

# The role of sports and music in public diplomacy: the case of Kosovo

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## Abstract

This article elaborates the influence of sports and music on the diplomatic position of Kosovo. Despite being a new country and struggling with political recognition and diplomatic relations, Kosovo has gained popularity through the global success of its citizens in sports and music. An analysis of international media has shown that there is a significant correlation between the success of individuals in changing diplomatic approaches towards Kosovo and redefinition of constraints towards its citizens. Moreover, the image of a country built through success stories of individuals has a significant effect on the general international public and has changed the negative perception of the country. Kosovo here is used as an example to illustrate how sports and cultural diplomacy have been more successful than classical diplomacy.

**Keywords:** public diplomacy, small states, nation branding, sports and music diplomacy, Kosovo, image

## Rola sportu i muzyki w dyplomacji publicznej na przykładzie Kosowa

### Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł omawia wpływ sportu i muzyki na dyplomatyczną pozycję Kosowa. Mimo, że Kosovo jest młodym państwem, które stara się o uznanie polityczne i dopiero buduje relacje dyplomatyczne, to już zyskało popularność dzięki światowym sukcesom jego obywateli w sporcie i muzyce. Analiza międzynarodowych mediów wykazała, że istnieje znaczna korelacja między sukcesem poszczególnych osób w zmianie podejścia dyplomatycznego wobec Kosowa a redefinicją ograniczeń wobec jego obywateli. Ponadto, liczne sukcesy we wspomnianych dziedzinach przyczyniły się do poprawy wizerunku państwa na arenie międzynarodowej. Na przykładzie Kosowa zaprezentowano w jaki sposób dyplomacja sportowa i kulturalna odniosła większy sukces niż dyplomacja klasyczna.

**Słowa kluczowe:** dyplomacja publiczna, niewielkie państwa, branding narodowy, dyplomacja kulturalna, Kosowo, wizerunek

States have always used their culture to transmit political, social, and economic values. Development of information technology, as well as the power and influence of public opinion in creating and shaping political priorities, was also a new thing in foreign policy not long ago. However public diplomacy became important especially among small and newly created states who are struggling for attention, considering it a powerful tool and effective way to represent their national interests and gain visibility in international relations. Kosovo declared independence in 2008, becoming the youngest state in Europe. It brought with it the harsh reality of a disputed narrative. To receive support, Kosovo had to work on getting international recognition. Diplomacy has mainly developed in its classic sense of building relations through diplomatic channels, while other areas such as public diplomacy, culture and sports had been widely neglected.

There is limited research explaining how public diplomacy can act directly in building a small state's image. Reasons for this gap in research are the ambiguity of the term public diplomacy and the difficulty in conducting scientific research where the impact of public diplomacy on the image of the small states can be proven. Achievements of individual citizens as a tool for the promotion of the small states have been left considerably unexplored.

This article aims at justifying the working hypothesis that sports and music, as instruments of the public diplomacy, serve small states through building their image and reputation at the international level, in parallel with classic diplomacy. Further, sports and music may complement traditional diplomacy. As complementary diplomatic tools, arts, sports and culture have bypassed and overwritten classic diplomatic borders. To identify and link these categories, this paper is divided into three parts to address: firstly, the question of public diplomacy and nation branding in general with reflections on Kosovo's actions in that areas; secondly, the issue of sports and arts diplomacy; and finally, some of the most successful events in Kosovo's sports, culture and music between 2008 and 2018. This analysis compares the success of the state's diplomacy and nation branding in Kosovo, with individual achievements in arts, sports, and music, which have served to promote the state and break through diplomatic obstacles where classic diplomacy has failed to penetrate.

## **Public diplomacy and nation branding**

The issue of improving the image of the country is not a matter that belongs only to politics and diplomacy. As a central issue, it is tightly related to the international reputation of a country, which affects equally all state and non-state actors, starting from individuals, NGOs, schools, universities, cultural centres, academia (Wählisch, Xharra 2010: p. 9–65). All inevitably contribute to and are beneficiaries of the positive image of the country, and all can be responsible for and affected by negative actions.

The term "public diplomacy" was first used in 1965 by Edmund Gullion, a career U.S. diplomat (Hansen 1984: p. 2), as a replacement for the word propaganda (Cull 2010: p.12), however, variations on this definition have made this area attractive for researchers and

very practical for its application. Jozef Bátora argues that public diplomacy is an opportunity for small states to influence the international agenda beyond their limited size, military and economic power (Bátora 2005: p.1). Additionally, former Australian foreign minister, Gareth Evans, has said that the persuasion and influence of public diplomacy extends beyond traditional diplomacy, leveraging both inside and outside governments (Evans, Grant 1995: p. 66). Gifford Malone suggests that public diplomacy affects perceptions of a government in the eyes of foreigners (Malone 1985: p. 4), by providing understanding for its nation's ideas, culture, institutions, goals and policies (Tuch 1990: p.3). According to Nicolas J. Cull, public diplomacy during the history took the form of contact between governments and publics of other countries, as an attempt to conduct foreign policy through engagement with people from other states (Cull 2009: p.12–17). In the latest researches in this field, Jan Melissen argues that public diplomacy aims to influence foreign audiences, both people and authorities; thus, it is called 'people-to-people' diplomacy, with the aim to create a positive image of the country and to win the hearts and minds of foreign audiences (Melissen 2005: p. 3–25). One of the instruments of public diplomacy that aims to reach foreign nations and people is "nation branding" (Szondi 2008: p.14–23). The term was first used in 1996 by Simon Anholt to describe the behaviour of the states compared to the behaviour of companies, whose advancement depended on prosperity, good management and progress (Anholt 2011: p.6). Although public diplomacy has been described as a "peculiarly American aberration", with nation branding having more European roots and appeal, showing clear British dominance (Laqueur 1994: p.19), public diplomacy and nation branding are synonyms for the same concept (Szondi 2008: p.14), and have a common goal – to promote the nation's image and interest. One of the most well-known nation branding campaigns over the last decades is the Estonian efforts to replace the "post – Soviet" image with more prestigious "pre-EU" image, which aims to replace the old image with a completely new one (Gilboa 2008: p.67).

Kosovo as a case study for this research shows one of the clearest examples of how public diplomacy and nation branding have arisen simultaneously with the existence of the state itself.

After the independence of Kosovo on February 17, 2008, Kosovo's foreign policy immediately took steps towards the advancement of the position of Kosovo especially in deepening the relations with the countries that had supported the independence of Kosovo (Tran, Orr 2008). Having the Euro-Atlantic integration as one of the top priorities of foreign policy, the necessary steps had to be taken in this regard to facilitate the path to good relations (*Declaration of Independence* 2008). In the meantime, civil society urged Kosovo's government to make use of nation branding in order to deal with the key challenges the country was facing (KFOS 2008: p.8), including the association of the image of Kosovo with a war zone and insecurity. Through nation branding and public diplomacy, Kosovo aimed to build a new reputation by overcoming the negative image of a post-war country. As an attempt to improve the image of Kosovo in the international arena and to reach the international public, the Kosovo government developed the "Kosovo – Young

Europeans" nation branding campaign, launched in 2009 and realised by Israeli company Saatchi & Saatchi. The slogan is based on the fact that the Republic of Kosovo is both one of the youngest countries in the world and also home to the youngest populations in Europe (Wählisch, Xharra 2010: p. 13–19). The TV commercial was broadcasted in six major international TV channels, namely CNN, BBC World News, Euronews, CNN Turk, Bloomberg, and Eurosport. It was claimed that a successful national brand and a better international image of Kosovo was expected to deliver political and economic benefits (Wählisch, Xharra 2010: p.25). Among the first activities of public diplomacy was also the project "Communication with Europe through diplomacy" between the Kosovo MFA and the British Government in 2011, implemented by the British Council office in Prishtina that aimed to promote Kosovo's public diplomacy as an instrument of strengthening relations between Kosovo and countries that have not yet recognised it. The project involved advocacy and information activities to establish channels of communication with targeted countries between government, parliament, civil society, businesses, academia, and media ("Kosovo talks EU | British Council"). The British Government, through its Embassy in Prishtina, contributed 141, 6588 Euro and the Kosovo Government through the MFA contributed 141,172 euro (Telegrafi 2011).

These attempts continued to circulate among the governmental institutions which closed the doors for many countries that had already taken sides over the political status of Kosovo and statehood. This bipolarity had a serious impact on Kosovo's development and brought with it political solitary isolation, which even today continues to barricade the country's communication with the democratised world and other nations. However, the fields which have had the most significant impact in breaking these boundaries (while still being subject to isolation) are sports and music through the efforts of individuals, which this article elaborates from the perspective of public diplomacy.

## **Sports and music in public diplomacy**

Sports and culture have been historically acknowledged for their role in improvement of cross-cultural understanding and engagement, and their role has grown over the years as a tool of diplomacy. Since the era of ancient Olympic Games, sports competitions have facilitated society's efforts to mediate and improve relations, resolve conflicts and glorify competitive desires.

Through sports, cities and countries have introduced and communicated with their counterparts (Spaaij 2012: p.761–774). In this manner, the opposite side – teams and their fans—could meet one another, opening the way for a sustainable relationship (Sport and Diplomacy WWW).

In contemporary history, sports have been recognised for their role in building relationships. As the former U.S Ambassador H.E. Jim Cain said in the 2nd Hague Conference on Diplomacy in 2009 that: "Sports can be a powerful medium to reach out and build relationships...across cultural and ethnic divisions, with a positive message of shared values: values such as mutual respect, tolerance, compassion, discipline, equality of

opportunity and the rule of law. In many ways, sports can be a more effective foreign policy resource than the carrot or the stick" (Murray, Pigman 2013: p.1103). Sports have often been defined as a universal language that enables individuals of different cultures to meet in an activity common to both, and by doing so, communicate with each other (Hansen 1984: p.228). Meetings of this kind with the "opposite side" were considered to strengthen the national identity of either respective sides or countries. These bilateral and multilateral forms of representation and communication constitute a form of diplomacy which has remained broadly unexplored (though more recently researchers have included an analysis of sports and music as instruments for foreign diplomacy (Redeker 2008: p.494–500, Statler 2012: p.71–75, Murray 2012: p.576–592).

In the last decades there are sufficient examples of the sports matches contracted specifically for the purpose of softening tensions between states who could not reach peaceful agreements through traditional diplomatic routes. Among the most distinguished examples is "the diplomacy of ping-pong," which opened the channels of communication and decreased tensions between People's Republic of China and United States of America at the beginning of 1970's (MacMillan 2008: p.179). Less than a year after the outbreak of so-called "ping-pong diplomacy", the U.S. President Richard Nixon, travelled to Beijing as the first U.S president to visit the People's Republic of China, considered as a unique case of the use of sports in diplomacy (Hansen 1984: p.229). Similarly, sports have played a crucial role in the termination of Apartheid in South Africa (Krotee, Schwick 1979: p. 33–42). In parallel, the Olympic Team of the Republic of South Korea and the Olympic team of the Republic of North Korea marched together in the opening ceremony of Olympic Games in Sydney 2000 (Gittings 2000). These are some of the most recent examples which illustrate that "sports diplomacy" is a pivotal increasing practice of contemporary diplomacy. Countries like Canada, according to Stuart Murray, identify artists, teachers, students, travellers, experts and young people as public diplomats alongside with traditional diplomats, who are involved in representative and diplomatic activities undertaken on behalf and in coordination with their governments (Murray, 2012). In the context of sports diplomacy, this hybrid form of cooperation created favourable conditions of the new forms of diplomacy to emerge (Murray 2012: p.576–592).

In public diplomacy music appears to be a powerful tool for obtaining different goals. As Kathryn C. Statler asked: "Who can dispute the power of music?" a question raised in an exchange prompted by a special issue of *Diplomatic History* (Statler 2012: p.71–75). Musical institutions and the experience of music making have all contributed to the idea that music can enact social alternatives and cause political change (Mahiet et al. 2014: p.2). For Olivier Urbain, "music has power to move people towards the direction of peaceful and noble goals, or destructive ones" (Urbain, Shorter 2015: p.2). Moreover, Felicity Laurence considered that music was used as "powerful and ubiquitous tool in propaganda," but has also "facilitated progress towards a sense of solidarity beyond cultural and national boundaries, and ultimately toward a sense of universal and connected consciousness" (Laurence, Urbain 2011: p.1–14.). Historically music has been used by both individuals and governments to ease the tense relations over specific periods of time, or in relations

with specific states. The most prominent examples are as follows below. The U.S. State Department sponsored Jazz Ambassadors program exactly for this reason. Organised tours overseas for jazz musicians like Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Benny Goodman, and Duke Ellington, aimed to improve the image of the U.S due to the racial inequality and tensions between 1956 and 1978 by bringing American culture to the Soviet publics in the middle of the Cold War (Von Eschen 2004: p.10–25). *In 1967, Our World* was the first live world-wide satellite program special and featured artists ranging from The Beatles to Maria Callas from fourteen different countries across five continents. Similarly, during the Vietnam War moral crisis, the Beatles decided to perform “*All you need is Love*”, to 400 million people around the world (see: USC Center on Public Diplomacy 2015).

### **Kosovo: the sports and art diplomacy in the service of national interest**

In the case of Kosovo, creation of this hybrid form of diplomacy was not planned or anticipated by the state's government or institutions. Kosovo's foreign policy had not planned to set foundations of public diplomacy on individual global achievements as it happened. Moreover, many domestic researches have emphasised that Kosovo's foreign policy did not take advantage of the favourable environment to set up strong foundations of public diplomacy (Wählisch, Xharra 2010: p. 8–15). As of October 2018, 116 countries recognised Kosovo's statehood (see: Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Republic of Kosovo, *Lista e njohjeve* WWW). Out of 28 EU Member States, Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, and Slovakia continue not to recognize Kosovo, despite relative progress in relations and support in Kosovo's EU integration path. Serbia, Russia, and China continue to reject Kosovo's legitimacy (Morelli 2018: p.1–16) and have blocked the country's path to the United Nations and other international organizations (Palokaj 2015: p.22). These political blockades have been a major obstacle for Kosovo youth, considered to be one of the most valuable assets of the country.

After 10 years, development of youth, sports, culture, and music soon faced barriers that prevented talented individuals from being part of regional, European or global competitions in their respective fields. Some of the major cases that drew international attention were the prevention of Kosovo to participate in the beauty pageant which took place in Moscow, Russia in 2013, even though Kosovo is accepted as a full member of the Miss Universe Organisation (see: B92 2013). Further, in May 2018, the Kosovo Karate Federation team was not allowed to enter Serbian territory on their way to the European Karate Championship in Novi Sad (Die Morina 2018).

Harsh political attitudes towards the status of Kosovo from countries that are economically and politically powerful have managed to suffocate attempts by Kosovo institutions to bring forward initiatives for the development and integration of art and sports, with the aim to offer chances to young athletes in the country. At first sight, these kinds of oppositions give the impression of what Murray calls in his book *Sports Diplomacy*, foolish and bizarre attitudes of those who are against people playing (Murray 2018: p.10).

However, in parallel, Grant Jarvie expresses in his seminar report *Sport, Culture and Society*, that it "is impossible to fully understand contemporary society and culture without acknowledging the place of sport" (Jarvie 2017: p. 2). Thus, these attitudes create the idea that obstacles against sports of one country are an attempt to block the promotion and acknowledgment of its culture. Moreover, from the societal perspective, participation of Kosovo in international sports was far more important than simply a game of any sport, but it was rather a factual recognition of the country's existence, including acceptance and inclusiveness in society. This only validates Murray's view that a sport in diplomacy is a re-conceptualisation of the old practice of bringing strangers together (Murray 2018).

In the light of political events in the region of the Balkans, where Kosovo as a small country was battling on many fronts, it was not in Kosovo's foreign policy plan that individual global achievements in sports and music would represent Kosovo and its statehood for the next 10 years. However, talented individuals in sports and music have decided to "actively engage" in the diplomacy of their country, through the activities that they could do best, by participating in international sports as an act of political involvement, and waved the flag of the new state in the countries where classic diplomatic channels continue to maintain hermetically closed gates. The successes of individuals in Kosovo's public diplomacy have made them actors who have opened opportunities for many generations to come. One of the major achievements in Kosovar sport was the admission of Kosovo as a member of the *Union of European Football Associations* (UEFA) in May 2016 (see: UEFA 2018), and *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA), despite the strong opposition from Serbia (see: FIFA 2016). In Kosovo, the decision taken from UEFA and FIFA resonated well beyond the football pitch. It represented a symbolic victory for Kosovo's foreign policy, on its way to full UN membership. Former politician and one of the initiators of public diplomacy of Kosovo, Petrit Selimi said: "Being recognised on the soccer pitch and online has far greater resonance than in some back room in Brussels" (Bilefsky 2013).

Professional athletes, actors, musicians, artists, and so on — frequently operate as "ambassadors"; and they do so to a global audience within the "soft power" or "co-optive" battle for influencing foreign public (Park 2017: p.14), while this achievement for the state of Kosovo is what Joseph Nye defined as attracting others and getting them "to want what you want" (Nye 1990: p.181) through the attraction of a nation's values and culture (Nye 2004: p.11). As Murray describes that powerful sports attracts political elites (Murray, Pigman 2013), Kosovo sports opened a new lead on political battles.

One of the individuals with the highest impacts in promoting Kosovo sports talents was Majlinda Kelmendi, gold medal Olympic winner in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 (see: Masters 2016). In 2012, after Kosovo's participation in Summer Olympic Games "London 2012" was refused, Majlinda represented Albania; however, internationally her success was applauded as a potential champion in judo from Kosovo who was not allowed to represent her country due to political issues (Borger, Walker 2012). This was the case even though the Resolution of the European Parliament requested that the International Olympic Committee allow Kosovar athletes to participate in the upcoming London Olym-

pic Games (European Parliament 2012). As a result, in December 2014, the International Olympic Committee granted Kosovo full membership (New York Times 2014).

Kosovo was able to take part in its first ever Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro in 2016, and Majlinda Kelmendi became Kosovo's first Olympic medallist as she took gold in the women's -52kg judo in Rio (Samuelson 2016). Kelmendi became "the face of the country" and a model of hope for over 50% of the population of Kosovo who is younger than 30 years old (Sinani 2015: p.275). Majlinda was the judo World Champion in 2013 and 2014 and European Champion in 2014, 2016 and 2017. In 2017 she won Grand Slam in Paris for the fourth time (see: *Majlinda Kelmendi Judoka* W/W). Majlinda Kelmendi became a headline in many giant global media such as BBC, Euro news, Reuters, Eurosport, Channel 4, "The New York Times", "Financial Times" and "Washington Post". Her individual participation in 2016 European Judo Championships in Russia, where she became world champion, represents one of the most victorious diplomatic moments, an achievement that other diplomatic units in Kosovo had aimed to achieve since its genesis in 2008 (see: CNN 2018).

Although Kosovo is strictly prohibited to participate in country's sports represented as an independent state, especially in Russia which was the greatest opponent of Kosovo's advancement in sports, the flag of Kosovo and the anthem were still broadcast and honoured by the Russian guard of honour after Majlinda Kelmendi became the 1<sup>st</sup> champion. This represents one of the biggest paradoxes in the field of Kosovo's diplomacy, where the achievements, especially in sports, where in places like Russia are a factual recognition of the position of Kosovo. It is important to mention that the position of the political opponents has remained the same towards the status of Kosovo; however, the battle of sport won by an individual broke through an impossible political situation where the athlete was still able to represent their country, even if the hosting country did not recognize it as such (Telegrafi 2016).

Other achievements in other sports have been recorded meanwhile. More than 10 years after independence, the Kosovo national football team won their first match for UEFA Nations League qualifiers, marking its first international match played on home soil (Homewood 2018). Kosovo's first-ever win in UEFA was highlighted in many international media, and as the former president of Football Federation of Kosovo stated for Radio Free Europe, Kosovo athletes have been the best ambassadors of Kosovo so far, throughout the 10 years of independence of the state. From a country connoted with war and trouble, Kosovo athletes comfortably improved the image of the country in the international arena. (Krasniqi-Veseli 2018). Kosovo's football team concluded the year unbeaten, with the chance of European Championship qualification, being labelled by international media as "Brazil of the Balkans" (Zeqiri 2018).

In the light of discussion of public diplomacy of Kosovo, the aim of cultural diplomacy as an instrument of public diplomacy is to facilitate the exchange of the ideas and culture among nations (Waller 2009: p.74).

Examples of the achievements of artists and sportsmen and women from Kosovo which played an important role in Kosovo's soft power strategy, is another illustration



that sports, and culture diplomacy helped to send through the information about Kosovo reality. Just like the sport, which was more an international struggle, art, and specifically achievements of Kosovo artists in music, is more a result of a limitless world that media and social media have created. Rita Ora, Dua Lipa, Majlinda Kelmendi, Era Istrefi, tenor Ramë Lahaj, are only some of the youth who had the chance to broadcast their talent in front of a global audience, bringing forward most highlighted values of the country (Hajdari 2016). The main aim of what Jessica Gienow – Hecht call the role of culture diplomacy in cultural information is a signal of cooperation and reach of people (Gienow-Hecht 2012: p.18). Nye linked public diplomacy with cultural relations considering that information and selling a positive image is part of it, but public diplomacy is more about building long-term relations than creating an enabling environment for government policies' (Nye 2008: p.101).

There has been a link between the success of Kosovar-British artists (especially their top female pop star) rankings and the increase of global interest in Kosovo, their country of origin (Potton 2017). In a few years the comparison in global media reporting about Kosovo has rapidly changed. The terms once used to describe Kosovo as Europe's black hole have been replaced by the global success of these artists to change the image of Kosovo from a former helpless country to one which produces global scale superstars. Search engines like Google have changed search results for Kosovo in the last few years (see: *Google Trends* 2018), from representing Kosovo as a small war-torn country to be an example of courage and changes that it has embraced. Just like Majlinda's case was highlighted by global media in Rio2016, on the same year another de facto recognition was pushed by talented tenor Rame Lahaj in Mexico, where he represented Kosovo in Operalia and received the third-place medal (see: *Operalia* 2016). Many people found out where Kosovo is geographically located through the video of the song "Shine ya light" by Rita Ora, recorded in Prishtina, in 2012. She promoted the image of Kosovo all around the world, becoming the biggest pop symbol of Kosovo (Cooper 2012). In her interview "Hypetrak.com," the Kosovo-British singer said that if anyone from Kosovo manages to break through to success, they must hold the flag for everyone else (MFA-RKS 2018). In the meantime, through her interviews around the world she has taken the opportunity to talk about human atrocities against Kosovar Albanians in the late 90s, and the pride she feels for her background (Armstrong 2015). For the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kosovo's independence, Rita put on a free concert in the capital Prishtina which draw over 300 thousand people from all over the world (Acres 2018). Her fame attracted many international media. For her contribution in promoting the image of Kosovo in the world, President Atifete Jahjaga in 2015, named Rita Ora honorary ambassador of Kosovo and described her as the country's "most successful artist" (Powell 2015). Another global pop star who returned to Kosovo in 2018 is the British Kosovar singer Dua Lipa. Her fame and popularity played along with her performing alongside Kosovo and international artists in the Sunny Hill Charity Festival. This festival, aimed at giving people a sense of belonging and the idea that they are part of Europe, put Kosovo on the global cultural map (Walker 2018). The pop star regularly promotes her Kosovo roots through her fame. The breakthrough of Kosovo artists has become

a rising trend in the last few years. Singer and author Era Istrefi broke international music borders with one of her songs including Albanian lyrics. Her song released in 2016 has 608,570,444 views on YouTube and made it into the Top 100 in the UK, Canada, France and Germany (BalkanInsight 2016). Following the song's success in 2017 she won the European Border Breakers Award. Later on, she was featured as one of the singers on the "Live It Up" - Official Song 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia, alongside American actor Will Smith and Puerto Rico-born singer Nicky Jam (Brophy 2018). The international media mainly discussed this topic for the fact that a singer from Kosovo was singing in Russia, a country who has repeatedly prevented Kosovo citizens from being a part of any type of event held in Russia. In December 2018, the American news media, *Politico*, in its annual list, which compiles a list of 28 people who will shape Europe in the year ahead, has listed Era Istrefi as Kosovo's ambassador among the 28 people who will be "shaping, shaking and stirring Europe in 2019" (Politico 2018). Other important events that have promoted Kosovo culturally, artistically and have opened the borders for Kosovo to become a host of international community for artistic competitions, are: "Dokufest" (International Documentary and Short Film Festival), which already became a symbol of cultural diplomacy of Kosovo, making Prizren the city of film and art, and Kosovo a meeting point of ideas and cultural exchanges (Bytyci 2014); equally important short film "Shok", which in 2016 was nominated for the Oscars, as the first movie from Kosovo that has ever been nominated for the Oscars (Popova 2016); the participation of Kosovo in the Venice Biennale International Architecture Exhibition, which was estimated that the cultural diplomacy is necessary to Kosovo's international affirmation (Kosovapress 2018).

## Conclusions

States have used sports and music to transmit messages, promote their political, social and cultural values throughout the history, especially to send diplomatic messages. This field, recently emerged for the possibility it provided to the states to influence the public opinion and promote state interests to foreign peoples and societies. Mostly the small states who strive for international recognition and the ones who cannot shape international agenda through their military, political or economic powers, have found public diplomacy as convenient and took advantage of it. Many theories and researches have analysed the role of public diplomacy in general, and the role of sports and arts in diplomacy, however this remained broadly unexplored for small states. In this article a theoretical insight has been provided on public diplomacy of small states and how they can use sports and music to become visible in international arena. Building and re-constructing the image of the state is not always possible through classic diplomacy. In the case of Kosovo, the use of individual achievements in the service of national interest has proven to be successful. Many artists and athletes are influencing the perception of Kosovo values at the international level. Individuals have brought global attention towards Kosovo with their personal successes. This is a big achievement for a country known for being torn apart by war, suffering from the aftermath processes of transition

to democracy and young statehood. Individuals such as Majlinda Kelmendi, Rita Ora, Dua Lipa, Era Istrefi, and all other successful individuals who have openly promoted and protected their Kosovar identity have become political players of public and cultural diplomacy of the country of their origin. The aim of this correlation was shedding light upon the facts that public diplomacy is not only a supplementary tool of classic diplomacy, but rather a complementary tool and equally important, which has managed to open diplomatic routes that classic diplomacy was not able to. The importance of public diplomacy derives from its possibility of direct communication with foreign audiences, without passing through governmental routes.

In the case of Kosovo, individual achievements of Kosovar youth have made possible that the young state and its statehood to be promoted directly to foreign publics, even to those countries where their governments closed any possibility for inter-institutional cooperation. By presenting the individual achievements of athletes and artists in the global scale, sufficient examples have been presented which show a direct correlation between the image of a country in international arena and sports and music as tools of public diplomacy. Whether the state gave support towards these individuals, their achievements have served to the interest of Kosovo's promotion and image building, much more than any attempts and efforts of the government through nation branding. However, how small states should take advantage of public diplomacy and individual achievements to the interest of the state's image should remain an open opportunity for future researches in this field.

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