PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS ABOUT NATO BRAND: THE CASE OF GREEK GENERATION Z

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Abstract

Public perceptions of Greek Generation Z about NATO brand after the Afghan case

During the 21st century, public diplomacy and branding received a new angle and application closely related with the meaning of securitization. Even though the importance of this meaning, researchers nowadays notice a research gap considering the three above-mentioned fields. NATO, as a popular security brand, represents an under-researched sui generis organization that gets involved with securitization worldwide. This research aims at eliminating the gap in security brand research, by revealing and answering what are the main factors that influence the configuration of public perceptions of Greek Generation Z about NATO brand after the crucial Afghan case. The examination of the research question follows a quantitative approach, employing the Elaboration Likelihood Model (EML) for producing the theoretical ground pillar and developing the testing hypotheses. Conforming to previous research, source credibility, information accessibility, and argumentation quality are examined as the main factors that could influence the public perceptions. The research effort draws two main conclusions based on the empirical data and the analysis. Firstly, and as former research supports, the source credibility is characterized as the most important factor for the communication processes of branding and public diplomacy. Lastly, the importance of source credibility penetrates the processes and major effects when underlying securitization and applying security branding.

Keywords: NATO, Greece, branding, security, public diplomacy, communication fields, credibility, argumentation, information, Ukraine war

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Acknowledgments

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1. Introduction

"The North Atlantic Council has met to discuss Afghanistan. The situation is extremely serious and unpredictable. Kabul has fallen, and the Taliban have taken control of most of the country. I am deeply saddened by what I see unfolding in Afghanistan." (Stoltenberg, 2021). These were the first words of the announcement that the North Atlantic Treaty (therefore NATO) and the General Secretary of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, made after the discussion with NATO's member countries in August 2021. Jens Stoltenberg avowed the decision of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to quit the longest war in the organisation's history, when the Taliban, the biggest enemy of the western powers in Afghanistan, conquered the majority of the Afghan territory (Stoltenberg, 2021). The mission of evacuating the country through Kabul's airport followed the announcement. NATO's forces and Afghan people that worked for the Alliance had to leave the country before 31st August, the evacuation deadline (Sabbin, 2021). After 20 years of war, NATO withdrew all the troops and nowadays upholds a monitor role.

The first lost war and the failure of Afghanistan's mission opened Pandora 's Box and brought to the surface problems that had beset the organisation for a long period. One of them refers to the unpopular image of the organisation and the lack of public support that is nowadays modified into a chronic challenge. The poor image that characterised NATO both internally and externally became a common secret, while at the same time, the world was changing, and new principles and values substituted the previous well-known processes considering the public image. More specifically, researchers made the initial steps towards the development of the argument that support and public consent are the two pivotal factors that every organisation should succeed in to remain functional. Regarding public consent and as Morgenthau claimed years ago, power is 'dependent' on public opinion (Wolff, 2014).

Consequently, public perceptions transformed into a major goal for important fields, such as public diplomacy, branding, and strategic communication (Snow & Cull, 2020; Alemu & Zewdie, 2022). The mission of public diplomacy, as previous research indicates, focus on transmitting the national foreign affairs in order finally to influence the public perceptions of the public. Accordingly, branding strategies use communication tools and processes, creating high-quality consumer experiences in order to produce desirable public perceptions. The power of public perceptions and opinion, as Melissen mentions, is not less significant "for political

purposes than military and economic power, and has always been closely associated with them" (Melissen, 2005, p. 4).

The meaning of security brand, as it has risen after the terrorist attacks and the reassessed meaning of human security, conquers exactly this side of public perceptions. More precisely, and as previous research mentions, security branding and public perceptions are highly associated when there is a need for brand evaluation. A great example is represented by Copenhagen and the timetable of 2015 when the Muhammad sketches ignited a sequence of terrorist attacks, influencing firstly the security feeling of the city and therefore the totality of public perceptions about the Copenhagen brand (Avraham & Ketter, 2008). On the other hand, as the example of Canada and Japan shows, securitization is also engaged with the public diplomacy process, affecting the national reputation and consequently the public perception of the state (Marczuk, 2020).

Even though the importance of the meaning, security brand, and securitization in public diplomacy from the research perspective represents a hardly new field that is characterised by a research gap (Coaffee & van Ham, 2008; van Ham, 2008). As Coaffee and van Ham mention "being recognised as a provider of security offers concomitant authority and credibility" (2008, p. 191), features that could commonly identified in well-known security brands of EU, USA, and NATO. The case of Afghanistan, in combination with a popular security brand organisation such as NATO, represents a chance to discover how security issues influence public perceptions. More indicatively, how a critical part of society, Generation Z, reacts to a security issue such as the Afghanistan withdrawal and the responsible organisation, NATO? Which are the major factors that influence the configuration of public perceptions when securitization is combined with public diplomacy and branding? The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) could provide the appropriate theoretical framework to examine the above-mentioned research problematization, even though it does not constitute a common tool among security brands and public diplomacy. Moreover, and coming to this date, it is important to analyse how Generation Z elaborates on such issues, whilst the Ukraine war, Palestine conflict, and other potential crises that could influence human security have already been erupted or are about to erupt. Lastly, it is therefore noteworthy to specify this research effort referring to NATO as a brand that supports and ensures human security from 1949.

1.1 The purpose of this research

The purpose of this research is to understand the consequences that have been caused by the failure of the Afghanistan case at NATO's brand. More specifically, the research focuses on analysing the public perceptions of Greek Generation Z about NATO by testing a set of hypotheses. This research aims to be transformed into a stimulus in a journey of examining and discovering the factors that contribute to and influence the security brand and public diplomacy of an international organisation with military and political hypostasis. To achieve the objectives of the research, a quantitative approach would be applied. From a theoretical perspective, this research endeavours to examine the phenomena of security branding and public diplomacy quantitatively. Lastly, and based on the purpose and the aim of this effort, this research attempts to set a new problematization in the field of strategic communication, branding, and public diplomacy motivating further research, whilst bridging the gap between the above-mentioned fields, the research on sui generis organisations, and securitization.

The research questions could be formulated as follows:

RQ: What is the main factor that affected the public perception of Greek Generation Z about the NATO brand?

The research is indissolubly linked to the ongoing processes of every society and organisation. Both factors are perceived as not static entities. As a result, it is necessary to take into consideration the culture of Greek society, the values and mission of NATO, and the almost 70 years of dependent processes. Greece could be considered a field of interest for multiple reasons. Briefly mentioning its political history as a member state of NATO, the unique relationships that were developed with the state of Afghanistan and its historical association with it, and finally, the true consequences that Greece was suffering after the invasion, referring mainly to the immigration wave (see next chapter). Lastly, answering the research questions, Afghanistan's mission will be considered as a case study. The literature review, theory, paradigm, and methodology will be analysed in the following chapters.

1.2 Delimitations

Branding is a field that has been set at the core of interest in the global community for the last decade. A lot of research has been conducted analysing branding in the commercial industry and its effects on consumer behaviour. However, this research effort focuses on security branding regarding an international organisation with political and military interests. Therefore, this research refers to citizens and not consumers. The examination of the present research question would take into consideration the peculiarities of Greek society, culture, and values. In addition and focusing on the methodology and the quantitative approach features, the research would take into consideration and examine circumscribed hypotheses and variables that display correlation with the phenomenon. Lastly, the research has in its broader view, as a reference point a specific political case study. Consequently, the findings could maybe be barren of the ability to apply to other case studies, organisations, or societies. Thereby, the results may not be representative enough to characterise the field of security branding as a whole. Even so, it is truly believed that this research effort could set proper problematizations and give a research direction for the future, concerning the importance of the chronic time slot.

1.3 An unexpected crisis

On 24th February 2022, Russia launched an attack on Ukraine, claiming its purpose was to protect Ukraine citizens with Russian nationality from a neo-Nazi Ukraine government (Kirby, 2022). Vladimir Putin, the present Russian president, supported that those people were in need of help, whilst the Ukraine government committing bullying and genocide against them. The invasion of Ukraine is the biggest military operation in European history after the end of the Second World War (Editors, 2022). This fact activated the international scene, international factors, and international organisations. The USA and the European countries presented a critical response to Russia's actions through official statements, diplomatic strategies, and economic measures focusing on intercepting the Russian invasion (Kirby, 2022). In addition to that, the European countries accuse Russia of war crimes in Ukraine, as thousands of civilians have been killed (Cook, 2022).

NATO, after the rejection of the Russian demand list and the beginning of the war, reinforced and deployed troops to the member-states that are located close to Russian borders (Bilefsky, Pérez-Peña, & Nagourne, 2022). However, as the articles of NATO's associations predict, NATO could only activate military operations, when one of its member states is under threat. As a result, until today NATO holds a coordinator role among Ukraine's requests and its member states' willingness to assist (NATO, 2022). NATO's neutrality prevents a possible escalation of the war, whilst providing the neseccary time for proper military plans to be developed (Gardner, 2022).

Considering this research effort, the Ukraine war is perceived as a crisis situation that would furthermore influence the public opinion of Greek Generation Z about the NATO brand. Although, it constitutes only a subsection of this research, as it remains an ongoing process and consequently an impossible case to be set under a broad or extensive examination. The Afghan war is highlighted as the main case and stimulus for this research effort, whilst it is supported as the main factor that could influence comprehensively the public opinion of Greek Youngs about NATO.

2. A sui generis Organization

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was established in 1949, attempting to face the Soviet threat in European territory. It was mainly constituted of a military organisation that was able to guarantee the collective defence of European countries. The end of the Cold War, the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9th November 1989, and the eradication of the Soviet threat towards European countries brought the organisation in front of a predicament and a problematization about the existing principles (Duffield, 1995). The solution came in the 1990s, through the transformation of NATO from a collective defence alliance into an organisation, with military and political features, that would embrace European and American security. Through this transformation, it was born a sui generis organisation. Or in other words, an organisation with unique hypostasis, values, and missions. NATO's enlargement and the new nature of its missions were in need of communication, as almost the majority of its member citizens had an unclear image of NATO missions (Wolff, 2014). However, NATO made the initial steps toward public diplomacy and communication years later, at the dawn of the 21st century.

More specifically, after the Kosovo learning outcomes, NATO recognized the need to develop a more comprehensive and effective public diplomacy and communication strategy. In 2003, NATO established the Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) (Babst, 2008). The PDD included NATO's Office of Information and Press and held the responsibility for the communication with external channels, such as daily press and media operations (Tomescu-Hatto, 2014). After one year of processes, Secretary-General George Robertson mentioned the need to reinforce the efforts for reaching the public sphere (Wolff, 2014). Although, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) referred to public diplomacy occasionally, ignoring the need for a comprehensive approach (Babst, 2008). Lastly, in 2014 it was established the Strategic Communication Center of Excellence that until today includes only 15 of 30 member-states (NATO, 2022).

In the following years and while a variety of missions were going on (see Afghanistan, African Union, Iraq, etc) NATO was struggling to find the golden recipe that would be able to solve the puzzle of the poor public image. In 2007 NATO established the Office of Strategic Communication (OSC), whilst implementing communication projects through which the public opinion sphere was targeted. A year after (2008), Secretary-General, Jean François Bureau referred for the first time to the meaning of branding (Mihaita & Sebe, 2011). The rise

of brands exceeded the commercial field and transformed into an international need for the majority of stakeholders. International organisations such as NATO were included (van Ham, 2001). As a result, in the same chronological period, NATO hired an executive CEO, a previous employee of Coca-Cola, Michael Stopford (Castle, 2016). Michael Stopford created an assortment of campaigns and platforms with the phrase "We are NATO". The sui generis organisation made the initial step toward a comprehensive approach to the communication field. The requirements for international brand existence were fulfilled.

More precisely, NATO created a logo, and a sign, whilst determining the target audience and scene of the competitors (See Figure 1). NATO brand manual and guidelines include the basic principles that NATO brand had to follow (NATO, 2022). "NATO Guarantees our Freedom and Security" became the brand narrative of the North Alliance. Political perspective was prioritised, while military and change were compiled in the triad of brand chapters. NATO during the 21st century applies branding through social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, and its own TV channel. Even though the comprehensive view and the concrete effort, branding campaigns and strategies have not yet reached their goals. The results of these communication and branding practices still receive ambiguous critics (Berti, Noyan, Grozdanova, & Petrovic, 2012). Nevertheless, as the meaning of public diplomacy, strategic communication, and branding is set at the core of global interest, NATO allots effort and money during its mission to reach "people's minds and hearts". But what happened during the Afghanistan case?

Figure 1. NATO and the meaning of branding

It is highlighted the need for international branding and the answer of NATO. The figure is constructed by the author with the information as retrieved from the official Website of NATO[1].

Requirements of international branding	NATO branding
Brand Image	**NATO** promotes itself in the **political**, **military**, and **change** fields. More specifically, NATO acts as a **negotiator**, **soldier**, and **expert** on international security and freedom.
Brand Identity	A unique **community** of values committed to the principles of individual **liberty**, **democracy**, **human rights,** and the rule of **law**.
Narrative	NATO supports international **security** and **freedom**, whilst protecting its member-states and creating a real **community**.
Slogan or Messages	**Animus** in consulendo **liber** (A mind unfettered in deliberation). NATO guarantees our **freedom** and **security**. **We** are **NATO**. An alliance that cooperates to enhance **security** and **stability**. An alliance with the capability and the will to **protect** its citizens. An alliance that **innovates** to **secure** our future.
Competitive Environment	**National** security systems, **European Union** (Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)), **Russian** security sphere, UN

2.1 The case of Afghanistan

On 11th September 2001, a series of terrorist attacks got place in the United States. The responsibility for these events was received by Al-Qaeda, a terrorist group that was based and acted in Afghanistan. George Bush, the American president of that time, declared the War against Terrorism and invaded Afghanistan to depose the Taliban and Osama bin Laden, as the leader. It was the first time that NATO activated article number 5, claiming collective support

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[1] As it is retrieved from the Official Website of NATO. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/129138.htm

against a common threat. The allied countries supported this decision, contributing to this effort with troops and technical support.

In the case of Afghanistan, NATO used both of its features, as a military and political organisation. More specifically, NATO got involved in this war by developing both military troops located in Kabul and strategic communication narratives. Regarding the communication policy, NATO supported the invasion of Afghanistan with strategic narratives and social media campaigns. The effort to defeat the Taliban, arrest Osama Bin Laden, and rebuild the Afghan country was conducted with a war on the ground and a "war of ideas" (De Graaf, Dimitriu, & Ringsmose, 2015). It was soon realised that in order to defeat the Taliban, the NATO powers had to win the trust of the local population. The narratives that NATO official specialists created were mainly coming from the battlefield, adding no value or information about the reasons or the goals of the multiple levels of conflict. In addition, the storytelling did not gain the trust of the Afghan people, but on the other hand, increased their fear of the unknown or even hostile western organisations. Worth mentioning that according to a survey (Foundation, 2013), 77% of Afghan citizens supported that they were afraid of foreign powers. This had as a consequence a big segment of the target audience to have an unclear image of what was happening in Afghanistan (Dimitriu, 2012).

During the second period of the war, 2006-2010, whilst the military goal was already succeeded (Al-Qaeda was forced to leave the Afghan territory and Osama Bin Laden was now dead), NATO had to gain the trust of the local population and cooperate with them at a higher level. But it was no longer only about the Afghan people. More indicatevely, after 5 years of war, NATO had to attract both the Afghan and allied public spheres. The strategic narrative should inform the target audience about the next goal, the process, and the good willingness of the organisation's activities. In order to achieve that, women and the big abuses that they suffered through the Taliban regime became the central issues of this narrative (Wright, 2019). Rescuing Afghan women was already a central matter even before the invasion. Mustering the issue and providing information about the human circumstances that now all the women were living under, liberating them from the fear of Taliban and sexism, constituted the main core.

Even with the social distinction of the narrative, NATO did not achieve its goals. The Alliance did not win the trust of the Afghan people, losing by this way the 'war of minds'. Military training was promoted as a first priority issue, instead of winning Afghan citizens' support. The problems that caused this were mainly recognized in the strategic communication plan

(Wolff, 2014). Firstly, NATO and its actions were misunderstood and barely known among local citizens. Secondly and closely related to the first feature of the problem, NATO faced difficulties regarding local support. Afghan people did not support NATO's mission under the fear of the Taliban, the unknown, and the crucial face of the North Atlantic Alliance and its values. Thirdly was the contradiction between the big narratives of the mission. Conflicting public opinion created a foggy image of the policies and final goal of the organisation (Wolff, 2014). And lastly, NATO's citizens, guided by the limited levels of awareness and engagement with the process of the mission, discontinued their support of the organisation.

The failure in the communication processes left space for the former regime. The Taliban returned, winning the hearts and minds of the Afghan people and finally the war. NATO announced its decision of secession from ISAF, after being defeated on the ground and in mind. This failure did not just bring another factor that transformed the international community into an unsafe environment, but another rift in the communication and branding processes of the Alliance.

2.2 NATO and Greece through the years

Greece became a member state of NATO in 1952, during the second big enlargement of the organisation (Huffpost, 2017). The country signed the membership in the North Atlantic Alliance, espousing the liberal policies that the USA supported at that time. Turkey became a member state in the same year. As a result, the geographic area that connects the West with the East and signalised the borders between the American power and the threat of the Soviet Union modified Greece and Turkey as important regional factors and a great motte for the spread of communism in Europe (Pantazis, 2020).

Nevertheless, the protection that NATO provided to its member states, Greece left the Alliance after the second Turkish invasion in Cyprus, called Attila 2, and the unwillingness that the main member state, the USA, demonstrated for reacting to the military resolution. Konstantinos Karamanlis, the Greek prime minister of that time, announced the Greek secession in 1974. Since then, Greek-Turkish relations penetrate the Greek membership in NATO, provoking occasional crises. Almost 6 years later, Greece, promoting its benefits and goals, re-entered the North Atlantic Alliance (Iatridis, 2020). Worth mentioning, that Greece has nowadays four

NATO bases in the Greek territory, whilst during the modern ages, Greece was transformed into the junction of West and East civilization and culture (Nedos, 2018).

During the invasion of Afghanistan, Greece supported the Alliance by providing troops and participating in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Except for the military contribution, Greece established diplomatic relations with the Afghan government in 2014, while in 2017 opened the first Afghan embassy in Athens. In addition, Greece donated funds to the Afghan security forces to assure the safety of the National Museum of Afghanistan, where Greek ancient artifacts are kept (Savvidis, 2021).

Considering the above-mentioned facts regarding the relations between NATO-Greece, Afghanistan-Greece, and Greek values and strategic location, the Greek society was quite opposite towards the invasion of Afghanistan (Daily, 2002). According to a survey (Daily, 2002), Greek citizens did not support the invasion, being afraid of future damages to the country's structure and the possibility of a bigger war with Islam religion. The failure of the Afghanistan case created two problem dimensions for the Greek state. Firstly, the terrorist fear that the whole of Europe faced during the first decades of the 21st century (Nesser, 2016). Secondly and most importantly, a huge segment of immigrants and refugees that Greece, as a first-line state, needed and needs to be handle (Harris-Papaioannou, 2021).

3. Literature Review

This chapter will introduce the two basic meanings that this effort will focus on. It will be adduced a short and deep brief of history, main factors, and modern features of the meanings, respecting the available time and space of this research effort. Thus, this literature review is narrowed down and correlated with the under-examined meanings and therefore aims at the emergence of independent variables. As a result, will be mentioned public diplomacy during the ancient and recent years. The evolution of the field after the invention of the telegraph, how previous research and case studies contribute to the public diplomacy field and the meaning of securitization will be mentioned in the first section. Therefore, the second important meaning of this research, brand/branding, will be analysed deeper. Branding, with the definition of the 21st century, will be covered in the second section, while developing the argumentation that highlights its significant confluence during the golden century considering the configuration of public opinion. Last but most important, there will be a synthesis section, where the correlation between public diplomacy, strategic communication, and branding will be described. The interrelationship and cross-fertilization of these meanings should be kept in mind, considering the recent times and the case study of this effort.

3.1 Public Diplomacy

Diplomacy locates its starting point thousands of years ago, when Herodotus and Plato, during their effort to produce the Ancient Greek theoria, travelled and reproduced the values, ideas, and practices of different societies and communities (Constantinou, 2016). Plato and Herodotus were constantly in a process of negotiating meanings and knowledge that came from foreigners. Years later, Greece, Rome, and the Byzantine Empire translated diplomacy into an effort not only to understand and negotiate foreign meanings but also to attract foreigners and initiate them with different values and missions (Melissen, 2005). In 1965, Edmund Gullion specified this small field of diplomatic processes and named it public diplomacy (Snow & Cull, 2020). Edmund Gullion did not coin the deep meaning of public diplomacy, although he brought it to the surface by indicating a more specific angle. Nowadays, public diplomacy could be defined

as the governmental efforts to appear attractive in the public sphere of the international community (Melissen, 2005).

Moving deeper into the meaning, as Sevin, Metzgar, & Hayden (2019) mention public diplomacy (PD) is on one hand closed related to International Relations (IR) (diplomacy), and on the other hand, its main target audience locates out of domestic borders (public) , broadening the field and remaining an instrument of national governments. More specifically and as previous literature indicates, governments use public diplomacy in their attempt to influence the public opinion of the international community and espouse national values and ideas (Snow & Cull, 2020).

Communicate, influence, and persuade finally the public opinion was the sequence used to describe the process of PD, indicating a one-way communication policy. Although, this was meant to change, starting in the 1860s with the invention of the telegraph. "My God, this is the end of diplomacy!" were the words of Lord Palmerston when he received the first telegraph message (Kurbalija, 2018, p. 141). Luckily, Lord Palmerston was wrong, and instead of the end, in the 21st century, after the information revolution and the use of digital means, such as the internet and social media platforms, the way of implementing PD changed dramatically, whilst re-introducing the power of public opinion.

Even though the importance and the adaption of the public diplomacy strategies, public diplomacy studies have been limited, especially when talking about public diplomacy in practice (Ayhan & Sevin, 2022; Vanc & Fitzpatrick, 2016). Most studies were referring basically to the USA, as an example and research area of public diplomacy implication (Melissen, 2005). According to previous research, the new age of public diplomacy and the critical transformation from one-way into a two-way communication process brought again public diplomacy in the centre of interest, overcoming the obstacle of the American monopoly (Snow, 2020; Snow & Cull, 2020).

Nowadays, methodological approaches constitute the problem that characterised the field of public diplomacy, as it is observed an absence of differentiation (Ayhan & Sevin, 2022). Case studies with historical content analysis are the basic examples of research studies in the public diplomacy field. According to Zhao Alexandre Huang (2021), public diplomacy is a tool through which it could be examined the way that governments choose in order to implement and rationalise their foreign policy. PD has three forms of application (Owen, 2016), namely daily communications that refer to publishing information regarding policies, explaining the

domestic values, strategic communication that is implemented by promoting a specific variety of themes and issues, and the creation of long-term relationships between key factors. The means of this form are involved in the education system, scholarships, exchanges, conferences, and the world of media (Nye, 2019).

Slovenia represents one of the case studies, through which public diplomacy is represented as a tool in order to increase and reinforce the national reputation, improve the national image and therefore influence the public perceptions and evaluation of the state and nation, creating high levels of trust (Krajn, 2004). The value of identity credibility was broached by the myths of Aesop and the story of the shepherd and the wolf (Cull, 2009). The phenomenon of source credibility has become even stronger after the evolution of technology, whilst a big variety of actors interact in an unpredictable, partly known, and unsafe environment. This argumentation is highly supported by the example of Spain as a great example of external reputation management that results in high levels of credibility (Melissen, 2006). The source credibility penetrates directly the level of effectiveness that PD could have, transforming into a fatal factor in the diplomatic process. Another well-known example that supports the impact of credibility is the example of the BBC "through its telling of bad news – as well as good – throughout the Second World War, effectively reversed the reputation of Britain for creativity with the truth earned in the First World War" (Cull, 2009, p. 41).

Taking a step after and considering the Canadian and Japanese examples of research, public diplomacy is correlated with the security issue. According to Marczuk (2020) Japan and Canada, with the "freedom from want" and the "freedom of fear" correspondingly, reinforced the issue of security through their public diplomacy policy. Through this effort, it underlined the role of public diplomacy in the national security processes (Cull, 2017). Joseph Nye and the meaning of soft and smart power are highly supported as well. The meaning of soft power was introduced in 1990 by Joseph Nye. Joseph Nye defined soft power as the ability to persuade people and guide them regarding your own willingness. Soft power does not include only the ability to persuade or guide, but also "the ability to entice and attract" (Nye, 2008, p. 95). The features of soft power constitute the interdependent relationship with the PD. In other words, public diplomacy is the instrument that can translate the values of a society into soft power, whilst soft power can translate the values of a society into powerful public diplomacy. A prerequisite of the ability to use soft power is firstly the testified presence in the public sphere and secondly the credibility of the source, as it comes through reputation. Worth to mention that the USA, after the critical event of the 11th September, uses public diplomacy and soft

power as a tool in order to apply national security strategies and reinforce the critical support of national interests (Rugh, 2017). Even though and as the case study of Kenya has mentioned, public diplomacy could produce not only positive but negative influence as well, preventing the desired results to come (Munene, 2011).

In conclusion, the PD had, has, and will have a great role in the IR and the international community. During the two last centuries, PD has changed and gained ground considering the great impact that could produce. Daily and strategic communication, long-term relationships, soft power, and security are some of the factors that characterise the meaning and the application of PD nowadays. But what about branding? In the following section, the field of branding will be deeply described.

3.2 Branding

Branding, another meaning that comes from ancient times, was firstly noticed in an Indian old transport-centre town, where people created animal figures to identify their hometowns (Bastos & Levy, 2012). Additionally, ancient Egyptians and Greek people, more closely to a modern branding form, drew hieroglyphics and marked their properties with iron touches (Moore & Reid, 2008). Thousand years after this, owners of products started using labels, discovering the meaning of reputation. Recognizing the importance of brands, companies made the initial steps, investing in their brand name in order to distinguish their products from other similar products (Jones, 2017). After the Second World War and the rise of the phenomenon namely mass production, branding became one of the most important meanings when referring to companies and organisations. Nowadays, branding signalises huge departments of companies and a big amount of well-spent money.

Even though the long history, brand, and the process of it, branding, still miss a common worldwide definition. Based on the previous literature, the complexity and multidimensional identity of a brand constitute the basic reason for both a big variety of research and consequently different interpretations (Bastos & Levy, 2012; Keller, Nelsin, Reibstein, Lehmann, & Oh, 2020). According to the American Marketing Association (AMA), "brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or any combination of them that is designed to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors"

(Riley, 2016, p. 5). Furthermore, and moving on the history line, branding literature has indicated that brands are communication tools through which we could recognize and express ourselves (Schulz & Stout, 2010), national interests, and identity (Dong & Tian, 2009). In addition to that and according to Keller, branding connotated an experience and a promise towards consumers. It is supported that branding describes a set of expectations or in other words, a set of outcomes produced by experiencing brand products and services (Keller, Sternthal, & Tybout, 2002).

Recent studies have identified branding as a cognitive construction, through which consumers create associations and perceptions (Alemu & Zewdie, 2022). Composing strategic narratives and providing argumentation is recognized as one of the main ways to apply branding strategies, as through these tools a central concept could penetrate the audience's mind, creating the desirable associations (Wolff, 2014). Taking a step after and over the past decade, it was highlighted the need to focus on generating and producing consumer experiences that are closely correlated with the development of stronger brands (Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Morrison & Crane, 2007). It is supported that argumentation and narratives, besides the benefits of association and cognition, could establish an emotional relationship between the company and the consumer (Dias & Cavalheiro, 2021).

Nowadays, branding is also recognized not only as a matter of organisations or companies but nations and states as well. Nation brand was firstly mentioned by Anholt in 1998 (Anholt, 1998). Almost two decades later, researchers mention that as is happening with branding, nation branding misses a comprehensive, common definition. Worth saying, marketing scholars refer to the meaning both as "country branding" and "nation branding" (Nguyena & Özçaglar-Toulouseb, 2021). Nation branding is identified as an instrument to claim uniqueness, including specific factors, such as history, political systems, location, geography, and population habits (Anholt, 2002). As a consequence, nation brand is a complex, ongoing and multifaceted effort (Lee & Kim, 2020) that produces the image and reputation, whilst comprising "a complex bundle of images, meanings, associations, and experiences in the minds of people" (Fan, 2010, p. 98).

Security, as a matter of national issues, has been put aside after the end of the Cold War until the terrorist attacks of 11th September in the USA. After these incidents, security and the creation of safe living conditions became a key issue not only for the national political agenda but also for the national reputation management (Coaffee & van Ham, 2008). Many studies

and research highlighted the need for elaboration, considering the national security issues and the national identity and reputation (Mihaila, 2015). Recent literature highlights the relations expressed between security branding and places through the Unique Selling Points (USP) (Coaffee & van Ham, 2008). The security dimension when referring to brand image and reputation has been highly underlined mainly through the case studies of Madrid (terrorist attack of 2004), Israel (Israel-Palestine Conflict), Miami (high crime rate), Copenhagen (terrorist attacks of 2015), and other places that suffered from insecure conditions (Avraham & Ketter, 2008). Worth to mention that through the example of Copenhagen is supported the negative influence that a security issue could cause in brands.

Security branding is an important factor not only for states and nations but also for international organisations and stakeholders. This becomes obvious when referring to NATO. NATO is perceived as a strong security brand (van Ham, 2008), considering that member-states use its logo in order to show their accomplishment of membership and reinforce their national brand and reputation (Coaffee & van Ham, 2008). Even though the importance of the field and its implication for the international scene, previous research highlights its hardly new elaboration (Coaffee & van Ham, 2008) and the need for further research (van Ham, 2008).

To sum up, and despite the functional differences between companies, organisations, nations, and political entities, branding is applied following almost the same lines and rules. A logo or a sign, combined with strategic communication and narrative, is the common method that CEOs and branding specialists choose to conquer the public's mind and connect with them. The experience that each consumer would derive from brands would contribute to the final image, reputation, and credibility of the brand. Last but not least, an important but recent factor that influences the national and organisation brand is the meaning of security and securitization. The process of security branding affects the reputation and therefore the consumer experience and attitude towards brands in the national and international sphere. But what kind of connection could brand/branding and PD develop?

3.3 The synthesis

In order to find the route that could guide to the correct synthesis, the deductive approach, as Plato and Aristotle taught thousands of years ago, was followed. The first step was to detect the main features that penetrate the two meanings. More specifically, the process line,

consisting of means, the final goal, and the time shot were followed. Focused on the means and starting with PD, it was noticed the need for influencing public perceptions through communication, values, and ideas. Analysing the process of branding was recognized as a similar technique. Branding also uses communication and values in order to reach people's minds. The first common feature could not signify anything else than the relation number one.

Moving on, the attraction was set on the desired outcome. PD's goal was to create power over the public opinion processes and a form of relationship. Thus, branding shares goals with PD, with the meaning of the persistent desire to create communication channels and then achieve a positive impact on the public sphere. These similarities of the two meanings, which seem to share the same ground, raise the question of whether they could be combined into a possible identification and developed the need for one of them. Melissen (2005) answers this, claiming that brand nowadays is a new prerequisite for implementing the new form of PD and not a replacement or overlapping meaning.

Even if both meanings share a lot of common features, there are basic distinctions between them that transformed and maintained their uniqueness. Brand and branding are meanings that refer to and answer questions regarding the meso-level of communication processes with a specific target audience. It includes the process of building trust, common interest, and a positive image. But public diplomacy is a meaning that uses the outcomes of daily communication, strategic communication, soft power, and branding to achieve long-term results and relationships with the stakeholders and the whole of the international community. As a consequence, it could be alleged that branding is another angle of applying and bringing PD closer to its final goals or as Melissen claims and captures in a better way, a new prerequisite.

4. Theory

In this chapter will be analysed the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), whilst attempting to create the theoretical framework and develop the hypotheses of this research effort. ELM, as a theory that captures the complexity of attitude change, will be the ground pillar for the research model and therefore for the hypotheses that need to be tested. The theory chapter is developed, respecting the available time, space, and according to the main meanings of this research. As a result, it will be shortly presented the ELM, following the elaboration of the hypotheses. Lastly, the research model will be demonstrated.

4.1 The choice of ELM model

This research effort set under examination the attitude and perception changes that result after the big defeat of the NATO organisation in the Afghanistan war, trying to investigate and reveal the factors that influence the configuration of public perceptions. Consequently, and from a quantitative approach, two main theory models were provided, namely "theory of planned behaviour" or TPB and "elaboration likelihood model" or ELM.

Starting with the first one, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) represents the development and extension of the boundary conditions that the Theory of Reasoned Action represented (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992). More specifically, the TPB model explains the individuals' attitude based basically on the intent to perform that attitude (Alam & Sayuti, 2011), which is based on previous experiences and norms (Ajzen, 1991). As a result, when a change happened or a current situation altered due to some novel and unfamiliar elements showing up, the model and the prediction of behaviour have little to offer in the research (Ajzen, 1985). In addition to that, TPB focuses on the explanation of models and research that perceive as dependent variable the behavioural intention and as independent variables the attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behaviour control (Ajzen, 2011), providing a research model that could not be adapted in this research effort. The above two main features that characterises the TPB resulted in the appropriateness and unsuitability of the model for this research, forcing the author to the ELM theory as it is providing therefore.

4.2 An effort to understand elaboration likelihood model (ELM)

The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) was composed by Richard Petty and John Cacioppo in the mid-1970s when both of them were still graduate students (Richard & Brinol, 2012). The development of ELM attempted to satisfy the need for a theory correlated with the study of attitude change that was popular at that time. As a result, the ELM was first perceived as a theory of persuasion or simply as attitude change (Richard & Cacioppo, 1986). Even so, the creators explored that the meanings and framework of persuasive messages could be applied to a variety of fields and studies. The main reason for this feature was that in fact, persuasion happens everywhere, whilst it has an essential role in human daily life (Petty & Brinol, 2012). Consequently and according to Petty and Cacioppo's model (1986), ELM postulates an explanatory model that scrutinises how and why a variety of factors influence the evaluation process and finally our attitudes under persuasive communication situations.

The elaboration likelihood model is characterised by the motivation, ability, and opportunity of human beings to elaborate and evaluate a communication process (Dotson & Hyatt, 2010). The motivation expresses the willingness of individuals to engage and think about the communication messages (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996). Ability determines the capability of individuals to comprehend the information, whilst the opportunity to get exposed to a variety of communication products (Petty & Brinol, 2012). High levels of elaboration likelihood happen when motivation, ability, and opportunity factors are able to influence how much elaboration will be devoted to any communication situation. Worth to mention that the elaboration term refers to the process through which people not only encode the provided information but "they also add something of their own" to this information (Petty & Wagener, 1999).

The ELM provides nowadays an organising framework that is able to explain not just what an attitude change is, but also how this attitude change supervenes (Petty, Heesacker, & Hughes, 1997). More precisely, ELM demonstrates four main features that support this. Firstly, it is claimed that people's attitudes change or evaluation could be done "with a high degree of thought or a relatively low degree of thought" (Petty & Brinol, 2012, p. 226). The so-called elaboration continuum is influenced by this process and ranges from low to high levels. Secondly, except for the elaboration continuum, there are a variety of processes of change that operate at the same time. When these operational processes happen at the very end of the elaboration continuum, a peripheral route is followed. On the other hand, in case operational

processes are noticed at the beginning of the elaboration continuum, a central route is followed. Thirdly, ELM theory postulates that the levels of thoughts about an issue could influence how temporary or permanent the final change will be. It is supported that the higher the level of thoughts that determine a judgement, the more it lasts over time and resists other changes (Brinol & Petty, 2015). The fourth feature is considered the most useful and refers to the organisational framework that ELM provides regarding the variables and the potential level of effect that they could cause. In other words, it is highlighted that the category of variables could affect and determine how much a person thinks. But how could these categories be created and framed?

The central and peripheral route represents the two basic categories that could determine and fit the above mentioned main features of ELM. The central route to persuasion indicates that attitude changes result from our intensive and careful attempt to evaluate the basic factors of a communication situation (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984). Subjects with high relevance conditions, such as argument quality, follow or should follow the central route to persuasion. The target of these subjects is to influence the mind-thinking and finally the evaluation of the message, generating positive or negative thoughts about it (Petty, Heesacker, & Hughes, 1997). Central route processing, except for a high level of elaboration, is supported that results in long-lasting changes and benefits (Dillard & Shen, 2012). Considering brands, brand involvement is claimed to lead to a central route when brand supporters examine carefully the communication messages (Park & Hastak, 1995). On the other side, the peripheral route to persuasion demands lower levels of cognitive effort to make an evaluation, whilst it is mainly focused on peripheral cues, such as colours, and source credibility (Bhattacherjee & Sanford, 2006). Lastly and in contrast to the long-lasting changes that the central route induces, the peripheral route results in less persistent and temporary changes (Pornpitakpan, 2004).

Figure 2. Elaboration Likelihood Model
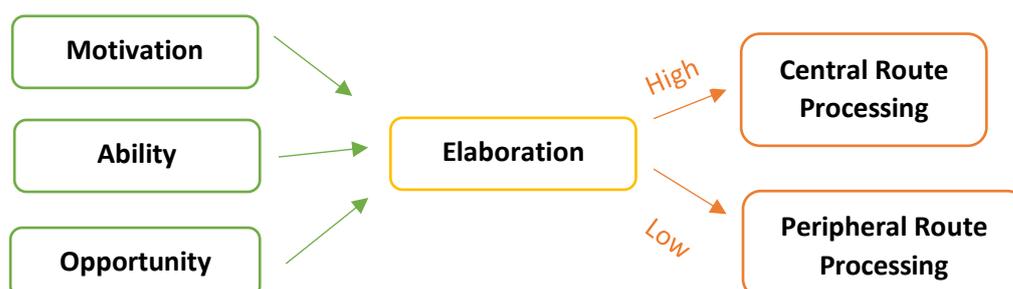
4.3 Towards research model and development of hypothesis

Following the theoretical framework and the existing literature, a testable research model and a variety of hypotheses are constructed. The main objectives of the following sections are to develop a research model in order to examine and discover the main variables that influence the public perceptions of Greek Generation Z about the NATO brand. The model consists of three components namely: argument quality, information availability, and source credibility. The development of the hypothesis would be structured and guided through theory's sections. At the end of the theory chapter, the research model would be presented.

4.3.1 Argument quality

As it is above-mentioned, argument quality is a major factor that characterises the central route to persuasion of the elaboration likelihood model, whilst exploring how individuals code the quality of arguments that are included in the communication process (Teng & Khong, 2015). Although the importance of quality argumentation, little is known about the features that make an argument persuasive (Charles & Lutz, 1998). Nowadays, it is supported that when arguments are clear rather than questionable, would probably create a more positive or favourable feeling to individuals (O'Keefe, 2002). In addition and according to Bhattacherjee & Sanford (2006) the argumentation is able to influence individuals' perceptions when useful information is included. Regarding the organisational and the commercial environment where narratives or arguments are used during the communication processes, it is claimed that they "affect the cognitive responses, beliefs, and attitudes" (van Laer, de Ruyter, Visconti, & Wetzels, 2014, p.808).

Considering this research effort and the field of brand and public diplomacy, narratives and arguments are extensively utilised during the two-way communication processes. In addition, it is claimed that argumentation and narratives signal the means through which researchers could study organisations and their influence on their external environment (Rhodes & Brown, 2005). Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

H1: Argument quality has a positive influence on the perceptions of Greek Generation Z about the NATO brand.

4.3.2 Information availability

Motivation, ability, and opportunity constitute the main factors that influence the levels of elaboration according to the elaboration likelihood model (Richard & Cacioppo, 1986). Respectively, some factors could affect the motivation, ability, and opportunities of individuals to elaborate on and evaluate communications products and messages. It is supported that some of them are the personal relevance, the need for cognition, and the number of message sources (Lien, 2011). Going deeper, message repetition is perceived as an essential factor that could contribute to the deeper and longest thinking of communication messages, as it provides more opportunities and the ability for individuals to scrutinise the argumentation and messages (Hawkins & Hoch, 1992). In addition to that, message repetition could increase the level of elaboration both by increasing the possibilities of understanding a message difficulty to process and by preventing people from relying on simple cues (Lien, 2011).

In the brand extension field, it is supported that repetition and information availability improve brand persuasion and lead to favourable evaluation (Lien, 2011). Furthermore, previous research mentions that information accessibility and availability have a positive impact on organisation's perceptions and reputation (Parveen, Jaafar, & Ainin, 2016). Nowadays, social media and platforms reinforce this effort, assisting organisations and companies in sharing information and finally influencing their reputation, image, and attitude toward their brand (Kim & Ko, 2012). Consequently, the second hypothesis is formulated as:

H2: Information availability has a positive influence on the perceptions of Greek Generation Z about the NATO brand.

4.3.3 Source credibility

In contrast to the two previous factors, source credibility is considered a peripheral cue that requires little cognitive effort and consequently less thinking time (Kitchen, Kerr, Schultz, &

Mccoll, 2014). Considering the majority of the research, source credibility is perceived as an common factor that characterises the peripheral route to persuasion in the process of persuasive messages (Teng & Khong, 2015). Even though there is a conflict related to the source credibility being a peripheral cue. Petty, Cacioppo, and Goldman (1981) during an attempt to reconcile this issue, claimed that source credibility could constitute both a central and peripheral cue based on individuals' involvement and engagement. Consequently, source credibility is perceived as a central cue when individuals are not involved with the topic, while when individuals are involved, source credibility constitutes a peripheral cue. Despite that conflict, it is extensively known that source credibility is affected by the meanings of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness (Na, Kunkel, & Doyle, 2019).

Lastly, source credibility also plays a significant role in the brand field. Credibility assists consumers in creating a comprehensive opinion and evaluation of a brand and its promise (Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin, 2021). More specifically, it is postulated that source credibility is proof that the brand has the ability and willingness to deliver its promises. Or in other words, credibility influences individuals' choices, especially when there is big uncertainty (Erdem & Swait, 2004). As a result, the third hypothesis is formulated as:

H3: Source credibility has a positive influence on the perceptions of Greek Generation Z about the NATO brand.

4.4 The research model

All the factors and hypotheses that compose this research model, are described in a concrete way in the following paragraph, whilst are visualised in the following Figure.

Figure 3. Research model
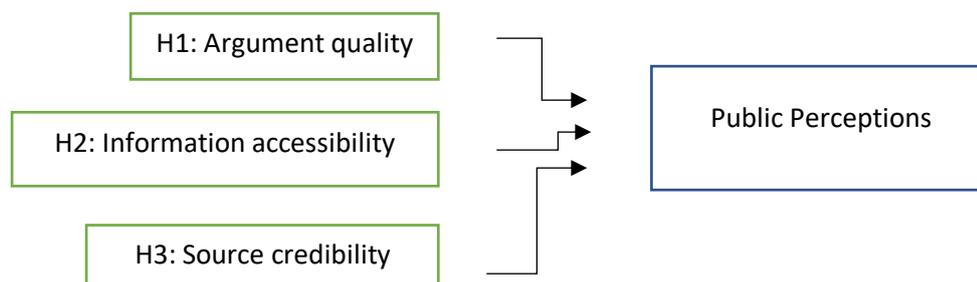
The research model consists of one dependent variable, namely public perceptions and three independent variables, namely argument quality, information accessibility, and source credibility. The first hypothesis implies the relations of public perceptions and argument quality. More specifically, it is hypothesised that the argument quality influences positively the development of public perceptions about NATO. Following the same line, the second hypothesis predicts that the information accessibility causes impact on the perceptions of Greek Generation Z, while the third hypothesis supports that source credibility instigates the positive levels of influence on public perceptions about NATO.

4.5 Control Variable

Considering the current situation, the Ukraine war could be mentioned as a variable that could influence the public perceptions about the NATO brand. The Ukraine war constitutes a fact that could potentially characterise NATO, following the same or different route as the Afghan war. Although, the Ukraine war is still a fact in progress and could be considered only as a potentially influential factor towards public perceptions, especially when this research effort focuses especially on another novel event. Keeping the Ukraine war as a control variable in this research model could exclude any possible effect in the dependent variable not attributed to the independent variables or in other words prevent a possible effect and change, whilst keeping the research under control (Marken, 2001). Lastly, it is supported that ensuring that "alternative causal effects or interactions can be excluded" increases the valid inferences of the research effort (Schwichow, Croker, Zimmerman, Hoffler, & Hartig, 2016, p. 38).

Consequently, and in order to test and examine a possible effect on the dependent variable by the Ukraine war processes, another hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H4: Ukraine crisis affects more negatively public perceptions about NATO.

5. Methodology part

This chapter will provide information about the research paradigm and study design (data collection, tools, and strategy), whilst composing the framework of the methodology that would assist the author to answer the main research questions. More specifically, it will describe and explain the choice of the quantitative methodology, as a way of conducting and selecting the necessary empirical data for this research. This thorough process will provide the final synthesis of the three previous sections and conclude in a meaningful way the big puzzle-image of this research effort. The segregation of the questionnaire will be one of the initial steps in order to reach the end of the route. The meanings of credibility and reliability would be referred to during the effort of the online survey construction. Lastly and following the willingness of composing a comprehensive overview, bias will be mentioned in the reflection part of this section. Moving to the next paragraph, keeping in mind that public diplomacy, branding, and ELM theory compile this research effort.

5.1 Research paradigm

The English word and meaning of paradigm originate from the Greek word paradeigma. Paradeigma in the Greek language means the pattern and was used firstly in 1962 by Thomas Kuhn in order to describe a shared framework among the scientific community that would provide a pattern for examining and analysing phenomena (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). Meanings that are included and synthesise the understanding of the paradigm are namely epistemology and ontology. Those meanings capture the worldview of mind thinking and are relatively important about the aspects of reality. In the field of social sciences research, ontology captures the way the world and the socially constructed phenomena are realised, while epistemology adds the theory of knowledge (Matthews & Ross, 2010). Given the nature of this research, the need for a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, its complexity, and its cause would be explained and analysed from a wider angle of post-positivism.

Post-positivism paradigm stepped forward considering the limitations and criticism of positivism. Post-positivism is the result of the combination of positivism and interpretivism

approaches and it is extensively known as methodological pluralism (Panhwar, Ansari, & Shah, 2017). In contrast with positivism, the post-positivist approach supports the claim that the absolute truth is nowhere to be found, but scientifically what matters is the reality (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). As a result, post-positivism by using statistics and experiments attempts to capture reality in the best possible way, leading to explanations of predictability of explaining the social world (Muijs, 2011). Considering that, and from an epistemology perspective, post-positivism supports objective perceptions.

Regarding this research thesis, the way that its aims, goals, and hypotheses were created, by following the path of previous research, constitutes a feature of post-positivism tradition (Muijs, 2011). Lastly, and using a quantitative approach indicating statistical empirical data, this research satisfies the need and the attempt to represent reality according to the post-positivism goals.

5.2 Study Design

Reflecting on the previous parts and attempting to compose the big narrative of this research, the design of the survey needs to be analysed. Considering the nature of the research, it could be assumed that applying qualitative methodology is the indicated way. Even so, the research questions of this thesis would follow another direction, applying the quantitative methodology and the variance model instead. The choice of quantitative methods was considered a unidirectional way. The argumentation for this option will follow the reductio ad absurdum thinking.

The North Atlantic Alliance constitutes a sui generis organisation that handles military and political issues with sensitive content. As a consequence, the admission to study internally NATO, for example interviewing or creating focus groups among employees, requires a sequence of specific steps and holds the bias of answers that follows employees' restrictions. In addition, and focusing on the Greek example, implementing any kind of research about NRDC is translated into a request for specific authorization from the Greek Defence Ministry. This process is characterised by a high level of bureaucratic circumstances that could last months, whilst the possibility of rejection is always a real probability. Another factor that guided this research effort to quantitative methodology is the need for self-determination. More

precisely, even if this research was approved in the first stage by the Greek Defence Ministry, it should be approved before being published as well, quitclaim authority of managing this effort.

Moving on and examining the qualitative option with external angles, was still considered inappropriate for this research. Firstly, considering the topic of this research as a political issue, the majority of people could become uncomfortable and unwilling to discuss with a researcher personal opinions and perceptions. Bias for giving the socially approved answer could produce invalid results, guiding the research in the wrong direction. Therefore, and examining a practical perspective, Greece holds the majority of restrictions related to the covid-19 pandemic during the first months of 2022, when the empirical data should be collected. As a consequence, travelling to Greece and conducting focus groups or interviews would be highly hampered. Focus groups or interviews for political issues with sensitive content on Zoom could not be considered an appropriate method for examining the research questions of this thesis.

The above-mentioned reasoning and critical thinking guided the author in the selection of quantitative methodology. Considering the relation between the dependent and independent variables, the variance model is the suitable quantitative model. Variance studies and theory, commonly used for social science research, provide a necessary explanation model for research based on survey data (Van de Ven, 2007). The variance method realises a continuous changing process on independent variables caused and driven by deterministic causation of dependent variables. Any change that is caused by the under-research factors is explained by variables (Doncaster & Davey, 2007). As a result, it is suggested to identify the independent variables, and then examine through statistics the variations in the dependent variable.

More specifically and referring to the quantitative method that applied in order to gather statistics data for this research effort, it is namely online surveys. Online surveys were conducted on a range of grounds. An initial argument is considered the capability of surveys to reach the opinion of the medium size segment of the target audience/population, assisting the validity of the results (Evan & Mathur, 2005). The choice of online surveys is also based on another crucial factor in this research. According to research, NATO and its external communication policies currently focus on youth and Generation Z, as the biggest problem of NATO's external image is noticed among people that belong in this specific age group (Wolff, 2014). Considering the familiarity of young people with digital tools and means, online surveys would be transformed from a wicked choice into a big advantage for collecting and observing

the Greek Generation Z and its public opinion. Lastly and again from a practical point of view, online surveys could assist the author to overcome the obstacle of distance and travel restrictions.

5.2.1 Sample collection and data collection

As is above mentioned, this research effort focuses on Greek Generation Z, considering organisational issues and factors. Examining Generation Z could contribute in a more effective way to capture the reality, as young people are mainly presented as the more critical part of societies and actively participate in socially constructed phenomena (Parker, Graf, & Igielnik, 2019). In addition, the research was mainly focused on educated young people that could understand and realise the complexity of politics, organisations, and the international relations scene (Rice & Moffett, 2021). The three criteria (age, education, country of residence) resulted, regarding more theoretical issues, in the choice of employing convenience sampling for the current research. Convenience sampling is also called Haphazard Sampling or Accidental Sampling and constitutes a type of nonprobability or non-random sampling (Given, 2008). This sampling method refers to a sample that is conveniently available (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2015; Zikmund et al., 2009). The convenient sample was chosen considering the suitability and the need for access to a medium-size number of respondents, in order to be able to discover and analyse a big variety of ideas. Except for the advantages, this type of sampling includes disadvantages that mainly respond to the levels of credibility. This issue will be mentioned later on.

Regarding the quantitative approach, the online survey was designed through Google forms (a popular tool among Greek Generation Z) and published through the student website of the University of Macedonia "International and European Studies-University of Macedonia", where students who study and are interested in international issues join, and the "Forum of International Relations" Facebook page, where are gathered people with interest in international relations. Therefore, it was published on the personal accounts of the author (Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn), as they include mainly new and past Greek colleagues and classmates who represent Generation Z and could effectively contribute to the data collection. Worth to be mentioned, that the online survey was conducted in Greek, reducing possible obstacles and misunderstandings that the English language could cause. Lastly, the

survey was published from 7th until 21st April. During these fourteen days, 213 responses were gathered, of which 191 were valid (for more details check the next chapter).

5.2.2 Survey Design

The complexity and multidimensional meanings which are touched through this effort reflect on the construction of the questionnaire. Every part reproduces a small synthesis of the literature review and the theory part, struggling to capture different angles and factors. Attempting to create a research model, the questionnaire is divided into 6 parts. Following this model, the questionnaire is able to address the socially constructed reality and the ELM theory, analysing at the same time the main factors of public diplomacy, branding, and strategic communication (Appendix 1).

Demographic data: Practically thinking, the first part of the questionnaire includes demographic questions, such as age and education that could assist the author to distinguish and exclude answers that do not fulfil the criteria of the sampling requirements.

Public perceptions: The answer to the research question is constructed through this part. Perceptions and attitude changes are highly explained through the ELM theory. In this case, this section focuses on cues, facts, narratives, and communication strategies that were employed to influence the public perceptions of the NATO brand. This effort will follow the steps of previous research, employing questions that brought light to the public perceptions of NATO (King's College & Ipsos MORI, 2019). As a result, this part includes the 4-item scale measured on a 7-point Linkert scale.

Argument quality: In the third part is being conducted the next step to combine theory and literature review, whilst examining the research question and testing the first hypothesis (See Figure 2). Strategic narratives that provide argumentation and attempt to influence the route to persuasion and therefore the public opinion about brands, would be under examination. Considering the case, the questions mention the meaning of arguments during the Afghanistan case and the final effects that have been caused regarding the public opinion and NATO brand. Examining argument quality, the author employed the Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006) scale. More specifically, it includes a 4-item scale measured on a 7-point Linkert scale. The questions are partly re-framed to respond properly to the under-examination phenomenon.

Information Availability: Moving on, this part consists of questions regarding the opportunity and consequently the number of repetitions of messages during the implementation of branding, and public diplomacy strategies. NATO used mostly social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, in order to publish the argument, namely campaigns and narratives that were referred to in the Afghanistan case. Focusing more on this case, the information availability is correlated with deeper thinking and finally the change of public opinion that Greek Young people created about NATO and its brand (answering the research question, testing H2). Describing the information availability through social media is used the Parveen, Jaafar, and Ainin (2016) scale. It consists of a 3-item scale measured on a 7-point Linkert scale. Similarly, the questions are partly re-framed in order to respond properly to the under-examination phenomenon.

Source credibility: The fifth part refers to the meaning of source credibility as an angle that influences and connects the processes of the peripheral route to persuasion with a major factor of branding and public diplomacy. The factor of source credibility is analysed deeply, highlighting its significant effectiveness on the three above-mentioned processes (answering the research question, testing H3). This section is composed of the Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006) scale and includes a 4-item scale measured on a 7-point Linkert scale. Again, the questions are partly re-framed in order to respond properly to the under-examination phenomenon.

Ukraine crisis: The final part takes into consideration the current changes regarding international relations and scene. As NATO and its brand are examined, the big crisis in Ukraine could not be excluded (answering the research question, testing H4). Except for the new challenges and changes that this case could cause to NATO's brand, the crisis in Ukraine could cause bias in the analysis if it wouldn't be mentioned. A new, ongoing, war situation that complicates the realisation of NATO's identity and brand could not be ignored through this research process. This part is supported by Dawar and Pillutla's (2000) scale, which includes a 3-item scale measured on a 5-point Linkert scale. Examining a different crisis, the scales are operationalized in order to respond to these effort goals.

Figure 4. A concrete description of the totality of hypotheses.

Hypotheses to test:
H1: Argument quality has a positive influence on the creation of NATO's public perceptions after the Afghan case.
H2: Information accessibility has a positive influence on the creation of NATO's public perceptions after the Afghan case.
H3: Source credibility has a positive influence on the creation of NATO's public perceptions after the Afghan case.
H4: Ukraine crisis affects more negatively public perceptions about NATO.

Figure 5. Summary of measurement
A comprehensive board referring to the different sections of the questionnaire, the number of scales, the applied model theory, and the previous research application.

Section	Scales	Theory-Field	Previous Research
Public perceptions	4-item	Attitude Change	King's College and Ipsos MORI
Argument Quality	4-item	Central Route-Argument	Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006)
Information Availability	3-item	Central Route-Opportunity	Parveen, Jaafar, and Ainin (2006)
Source Credibility	4-item	Peripheral Route-Credbility	Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006)
Ukraine Crisis	3-item	Control Variable	Dawar and Pillutla (2000)

5.3 Considering Bias

Given the nature and the design of the research, it should be considered a range of biases. Through the description and the implementation of quantitative research regarding political and social issues, bias could be firstly noticed in the sampling method. Convenience sampling,

except for the easily accessible and applying method, embodies possible bias. Even though and to eliminate the possibility of bias, there were some techniques applied, as described. The initial source of bias that could be noticed refers to the adequacy of responders. Participants with absence of knowledge about the topic could cause bias and quick responses that do not represent the reality and the socially constructed public opinion (Sedgwick, 2013). This issue was handled through the first part of the questionnaire and the criteria for eligibility. Responders that did not fulfil the criteria were excluded from the collected data and their responses were not taken into analysis and measurement. Thus, the usage of an invalid or untested questionnaire could be transformed into another possible source of bias (Malone, Nicholl, & Tracey, 2014). As is already described, the totality of the questionnaire's sections was applied in relevant research at least one time, reinforcing the meanings of validity and reliability of this thesis effort and eliminating more biases.

A second possible source of bias is referred to as social desirability bias (SB). Research that examines phenomena and cases with social and political issues could unwillingly entice responders to answer based on socially acceptable choices, supplanting their personal opinion (Jann, Krumpal, & Wolter, 2019). Regarding this research effort, participants were asked about their opinion on a phenomenon and brand with an assortment of social and political perspectives in Greek society and scenes. To mitigate SB bias, the anonymity of the questionnaire and the ability of the participants to quit in any part of the process was highlighted.

6. Data Analysis

This chapter provides the analysis of the data that were gathered by applying quantitative approach and publishing the survey. In order to examine and analyze the responses, the IBM SPSS Statistics program (therefore SPSS) was used. SPSS analysis is implemented in different stages. Descriptive analysis is implemented in order to check the validity of the responses and the functionality of the questionnaire. Therefore, multiple regression analysis indicates the answers to the research questions, by testing the hypotheses. Moving to the following paragraphs, keeping in mind that this effort attempts to answer what is the main factor that affects the public perception of Greek Generation Z about the NATO brand.

6.1. SPSS Data

6.1.1 Demographic Data

As is already mentioned and in order to receive accurate and valid results, responders need to fulfill three criteria (age-education-country of residence). Firstly and regarding their age, they need to belong to Generation Z (18-26 years old). Secondly, they need to be educated as it is more possible to have knowledge about the international scene. And thirdly, they need to live inside the Greek borders or hold a Greek nationality, sharing the Greek culture. Before starting the data analysis, descriptive analysis needs to be held in order to exclude responders that do not fulfill the abovementioned eligibility criteria. Specifically, the survey gathered 213 responses, whilst 191 were valid. In particular, 15 responders did not belong in Generation Z, and 7 responders did not share Greek nationality (See Appendix 2).

Moving on to the next variable of the demographic section, the knowledge about NATO is to be examined. Considering the variable regarding the knowledge about the NATO organization, the mean and the median (mean=3,1 and median=3,20) indicate that the average of the participants has a medium level of knowledge about NATO. More than 30% of the participants mentioned that their knowledge of NATO organization is good and very good (on a scale of

1(not at all)-5(very well), 4=23,9%, and 5=7%). Last but not least, a positive skewness (0,142) and negative kurtosis (-0,439) indicate some outliers. Even though, they are kept in the data as the trimmed mean is close to the normal mean (5% trimmed mean=3,6 and mean=3,3). Participants with a medium or high level of knowledge of NATO increased the level of accuracy of the results (Graphs are provided in Appendix 2).

6.1.1. Internal Consistency

Before recoding and creating the team of variables that would express and measure the dependent variable (public perceptions) and the independent variables (argument quality, source credibility, and information availability), the internal consistency needs to be tested. According to Pallant (2016), all scales need to provide good internal consistency, with Cronbach Alpha values above 0,7 considered as acceptable. "Public perceptions" scale has a good internal consistency which is implied through $\alpha=0.827$. "Argument quality" and "information availability" scales have an internal consistency of 0.913 and 0.803 correspondingly, which suggest a very good internal consistency. "Source credibility" scale has an internal consistency of 0.912, which indicate a very good internal consistency. The abovementioned results were expected to be, as all the scales are operationalized from already validated scales. In conclusion, all the scales are reliable and retained to test the hypotheses.

Figure 6. Internal Consistency of Model Constructs

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
(1) Public perceptions	4	0.827
(2) Argument quality	4	0.913
(3) Information Availability	4	0,803
(4) Source Credibility	3	0,912

6.1.2 Descriptive Analysis

"Public perceptions" is negatively skewed (-0,549) with a positive kurtosis (0,273). This indicates clustering of scores at the high end, skewed to the left, and distribution in the peak. In order to produce normalised data, bootstrapping method was applied. Bootstrapping method was applied performing bootstrapping for 1000 and 10000 number of samples. Although, the bootstrapping method did not produce more normalised data, keeping "public perceptions" negatively skewed with a positive kurtosis. The Box plot for "public perceptions" does not indicate any outlier. "Argument quality" is positively skewed (0,608) with a positive kurtosis (0,332). There are noticed 4 outliers. Even though, the trimmed mean and the original mean (5% trimmed mean=13.35 and mean=13.540) are very close. Considering that the values are not so different from the main distribution, the outliers retain in the data analysis. "Information availability" is also positively skewed (0,081) with positive kurtosis (0,030). There are three outliers observed. Similar to the "source credibility", the trimmed mean and the original mean (5% trimmed mean=9,906 and mean=9,957) are very close. As a result, the outliers remain in the data analysis. Lastly, source credibility is positively skewed (0,135) with a negative kurtosis (-0,333). Again, the bootstrapping method was applied performing bootstrapping for 1000 and 10000 number of samples. Nevertheless, normalised data was not produced. This time, no outliers were observed. All variables, except for the source credibility, have 4 values that indicate that min=4 and max=28. Source credibility consists three values, and the min=3 and max=21. Some values of descriptive results are presented in Figure 4 (For Box Plot and SPSS outputs see Appendix 3).

Figure 7. Descriptive Values

Variable	Mean	Std. Error	SD	Scale Range
(5) Public perceptions	14,56	,22	3,24	1-7
(6) Argument quality	13,54	,31	4,56	1-7
(7) Information Availability	16,57	,27	4,00	1-7
(8) Source Credibility	9,95	,26	3,83	1-7

6.2. Hypotheses Testing

To examine the totality of the hypotheses, or the strength and the direction of the linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables, correlation analysis and the value of the Pearson correlation coefficient had to be implemented (Pallant, 2016). Pearson correlation coefficient value describes the strength and the direction of the relationship between two variables. It is worthy to be mentioned that at this level of analysis with Pearson correlation value, causality cannot be indicated. Even though, it is the first step of discovering if there is a correlation between independent and dependent variables. More specifically and referring to this research, two of the three under-examined independent variables develop correlation with the dependent variable. "Argument quality" indicates a medium correlation with "public perceptions" (r=0.348), whilst a positive strong correlation is detected between "source credibility" and "Public perceptions" (r=0.468). "Information availability" indicates a less significant correlation with "Public perceptions" (r=0.223).

The next step in order to reach the final results of hypothesis testing is regression analysis. Multiple regression analysis, except for the existence of a correlation, could indicate a causality. In addition, by applying multiple regression analysis the way independent variables affect the dependent variable could be assumed. Before examining the way of affection, the data had to be controlled to ensure a proper regression analysis. The variables that need to be measured are performed using Likert scales, an acceptable form for applying multiple regression analysis (Pallant, 2016). In addition to that, Likert scales are treated as continuous and include seven values, categorising them as continuous interval scales (Wu & Leung, 2017). As a result, and before proceeding to the next step, residuals, normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity need to be controlled. The results from the above-mentioned tests could be found in Appendix 3.

Ensuring that the data were proper enough to apply multiple regression analysis, the next step was implemented. The overall model explains 48,7 % of the variance in the dependent variable, with an adjusted R Square of 0.487, which is an appropriate and optimistic number to report when the sample is small (Pallant, 2016). The independent variable that performs the strongest contribution to "Public perceptions" is the "source credibility", with a beta coefficient of β = 0.482 (t=5.325, p <0.00). In addition, "argument quality" and "information availability" have a weaker contribution related to the dependent variable, with a beta coefficient of β = 0.135 (t=1.888, p<0.060) and β = 0.053 (t=0,998, p<0,104). Given the above, combining the results

from the Pearson correlation coefficient and the multiple regression analysis, only hypothesis three is supported. In detail, higher levels of source credibility support more positive public perceptions. Being adapted in this under-examined case, the almost neutral public perceptions levels   are   engendered   with   a   medium   level   of   source   credibility.

Figure 7. Coefficients Results

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig
	Beta	**Beta**		
(1) Argument quality	*0,096*	*0,153*	*1,888*	*0,060*
(2) Information Availability	*0,043*	*0,0053*	*0,998*	*0,414*
(3) Source Credibility	*0,423*	*0,482*	*5,325*	*0,000*

Lastly, regarding the control variable about the affection of the Ukraine crisis, a different approach is applied. Each variable is considered separately to discover the level of influence and the final bias that the Ukraine crisis has in this research. In particular, a descriptive analysis is implemented for each variable that describes and examines the Ukraine crisis. According to them, the majority of responders (68,9%) mention that the Ukraine crisis will further influence their perceptions of the NATO brand. In addition to that and considering the possibility of a future NATO operation, the majority of the responders (63,6%) are not willing to endorse a new movement. But closer to the ongoing process, responders (39%) remain neutral about the reaction of NATO regarding the Ukraine war, as the mean is close to the central and neutral reaction. Given these data, it can be assumed that for this timeslot and as NATO is currently not actively involved in the Ukraine war, the perceptions about the NATO brand are not significantly influenced. This assumption is also supported by the Pearson correlation coefficient. The variables related to the Ukraine crisis do not indicate a significant correlation value with the dependent variable of "Public perceptions". In Figure 8, there are some descriptive values related to the three variables and the Pearson correlation coefficient value.

Figure 8. Descriptive Values, Pearson Values related to the "Ukraine crisis".

Variables	Mean	SD	Scale Range	r
Ukraine war	5,01	1,678	1-7	0,102
Reaction to war	3,17	1,516	1-7	0,360
Support of reaction	2,93	1,572	1-7	0,390

Figure 9. Hypotheses testing results

Hypothesis	Results
H1: Argument quality has a positive influence on the perceptions of Greek Generation Z about the NATO brand.	Not supported
H2: Information Availability has a positive influence on the perceptions of Greek Generation Z about the NATO brand.	Not supported
H3: Source credibility has a positive influence on the perceptions of Greek Generation Z about the NATO brand.	**Supported**
H4: Ukraine crisis affects more negatively public perceptions about NATO.	Not supported

7. Discussion & Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the final conclusions regarding both the case study that was under examination and the bigger problematization about the co-existence of strategic communication, branding, and public diplomacy in sui generis international organisations and securitization meaning. The author, based on the data and the previous research, supports that the source credibility contributes the most to the creation of public perceptions about security brands. The abovementioned sentence constitutes the main conclusion that will be analysed furthermore in this section. Following the next paragraphs, keeping in mind that branding and securitization or security brand is a under-researched field during the 21st century.

7.1 The current hypotheses and case study

This research has been focused on discovering the main and most important factors that contributed to the formulation of public opinion regarding the brand of a sui generis international organisation, NATO. The analysis took into consideration an ongoing crisis, referring to the Ukraine war and its consequences from January to April when the research and the collection of the data ended. After the exposition of the data, the research has been concluded with three basic results, following the path that the research questions set up and the peculiarities of the hypostasis that characterise the current organisation.

Firstly, and as the data indicate, the majority of responders have developed almost neutral, closer to negative perceptions about the NATO brand, as the mean of "Public Perceptions" dependent variable was 14,56 with a minimum value of 4 and a maximum of 28. During the 21st century and whilst the international scene is about to gain a new order, Greek young people hold an almost neutral attitude towards NATO after the Afghan case, the main security brand of Europe. Going a step after, the research aimed at discovering the most significant factor that is related to the configuration of public perceptions. Or in other words, the main factor that influences the elaboration processes regarding the NATO brand.

The survey and the previous research revealed the real problem that NATO faces in the golden century. As it is mentioned and according to ELM theory, argumentation and information

availability constitute factors of the central route to persuasion and finally the configuration of change attitude and public perceptions. Considering this case, argument quality and information availability hold medium levels of significance when the talk comes to public perceptions about NATO. Considering the previous research as provided in the literature review, the findings of this effort do not support the significance of the argument quality or narrative during the communication process of brand and public diplomacy (Wolff, 2014; Alemu & Zewdie, 2022).

On the other hand, source credibility is preserved as the most significant factor which is related to public perceptions and NATO and constitutes the answer to the research question. Source credibility has been characterised both as a peripheral and central route to persuasion in previous research. In addition to that and as it is above mentioned, there was a conflict considering the real feature of source credibility that was attempted to be solved by Petty, Cacioppo, and Goldman (1981). As was mentioned, source credibility could constitute a peripheral cue context, when individuals are less able and motivated to engage in the elaboration process (Petty & Wagener, 1999). The findings of this research effort indicate and present the source credibility as a significant factor that contributes to the configuration of the public perceptions and could be therefore characterised as a central cue context. Except for one of the dimensions of the ELM theory and model, the findings support the role that source credibility has in the fields of public diplomacy and branding. More specifically, it is supported that source credibility is a crucial factor when applying branding and public diplomacy strategies, especially when this refers to security issues. As happened in the Copenhagen example, a failure in the management of a security issue affects the source credibility and the perceptions about the brand.

Overall, the answer to the research question, considering the most significant factor that influences the perceptions of Greek Young people, is answered through this effort. More precisely, the findings demonstrate that public perceptions of Greek Generation Z about NATO are significantly influenced by source credibility. By supporting only the third hypothesis and not supporting the rest of them, this research effort attempted to reach and satisfy the research aim.

7.2 The bigger image

This research makes two main contributions from a theoretical perspective. Firstly, it reveals the application of ELM theory and the implementation of persuasive communication in different fields, namely public diplomacy, branding, and especially security branding. More specifically, this research effort highlights source credibility as a central cue context when individuals are not personally involved in the communicated issue, supporting previous findings and research (Petty & Wagener, 1999; Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981).

Secondly and referring to the outcomes, this research contributes to a better understanding of how the communication processes and factors could influence public perceptions. By means of this, it is supported that even for sui generis organisations that holds unique features, attitude, and way of communicating, when security is the main issue, source credibility remains a significant factor that influences public perceptions (Avraham & Ketter, 2008; Coaffee & van Ham, 2008; Rugh, 2017; Marczuk, 2020). As it is presented throughout the literature review, source credibility is an important factor that crosses the borders and influences communication of securitization issues, even if it refers to public diplomacy and branding. This research could constitute a helpful tool and motivation to fill the gap regarding research that combines security and branding or public diplomacy, not only considering states and nations but also international organisations.

7.3 Limitations and Future research

Even though the current study and conclusions have presented interesting and helpful insights and outcomes, contributing to the current body of knowledge, some limitations should be noticed. Firstly the convenience sampling, the criteria of sampling and the specific target audience of Generation Z. Except for the limitations that have already been noticed during the methodology section, the criterion of addressing the issue mainly to people that are interested in international issues could limit furthermore this effort. More precisely, this feature might bring the findings of this research not in full accordance with the general population of Greek Generation Z. In addition to that, and as the research effort is conducted following the quantitative approach and post-positivism paradigm, the findings are based only on statistical

numbers. A mix-method approach with in-depth interviews or focus groups could probably discover and give a deeper insight into the findings.

Nevertheless, this research effort could be a stimulus for further research within the securitization, branding, and public diplomacy field. The lack of research is already recognized from previous literature and this research could lead to new directions and questions. In addition to that, securitization, during a period that is characterised by high insecurity and ongoing crises such as the Ukraine war and the Taiwan crisis, would be transformed into a vital part of the branding and public diplomacy of a variety of nations, states, and international organisations. These results in a special issue when focusing on NATO and security brands, keeping in mind that it remains one of the less examined organisations, whilst it is postulated as the basic organisation related to international and brand security. Lastly, it could be of interest to research how to source credibility with the meaning of trustworthiness, attractiveness and expertise could be created through the communication processes of public diplomacy, (security) brand, and strategic communication.

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Appendix

Appendix 1

Questionnaire (translated in English by the author)

NATO after Afghanistan

My name is Georgia Moysaki and this is a survey-part of my master thesis.
During this questionnaire, there are questions about your opinion and perspectives about the North Alliance or NATO, considering the withdrawl of military forces in Afghanistan (August, 2021).
Before you start, keep in mind that:
1. Your identity and your answers will be kept anonymous
2. You can quit in any part of the survey
3. You can send me your feedback, positive or negative (ge7252mo-s@student.lu.se).
4. You can skip the next video-session.

Thank you for your effort!

Video Session

NATO in Afghanistan

Demographics

In which age group do you belong? *

○ Under 18

○ 18-26

○ 27-34

○ 35-44

○ 45+

Where is your permanent residence located in; *

○ Greece

○ Other

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? *

○ High school

○ Bachelor

○ Master

○ Other

How well do you think that you know NATO organization processes? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
not at all	○	○	○	○	○	very well

Public Perceptions

Please, rate how much you disagree (1) or agree (7) with the following statement.

I feel less favorability towards NATO. *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Agree

I believe that NATO has a possitive impact in the international scene. *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Agree

I believe that NATO is a strong Ally *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Agree

I believe that NATO is a force for good in the world. *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Agree

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Argument

Please, rate how much you disagree (1) or agree (7) with the following statement.

The information provided for the Afghanistan case from NATO was informative. *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Agree

The information provided for the Afghanistan case from NATO was helpful *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Agree

The information provided for the Afghanistan case from NATO was valuable. *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Agree

The information provided for the Afghanistan case from NATO was persuasive. *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Agree

Information Availability

Please, rate how much you disagree (1) or agree (7) with the following statement.

I think that NATO provided general information about the Afghanistan case. *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Agree

I think that NATO provided information about competitors in the Afghanistan case. *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Agree

I think that NATO provided information about specific missions in Afghanistan. *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Agree

Source Credibility

Please, rate how much you disagree (1) or agree (7) with the following statement.

NATO organization was knowledgeable on this topic. *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Agree

NATO organization was trustworthy. *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Agree

NATO organization was credible. *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Agree

NATO organization appeared to be an expert on this topic. *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Agree

Ukraine Crisis

Please, rate how much you disagree (1) or agree (7) with the following statement.

Ukraine crisis will affect more my perception about NATO. *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Agree

NATO responds properly to the Ukraine crisis. *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Agree

I will support NATO's mission in the future. *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Agree

Appendix 2

1. Demographic Profile of the Responders

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Age		
Under 18	9	4,2
18-26	198	92,9
Over 27	6	2,8
Education Level		
High School	11	3,9
Bachelor Degree	135	63,3
Master Degree	67	32,6
Country of Resident		
Greece	204	95,9
Any other country	7	4,3

2. Results for Variable – Knowledge about NATO
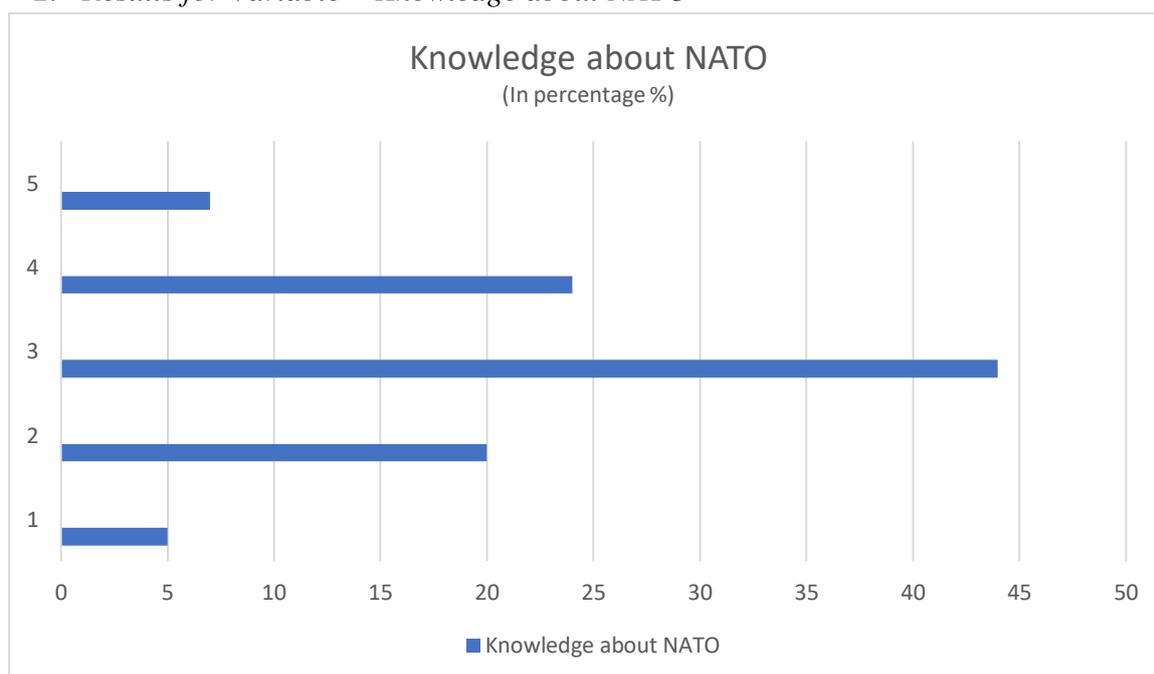
Appendix 3

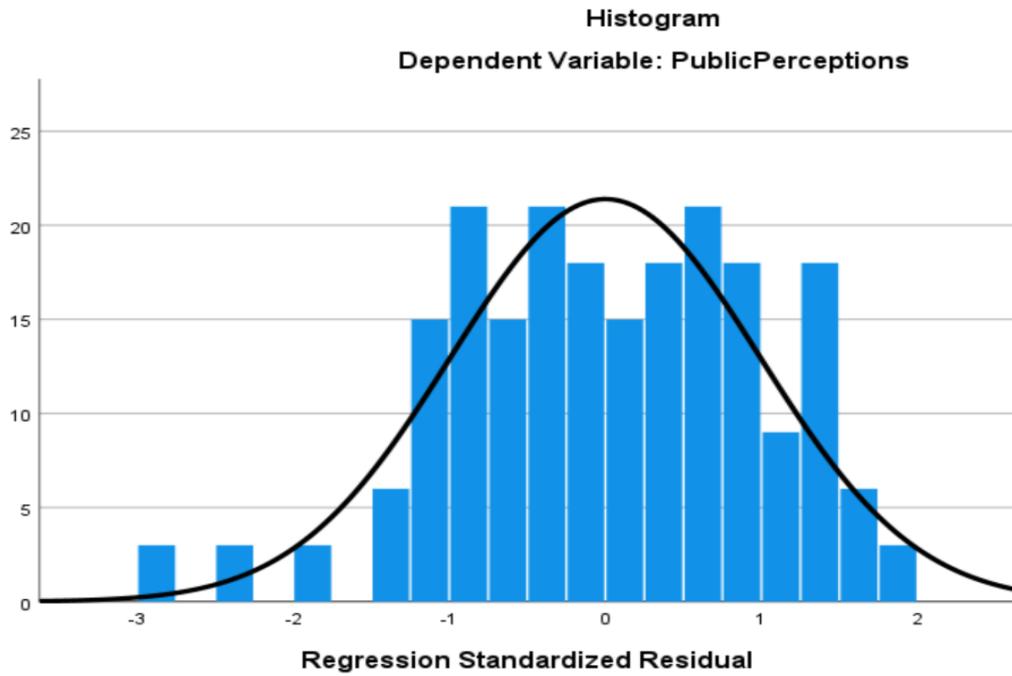1. *SPSS Box plot and Histogram*
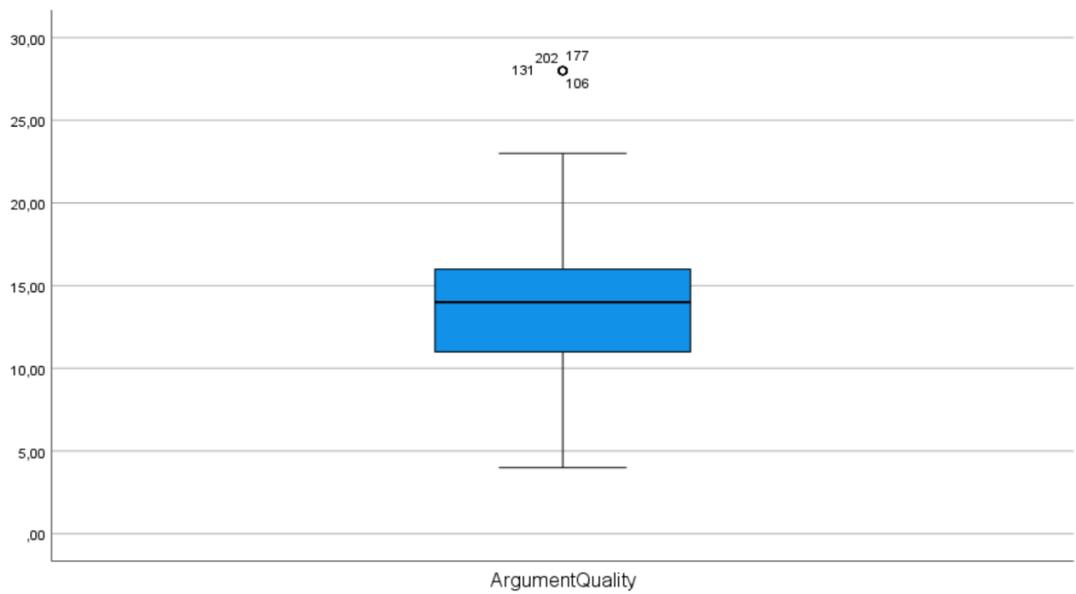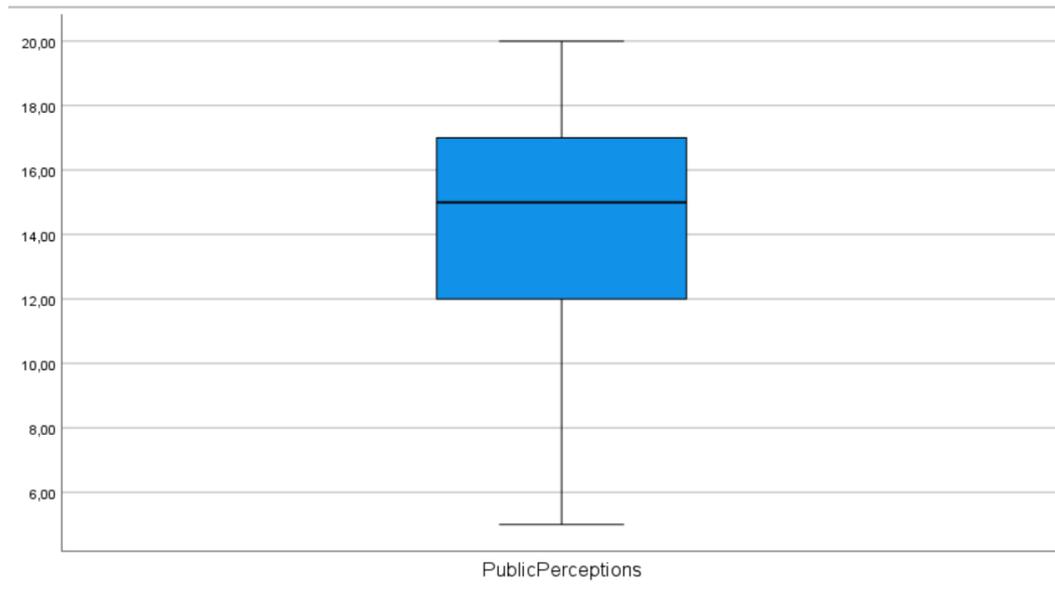
PublicPerceptions
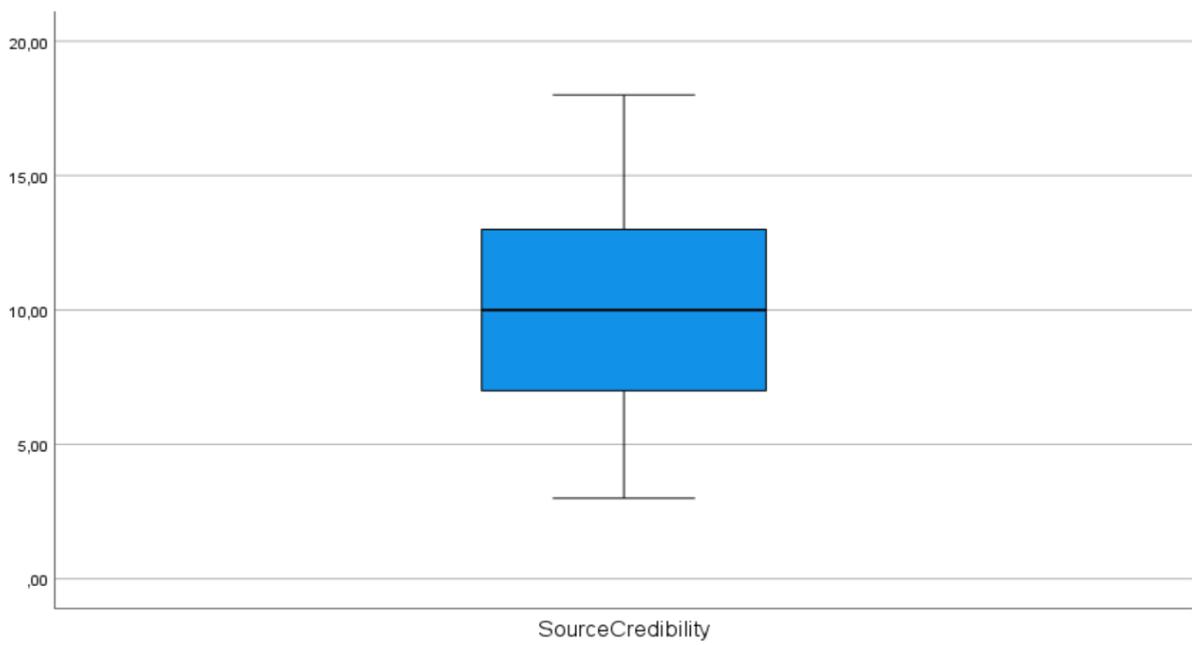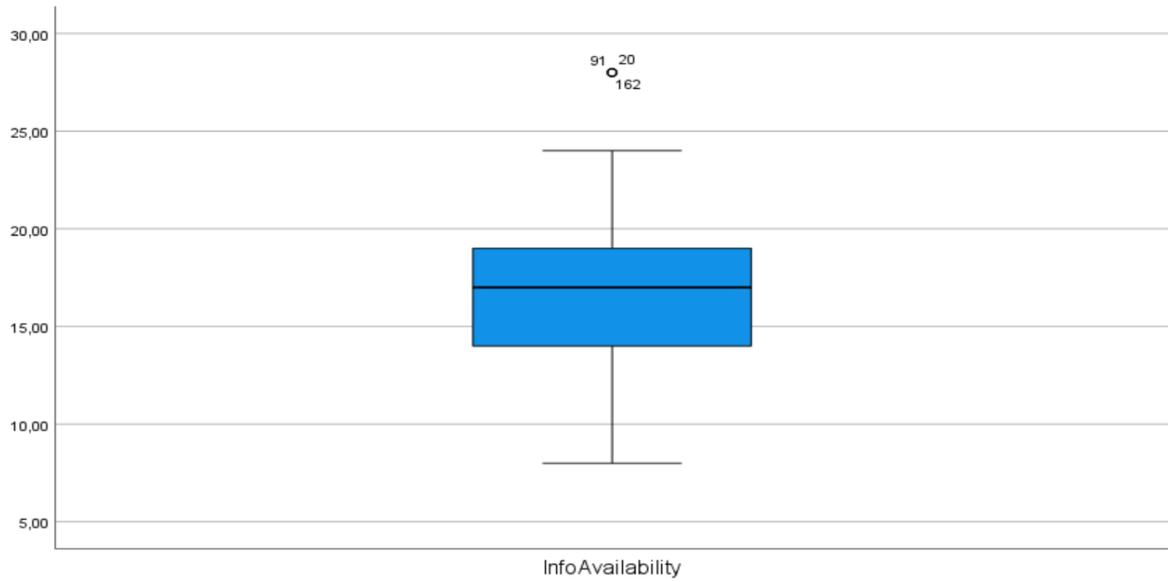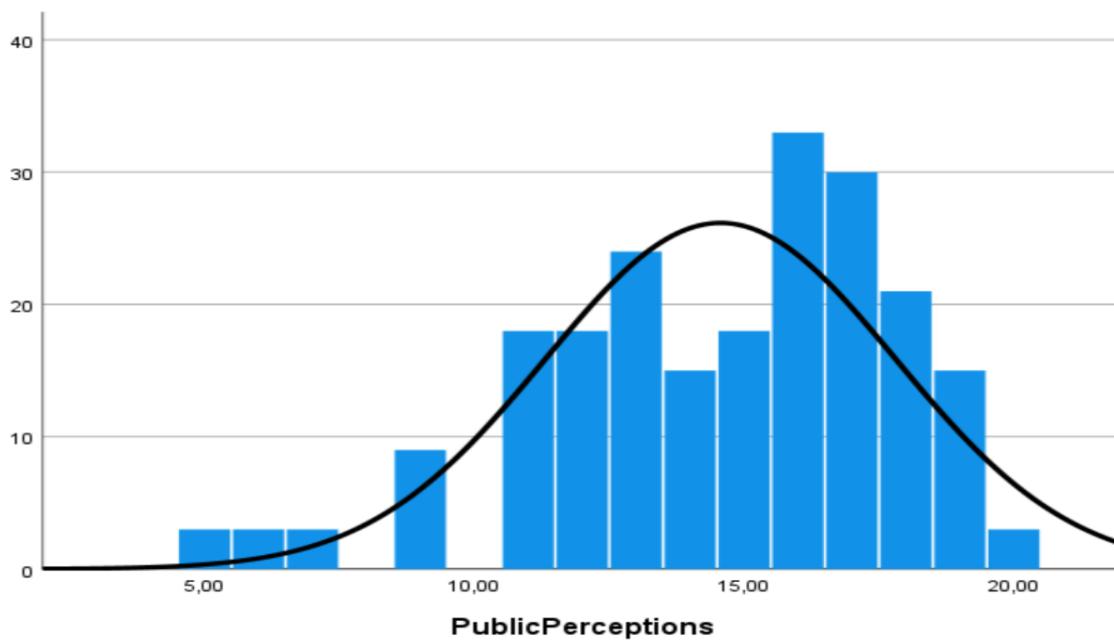
2. *Multiple Regression Analysis Results*

Histogram: H1, H2 & H3
IV: Argument quality, Information availability, and source credibility
DV: Pubic perceptions

Histogram
Dependent Variable: PublicPerceptions
Regression Standardized Residual

Normal P-Plot: H1, H2 & H3
IV: Argument quality, Information availability, and source credibility
DV: Pubic perceptions

Scatterplot: H1, H2 & H3
IV: Argument quality, Information availability, and source credibility
DV: Pubic perceptions