distinction, discovering common identity elements, and developing multiple identity belongings. Language teaching, educational exchange programs, cultural heritage projects, and diaspora networks function as concrete instruments of identity construction processes and prepare the cultural ground for long-term diplomatic relations. Institutional structures such as the Confucius Institute, Goethe Institute, Alliance Française, British Council, and Yunus Emre Institute represent the institutional dimension of these identity construction processes.

The findings in the soft power capacity enhancement mechanism reveal the systematic role that cultural attractiveness elements play in enhancing states' international prestige and providing advantage in diplomatic negotiations. Anholt's (2007) nation branding perspective and Schneider's (2005: 148-164) cultural attractiveness analysis provide valuable frameworks for the operationalization of this mechanism. Cultural industries, innovative/creative economy, and cultural tourism contribute to soft power capacity while simultaneously creating economic value (Throsby, 2014; Hesmondhalgh, 2019). The international successes of the film industry, music, fashion, and gastronomy positively influence the general perception of those countries and provide advantage in diplomatic processes. South Korea's Hallyu phenomenon, Japan's Cool Japan strategy, and the global dissemination of Turkish television series are successful examples of how cultural industries are systematically transformed into soft power capacity.

The contributions of the study at the empirical level lie in its systematic demonstration of the synergistic interaction among the three fundamental mechanisms of cultural diplomacy. It has been determined that norm diffusion processes support identity transformation, identity construction processes enhance soft power capacity, and the increase in soft power creates new norm diffusion opportunities. This synergistic model concretizes Wendt's thesis of mutual constitution between structure and agent in the context of cultural diplomacy and offers an original contribution to international relations theory. This cyclical and mutually reinforcing effect demonstrates that cultural diplomacy constitutes an integrated effect system. The European Union's cultural diplomacy programs provide a concrete example of how these three mechanisms can be integrated at the institutional level.

The findings pertaining to the transformative effects of digitalization processes on cultural diplomacy reveal that social media platforms, digital art projects, and virtual cultural events

fundamentally transform traditional diplomacy spaces and times (Castells, 2009; Seib, 2012; van Dijk, 2016). This transformation enables the democratization of cultural diplomacy and its reach to wider audiences while simultaneously creating new inequalities and digital divide problems. Digital cultural diplomacy practices accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic—virtual museum tours, online concerts, digital film festivals—have concretely revealed both the opportunities and limitations of this transformation (Albayrak, 2023: 495-505; Koçyiğit et al., 2024: 709-722).

The findings pertaining to the role of the multi-actor structure in cultural diplomacy processes systematically reveal the increasing role of civil society organizations, artist communities, academic institutions, and diaspora networks in cultural diplomacy processes (Singh, 2010; Cooper, 2021). These actors assume complementary and sometimes alternative functions to official diplomacy channels, contributing to the democratization and pluralization of international relations. The elements of listening, advocacy, and exchange diplomacy emphasized in Cull's (2019) five-component public diplomacy model provide a valuable framework for analyzing the different dimensions of this multi-actor structure.

The research findings have also systematically revealed the potential limitations and critical dimensions of cultural diplomacy. When evaluated from a post-colonial perspective (Said, 1978; Scott, 2019; Wang, 2018: 650-653), there exists a risk that cultural diplomacy may function as an instrument in the process of universalizing Western values. Within the framework of Gramsci's (1992) hegemony theory, the potential of cultural diplomacy to reproduce existing power asymmetries must be taken into consideration. These critical findings demonstrate that the principle of mutuality (Mitchell, 1986), ethical principles, and principles of preserving cultural diversity are of central importance in the design of cultural diplomacy strategies.

Among the methodological limitations of the research are the restricted level of generalizability of findings by virtue of the nature of qualitative research approach, the limitation of data sources to academic literature, and the difficulties in fully covering current developments. As Yin (2018) emphasizes, the aim in case studies is not statistical generalization but analytical generalization; in this study too, findings have been generalized to specific theoretical propositions. Furthermore, due to the great diversity of cultural diplomacy practices, it was not possible to cover all variations, and the research remained limited to a specific sample. Limited access to direct primary data sources—interviews with diplomatic actors, ethnographic field studies—caused the study to remain restricted to an analysis method based on secondary sources. Despite these limitations, reliable and meaningful findings were obtained through the systematic analysis of comprehensive academic accumulation in the fields of social psychology and international relations.

For the overcoming of these limitations in future research, the conduct of empirical studies using primary data sources, the realization of comparative analyses of different cultural contexts, and the adoption of longitudinal research designs are recommended. Particularly, the use of longitudinal research approaches is necessary for the evaluation of the long-term effects of cultural diplomacy activities and for understanding the effects of cross-cultural differences on cultural diplomacy dynamics. Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions theory offers important insights regarding how cultural diplomacy strategies should differentiate in different cultural contexts.

Among the priority areas recommended for future research is the analysis of how digitalization processes are transforming cultural diplomacy and the reflections of this transformation on international politics. Research questions such as the effect of social media platforms on cultural identity formation, how transnational actors are transforming traditional state-centric cultural diplomacy structures, and how cultural mobilization occurs during global crisis periods carry the potential to expand the explanatory capacity of cultural diplomacy theory. Within the framework of the network society paradigm (van Dijk, 2016; Castells, 2009), how digital cultural diplomacy

is transforming traditional models constitutes one of the priority research areas.

At the theoretical level, the evaluation of cultural diplomacy from postcolonial perspectives, the integration of feminist international relations theories into cultural diplomacy analysis, and the systematic examination of the contribution of critical theory approaches to understanding cultural hegemony dynamics are recommended (Chibber, 2016; Odabaş, 2018). Particularly, the questions of how changes in global power balances are affecting cultural diplomacy strategies and how rising powers are developing alternative cultural diplomacy models constitute important questions for future research. The cultural dimensions of China's Belt and Road Initiative, India's yoga diplomacy, and Turkey's use of Ottoman cultural heritage as a diplomatic instrument necessitate the systematic analysis of these alternative models.

From a methodological perspective, the use of experimental methods, longitudinal case studies, and mixed methodological approaches is recommended for overcoming the limitations of this research in future studies. Particularly, the use of social network analysis methods in mapping cultural flows, digital ethnography techniques in understanding online cultural interactions, and sentiment analysis methods in measuring cultural diplomacy effects is necessary. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis model and Lame's (2019: 1634-1640) systematic literature review protocol can provide methodological guidance for future research.

Among short-term urgent recommendations for policymakers are the systematic integration of cultural diplomacy strategies with national foreign policy objectives, the strengthening of institutional coordination mechanisms, and the development of professional human resources. Particularly, the comprehensive training of cultural diplomacy practitioners, the development of multilingual competencies, and the enhancement of intercultural communication skills should be evaluated among critical priorities. The observance of the principle of mutuality (Mitchell, 1986) and ethical standards is imperative for preserving the boundary between cultural diplomacy and propaganda.

Medium-term strategic recommendations include the strengthening of the economic dimension of cultural diplomacy, the support of innovative-creative industries in international markets, and the evaluation of the diplomatic potential of cultural heritage tourism (Throsby, 2014). The systematic development of digital diplomacy capacities, the professionalization of social media strategies, and the increase of online cultural content production are also among medium-term priorities. In the Turkish context, the strengthening of the capacities of the Yunus Emre Institute and TİKA, the evaluation of the strategic potential of Turkish television series, and the systematic use of Ottoman cultural heritage as a diplomatic instrument are of importance (Yağmurlu, 2007: 10-34; Güven & Arslan, 2020; Ökten, 2022: 99-136).

Long-term strategic recommendations encompass the development of sustainable cultural diplomacy models, the increase of active participation in global cultural governance mechanisms, and the strengthening of future generations' cultural diplomacy consciousness. The development of cultural approaches in global challenges such as climate change, sustainable development, and social justice, and the transmission of cultural diversity to future generations while preserving it are also among long-term objectives. The integration of cultural diplomacy with UNESCO's cultural diversity programs and sustainable development goals constitutes the institutional framework of these long-term strategies.

The recommended approaches for practitioners include the development of cultural diplomacy projects within the framework of participatory design principles, the provision of effective participation of local communities in decision-making processes, and the integration of sustainability principles into all activities. Particularly, the observance of ethical principles in cultural diplomacy practices, the avoidance of cultural essentialism, and the support of cultural diversity are of critical importance. The consideration of post-colonial critiques (Said, 1978; Scott, 2019) and the avoidance of Western-centric approaches is imperative for the legitimacy of

cultural diplomacy practices.

Recommendations for academics encompass the increase of interdisciplinary research in the field of cultural diplomacy, the development of international cooperation projects, and the support of young researchers' specialization in this field. Particularly, in the Turkish context, the systematization of cultural diplomacy research, the convergence of local experiences with international literature, and the development of original theoretical contributions are necessary (Bulut, 2019: 3-25; Kömür, 2020: 90-110). Bourdieu's cultural capital theory, Habermas's (1984) communicative action approach, and Appadurai's (1996) theory of global cultural flows provide valuable theoretical frameworks for interdisciplinary research.

Recommendations for the civil society sector include the enhancement of NGOs' capacities in cultural diplomacy activities, the facilitation of their access to funding sources, and the strengthening of their collaborations with international networks. The provision of systematic participation of civil society organizations operating in the fields of youth, women, art, and culture in cultural diplomacy processes is of importance. The importance of informal channels emphasized in the Track II diplomacy literature strengthens the strategic position of civil society organizations in cultural diplomacy processes.

The findings and recommendations of this research systematically reveal the increasing importance of cultural factors in contemporary international relations, offering valuable contributions to both theoretical literature and practical policy applications. The original theoretical contribution of the research lies in the integration of constructivist theory with the soft power approach and the modeling of the synergistic interaction among the mechanisms of norm diffusion, identity construction, and soft power capacity enhancement. Particularly, the opportunities that cultural diplomacy offers for preserving cultural diversity and developing productive-innovative-transformative syntheses in the face of homogenization pressures created by globalization processes are of critical importance.

In conclusion, the multidimensional, dynamic, and transformative nature of the role of cultural diplomacy in international politics and foreign policy demonstrates the critical importance of interdisciplinary approaches from both theoretical and practical perspectives. The integration of cultural diplomacy into traditional diplomacy methods not only strengthens bilateral relations but also provides valuable guidance for global governance, sustainable peacebuilding, and common prosperity enhancement. However, the potential hegemonic dimensions of cultural diplomacy and the limitations of Western-centric approaches necessitate the evaluation of strategies in this field from a critical perspective. The systematic use of the soft power instruments that cultural diplomacy offers for coping with the complex global challenges of the twenty-first century has become an indispensable strategy for both the realization of national interests and contribution to global peace and stability. The most important message of this study is that international politics must be evaluated not solely through power balances and interest calculations, but also through the perspectives of cultural richness, innovative-productive-transformative interaction, and the construction of shared values.

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