

INSTRUMENTATION AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS:  
MUSIC AS A MAJOR KEY IN CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

by

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HONORS THESIS

Submitted to Texas State University  
in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for  
graduation in the Honors College  
May 2020

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## **ABSTRACT**

Cultural diplomacy is a well-understood aspect of international relations, but music's role in geopolitics is not as thoroughly studied in the field; music and international relations are usually not thought of in the same realm. However, when viewed through the lens of cultural diplomacy, one can explore global political events as they relate to music. My thesis examines the use of music as a tool of cultural diplomacy in between states, both in a historical and contemporary context. By using both primary and secondary texts to study events such as the Americanization of post-World War II West Germany, the political implications of the Eurovision Song Contest, and the emerging effects of the Barenboim-Said Foundation, my thesis reveals how music has been and can be used as a tool in international relations – and how it can have effects in the future of the field.

## Introduction

“Music is what makes the world go ‘round.” This saying, well-known in pop culture, is emblazoned on merchandise, motivational posters, and in the minds of musicians and music lovers. It usually refers to music being an artistic, heartfelt expression that unifies people effortlessly. However, if one imagines this phrase in the mouth of a political scientist instead of a musician, it takes on a different meaning entirely. The world that we know is in a constant process of being shaped by geopolitical forces; naturally, the sources of these international political agents are countless, but one that has not been given its righteous place of importance and study in international relations is that of music: in a very different way than the intended usage of the phrase, a political scientist could argue that music does, indeed, make the world go ‘round.

Music has long been recognized and used, at least by some governmental agencies, as a small aspect of public diplomacy campaigns. It has been pushed as propaganda, banned among peoples in censoring efforts, and used as a way to unify populations – to say in the least, music and foreign affairs have always been intertwined.<sup>1</sup> However, its use as a tool in cultural diplomatic policy has been underwhelming, and does not match up to the massive potential that it possesses. Even more so, the general populace seems to be largely unaware of the effect that music can have and historically has had in international relations, generally seeming to perceive world politics through a realist perspective that favors only hard concepts of military and economic power as driving forces in geopolitical change. If one were to ask an average citizen their own notion of how international politics and music are related, their answer would most likely

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Einbinder, “Cultural Diplomacy: Harmonizing International Relations Through Music,” *New York, Gallatin School of Individualized Studies*.

rest somewhere along the lines of artists using music as an expression of discontent with political events. Of course, while this answer is completely valid, it also disregards the role of music and cultural diplomacy in tangible pieces of foreign policy. My thesis seeks to discover how music has been used in public diplomacy and foreign affairs, by both states and NGOs, as well as what implications these initiatives hold for the field of international relations as a whole.

Though it may be a widely-accepted given that wherever politics go, music is sure to follow, the less-considered inverse is also deserving of recognition: no matter what corner of the world music reaches towards, political change is right behind, shaped and influenced by the culture which surrounds it. Music plays a role in world politics by both helping to change diplomatic relations between states, as well as acting as a reinforcement of existing political biases. Though these may seem to be two contradictory claims on the surface, my thesis will examine this duality in detail and reveal how they both speak to the power of music in cultural diplomacy.

The three case studies that I have chosen to research are those of West German and American bilateral relations following World War II, the multilateral relations of Europe as they pertain to the Eurovision Song Contest, and how the Barenboim-Said Foundation can have effects in the future of Middle Eastern relations. These examples are pertinent because they work on many different levels; they provide both historical and contemporary evidence, and feature both states and non-states functioning as the primary actors. Music can be (and has been) utilized as an agent to aid in geopolitical change, and the study of this reveals how music truly does make the world go ‘round – and how its potential can be further harnessed in the future of international relations.

## Constructivism and Cultural Diplomacy

In order to fully understand the assertion that music plays a geopolitical role, it is helpful to break down both the international relations paradigm that this argument is framed in, as well as the very concept of cultural diplomacy. My thesis will be working fully within a constructivist framework, as I find that, generally speaking, constructivist arguments are the most compelling and applicable to modern institutions of international relations. Constructivism takes as a given the social dynamic of geopolitics – it states that the laws, norms, and rules that govern the international community have been historically and socially constructed, and are constantly adapting as actors interact with one another. It also accepts states as the main actors of international relations, but gives room for the importance of non-state actors, such as nongovernmental organizations, transnational corporations, and individuals.<sup>2</sup>

While one that is strongly convicted of another geopolitical theory may reject these claims, I will not be discussing different paradigms of international relations in juxtaposition to one another, as countless academics have already done so at length. The three case studies I will be dissecting serve as argument enough for the claim of constructivism, but for transparency's sake, it is worth noting that these three examples do function most clearly when viewed through the lens of constructivism. In sum, due to its allowances for social forces in geopolitics, constructivism is, at its core, the paradigm which works most seamlessly as accepting cultural diplomacy as a necessary tool of

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<sup>2</sup> Efe Sevin. 2015, "Pathways of Connection: An Analytical Approach to the Impacts of Public Diplomacy," *Public Relations Review* 41 (4): 562–68.

international relations.<sup>3</sup>

For its part, cultural diplomacy is defined by the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy as “a course of actions which are based on and utilize the exchange of ideas, values, traditions and other aspects of culture or identity, whether to strengthen relationships, enhance socio-cultural cooperation, promote national interests, and beyond.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, it is the part of geopolitics that encompasses more than international summits, war, and treaty law (not to take away from these important aspects.) Cultural diplomacy accounts for all exchanges of culture that both intentionally and unintentionally aid in achieving a political end, such as sharing art, sports, literature, media, even interpersonal exchanges between citizens of different cultures – and, of course, the exchange of music on a global level. These cultural exchanges are an important yet understudied aspect of international relations, usually considered merely an effect that will inevitably arise when states engage politically with one another. However, cultural diplomacy also has a causal influence in geopolitics.

This dual nature of cultural diplomacy, both a cause and effect in global politics, states that actors exchange culture with one another because of changes in policy, but also acknowledges the fact that the political atmosphere is constantly changing due, in part, to the effects of cultural diplomacy. The following case studies will discuss this duality and interchange in detail, exploring historical and contemporary examples to make an argument for the future use of cultural diplomacy and music in international relations.

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<sup>3</sup> Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> “Institute for Cultural Diplomacy.” Institute for Cultural Diplomacy.  
[http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/index.php?en\\_culturaldiplomacy](http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/index.php?en_culturaldiplomacy)

## **Music and the Americanization of Post-World War II West Germany**

The Americanization of West Germany in the post-war era is a particularly well-documented example of the utilization of cultural diplomacy in international relations. This was an intentional effort on the part of both governments involved, and included legal and cultural initiatives in order to change both the world's perception of West Germany, and West Germany's perception of the world. Music in particular played a large role in the cultural shift that occurred in West Germany in the years following World War II, promoting transatlantic relations and a pro-democratic agenda.

While there is a large body of research in the academic community concerning the Americanization of West Germany, and certainly a wide variety of literature chronicling the bilateral relations between the two during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there is a surprisingly small amount of work that ties these aspects together as two halves of the same whole, using culture as the common thread. Nevertheless, the intertwined nature of post-World War II relations between West Germany and the US, a relationship that encompassed both politics and culture, provides a compelling case study to research music's use as a tool in cultural diplomacy between states.

### **Jazz in West Germany**

In the years immediately following World War II, there was an aversion to pieces of American culture (and, specifically, African American culture) in West Germany which fueled a distaste for jazz.<sup>5</sup> However, as the country became more and more Americanized, through both intentional and unintentional measures, jazz disseminated

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<sup>5</sup> Richard L Merritt, "American Influences in the Occupation of Germany," *The American Academy of Political and Social Science* 428 (1976): 91-103.

through West German culture and became more widely accepted – and, eventually, cherished. Some of these efforts were strategically measured on the part of the American government, such as the opening of *Amerika Häuser* throughout the American sector. These were cultural centers that celebrated the American lifestyle and offered a non-threatening space of discussion and education surrounding American politics and culture.<sup>6</sup> Part of this culture, of course, included music: in the congressional hearing regarding the financing of *Amerika Häuser*, the executive director of the initiative provided that, in its barest form, each should have a library, an area for projecting films, an area for children, and “a place for music, or the machines and records of American music.”<sup>7</sup> These centers accepted music as a cornerstone of culture, and proponents of the *Amerika Häuser* advocated for the use of music as a tool to help change the diplomatic relations between America and West Germany.

As one might suspect, the discourse surrounding the *Amerika Häuser* was much different when in the eye of the public than when behind closed doors – at the opening of the first cultural center, for example, it was explicitly stated that the center was not intended to be a factory of propaganda, and instead that citizens were encouraged to partake in democratic discussion and even challenge the ideas that they would encounter.<sup>8</sup> In contrast to this, however, in the same congressional hearing during which this speech was read aloud to illustrate the purpose of the *Amerika Häuser*, the spokesmen also openly admitted that the primary goal of these centers was to combat the

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> US Congress, House, Committee on Government Operations, *German Consulate-America House Programs: Hearing Before a Special Subcommittee. 83<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> Sess., Jan 1<sup>st</sup> 1953.*

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



Soviet flow of ideas coming from the East.<sup>9</sup> The representatives even expressed concern that their leases for the *Amerika Häuser* could be rescinded, as under their contracts, the centers could only be used for cultural purposes; they worried that, if it was widely known that the initial purpose of these houses was actually to spread propaganda that counteracted the Soviets', they would be breaking their contracts and eventually lose the buildings to the West German government.<sup>10</sup>

However, the fundamental difference between spreading culture and spreading propaganda (or whether there is a fundamental difference at all) is not a relevant issue for the purposes of this argument – the key takeaway here is that the American government was, both openly and secretly, using culture as a tool to change geopolitical conditions. Even more pertinently, music was seen as an essential factor in doing so.<sup>11</sup>

The particular music of choice in this scenario was jazz. Jazz music was a massive part of American culture during this era, and fittingly was increasingly exported across the Atlantic to West Germany. The *Amerika Häuser* not only played recordings of jazz and served as meeting places for high-brow jazz-enthusiasts, but also frequently put on jazz concerts.<sup>12</sup> The concerts in the centers were originally intended to showcase a wide variety of American music, including more orchestral arrangements; however, due to low funding, the responsibility of playing the venues fell into the laps of American GI bands, who overwhelmingly favored jazz, and shared that love with their West German audience.<sup>13</sup> These American soldiers also played a less official role in disseminating jazz

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Uta G Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, Univ. of California Press, 2009, p 146.

<sup>13</sup> Merritt, "American Influences," p 102.

music through West Germany as they partook in individual exchanges with German citizens: as they settled in and engaged with the social network around them, as well as pursued relationships with West German women, the two cultures became more intermixed, and pieces of American culture more widely accepted.<sup>14</sup>

However, this cultural shift was not a quiet one, and there was a fierce debate concerning the validity of this new lifestyle, with jazz music at the heart of it. Immediately following World War II, there were lingering anti-American sentiments in West Germany which, taken alone, would have made it difficult enough for jazz to be seen as a respected genre of music. However, its struggle was even greater, as jazz was constantly under attack from blatant racism that initially dubbed it worthless, being as it was borne from African American culture. However, some German academics, such as jazz-enthusiast Joachim Ernst Berendt, were earnestly fighting for jazz to be seen as a respectable form of music. His works aimed to separate the music from American consumer culture by more narrowly defining what exactly constituted jazz, arguing that what most radio stations were broadcasting as jazz at this point did not fit into the genre at all.<sup>15</sup> He also stressed that its African roots did not discredit jazz as valid music, and rather that whites had a moral duty to listen to the music with a compassionate ear and try their best to welcome the unfamiliarity of the beats and rhythm, as the burden for the plight of disenfranchised Africans was theirs to bear.<sup>16</sup>

Berendt was certainly not a perfect champion of jazz as art – in his attempt to make the music more palatable to his German audience, he often stripped jazz of its

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*, p 142.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p 138.

cultural implications for African Americans and lauded it as the international genre, or widely emphasized its minimal white roots while downplaying the overwhelming African ones – but he did create a discussion concerning the validity of jazz as a respectable piece of culture. While his arguments often still relied on racial hierarchies, and always on classist notions of true art versus low-class imitation, his works certainly helped to push jazz into the social sphere, specifically the high-class sphere, in West German culture.<sup>17</sup> These same ideals will be reflected in the German acceptance of rock ‘n’ roll in the years following World War II.

### Rock ‘n’ Roll

Much like jazz, rock ‘n’ roll was initially seen as nothing more than an undesired attempt at Americanization in West Germany, but was eventually accepted within the culture. However, unlike jazz, rock ‘n’ roll was not explicitly pushed as part of the effort to Americanize West Germany; officials feared that the branding of rock ‘n’ roll as an essential piece of American culture would further reinforce the lingering anti-American notion that American music (and, thereby, culture) was inherently lesser than European: less civilized, less intellectual, less worthy of recognition.<sup>18</sup> In a way, these predictions had a certain truth to them - rock ‘n’ roll was never quite able to penetrate the upper crust of German society, and instead was more a part of West German counterculture. In fact, the distinction between jazz and rock was precisely what allowed forms of jazz, such as cool jazz and bebop, to be more accepted in high-brow German society: while rock ‘n’ roll was initially seen as a subset of jazz, as the genres separated and became more

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

distinct, rock 'n' roll was associated with the rowdy riots of the *Halbstarcken* (groups of mostly young, working-class German men that embraced the rock 'n' roll subculture and frequently vandalized public property and resisted authorities), unconventional gender roles, and an overall contempt for the West German status quo. Meanwhile, jazz was coming to be associated with academics, intellectuals, and the German upper-class.

In other words, as jazz grew to be more widely acclaimed in the 1950s and 1960s, it came to represent the parts of America that all of Germany could come to respect and embrace: it was seen as intellectual yet hip, novel yet not too unfamiliar, outside of normal without venturing too far off the deep end. Jazz struggled in its own right to become respected throughout German society, and in doing so was often stripped of its relevant cultural and racial implications as the definition of “true” jazz became narrower, but the eventual acceptance of at least some forms of jazz within all spheres of German society stands as a testament to the willingness of West Germans to broadly accept new pieces of culture that didn't push too far outside of social norms.

However, the grungy, anarchistic rock 'n' roll did not have the same neutralizing factor – it belonged to the youth. The new generation of Germans sought to create clear social boundaries between themselves and their parents, whom they felt bore the blame for the war and represented a culture which did not resonate with them – one with nationalistic roots and strict social guidelines dictating sexuality, gender roles, and collectivism.<sup>19</sup> The widespread acceptance of rock 'n' roll by West German adolescents reveals the ways which culture is spread through unintentional acts of cultural diplomacy.

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<sup>19</sup> Henrick John Hohl, “Riots, Rowdies and Rock 'n' Roll: The Reception of American Popular Culture in West Germany between 1956-1959,” GRIN, 2004.

The dissemination of rock 'n' roll was never a part of the official plan to Americanize West Germany, yet it prevailed nevertheless because of the rebellious West German youth and their affinity for American and American-modeled rock bands.<sup>20</sup>

The embrace of rock 'n' roll seemed a knee-jerk reaction to the first generation to come of age following the oppressive Nazi regime – in the subculture created by rock 'n' roll, youth could freely express their individuality. Women, in particular, used rock 'n' roll as a way to challenge the ideals of the generation before them. While women in the counterculture were still considered subordinate to men, they were able to take part in something more than just fulfilling wifely duties: they rebelled alongside their male counterparts in both loud and quiet ways. West German female rock 'n' rollers were wearing masculine clothing, unapologetically lusting after rock 'n' roll stars, and even occasionally taking part in the riots of the *Halbstarken*.<sup>21</sup>

While to a modern reader, these acts may hardly seem radical, in the age directly after the Nazi regime, all of these represented ideologies directly in contrast to those of fascism. This is not to say that rock 'n' roll signified the liberation of women in West Germany - nor in America for that matter - but it did offer an escape from the decidedly anti-feminist fascist ideals that placed women dutifully in the homes of their husbands, serving them and the state by homemaking. While women in America were hardly free of the same societal shackles that tied down their German counterparts, the embrace of American rock 'n' roll meant a bold-faced rejection of previous gender roles of fascism and the ability to choose one's taste, which signified a turn to a pro-democratic culture.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*, p 142.

## Implications for International Relations

Music's role in the cultural shift that occurred during the Americanization of West Germany following World War II was not a small one. The universal acceptance of jazz and the alternative acceptance of rock 'n' roll, along with other pieces of American culture, paved the way for a West Germany that was completely different culturally and politically within a matter of years. The changes in politics and culture, however, did not happen separately from one another, and instead played an interconnected role in changing the bilateral relations between America and West Germany.

In the post-war era, the clashing ideologies that would come to a head during the Cold War were being shaped, and political lines were being drawn around the world. Germany, with its zones of occupation and Berlin Wall, provides an especially pertinent and literal example of the ways in which the world's superpowers were dividing themselves along political lines. Culture was seen as an inseparable aspect of politics – hence why the American government funneled resources into Americanizing West Germany, and why East Germany erected the wall in the first place. For America, rebuilding West Germany as part of the Euro-Atlantic political structure and inciting a cultural shift to one more accepting of a Western-focused liberal democracy was not just desirable – it was an absolute necessity. Had the Americanization efforts been unsuccessful, the geopolitical story between Germany and America would have been completely different. However, due in part to pieces of cultural diplomacy, and particularly the power of music, West Germany was successfully and strategically Americanized. The roles that jazz and rock 'n' roll music played were instrumental in Americanizing the culture of West Germany, and ergo in helping to form the strong

allyship that exists to this day between Germany and America.

This American-West German relationship, however, was not one-sided; the West German government was also interested in changing how they were perceived by their new Western allies. West Germany had an official policy of joining the Western community of states in the post-war era, known as *Westbindung*. Acts under this included joining NATO, forging a Franco-German alliance, and accepting rearmament under highly restrictive terms.<sup>22</sup> The transatlantic tinge of *Westbindung* was so strong that even those policies which did not explicitly deal with the United States had motives for strengthening German-American diplomatic ties. For example, the Franco-German alliance was seen as a necessary part of *Westbindung* not just because of the need for Western European integration, but also as an act of good faith towards the U.S. – after all, as a close ally with a high level of sympathy from America, mending the relationship and taking concrete strides in continuing diplomatic efforts provided the perfect proof of German goodwill.<sup>23</sup>

Naturally, these *Westbindung* acts did not pass without a fair amount of criticism from both citizens and public officials, mainly concerning the need to focus on integrating more fully into Europe instead of solely engaging in Atlanticism; simultaneously, however, the German government recognized the advantageous position of a political partnership with the United States.<sup>24</sup> Especially in the early years of the post-war era, for German chancellor Konrad Adenauer, fortifying the German-American

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<sup>22</sup> Ronald Joseph Granieri, *America's Germany, Germany's Europe: Konrad Adenauer, the CDU/CSU, and the Politics of German Westbindung, 1949-1963*. The University of Chicago (1996,) p 14.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p 67.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

relationship was of the utmost importance. Although through his years in office he grew to criticize the American government more, mainly for its ambivalence to Europe-specific issues, his initial years of leadership are marked by rhetoric and policies that lauded the necessity of transatlantic diplomatic relations.<sup>25</sup> Even in his later years, he continued to adhere to policies of Atlanticism, though markedly less so, instead choosing to focus on the Franco-German relationship which he believed would bring peace to Western Europe.<sup>26</sup>

### Conclusion

All of the aforementioned implications, however, would have not occurred without the massive export of cultural diplomacy, and specifically music, to West Germany. Without the acceptance of American culture, and thereby anti-communist American politics, the strong American-German alliance would have arguably never been forged, and the geopolitical landscape of Europe would almost certainly be very different. In the current world, many take the Americanized culture of Western Europe, and specifically of western Germany for granted. Many of the agents and effects of modern globalization in Europe - such as the standardization of English, the power of advancing telecommunications, and massive transnational corporations - have all had a distinctly American flavor to them, especially for our German allies.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, in this age of general international cooperation between democratic countries, it is almost all too easy to forget that the diplomatic relations (or, rather, lack thereof) between America and

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p 41.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p 71.

<sup>27</sup> Victoria De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe*, Belknap Press, 2005.



Germany were vastly different less than eighty years ago. However, the role that cultural diplomacy played in the Americanization of West Germany, and the specific yet broadly effective part that music had in this, should not be forgotten; music helped to shape geopolitics concerning post-World War II American-German bilateral relations.

## **The Eurovision Song Contest's Impact on European Politics**

The Eurovision Song Contest (ESC), is well-known around the world for its larger-than-life pop song performances and grand message of striving for a more unified Europe. However, less attention is paid to its political implications than it rightfully deserves. Although the contest rules explicitly forbid contestants from making reference to political causes, beyond the glitter and bright lights, the ESC is deeply and inherently political. This chapter will explore instances when the contest served as an echo-chamber for existing political biases, shown in the controversial voting blocs of the contest, as well as in the case of individual states. However, in an even broader sense, this chapter will dive into how the very idea of what it means to be European is negotiated at Eurovision through messages ingrained in the lyrics, how the artists present themselves, and even just by being able to participate. The stage that Eurovision provides is so much more than just a literal platform on which individual contestants perform – it is a world stage upon which nations can prove their ability to integrate into Western European culture, and potentially the European Union. The Eurovision Song Contest is not only inseparable from political influence, but in and of itself shapes modern European politics through music.

### **European Politics at the ESC**

#### **Voting Blocs**

“Eurovision is not about politics, or asserting your place in the community, or even about national pride. It is not an opportunity to show your neighbors how much you

love them. It is about picking the best popular song in Europe.”<sup>28</sup> These were the words of U.K. Eurovision host Terry Wogan as he stepped down from his long-held position, lamenting that the contest had morphed into something political during the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and should return to a simple, song-oriented past. However, his parting words could not be more ironic – as this section in my thesis will discover, the ESC is precisely about politics, asserting a place in the European community, and national pride. In short, while Wogan is certainly correct about the current contest being tinged with politics, the apolitical past that he mourns simply never existed.

Eurovision’s reflection of political alliances can be most clearly marked through the controversial voting blocs that occur every year. The contest has used a variety of different voting methods through its past, but today uses a positional voting system to decide the winner, with each participating country sending in two sets of votes: one from a professional panel, and one from citizens televoting.<sup>29</sup> The jury system was actually introduced in order to cut down on the pervasive block voting, yet each year, the voting blocs are a large part of the conversations surrounding the ESC.

While it is important to note that many of the states that comprise these voting blocs are culturally similar, which provides a very viable reason as to why they might genuinely prefer each other’s performances in the contest, it is also interesting to view these voting alliances through a political lens. Notably, Nordic countries comprise one of the culturally and politically aligned blocs of Eurovision participants that have an

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<sup>28</sup> Leigh Holmwood, “Eurovision is ‘Rubbish,’ Terry Wogan tells European Broadcasters,” *The Guardian*, May 6 2009. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2009/may/06/eurovision-terry-wogan-rubbish>.

<sup>29</sup> Mantzaris, Alexander V., Rein, Samuel R., Hopkins, Alexander D., “Examining Collusion and Voting Biases Between Countries During the Eurovision Song Contest Since 1957,” *Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulation*, Jan 31 2018.

unusually high rate of voting for one another in the contest.<sup>30</sup> The propensity of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden, and Norway to ally in the contest is reflected as well in their political alliances. These Nordic states are the principle members of the Nordic Council, which is an inter-parliamentary body that also includes Greenland and the Faroe and Aland Islands.<sup>31</sup> The council was founded in 1952, and by 1958, had created the Nordic labor market and the Nordic Passport Union, which allowed for the free movement of peoples between the Nordic states.<sup>32</sup> While these states now belong to the larger Schengen Area, the Nordic Passport Union was formed long before the Schengen Area was, showing a long history of political alliance between them.

The Nordic Council continued to form treaties throughout 20<sup>th</sup> century – some of the more notable initiatives include the foundation of the Nordic School of Public Health, the Nordic Cultural Fund, the Nordic Science Policy Council, and the Nordic Investment Bank. There were also a few attempts to formally consolidate the area into one of full economic cooperation, though they never quite passed.<sup>33</sup> Now, with the massive overlap of the European Union and the European Economic Agreement, many of the functions that the Nordic Council was initially intended to perform are now largely unnecessary. However, it still remains active, currently with a particular focus on strengthening the Nordic language community and promoting the universal education in Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish in its member states.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the council’s deepening of political ties via cultural and economic initiatives between Nordic states still remains

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> The Nordic Council, “Nordic Co-operation.” <https://www.norden.org/en/nordic-council>.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

pertinent even when considering the current larger political alliance of the EU and EEA; while these countries belong to a broader European network of states, they continue to align themselves with one another politically and culturally. The results of this can be seen in initiatives such as the NGO “Nordisk Vision,” which strives to create a democratic federation of the Nordic states, current political agreements that exist exclusively between Nordic countries, such as taxation guidelines, and of course, the Nordic Eurovision voting bloc.<sup>35</sup>

### Two-Way Voting Biases

These political alliances can also be seen in the case of individual countries. For instance, in 2016, Poland was one of two countries to give Ukraine, the winner, the maximum 24 points (12 from the jury and 12 from televoting.) Ukraine also awarded Poland a large amount of its votes, with 8 points. The following year, however, the voting pattern had changed. Poland awarded Ukraine with just two votes, and Ukraine to Poland? None at all.<sup>36</sup> While it is, of course, feasible that Ukraine and Poland simply did not favor each other’s songs in 2017, a look at the geopolitical conditions between the countries at the time reveals that the sharp drop in votes may be due to something else entirely.

In mid-2016, relations between Poland and Ukraine were more strained than usual. The source of this tension was a strong disagreement over the actions carried out by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in 1943 and 1944. During this time, approximately 100,000 Poles were slaughtered in the Ukrainian city of Volhynia. While most Western

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> EurovisionWorld, “Eurovision Results: Voting and Points.” <https://eurovisionworld.com/eurovision/2019>.

historians and the Polish government consider this an ethnic cleansing, it is not recognized as such by the Ukrainian government – so much so that in 2015, part of the decommunization laws adopted by Ukraine included the punishment of speaking out against Ukrainian freedom fighters, namely the insurgent army. Warsaw perceived this as a direct insult, and in 2016, Polish parliament passed a notion to officially recognize the Volhynia massacres as a genocide. This decision was highly criticized by Ukraine, who claimed that the events at Volhynia were simply a piece in the war, and that both sides committed similar crimes.<sup>37</sup> This disagreement resulted in extremely strained relations between the two countries during 2016 and 2017. While this political tension may not have resonated with the general public in time for the 2016 Eurovision contest, by 2017's performance, the public would have been fully aware of the situation, and let this bias effect their voting.

Naturally, it may be hard to accept that Europeans are not truly voting for the song which they sincerely feel should win in the ESC, and some spectators that truly believe the contest is based on musical merit may jump to defend instances of bloc voting as simply sharing similar culture and taste, and the Ukrainian-Poland situation a mere coincidence. While this could certainly be true (particularly in the case of the voting blocs, where it would be remiss not to mention that the culture shared by the blocs that might make them more likely to favor each other's music), by their own admission, only 26% of European voters sincerely vote in the contest – that is, vote for the song they genuinely believe deserves to win. In a survey conducted concerning the 2016 contest, 26% of voters were found to be sincere voters, 11% strategic voters (voting for a few

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<sup>37</sup> Wojciech Kononczuk, "The Paradoxes of Polish-Ukrainian Relations," Wilson Center, May 23 2018.

candidates they found unlikely to win as well as their own favorite, giving theirs a higher chance of winning in the finals), and 26% were found to be bandwagon voters (voting for who they thought was most likely to win irrespective of their own preferences.) The missing 37% is simply filed under “other voting.”<sup>38</sup> This means that the largest chunk of Eurovision voters are not voting for whom they like the most, nor for whom they think has a highest chance of winning – and this number doesn’t even include the fact that even those sincere, strategic, and bandwagon voters are most likely influenced subconsciously by political preferences. This mysterious 37% leaves much room for geopolitical biases to vastly influence the results of the Eurovision Song Contest on a state-to-state level.

### **European Identity at the ESC**

Perhaps even more interesting than the ESC’s tendency to echo existing European politics, however, is its influence in shaping ongoing European relations. Countries often use their performances at the contest as a way to express their European identity; not by way of patriotism or nationalism, but rather how they intend to fit into a broader European culture and political structure. This section examines in detail two instances of countries building their identity at the Eurovision Song Contest, with Germany’s reconciliation and Estonia’s bid to enter the European Union.

#### German Reconciliation

Although there has certainly been a resurgence of nationalism in Europe in recent

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<sup>38</sup>Daniel Stockemer, André Blais, Filip Kostelka, and Chris Chhim, 2018, “Voting in the Eurovision Song Contest.”

years, in general, European countries are less overtly patriotic when held in comparison to countries such as the United States.<sup>39</sup> In contrast to this, the ESC serves as a safe space for countries and their citizens to be harmlessly and overtly patriotic. However, Germany's story at the contest is slightly different – in the wake of both World Wars, the state was largely perceived as an aggressor. Seeking to change this, Germany used the ESC to prove its ability to be a cooperative global citizen, a peaceful neighbor, and above all, a good European country. Unlike other countries, Germany doesn't attempt to show how their nation's ideals fit into the European Union; they show how the EU supersedes their nationalism.

The reconciliation of Germany<sup>40</sup> following World War II can be seen through its adoption of a distinctly pro-European stance in politics, economics, and culture; the country was radically westernized and its commitment to atonement can be marked through both concrete gestures, such as reparation payments throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the aforementioned *Westbindung* policy, and symbolic ones, such as German leaders memorializing victims of the Holocaust.<sup>41</sup> This shift to atonement and a pro-Western agenda is clearly reflected in Germany's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest. Unlike other countries, Germany notably avoids overt shows of patriotism and the use of national symbols and codes. Instead, the country opts for themes of peace and unity.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>YouGov, "Survey Results," Yougov.co.uk, 2016.  
[https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus\\_uploads/document/71wl1vs4ii/International%20toplines\\_W.pdf](https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/71wl1vs4ii/International%20toplines_W.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> ***Note that any reference to Germany in this chapter refers exclusively to West Germany until the country's reunification in 1990.***

<sup>41</sup>Julie Kalman, Ben Wellings, Keshia Jacotine, *Eurovision: Identity and the International Politics of the Eurovision Song Contest since 1956*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p 25.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



Germany also often chooses a cosmopolitan style of entry shown by its embrace of a wide variety of music styles throughout the contests of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as American jazz, rock ‘n’ roll, and boogie.<sup>43</sup> While the roots of this can certainly be credited to the subject matter of section one, in that the Americanization of West Germany shifted German preference to these styles, it also speaks to the attempts on the part of the German people to showcase their cosmopolitan style and desire to fit into Western society.<sup>44</sup> In addition to this, Germany has a track record at the contest of choosing to compete in languages that show their dedication to being a good European neighbor. In the early days of the ESC, when the contest signified for Germany a chance to fortify the emerging Franco-German alliance, the language of choice was often French. While none of the entries were fully sang in French, in the 1950s and 60s, contest entries often featured a smattering of French.<sup>45</sup> However, both the contest and the European Union evolved in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup>, and English became the standard language of inter-European exchanges. Germany’s performances at Eurovision reflected this change: from 2000 until present day, the majority of Germany’s contest entries have been fully in English – and those which haven’t have been partly in English and partly in German (save for 2004, when the performance was a mix of English and Turkish.)<sup>46</sup> In fact, the most recent contest entry to feature any amount of German was in 2007, with the performance of *Frauen regier'n die Welt* (“Women Rule the World”) by Roger Cicero.

In comparison, France - joining Germany as one of the “Big Five” of the contest,

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p 29

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p 30

<sup>46</sup> Eurovision Song Contest, “Germany.” <https://eurovision.tv/country/germany>.

or those which make the biggest financial contributions to the ESC – has performed all of its contest entries since 2000 either fully or partly in French, except for in 2011, when their song was performed in Corsican.<sup>47</sup> For Spain, another of the Big Five, the story is similar: from 2000-2019, every entry was fully or partly in Spanish, except for their 2016 English performance.<sup>48</sup> These stand in stark contrast to Germany, which vastly prefers to either mix English in with German, or completely eschew its national language in order to give their contest entries a cosmopolitan flavor, and help to paint itself as a good European neighbor.

Other than language, Germany employs other methods of image-making at the contest to portray themselves in a positive light, such as lyrics, choice of performer, and choreography. The most pertinent example of this is seen in the 1982 performance of “*Ein bißchen Frieden*” (“A Bit of Peace”) by the performer Nicole. The performance was quite simple – a young woman seated behind a white guitar, wearing a black dress, with the band behind her wearing all white and outfitted with black instruments. The song itself was folksy and catchy, with the sweet-faced Nicole the perfect bearer of the pleading message:

A little bit of peace, a little bit of sun  
on this earth, we all live on.  
A little bit of peace, a little bit of happiness,  
A little bit of warmth, is what I'm wishing for.  
A little bit of peace, a little bit of dreaming  
and that the people don't cry so often.

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<sup>47</sup> Eurovision Song Contest, “France.” <https://eurovision.tv/country/france>.

<sup>48</sup> Eurovision Song Contest, “Spain.” <https://eurovision.tv/country/spain>.

A little bit of peace, a little bit of love,  
that I'll never lose hope again.  
Sing with me a little song,  
that the world lives in peace.  
Sing with me a little song,  
that the world lives in peace.<sup>49</sup>

Of course, every detail of this performance was perfectly intentional. From the choice of performer (at this time of the ESC, while still visibly shaking off their tarnished past, Germany was statistically far more likely to perform better in the contest with a female performer than with a male)<sup>50</sup>, to the straightforward choreography and costuming, to the lyrics which pleaded for peace and unity in the tumultuous times of the Cold War. The theme and the staging were balanced, harmonious, and above all, simple: the performance felt personal, almost like the audience was invited into Nicole's bedroom as she wrote a song about needing peace in times of fear.

Other than choosing German as the language (the use of English in the contest wouldn't come until much later), the 1982 performance was the pinnacle of Germany's branding in the Eurovision Song Contest. Both the song and performer were chosen to be palatable to a wide European audience (nonthreatening, cosmopolitan, and peaceful), which paid off: "*Ein bißchen Frieden*" gave Germany its first win of the ESC.

The historical context of the Cold War was a massive part of the win, as well; the

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<sup>49</sup> Eurovision Song Contest, "Germany." <https://eurovision.tv/country/germany>.

<sup>50</sup> Kalman, *Eurovisions*, p 33.

nuclear arms race looming overhead meant that Europeans deeply resonated with needing a bit of peace. Nevertheless, “*Ein bißchen Frieden*” marked a turning point for Germany in the ESC. No longer viewed as an aggressor, the soft tone of “*Ein bißchen Frieden*” elicited empathy towards the country from the majority of the European community. No one envied the position of Germany, politically sandwiched between the two superpowers of the Cold War, and the message of their 1982 ESC performance was, likewise, perfectly neutral: not a piece of counterculture nor a call to Germany’s history of power, the song was a simple plea for the country to not be sacrificed in a new war, and for the world to unite and know peace. While Germany continued to work to brand itself as a pacified European neighbor in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and continues to do so, their win in 1982 signified a change in their image on the European stage.

Although, presently, Germany is indubitably considered European, its presentation at the ESC still reflects attempts to mold into a unified Europe and shake off their historic image as an aggressor. Unlike the rest of the Big Five in the contest, Germany does not use the ESC to be even playfully patriotic, and unlike still other countries, Germany does not attempt to show how their nation’s ideals fit into the European Union: rather, the contest is an opportunity to prove, time and time again, that the ideals of the European Union have deeply woven themselves into German culture.

### Estonia and the European Union

Like Germany, Estonia used the Eurovision Song Contest to project a positive

European image of themselves; however, instead of trying to prove that they were capable of being a good European neighbor, they were attempting to prove that they were European, at all. To the citizens of Estonia, the ESC always represented Western democracy – it was part of a larger “window to the West,” or consumption of Western European and American pop culture during the Soviet occupation. Estonians watched the contest every year, and highly preferred it to the Soviet equivalent, “Intervision.”<sup>51</sup> Following their independence, however, Eurovision became no longer just a window to view Western culture, but actually part of a door for Estonia to enter the political and cultural structure of Western European states.

Estonia made it to the qualifying round in Eurovision in 1993, officially competed as a finalist in the contest in 1994, and earned fifth place in 1996.<sup>52</sup> These feats represented far more than musical success for Estonians, but rather success in rebranding the nation as a true European country and potential member of the European Union; Estonian media portrayed gains in the ESC as gains in a return to Europe, and the citizens gladly accepted this.<sup>53</sup> Estonia continued its advancement in the contest, and in 2001, was awarded with a win for its performance of *Everybody*. This victory was met with an explosion of joy by the media and citizens – it was lauded as the “most important event since independence,”<sup>54</sup> and dominated media coverage for weeks after.

Herein lies a major difference between the nation building that Germany and Estonia both partake in during the contest: for Germany, a founding member of the EU

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<sup>51</sup> Paul Jordan, *The Modern Fairytale: Nation Branding, National Identity, and the Eurovision Song Contest in Estonia*, University of Tartu Press, 2014, p 75.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p 76.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p 77.

and highly influential state in Western Europe, actually winning the ESC is of no importance for their national image, but for Estonia, winning was a huge victory outside of the contest. Winning Eurovision symbolized a wider acceptance of Estonia into the network of Western European states.<sup>55</sup> Matching this symbolism, and the pace of Estonia's ascension in Eurovision, was Estonia's quick ascension as a viable member of the European Union in comparison to its closest geographical and cultural neighbors. Though Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia have many similarities concerning entry into the EU – all were invited to the 2002 summit in Copenhagen and officially joined in 2004 – while Latvia and Lithuania had been negotiating to join since 1999, Estonia had been negotiating a full two years prior in 1997.<sup>56</sup> In fact, Estonia was the first post-Soviet nation to join EU accession talks.<sup>57</sup>

While Eurovision alone certainly cannot be credited with the entry of Estonia into the EU, it was one of the ways that the country asserted itself as able to integrate into Western European culture and politics. For instance, the 2001 performance was a duet featuring Tanel Padar, a white, native Estonian, and Dave Benton, a Black immigrant to Estonia. Benton remains the only Black contestant to win Eurovision, which was a milestone not lost on Estonian politicians. The Minister of Culture said of the performance, “it supported the opinion of Estonia being liberal and friendly. It was a good image to show Estonia's multiculturalism.”<sup>58</sup> Much like Germany, Estonia also used English as the main performance language to assert its place in the Western

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> European Union, “Estonia Overview.” [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries/estonia\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries/estonia_en).

<sup>57</sup> Jordan, *The Modern Fairytale*, p 90.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p 81

community of states. While Estonian was used in its early years of participation in the contest, since 1999, Estonia has largely used English to compete in Eurovision.<sup>59</sup>

Perhaps even more important than their 2001 win, however, was their 2002 hosting of the contest. Estonia was desperate to prove itself as a forward-looking country not burdened by its Soviet past, and the 2002 contest embodies that. For instance, Estonia by itself was unable to provide all of the materials necessary for such a large event, and Sweden stepped in to provide much needed technical support. However, not wanting to be stereotyped as an impoverished post-Soviet country, politicians and producers alike cleverly spun the assistance as unprecedented international cooperation in the contest.<sup>60</sup> And, while once again their success in Eurovision should not be misconstrued as the direct cause for their success in joining the European Union, it should be noted that the ESC date was moved to be closer to the date of EU accession talks, as the contest was seen as the greatest “possibility [they] had to promote [their] country.”<sup>61</sup> In addition to this, the UK ambassador to Estonia argued that Eurovision had a “remarkable effect”<sup>62</sup> on EU entry – not just because of European Union nations believing that Estonia should belong, but also in boosting national confidence and giving Estonian citizens a true sense of belonging.<sup>63</sup> As aforementioned, Estonia was already on track to EU membership – but to many, the 2002 hosting represented a true make or break moment in promoting the nation as capable of integrating into Western European politics and culture.

After much tedious planning and outside assistance, the 2002 Eurovision Contest

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<sup>59</sup> Eurovision Song Contest, “Estonia.” <https://eurovision.tv/country/estonia>

<sup>60</sup> Jordan, *The Modern Fairytale*, p 90.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p 91.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p 92.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

was a success. In fact, ironically enough, Terry Wogan - quoted at the beginning of this section as saying that Eurovision is not about asserting a place in the European community - opened up the contest by saying the previous victory was a “major breakthrough” for Estonians and an opportunity to “make their mark” in Europe.<sup>64</sup> The hosting of the 2002 contest served the same purpose: to prove to Western European states that Estonia was ready for integration. Although there were still some dissenting opinions that the country had an unshakable Soviet past, the international response was generally positive. Furthermore, both the 2001 victory and the 2002 hosting served to uplift Estonia’s spirits and boost national confidence in their own country.<sup>65</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The Eurovision Song Contest is a fascinating agent of cultural diplomacy because it not only echoes political biases and dissonances - such as in the cases of the Nordic voting bloc and Ukraine-Poland - but also actively shapes them through nation branding, as one can see in the case of German reconciliation and the Estonian bid to enter the EU. While the contest brands itself as an apolitical enigma, its clear ways of reacting to, as well as affecting, European politics shows how music has a voice in geopolitics. Eurovision contestants use the contest as a space to promote national interests abroad and align themselves politically.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p 96.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p 109.



## **The Barenboim-Said Foundation and the Middle East**

The friendship between Edward Said, a Palestinian-American professor, and Daniel Barenboim, an Argentinian-Israelian musician, was perhaps unlikely on the surface. However, when the two happened to meet each other in a London hotel lobby in 1992, the conversation that ensued proved that they had much more in common than one might think. Upon their first meeting, Said and Barenboim soon found themselves in a deep conversation about music, society, and Middle Eastern politics. This serendipitous encounter resulted in not only a lifelong friendship, but also the Barenboim-Said Foundation, which sponsors programs that utilize music as a piece of cultural diplomacy to foster friendly Middle Eastern relations.

### **Music in the Orchestra and Academy**

When asked what connected the unlikely pair the most in a 2002 NPR interview, Said was quick to answer – a love of music.<sup>66</sup> This answer makes sense when considering the Barenboim-Said mission, and that their first project together was a collaborative orchestra. However, what makes their orchestra unique are the musicians which compose it; membership is confined to musicians of Middle Eastern descent (as well as Spaniards, due to its current location in Seville.) The West-Eastern Divan Orchestra was officially founded in 1999 in Weimar, Germany, although it began a workshop for Arabian musicians. These music students gathered in Weimar's concert hall to hone their skills, but what they created was much more than music; or rather, music facilitated the process of creating something else.

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<sup>66</sup> Scott Simon, "Barenboim and Said: 'Parallels and Paradoxes:' A Unique Intellectual Collaboration between Scholar, Musician," National Public Radio, Dec 28 2002.

The workshop, and eventual orchestra, was a space of understanding and respect, even in disagreement. However, that's not necessarily how it began – in the same NPR interview, Barenboim and Said recounted a story about an Israeli cello player, who wanted to join a smaller group of Palestinian students after the workshop in playing traditional Arabian music. However, the student was rejected from the group, and told that they needed to “have the music in their blood.”<sup>67</sup> Barenboim and Said, of course, intervened and reminded the students that, by their own logic, they should not play Beethoven, nor the music of any other Western European composer. Although they did not mention whether their chastisement worked that night, they did say that by the end of the workshop, students of all backgrounds were coming together to play music composed from all over the world. In fact, the very student that was not allowed to play with the initial small group was seen with them, as they taught him how to tune his cello to the Arabian scale.<sup>68</sup>

In contrast to this rather fairytale ending, however, in the big picture, neither Barenboim nor Said had grandiose notions of solving the Middle Eastern conflict purely through music. They simply believed that music could help to create the sort of environment necessary for discussion – one that embraces listening and understanding to ameliorate ignorance. Barenboim himself said of the orchestra in 2008:

The Divan is not a love story, and it is not a peace story. It has very flatteringly been described as a project for peace. It isn't. It's not going to bring peace, whether you play well or not so well. The Divan was conceived as a project against ignorance. A project against the fact that it

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

is absolutely essential for people to get to know the other, to understand what the other thinks and feels, without necessarily agreeing with it. I'm not trying to convert the Arab members of the Divan to the Israeli point of view, and [I'm] not trying to convince the Israelis of the Arab point of view. But I want to – and unfortunately, I am alone in this now that Edward died a few years ago – ...create a platform where the two sides can disagree and not resort to knives.<sup>69</sup>

However, even though it has not ended all conflict in the Middle East, and was never intended to, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra has certainly been a success by other standards. Though now based in Spain, it continues to perform all around the world, and has been recognized by the United Nations, internationally acclaimed musicians, and world leaders for its mission in cultural diplomacy.<sup>70</sup> It has received accolades and grants, and a documentary about the orchestra, *Knowledge is the Beginning*, even won an Emmy in 2007.<sup>71</sup> The international success of the orchestra led to the founding of the Barenboim-Said Academy in 2016.

The Barenboim-Said Academy acts as an extension of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, and thus shares the same goals. However, unlike in the orchestra, where the students focus purely on creating music, the four-year degree from the conservatory also requires courses in philosophy, ethics, and history.<sup>72</sup> This combination of education in both music and humanities is the culmination of Barenboim and Said's work: using music as an avenue to first forge a relationship,

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<sup>69</sup>Ed Vulliamy, "Bridging the Gap, Part Two," *The Guardian*, Jul 13 2008.

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2008/jul/13/classicalmusicandopera.culture>

<sup>70</sup>Einbinder, "Harmonizing International Relations Through Music."

<sup>71</sup> *Knowledge is the Beginning*, Directed by Paul Smaczny. Berlin, Germany: EuroArts 2005.

<sup>72</sup> Barenboim-Said Akademie, "Courses: Bachelor of Music Curriculum."

<https://barenboimsaid.de/study/academic-programs/bachelor-of-music>

and then debate more complex topics within the parameter of that relationship. Unlike the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, which some performers claim is apolitical (which, as citizens of countries which do not even allow interaction with one another, I argue that their very participation in the orchestra is, at its core, a political act), the Barenboim-Said Academy embraces its political implications. For performers in the orchestra, political discussion is a choice – for students at the conservatory, it is a necessary part of the learning experience.<sup>73</sup> In this way, the Barenboim-Said Academy takes the political engagement one step further, using music as the common thread between students to do so.

#### Effects (Past and Predicted)

It goes without saying that the Middle East is an incredibly complex region with painfully intertwined histories of blood and war, and the most deeply impactful reform in the area will come from concrete policy and structural changes instead of from programs for cultural diplomacy. Furthermore, it is impossible to quantify the effects that both the Barenboim-Said Academy and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra have had and will have on Middle Eastern relations, and particularly Israeli-Palestinian relations. Barenboim himself even admitted that thus far, his programs have not had massive effects on the ground in the Middle East.<sup>74</sup> However, even given the circumstances, cultural diplomacy can still play smaller role, especially when it comes to interpersonal exchanges between individuals. To this effect, the

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Olivia Hampton, “Israeli-Palestinian Orchestra Brings Message of Peace to a Divided America,” The Times of Israel, Nov 9 2018. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-palestinian-orchestra-brings-message-of-peace-to-divided-america/>

highest reviews of both the conservatory and the orchestra come from past students and performers. For instance, the youngest member of the orchestra in 1999 was a ten-year old pianist from Jordan, but he already had an archetype of Israelis as brutish murderers. However, working with Israelis to make music completely changed his perspective. He noted later that his participation in the orchestra “changed [his] idea of what a human even is.”<sup>75</sup>

In addition to this, there is a common theme of the performers forging familial relationships. In the documentary *Knowledge is the Beginning*, two of the top viola players told the of how their fathers fought against each other in the same war; just a generation later, however, their children are “closer than brother and sister.”<sup>76</sup> This sibling sentiment was repeated later by two violinists, saying that while in the orchestra, they were like sisters. However, they feared that going back home may mean never seeing each other again.<sup>77</sup>

Naturally, the orchestra and academy are not always filled with close friendships bridging over and weaving through political disagreement. However, even in disharmony, the effects of cultural diplomacy can be seen. In the same documentary, there is footage of the musicians in heated political debates with each other. However, the fact that they are even interacting civilly, if passionately disagreeing, is something incredible – in fact, the very notion of the performers from these countries being able to interact at all is no small feat. After all, for many of the performers, this experience is the first time that they have been able to form a connection (positive or negative)

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<sup>75</sup> *Knowledge is the Beginning*, Paul Smaczny..

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

with one another.

However, clearly, not every Palestinian nor Israeli is a professional musician, nor has dreams of being one. For a more hard-hitting effect, the next step in the Barenboim-Said mission should be accessibility to all Middle Easterners to forge a connection through music, not just those who are most inclined to perform orchestrally. There has been one major part of this already, with the opening of the Barenboim-Said Music Center in the Central West Bank city of Ramallah.<sup>78</sup> This is a youth music school, with an eight-year program that teaches music education to children of all ages. While the music center still primes its older students for professional musicianship, for younger students, it is simply an immersive musical experience to learn the basics. This is the sort of accessibility that will allow the mission of the Barenboim-Said Foundation to thrive, especially as such a strong emphasis music education in this region is not particularly common.

However, even with the opening of the Barenboim-Said Music Center, there is still ample opportunity for the Barenboim-Said Foundation to further the reach of their mission. While their focus has been on the collaborative creation of music, listening to music is a cooperative experience as well. As we have seen in the previous case studies, the use of music in cultural diplomacy is just as powerful in its exchange as it is in its creation. Therefore, the performances by the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, the Barenboim-Said Academy, and the Barenboim-Said Music Center should be accessible online, especially while these organizations are unable to perform in certain countries. Barenboim himself has claimed that the mission of the

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<sup>78</sup> Daniel Barenboim Stiftung, "Projects." <https://www.daniel-barenboim-stiftung.org/en/projects>

Barenboim-Said Foundation will only be fully recognized when his organizations can perform in every country represented within them.<sup>79</sup> While this is certainly an admirable goal, with current technology, there are ways around the present physical limitations, and a virtual performance to reach their target audience is certainly better than no performance at all.

Another potential way to amplify the effects of their mission comes through the Barenboim-Said Academy. As the school grows, it may be beneficial to open up it up to being more than strictly a conservatory. Of course, keeping in line with the mission of Barenboim and Said, the emphasis should remain heavily on music education, but the school could also potentially offer minors or double majors in areas such as political science or international relations. This not only gives more students an opportunity to participate, such as those that have interests in both of these areas and do not want to choose between the majors, but also opens up enrollment to students which are more likely to pursue careers in the governmental agencies of their home countries, as well as more likely to be civically engaged. Be it at a local or national level, it is important that both the employees and citizens have the open, cooperative mindset towards their neighbors that an education at the Barenboim-Said Academy provides.

It would be remiss not to mention that the previous claim opens the dialogue to discussion of democracy in the Middle East, which is a multifaceted area that warrants much more attention than could possibly be given within the parameters of this thesis. The participants of the Barenboim-Said programs live under a variety of

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<sup>79</sup> *Knowledge is the Beginning*, Paul Smaczny.

different governments with varying degrees of democratic processes that allow for the prospect of civic engagement. However, as more Middle Eastern governments appear to be taking steps towards embracing democracy (for instance, the promising case of Jordan undergoing democratic policy reform as of 2011), and oppressed citizens grow more restless and demand a voice in their own government, it is important to remember that the story of democracy in the Middle East is far from being set in stone.<sup>80</sup> As this story continues to be written, it is important to educate the citizens that may potentially shape their future government; education not just in a literal sense, but education against intolerance, as well.

### Conclusion

The serendipitous meeting between Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said has led to a massive musical outreach program that includes an orchestra, a music conservatory, and a primary music school. While even Barenboim himself has admitted that the Barenboim-Said Foundation has yet to see massive change on the ground in the Middle East, the personal effects that the organization has had in changing students' perspectives has been exceptional. The men, women, and children in these programs undergo a transformative process that massively expands their worldview simply by interacting with one another; while the music they create cannot hope to bring peace by itself, the effects it has on individuals can certainly help to foster it.

Especially as the countries involved undergo democratic reform and the citizens are potentially given more opportunities to be civically engaged, it will be imperative

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<sup>80</sup> USAID. "Jordan: Democracy, Rights, and Governance." <https://www.usaid.gov/jordan/democracy-human-rights-and-governance>



that their mindset is one of tolerance and cooperation with neighboring countries in order to advance positive multilateral relations in the region. This perspective change is already occurring within the students in the programs of the Barenboim-Said Foundation, but can potentially be expanded upon via a greater emphasis on accessibility, such as the utilization of virtual performances, as well as offering civically-minded programs in addition to the music programs at the Barenboim-Said Academy.

As Barenboim said, this project is not one for peace in the Middle East – as lovely as a story that would be, it is inescapable that the region will only know peace through policy reform and structural change on both a domestic and international level. However, the effect that music has had in creating an environment where interaction and engagement between all sides are encouraged - political disagreements or not - should not be simply written off, either, and the programs of the Barenboim-Said Foundation stand as a beacon of hope for the future of Middle Eastern relations and the role that cultural diplomacy can help to play.

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