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An Overview of Turkey's Soft Power Apparatus: Doctrine, Agents and Operational Dimensions

Dr. Pavlos I. Koktsidis

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INSTITUTE OF STUDIES FOR POLITICS AND DEMOCRACY

Address: 2 Andrea Zakou, Office 302, 2404 Engomi, Nicosia, Cyprus.

Tel.: +357 22 664470 ■ Email: info@ispd.org.cy ■ www.ispd.org.cy

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Dr Pavlos I. Koktsidis
Research Fellow

About the author

Dr. Pavlos I. Koktsidis is an Adjunct Lecturer of International Relations and Conflict Studies at the Department of Social and Political Sciences in the University of Cyprus.

Contact Details:

Email: pavlosk@ucy.ac.cy

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Executive Summary

Theoretically, soft power draws on the actor's persuasive narrative and attractiveness, sincerity and consistency with political values, and with a foreign policy that is perceived as moral and legitimate. However, it does not presuppose a state's genuinely moral motivation, and it does not presume the purely voluntary, independent, and co-opting nature of relations between powerholding and receptor states. Turkey's soft power communicates a "grand-narrative" that combines historio-cultural elements with Turkey's supposedly powerful and dynamic socio-political paradigm focusing on the "rediscovery" and promotion of the Ottoman-Islamic and Turanic legacy in the "post-Ottoman geopolitical space", the harmonization and acquiescence of relevant states and people with Turkey's idiosyncratic mix of modernity and conservatism, and the projection of social care and responsibility towards ethnic and religious kin communities through cultural, economic and humanitarian involvement. Turkey's soft power initiatives emanate from both state-to-public and private-to-public agencies through a top-down and centrally coordinated mechanism. Soft power practices are implemented by a variety of agencies on multiple levels with adjustments depending on the locality. The penetrative intensity and extent of activities are generally determined by the target community's level of dependency and degree of permissiveness.

Introduction

This is the first part of an investigative study that seeks to clarify Turkey's soft power doctrine, agents and operational dimensions and account for the practices employed by Turkey in the occupied areas of Cyprus ("TRNC") in collation with experiences from Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The study begins with a straightforward theoretical account of soft power. The theory section explains the critical dimensions, means and objectives concerning the use of soft power practices in the foreign policy of states.

Following the theory section, the study offers a summary of Turkey's perceived geopolitical role and clarifies the evolution and crystallization of a "new Turkish foreign policy" since the rise of AKP into power (2002). The present study focuses on the doctrinal dimensions, structure, and agents that make up Turkey's soft power policy framework.

Its core aim is to illustrate the "grand-narrative" upon which Turkey's soft power is designed and projected, identify the sought policy objectives and pinpoint the policy instruments used for carrying out soft power initiatives. Within this context, the study focuses on the two critical dimensions of Turkey's soft power: i) Religious-cultural and educational diffusion, and ii) Humanitarian and economic inflows.

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I. Soft Power: Concept and Means

Since Joseph Nye introduced the concept of soft power in the 90s, there has been a great deal of academic research and numerous policymaking studies with reference to the concept. In this section, we encapsulate the fundamental conceptual tenets of soft power as accepted by most academics and policymakers and provide a general overview and update of its intended uses and methods. In broad terms, soft power is the ability to attract and co-opt, rather than coerce i.e. military means, a particular target audience, be it a country, a region or community of perceived strategic importance in order to accomplish foreign policy objectives vital to the state. According to Nye, the objective aim of soft power is to shape the preferences of others (target audience) through appeal and attraction in order to allow the government (agent) to obtain a desired outcome.¹ In other words, according to Nye's logic, soft power implies getting others to want the outcomes that you want by co-opting people rather than coercing them.² Nye characterises the ability of a state to induce others to adopt its own policy preferences as "soft power". Nye's defining feature of soft power lays in the predominance of its non-coercive nature. He argues that soft power derives from an actor's "culture (when it is pleasing to others), its political values (when they are attractive and consistently practiced), and its policies (when they are seen as inclusive and legitimate), and it is used for the accomplishment of favourable outcomes."³


Nonetheless, at its core, soft power is a means-end power strategy in achieving favourable foreign policy outcomes. The strategic purpose of soft power is to provoke changes on social attitudes through the shaping of public opinion with the use of formal and informal channels, political and non-political organizations, as well as through cultural and economic agents. The promotion of values through governmental and non-governmental actors is a major soft power objective, which can help states shape a target country's foreign policy preferences. For doing so, soft power policies normally utilize a nexus of means including the provision of

¹ Nye, Joseph (2011). *The Future of Power*. New York: Public Affairs, 84

² Nye, (2011). *The Future of Power*

³ Nye, Joseph (8 May 2012). "China's Soft Power Deficit to catch up, its politics must unleash the many talents of its civil society". *The Wall Street Journal*.

incentives, public attraction and the arousal of emotions, always in accordance with their capacity and in appropriate to the target audience proportions. Value-promotion is an explicitly soft power approach to foreign policy that is operationalized through a variety of means. Government agencies that promote the society's cultural values through, for example, educational exchanges and targeted scholarships, are ways of shaping the aims and choices pursued by foreign policy actors in another country.



The promotion of values through governmental and non-governmental actors is a major soft power objective, which can help states shape a target country's foreign policy preferences.

States can also fund non-governmental actors with an explicit values promotion agenda, such as human rights groups, religious groups and so on. According to the prototype theory, the strength of this approach is that domestic actors within a particular target country embrace the underlying values promoted by the agent and then this becomes the basis for policy choice, which perhaps unconsciously, conforms to the interests of the promoter state. It is worth stressing that soft power is neither a value-objective concept nor it constitutes a mere social or cultural influence. To the contrary, it is a deliberate, coordinated and objective-driven political action to increase strategic eminence through social appeal, acquiescence, and if possible, create some dependency with the target community. Nye himself has, probably naively, asserted that “seduction is always more effective than coercion...but many values like democracy, human rights, and individual opportunities are deeply seductive.”⁴ He nevertheless reiterated that soft power is a descriptive, rather than a normative, concept.

⁴ Nye, Joseph (2004) Soft power: the means to success in world politics. Public Affairs, New York, 26

Today, analysts accept that soft power is a value-driven and value-subjective concept. States and governments shape their soft power policies according to their subjective values, preferences, aims, and calculations. Nye has thus later clarified that “soft power is not a form of idealism or liberalism, but it is simply a form of power, one way of getting desired outcomes.”⁵

Notably, soft power may indeed be used by agents promoting liberal democracy or human rights, but so it can be used by agents promoting forms of authoritarianism, hegemonic control, or religious fanaticism, or even more cunningly, by concealing the above with idealistic or/and romanticised narratives. Soft power explains the methodology and means of exerting power, but it does not define its value-content, qualities, and objectives.

Secondly, soft power is partly, or in whole, intentionally directed and coordinated by

governments as part of their formal and informal foreign policy toolkit. According to Nye, the state sets the agenda through influence and the ability to entice and attract.⁶ Hence, there needs to be intentionality by the state, a clear blueprint on how to best utilize state and non-state resources, and how to design ways to translate these non-state actors into actual soft power assets. In other words, soft power involves the political instrumentalisation of agents and resources such as culture, values, and economics for achieving the state’s own purposes. However, the tactical purpose of soft power is not to necessarily impel a speedy

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⁵ Nye, Joseph S (2011). *The Future of Power*. New York: Public Affairs, 84

⁶ Nye, Joseph. (2008). “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power”. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616: 94-109

transformation of allegiance, but rather, it aims to affect the public sphere and governing elites of its target audience by creating an enabling a receptive environment for government policies through a gradual but systematic “pulling and enticing”.


Third, soft-power initiatives serve to complement traditional diplomatic relations and military engagements.⁷ Alongside to top-down diplomatic initiatives and conventional military means, soft power is carried out as part of a country’s foreign policy repertoire. Soft power is not only used to complement foreign policy by instigating a gradual bottom-up transformation and harmonization in the target audience’s socio-political sphere. Popular culture and the mass media, educational practices and religious ethics, and a particular set of normative structures are regularly identified as means of soft power. In its totality, culture shapes its members’ perceptions and affects what they notice and how they interpret it.⁸

Moreover, driven by political objectives, successful soft power policies do not merely offer a more subtle, less expensive and less provocative or morally disturbing way of foreign engagement, but they also seek to increase a sense of local social empowerment, demonstrate social concern, symbolise interest and care. Aid programmes, food distributions, donations, scholarships, reconstructions, and infrastructure works are key elements in the exercise of soft power policies. Soft power aims at the creation of a varyingly consenting social environment by incentivizing communities to familiarize with norms and practices and adopt value-driven paradigms but also to promote admiration and dependencies across the social spectrum and align target audiences and their leaderships with the agent’s security interests. Soft power presumes that systematic familiarization allows for establishing new trends and “new wants”, translating into political attitudes. In that sense, soft power can become a lot more aggressive, dexterous, and penetrative into the social context of a foreign community.

⁷ David W. Kearn (2011). “The hard truths about soft power”, *Journal of Political Power*, 4:1: 65-85

⁸ Kier, Elizabeth (1996). “Culture and French Military Doctrine before World War II.” In Peter J. Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 164

Fourthly, through systematic exposure actor states familiarize target communities with beautified narratives and capitalise on existing collective insecurities to project power and create (or consolidate) real or symbolic ties with the community. Nonetheless, soft-power analysts recognize that the goal to ensure that others would automatically follow the lead of the powerholder only due to the power of attraction is far from certain. The perceivably agreeable and non-coercive nature of engagement by the powerholder and the legitimacy of its goals should not be taken for granted.



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According to Keohane and Nye, legitimacy and desirability first depend upon the agent's credibility, in the sense of consistency, dependability, and sincerity. Second, legitimacy and desirability are built on a cluster of qualities that are derived from benignity, competence, and charisma.⁹ Hence, legitimacy and desirability can be seriously hampered or prove ineffective when policies, traditions, culture or values repel others instead of attracting them with the result of backfiring and leading to "soft disempowerment." The same result may occur when soft power is employed in ways that are evidently coercive or manipulative. Often, to justify the extent of influence, power-agents are drawing on and articulating shared values and expectations with the target community and try to connect actions to standards of appropriate and acceptable behaviour.

⁹ Keohane, R., Nye, J. (1998). "Power and interdependence in the information age". *Foreign Affairs*, 77:81–94

However, at the same time, soft power introduces subtle as well as more direct forms of control. Soft power tools have often gone beyond their theoretically seductive nature, as opposed to coercion, to assume a hegemonic and perhaps more forcible role.¹⁰ “Soft” economic interventions such as grants, scholarships, loans, donations, private business or aid, replace clear-cut punishment and rewards and help create more acceptable relations of dependency between members of the target audience and the promoter. Sponsored religious organizations and educational institutions rally people around shared values and, on many occasions, prepare future generations of political elites and generate a critical mass of supporters.

In economically weaker states, economic practices by private or state-owned enterprises, including ownership of media and commercial premises, infrastructural development and reconstruction projects can also create conditions of dependency through recruitment and tax-revenues and so on, and establish long-term political influence and control. Receptor governments are also given the opportunity to trade off their assets in return for political gains and support. This creates a bidirectional situation in which soft power agents exert influence and control in exchange for diplomatic support, alliance building and threat protection. However, this mutual benefit may often seem harmless, but the political trade-off usually comes at the expense of the target audience’s autonomy.

II. The Evolution of Turkey’s Foreign Policy: The Internal Dimension

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey shifted from the downtrodden imperial legacy (as the Ottoman rump state), to the pursuit of a conventional nation-state-centred policy that prioritised the maintenance of the internal Kemalist secular order and the preservation of Turkish National Unity and Integrity (*milli birlik ve beraberlik*). Independent Turkey’s discreet positioning in world politics (“evasive neutral”)¹¹ and her non-aligned,

¹⁰ Fan, Y. (2008). “Soft power: Power of attraction or confusion?” *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 4(2): 147–158

¹¹ Weber, Frank G (1985). *The Evasive Neutral: Germany, Britain and the Quest for a Turkish Alliance in the Second World War*. University of Missouri Press

inward looking, and self-absorbed character allowed Turkey to go along with post-Ottoman nation-building reforms, and progress with social modernization measures.

However, the emergent bipolarity at the end of the Second World War (Cold War) meant that the Kemalist-associated military establishment, which served as guarantor of Turkey's secular tradition, needed to realign Turkish foreign policy according to the prevailing necessities of the time i.e. Soviet Communism and reactionary Islam.¹² The threat of communist expansion and the fear of Islamist infiltration, considered both by the secular establishment (Kemalist reformists and the army) as corrupting, backward looking and out-dated, prompted Turkey to join the US-NATO security alliance. Despite on-going frictions as well as periods of open tension with its neighbours (Turkey-Greece (1955), Cyprus (1960-74), Turkey-Syria), Turkey has managed to retain an often-shaky balance between its forged relations with the West and the pursuit of a narrowly defined national-interest, exercising thus an analogy of power in accordance to its dependencies.

The frequent alteration of leadership in the turbulent 1990s, which at some point saw the short-lived rise of an Islamist Prime Minister, Necmettin Erbakan (1996-97) gave way to an unproductive period of inward and outward reflection, always under the watchful eye of the

Due to the lack of government stability, Turkey's secular-nationalist hard-muscle, that is Turkey's interventionist military establishment and the National Security Council, strived to preserve the Kemalist legacy, neutralise deviations and define Turkey's external orientation by allowing or disallowing for flexibility in Turkey's external relations.

¹² Hale, William (2012) Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000. Routledge

military establishment and the covert networks of power, better known as Turkey's "deep state" (derin devlet).¹³ Due to the lack of government stability, Turkey's secular-nationalist hard-muscle, that is Turkey's interventionist military establishment and the National Security Council, strived to preserve the Kemalist legacy, neutralise deviations and define Turkey's external orientation by allowing or disallowing for flexibility in Turkey's external relations. However, throughout this difficult period, Turkey succeeded in 1995 to enter a Customs Union Agreement with the EU, was granted the status of an accession candidate and reluctantly agreed to implement reforms that could eventually lead to EU accession.

Nevertheless, internal reluctance and reaction to reforms, troubled relations with Greece and frequent calls by European leaders for establishing a partnership agreement instead of granting Turkey a full member-state status, had been thwarting off Turkey's necessary constitutional changes. Hopes were considerably raised at the 1999 European Summit in Helsinki after a U-turn policy shift on behalf of Greece. In an effort to Europeanise Greco-Turkish relations and encouraged by Turkey's effort to reform, Greek-Turkish relations were brought in at the "European table" by Greece, in conjunction with the fulfilment of the "Copenhagen Criteria", on grounds that Turkey needed to respect good-neighbourly relations and resolve any issues through the principles of international law.

Thus, Greece agreed to withdraw its veto against Turkey's accession in return for Cyprus joining the EU even without prior solution to the Cyprus conflict, and on the condition of resolving outstanding bilateral issues by 2004, or if that proven to be unfeasible, by referring those issues to the Internal Court of Justice in The Hague. This, however, would have required an arbitration note between the two parties prior to delivering the case to the ICJ on a variety of claims Turkey posed but Greece regarded as non-negotiable sovereign and legal rights. It is therefore very doubtful whether the two countries would have eventually come to an agreed conclusion or settlement given that Turkey does not fully recognize the prevalence of ICJ over

¹³ A horizontally widespread para-state structure (network) of dubious legality comprised by nationalist and primarily western-oriented high and mid-rank officers as well as the country's intelligence services and their associates

direct bilateral talks, and secondly, because Greece was becoming growingly reluctant in deposing and thus compromising her sovereignty and legal rights to the ICJ's legal jurisdiction.

An earth-shaking political change took place in Turkey in 2002 with the ascendancy in power of the Islamist-conservative AKP under the leadership of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (2003 - 2014 and President of the Turkish Republic from 2014- until today). Given that all of Erbakan's previous political endeavours were either persecuted or judged unconstitutionally on anti-secular grounds by the state, Erdoğan and his group of "reformists" had initially intended to steer Erbakan's Islamic Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi, FP) towards a more western-oriented, economically liberal albeit socially conservative direction that integrated Turkish Islamism in political and social life.

In 2001, following a rift with Erbakan's ultra-conservative opponents, Erdoğan and his followers founded the AKP (Justice and Development Party - Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi). The party achieved a remarkable victory in 2002 (34.3%) and by 2007, it had drastically increased its electoral performance, gaining 46.6% of the electorate.

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In its early period in government, the AKP adopted a two-pronged policy that was assumedly intended for internal purposes: first endeavoured to restrict the authority of the state's secular elite, represented by the military, the judiciary, the public sector and members of the opposition Republican Party. On several occasions, the AKP has indeed faced a series of challenges including attempted constitutional blockades by the Constitutional Court, coup d'état threats and real or alleged conspiracy attempts aiming to overthrow it from power, usually plotted by hard-core elements of the staunchly secularist military establishment (Ergenekon, Kafes Operasyonu Eylem Planı, Balyoz-Sledgehammer Conspiracy). However, with AKP's popularity rising within Turkey's public opinion (50% in 2011 general elections), AKP has managed to overcome much of those difficulties (usually through parliamentary support) and ultimately appointed senior level officials in key posts (General Military Staff, Army, Navy and Air Force General Commanders, Gendarmerie), reducing thus the undermining influence of the army against the governing party.

Secondly, the AKP engulfed a generally acceptable rhetoric on human rights to increase tolerance and moderation against the persecution of Islamic attitudes and traditions vis-à-vis the secular Kemalist regime. Interestingly, in its foreign policy, the AKP had initially claimed to support Turkey's integration into the European Union, although probably as pretext for restricting the power of the military regime, and initially attempted to balance out Turkey's international position between Islamic tradition and secular politics. In the very early days of AKP's governance, western liberals and leftists had welcomed the idea of Turkey synthesizing elements of traditional Islamic tradition with democratization efforts and the "demilitarization" of politics. Hence, they invested in AKP's proclaimed eagerness to reform and join the EU and saw Turkey as a role model for the rest of the Middle East.

However, the gradual relaxation of Kemalist-secularism led to an acceptance of political Islam in public mind as a normal political force. A moderate version of political Islam was now seen as an acceptable trend in politics, and the de-marginalization and integration of Islamists in political life, education, social activity, and political action was considered as counterweight to the secular-military monopoly. AKP rallied around most of the conservative Muslim

communities across Turkey, the marginalized and economically impaired rural and agrarian populace of the east, as well as a new breed of “outsiders and wannabes”, including industrialists and entrepreneurs. Islamic piety, anti-Americanism and anti-Israeli sentiments were popular themes among AKP’s support basis.

Turkey’s prior foreign policy was seen by the more conservative masses as either illegitimate in terms of Islamic solidarity or simply as subdued to external interests (mainly the US). The AKP has been openly endorsing such perceptions as a counterweight to the secular-Kemalist order, sharpening thus the dichotomies and promoting further populism and radicalization. The AKP-controlled media corporations and its organizational networks have played an important part instilling or reproducing the ideals and foreign policy perceptions held by AKP’s nomenclature, both within and outside Turkey.



This power-struggle between the old and the emerging ruling elite has ultimately led towards the creation of a phobic, intolerant, repressive and authoritarian regime.

Over the last decade, the AKP has built an informal, powerful coalition of party-affiliated businesspersons and media outlets whose existence depends on the political order that Erdoğan has constructed. In an effort to sustain public support the AKP-controlled media have been agitating public sentiment against domestic and external “enemies of the state” while at the same time former officials were gradually being replaced by party-friendly individuals and public sector positions were being overtly filled up with party-associates. This power-struggle between the old and the emerging ruling elite has ultimately led towards the creation of a phobic, intolerant, repressive and authoritarian regime.

Ultimately, the Gezi Park events in 2013, the failed military coup attempt in July 2016 and the AKP's de facto coalition with Devlet Bahçeli's far-right ultranationalist MHP (Nationalist Movement Party - Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi) have unleashed an extrovertly practiced and suffocating aggression of authoritarianism, whose effects are witnessed in Turkey's foreign policy reactions (e.g. operations in Syria, rhetoric and actions against Greece, Cyprus and the West).

III. Turkey's "New Foreign Policy" Doctrine

The concept of soft power was first introduced to the higher ranks of Turkish politics during the mid-2000s, following a more assertive foreign policy agenda under the conservative-Islamist AKP. According to Oğuzlu, "The entrance of soft power, first into the Turkish foreign policy lexicon, and then later into its popular discourse intersects with Ankara's vision change in foreign policy."¹⁴ Without a doubt, most notable among Turkey's new foreign policy architects, is the former AKP Prime Minister (2014-2016), Foreign Affairs Minister (2009-2014) and leader of the ruling AKP (2014-2016), Ahmet Davutoğlu.

Among his several writings, his most influential thesis called for a paradigm shift in Turkey's foreign policy and it was publicly articulated in his seminal work Strategic

Depth: Turkey's International Position (Stratejik derinlik: Türkiye'nin uluslararası konumu, 2001). Davutoğlu has been since regarded as Turkey's "foreign policy architect" or "founder"

In hindsight, the AKP's foreign policy shift has not been simply a natural result of its conservative Muslim support basis, neither a symbolic break with the previous establishments' perceived complacency.

¹⁴ Oğuzlu, Tarik (2007). "Soft Power in Turkish Foreign Policy" Australian Journal of International Affairs 61 (1):81-97

of Turkey's "new foreign policy doctrine". Even after his resignation from the position of Prime Minister in 2016, due to a rift in relations with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the fundamental tenets of his foreign policy strategy have at varying levels continued to hold sway in Turkey's foreign relations.¹⁵

It is therefore essential to begin with a brief examination of Ahmet Davutoğlu's groundbreaking influence and explain how he envisaged the use of soft power in Turkey's foreign policy. In hindsight, the AKP's foreign policy shift has not been simply a natural result of its conservative Muslim support basis, neither a symbolic break with the previous establishments' perceived complacency.¹⁶ Acting as Foreign Affairs Minister, Davutoğlu had openly declared, "We will follow a foreign policy which is based on a vision."¹⁷ Davutoğlu's vision stems from the fundamental premise that Turkey possesses "strategic depth" due to its history (legacy) and geographic position and thus Turkey is listed among a small group of countries, which Davutoğlu calls "central powers".¹⁸ Thus, according to Davutoğlu, Turkey should not be content with a constrained regional role in the Balkans or the Middle East, because it is not a "regional" but a "central power".

In view of that, Davutoğlu rejected the perception of Turkey serving merely as a "bridge" or a passage between Islam and the West, as this perception relegates Turkey to an instrument of external strategic interests. Hence, Turkey should instead aspire to play a leading role in several regions and thus develop a globally strategic significance. In Davutoğlu's view, Turkey is a Middle Eastern, Balkan, Caucasian, Central Asian, Caspian,

¹⁵ His resignation was the result of a sharp deterioration in relations with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who supports an executive presidential system of government that would result in the dissolution or severe reduction of powers of the Office of the Prime Minister

¹⁶ Fotiou, Eleni & Dimitrios Triantaphyllou (2010). "Assessing Turkey's 'Soft Power' Role: Rhetoric versus Practice." *International Spectator* 45(1): 99–113

¹⁷ Davutoğlu, Ahmet, "Türk Dış Politikası'nın İlkeleri Ve Bölgesel Siyasal Yapılanma", *Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi*, No. 3, Ağustos 2012, S.6

¹⁸ Palabıyık, Adem (29 June 2010). "Interpreting foreign policy correctly in the East-West perspective". *Today's Zaman*. Av.at:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20100703003210/http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/news-214522-comments-on-discussions-regarding-a-shift-of-axisinterpreting-foreign-policy-correctly-in-the-east-west-perspective-by-adem-palabiyik.html>

Mediterranean, Gulf and Black Sea country, and it can simultaneously exercise influence in all these regions and thus claim a global strategic role.¹⁹ Turkey could thus assume a leading role as a role model of liberal Islam, prosperity and modernization and function as a global mediator between Western states and the Muslim world.

Firstly, Davutoğlu argued that Turkey “needs to resolve all bilateral disputes, which have hampered its relations with its neighbours”. In what he termed as “zero problem policy with neighbours,” he stated “in recent decades Turkey has wasted crucial efforts and time in conflicts with its neighbours (Greece, Syria, Cyprus, Iraq and Armenia) and thus Turkey needs to overcome the phobic syndromes and establish cordial relations with all its neighbours”.²⁰ Turkey’s foreign policy should aim at resolving all pending disputes, which Turkey’s diplomatic inertia had accumulated in

No matter how benign or liberal Davutoğlu’s position would have seemed, the fact that a politically active Islamist has reverted to the idea of Turkey’s “geopolitical stretching and autonomy”, placing it at the forefront of his new foreign policy mind-set, has ultimately attracted considerable criticism and aroused significant concerns about the prospect of a dynamically emerging neo-imperial vision.

¹⁹ Grigoriadis, Ioannis N. (April 2010). “The Davutoğlu Doctrine and Turkish Foreign Policy”. Working Paper No 8/2010. Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy Middle Eastern Studies Programme. Av.at: http://www.eliamap.gr/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/%CE%9A%CE%95%CE%99%CE%9C%CE%95%CE%9D%CE%9F-%CE%95%CE%A1%CE%93%CE%91%CE%A3%CE%99%CE%91%CE%A3-8_2010_loGrigoriadis1.pdf

²⁰ Ibid

the past, so it can seek its own global strategic role.

Secondly, Turkey must adopt a more flexible approach in alliance building formations to disengage from external patronage vis-à-vis the US and increase its autonomy and influence in foreign policy decision-making. Thirdly, Turkey must expand her influence into the “Turkic world”: many Eurasian countries with whom Turkey shares common historical and cultural traits including language, customs, and historical ancestry. This broadly includes the Turcoman communities of the East. Fourthly, Turkey must be able to influence and offer its protection to the native Turkish and Muslim communities in the Balkans, especially Bosnian Muslims, Albanians, and Kosovo Albanians. This obviously includes the Turkish Muslim community in Cyprus. For doing so, Davutoğlu depicted a synthesis of soft power alongside to a more dynamic, flexible and assertive foreign policy and called for the promotion of “win-win” solutions while urging for the expansion and deepening of Turkey’s sphere of influence. Davutoğlu’s vision could eventually lead Turkey to become a real “central power”, a leader within the Sunni-Muslim world, and a powerful, valuable, and autonomous actor in global politics.

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By rejuvenating the so-called “Neo-Ottoman” trend in Turkish intellectual life, Davutoğlu proposed a deliberate revival of the Ottoman past, “both as a matter of cultural

enrichment, but also as a source of an enriched Turkish identity as a political actor".²¹ Within the context of AKP's cultural revival of Ottoman traditions and grandeur, and with the transformative effects such changes have on politics and society, Davutoğlu proposed advancing Turkey's interests by reclaiming the geopolitical space left behind by the Ottoman Empire. This could eventually lead towards a post-modern exercise of imperial power, influence, and control. Turkish foreign policy has ultimately slipped into a more aggressive, hegemonic, and bellicose expression of his original foreign policy framework, losing its sense of measure, balance, and delicacy.

Davutoğlu's "diplomatic activism" took the form of active interference, hegemonic ambition, extreme conservatism, propaganda, and increased militarization. For example, Turkey's relations with Israel reached a breaking point following the Mavi Marmara incident in 2010 and they were further poisoned by President Erdoğan's support to the Palestinian Hamas and his provocative rhetoric against Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu. Frictions culminated into a growing trust-deficit in relations between the two countries. Similarly, President Erdoğan's support for Egypt's overthrown Islamist government (Muslim Brotherhood) have brought relations with Egypt into an unprecedented low after President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's secular government in Egypt rose into power.

In addition, Turkey's continuing military occupation and constant active interference in Cyprus, and the long-standing bellicosity with Greece in the Aegean, have negatively affected the image and perceptions of Turkey in the eyes of its closest neighbours. Since 2011, and especially after the Gezi Park protests in May 2013, AKP was publicly accused by secularists, nationalists, and progressives alike of driving Turkey towards an Islamist and authoritarian agenda. Since 2018, the AKP's Grand National Assembly alliance with

²¹ Murinson, Alexander (2006). "The Strategic Depth Doctrine in Turkish Foreign Policy". *Middle Eastern Studies*, 42 (6):945–96

Devlet Bahçeli's far-right ultranationalist party MHP (Nationalist Movement Party - Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi) alongside with nationalist pressures from the opposition Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi - CHP) and Meral Akşener's nationalist secular İyi Parti (The Good Party), have accelerated the AKP's deteriorating path into adventurism and aggressive nationalism. Turkey's military interference in regional conflicts (Syria, Iraq, Libya), despite international warnings for restraint, and the AKP's political rapprochement with Russia, - epitomized by the purchase of the Russian missile batteries S-400 and the inauguration of the Turkish Stream pipeline carrying Russian gas into Europe, - have complicated relations with the US even further.

Obviously, such initiatives symbolize Turkey's attempted foreign policy autonomy and manifest its intended emancipation from US-patronage and its desire to be treated as equal. Yet Turkey's political manoeuvring have infuriated the US Congress and forced the US to respond by freezing off Turkey's forthcoming F-35 aircraft purchase and proceeding with the Turkish-Iranian Halkbank scandal indictments. At the same time, the precarious nature of relations between Ankara and Moscow, evidenced in fundamental disagreements over war-torn Syria's future and Turkey's interference in Libya (against the Russian-supported faction) will hardly ever allow Turkey to build a counterweight alliance with Russia without shaking off NATO's foundations. On the contrary, it may only help to overstretch the limits of European and US tolerance, increase scepticism or even accelerate the search of alternative and more reliable partnerships in the region until a serious policy shift comes about in Turkey.

Furthermore, relations between the EU and Turkey have soured on many levels. Turkey's EU accession process has stalled, if not informally considered "dead but unburied" by many in both sides. The EU has in numerous occasions condemned Turkey for a variety of issues and violations whereas President Erdoğan's offensive statements ('slams') against EU member states (France, Italy, Holland, Greece) have contaminated relations

even more. Although such adversities may be overridden, tolerated, or alleviated in the near or medium-term period, they have nevertheless created scepticism over Turkey's commitment, predictability, and reliability in relations with the West. And, contrary to Davutoğlu's vision, Turkey's aggressive interferences and hegemonic posture is currently producing a "zero-friends" situation instead of the proclaimed "zero problems with neighbours". As pointed out, the concepts of historical depth and Turkey's geo-spatial Ottoman legacy have brought historiography into the Turkish foreign policy mind-set – objective historical laws, historical logic, broader geopolitical vitalities and a sense of responsibility have come at the expense of short-term pragmatic political calculations.²²

IV. Turkey's Soft Power: Major Agents and Activities

Within this new foreign policy framework, Turkey has been the object of numerous studies centralizing the notion of soft power.²³ Yet the majority of these works have treated soft power in a normative manner (democratic and humanitarian values) and as a positive paradigm in accordance to western expectations. Turkish soft power is regarded as the power of a democratised, economically open Turkey whose ability to combine Islam and democracy is regarded as an inspiration to Arab countries and the Muslim world. However, since Erdoğan's foreign policy shift in 2013, the use of soft power in Turkish foreign policy has raised questions concerning the capacity of the concept to characterise Turkey's influence beyond

²² Targański, Tomasz (2017). "Neo-Ottomanism. An empire being rebuilt?" *New Eastern Europe*, Issue 3-4: The Balkan Carousel, 76-82. Av.at: http://neweasterneurope.eu/new_site/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/NEE_3-4_2017_final.pdf

²³ Altınay, Hakan (2008). "Turkey's Soft Power: An Unpolished Gem or an Elusive Mirage?" *Insight Turkey* 10 (2):55-66; Altunışık, Meliha Benli (2008). "The Possibilities and Limits of Turkey's Soft Power in the Middle East" *Insight Turkey* 10 (2):41-54; Kalin, Ibrahim (2011). "Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey" *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs* 16:5-23. Oğuzlu, Tarik (2007). "Soft Power in Turkish Foreign Policy" *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 61 (1):81-97; Yörük, Zafer & Vatikiotis, Pantelis (2013). "Soft Power or Illusion of Hegemony: The Case of the Turkish Soap Opera 'Colonialism'" *International Journal of Communication* 7: 2361-2385

its borders and the underlying interests, values and power structures that lie behind its soft power rhetoric.²⁴

As early as in 2011, Chief Advisor to President Erdoğan, Ibrahim Kalin, has clearly presented the aims of Turkey's soft power policy in the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus as "a reconnection with Turkey's history and geography". In his words, "Turkey's soft power capacity comes from its history, culture and geography. Rather than seeing them as obstacles or burdens, the Turks are now turning them into strategic assets in both domestic and foreign policy."²⁵ Kalin has explicitly stated:

"In the large Euro-Asian landmass, the common denominator for Turks, Kurds, Bosnians, Albanians, Circassians, Abkhazians, Arabs, Azeris, Kazakhs, Kyrgyzs, Uzbeks,

Turkmens and other ethnic groups, as well as Armenian, Greek, Jewish and Assyrian communities is the Ottoman experience they have shared and built together. It is this Ottoman heritage that brings together these diverse groups and enables them to relate to a shared experience in time and place."²⁶

This heritage includes a variety of bonding elements, including religious and linguistic ties, cultural traits, ethics and customs, historical bonds and mutual benefits, behavioural

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²⁴ Gabrielle Angey-Sentuc and Jérémie Molho (2015). "A critical approach to soft power: Grasping contemporary Turkey's influence in the world", *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, 1-18, 21

²⁵ Kalin, Ibrahim (2011). "Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey" *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs* 16:5-23

²⁶ Kalin, Ibrahim (2011). *Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey*. *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*. 14(3):10

and culinary traditions, architecture, and lifestyle. This inclusive and largely positive Ottoman legacy must be therefore placed at the forefront of Turkey's soft power policies. Although Kalin has obviously rejected the term "Neo-Ottomanism" in defining the new foreign policy framework, he nevertheless admits the "fact" that Turkey represents the pivotal point of the Ottoman heritage...through which people of the region [may] reconcile with their history and geography.

Turkish soft power must therefore shape this new geopolitical imagination to create a notion of common memory, conscience and cultural depth."²⁷ Turkey's soft power activities stem from a state coordinated mechanism that embraces multifarious actors, including state agencies, media outlets, educational programmes, as well as other private and no-profit economic and cultural agents. The Turkish government directs a web of organizations through a mechanism that ensures compliance with foreign policy aims, increasing the effectiveness of soft power. This task is undertaken by the Office of Public Diplomacy whose secretarial services are carried out by the General Directorate of Communications.²⁸

The Office of Public Diplomacy is tasked with "providing cooperation and coordination between public agencies and non-governmental organizations in their activities related to public diplomacy."²⁹ The office is headed by the Public Diplomacy Coordination Board, established to provide coordination between the state institutions that perform soft power activities including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, YEL, TIKa, YTB, university programs, political communication activities, and media campaigns, established to develop public diplomacy programs. The objectives of this office are to:

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Prime Ministry, Recep Tayyip Erdogan (30 Jan. 2010). Circular: Office of Public Diplomacy, Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Office of Public Diplomacy; Sancar, Gaye Asli (2015). "Historical Perspective: Ottomans and the Republican Era"

²⁹ Huijgh, Ellen & Warlick, Jordan (2016). "The Public Diplomacy of Emerging Powers, Part 1: The Case of Turkey". USC Center on Public Diplomacy. Figueroa Press Los Angeles.

(i) ensure better coordination and cooperation between various public diplomacy actors in the country; (ii) empower the “Turkey brand” and improve Turkey’s reputation; and (iii) increase Turkey’s visibility and activity in international public opinion.³⁰ The Directorate of Communications maintains coordinated communication with all agencies of the state for adopting a holistic communication strategy, and works in cooperation with other agencies and organizations that add value to the country.

Religion is at the forefront of the Turkish soft power agenda. The major state-sponsored institution with soft-power capacities is the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı or simply Diyanet). Diyanet is the public service responsible for the administration, monitoring and supervision of religious affairs (Islamic) in Turkey. However, since AKP rose in power, Diyanet has assumed an increasingly important role in the promotion of Turkey’s public diplomacy. Diyanet functions as a transnational state apparatus and external instrument in the promotion of Turkish-Islamic tradition.

Diyanet’s role in Turkish domestic and foreign politics has sustained Erdoğan’s ideological hegemony and increased authoritarianism. For example, in 2016, Diyanet instructed its affiliated imams to collect detailed information of the Gülen movement (see below) and handed intelligence reports from 38 countries over to the Turkish parliament. According to Çitak “Diyanet places the focus on the grounds of foreign policy...as an external instrument to build and consolidate national unity among the Turkish communities abroad.”³¹

AKP has drastically affected Diyanet’s external activities. Diyanet has become a major foreign policy tool in assisting AKP’s intention to utilize Islam (i.e. Turkey’s Hanafi-Sunni Islamic tradition) as a power-element of foreign policy. As noted, “since the AKP came

³⁰ Directorate of Communications, Presidency of the Republic of Turkey. Av.at: <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce>

³¹ Çitak, Zana (2013). “The institutionalization of Islam in Europe and the Diyanet: the case of Austria,” *Ortadoğu Etütleri* 5(1): 167-182

to power, Diyanet has changed – from an agency exercising state oversight over religious affairs and ensuring that religion did not challenge the Turkish republic's 'ostensibly secular identity' to that of promoting mainstream Hanafi Sunni Islam and projecting "Turkish Islam abroad."³²

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Diyanet has become the public face of AKP's Islamic understanding inside and outside Turkey. In fact, during 2010-2011, Diyanet began its transformation to "a supersized government bureaucracy for the promotion of Sunni Islam."³³ Alongside this function, Diyanet has served to maintain the Islamic identity of the Turks in Europe "through centralised sermons where the message from the centre to the periphery remains the same: stay Turk and act in the world according to the interest of the Turkish state."³⁴ According to the agency's objectives, Diyanet is responsible for preventing the assimilation of Turkish populations abroad, ensuring their adherence to their own identity in harmony with the society they live in, introducing the religious experience and knowledge of Turkey and ensuring its "correct understanding."³⁵

³² Lepeska, David (17 May 2015). "Turkey Casts the Diyanet". Foreign Affairs.

³³ Cornell, Svante (0 October 2015). "The Rise of Diyanet: the Politicization of Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs". The Turkey Analyst. Av.at: <http://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/463-the-rise-of-diyamet-the-politicization-of-turkey%E2%80%99s-directorate-of-religious-affairs.html>

³⁴ Öztürk Ahmet, Erdi (2018). "Transformation of the Turkish Diyanet both at Home and Abroad: Three Stages". European Journal of Turkish Studies. 27:2018 : Religion as a Foreign Policy Tool: 1-24, 22

³⁵ Republic of Turkey, Presidency of religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı). Basic Principles and Objectives Av.at: <https://www.diyamet.gov.tr/tr-TR/Kurumsal/Detay//3/diyamet-isleri-baskanligi-temel-ilke-ve-hedefleri>

Religious-driven soft power influence is practically achieved through Diyanet's Directorate General of Foreign Relations, which provides a number of services abroad, most important among which are:

i) Representations Abroad: Consultancy, attaché's offices and coordination units formed in embassies and consulate generals of the Republic of Turkey with the purpose of rendering regular, effective, and coordinated services for Turks, cognates and coreligionists living abroad.

ii) Staff Employment: Religious officials are sent abroad with the aim of helping Turks, cognates, and coreligionists to perform their practical daily prayers, contribute to religious services and the maintenance of Turkish identity. Diyanet appointed Imams act as intermediate agents, transmitting the message of identity and normative politics in official functions and acting as an informal contact with the faithful.

iii) Education: Formal and non-formal education activities are carried out at different levels in many countries with a sense of responsibility stemming from common history and civilization for Turks, cognates and coreligionists. Guest students are sent from abroad to Turkey to receive religious education in Quran, imam-hatip (religious) high schools and attend faculties of theology.

iv) Social and Cultural Activities: Conferences and meetings are organized on different religious and national days with the aim of protecting religious and national identities of Turks, cognates and coreligionists living abroad. Diyanet publishes information about Islam to Muslims abroad and enables them "to understand the religion correctly"

v) "City Projects": This includes building new mosques and madrasas (Muslim theological schools) abroad countries and restoring existing ones. Diyanet provides funds and runs mosques and associations in numerous European countries (Germany, Netherlands,

France, Kosovo, BiH, Albania, Denmark and in the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus”).

The Yunus Emre Institute (Yunus Emre Enstitüsü) represents Turkey’s most visible soft power instrument in the fields of education and cultural promotion. The Yunus Emre Institute was founded in 2007 as a public foundation and its normative purpose is to provide education in the area of Turkish language, philology, culture and art, and improve the friendship between Turkey and other countries.”³⁶ The foundation was created as a supplement to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs furthering its goal of “exporting Turkey” to the rest of world. According to the institute’s sources, YEI broadly represents “Turkey’s face” in cultural diplomacy. Its stated aim (mission-vision) is to “increase the number of people who forge bonds with, and are friendly to, Turkey all around the world and enhance Turkey’s recognition, credibility and prestige in the international arena.”³⁷

YEI operates 58 centres in about 30 countries, including the “TRNC”. In the words of Şeref Ateş, Head of the Yunus Emre Institute, “The aim of the establishment (YEI) is to act as a soft power flag-bearer of Turkish culture around the world by representing its values and teaching Turkish language to nations close to Turkey historically, as well as others, in accordance with Turkey’s strategic goals.”³⁸ However, just like Diyanet, YEI stresses the idea that it represents and promotes “Turkey’s rich cultural background by way of compatible representatives and in the right way.”³⁹ YEI constitutes Turkey’s

³⁶ Yunus Emre Institute, Corporate Identity. Av.at: <https://www.yee.org.tr/en/corporate/yunus-emre-institute>


³⁷ Yunus Emre Institute, Vision Mission. Av.at: <https://www.yee.org.tr/en/corporate/vision-mission>

³⁸ Unal, Ali (24 July 2017). “Yunus Emre Institute Head Ateş: As an element of soft power, our aim is to introduce Turkey, its culture to the world”. Daily Sabah. Av.at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/07/24/yunus-emre-institute-head-ates-as-an-element-of-soft-power-our-aim-is-to-introduce-turkey-its-culture-to-the-world>

³⁹ Yunus Emre Institute, President’s Message. Av.at: <https://www.yee.org.tr/en/corporate/presidents-message>

spearhead in cultural diplomacy, aiming to build a positive image of Turkey abroad by “using the diplomacy tools of language, science and culture.”⁴⁰

As a public and government-controlled foundation, YEI’s cultural activity has become integral part of Turkey’s soft power strategy in the Balkans, the Caucasus and Western Europe,⁴¹ while it has recently endeavoured to operate a “cultural diplomacy academy.”⁴² Parallel to the activities of YEI, the Turkish state has inaugurated in 2010 the “Presidency for Turks and Related Communities” (Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı - YTB) supervised by the Presidency Office. YTB is tasked with maintaining ties with the Turkish Diaspora, administering educational mobility, and providing scholarship programs.



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In addition, the Turkish Maarif Foundation (TMF) is another “system” that plays a pivotal role in disseminating a Turkish-designated educational curriculum abroad with the aim to nurture “pure-minded people who use knowledge for the peace and welfare of

⁴⁰ Turkish Culture Magazine, (March and April 2019), Yunus Emre Institute. Av.at: <https://www.yee.org.tr/en/publication/2019-march-april>

⁴¹ Unal, Ali (24 July 2017). “Yunus Emre Institute Head Ateş: As an element of soft power, our aim is to introduce Turkey, its culture to the world”. Daily Sabah. Av.at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/07/24/yunus-emre-institute-head-ates-as-an-element-of-soft-power-our-aim-is-to-introduce-turkey-its-culture-to-the-world>

⁴² Turkish Culture Magazine, (March and April 2019), Yunus Emre Institute. Av.at: <https://www.yee.org.tr/en/publication/2019-march-april>

humanity and carry out comprehensive educational activities throughout the world based on the common values of humanity and Anatolian tradition of wisdom.”⁴³ The Turkish government set up the Turkish Maarif Foundation soon after the 2016 coup attempt, with an aim to administer or compete with overseas schools linked to the Fethullah Gülen movement (see further below).⁴⁴ The Mariff Foundation is particularly active in the Balkans and many students enrolled in Mariff Foundation schools sponsored schools come from local Turkish populations as well as numerous other Sunni Muslim minorities.

It is worth mentioning that the “The Fetullah Gülen Islamic Movement” (Gülen hareketi) or Hizmet (degradingly referred by the AKP government as “FETÖ”)⁴⁵ had been one of Erdoğan’s staunchest political allies until political tensions (power-struggles) rose in 2013 between the AKP and Fethullah Gülen’s supporters (Gülenists), leading to the persecution of the latter by the AKP government. The Gülen Movement can be generally described as a social-based religious network, promoting a sort of an “enlightened version” of Sunni Islam, with particular political undertones and with access to a supportive business and media sector.

The Gülen Movement in cooperation with the AKP could administer a transnational privately funded and state approved network of Islamic and conservative, yet tolerant in nature, educational institutions, mainly schools and few universities in several countries. Many of its school graduates were later appointed in the judiciary, police, and public service in Turkey. However, despite its significant success in promoting Turkish culture around the world, the political fallout with AKP has led to the seizure of educational

⁴³ Turkish Maarif Foundation. Av.at: <https://nj.maarifschool.org/page/524-turkish-maarif-foundation-12>

⁴⁴ Kasap, Selam (2 October, 2019). Turkey makes Maarif Foundation global education brand. Anadolu Agency. Av.at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/education/turkey-makes-maarif-foundation-global-education-brand/1599532>; Andac Hongur, Ahmet Sertan Usul (17 February 2020.) “Turkey’s Maarif Foundation antidote to FETO terrorism”. Anadolu Agency. Av.at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/turkeys-maarif-foundation-antidote-to-feto-terrorism/1736514>

⁴⁵ Fettulah Gülen Terrör Örgütü, Fettulah Gülen Terrorist Organization

premises, closure of all media related to the movement, and widespread purges against teachers and public employees. The Gülen movement has been designated by AKP as a terrorist organization and Gülen characterised as a coup plotter.

Apart from the above structures, Turkey utilises, although to a much lesser extent, the “International Organisation of Turkic Culture”- known as TÜRKSOY (Uluslararası Türk Kültürü Teşkilatı). TÜRKSOY or as it has been known, “the UNESCO of the Turkic World”, founded to promote “the common cultural identity of the Turkic speaking states, promote activities to strengthen the ties of brotherhood and solidarity among Turkic peoples” as the fundamental pillar of a broader, more inclusive historical Turkic nation. TÜRKSOY works under the auspices of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States (Türk Dili Konuşan Ülkeler İşbirliği Konseyi), in cooperation with the Turkic Academy, the World Turkic Business Council, the Foundation of Turkic Culture and Heritage, and other related cultural promotion actors.

TÜRKSOY has been established on the foundations of common history, common language, common identity and common culture shared by the Turkic-origin populations with the aim to broaden bilateral cooperation in areas such as economy, science, education, transportation, customs [and] tourism.⁴⁶ According to TÜRKSOY sources, its budget is composed of contributions by the Ministries of Culture of its member countries and its activities are financed through additional resources by local governments, universities and NGOs.

However, it has been argued that TÜRKSOY’s political interests in promoting a form of “Turkic nationalism” and the “pan-Turkic idea” are covered by an exclusively culture-centred mantle, an argument that is indicated by the organisation’s connection with

⁴⁶ Myrtside, Vasiliki (2019) “Pan-Turanism and TÜRKSOY: The Common Turkic Cultural Identity as a Political Tool”. Eastern Mediterranean Policy Note No. 36. Av.at: https://cceia.unic.ac.cy/wp-content/uploads/EMP_N_36.pdf

diplomacy and policymaking. In other words, it uses identity, culture, education, and science to establish the idea of its member states' co-acting as a Turkic nation. TÜRKSOY's statutory objective is the promotion of the cultural assets that constitute the Turkic identity, though, TÜRKSOY's cultural agenda includes events in and outside the Turkic world, which indicates that the organization's objective is not simply a display of the common Turkic identity, but the creation of a new one that will represent a TÜRKSOY-centred pan-Turkic ideology. For example, TÜRKSOY provides a platform for the joint action of Turkic diaspora in the world and administers the Pan-Turkic celebration of the Nowruz Day in cities outside the "Turkic-world" (Brussels, Paris etc.)

For its external economic and development activities, the Turkish state has established The Turkish Co-operation and Co-ordination Agency (Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon İdaresi Başkanlığı, or TİKA). TİKA was established in 1992 as a government department of the Office of the Prime Minister of Turkey.⁴⁷ TİKA should be considered as the backbone of Turkey's public diplomacy, undertaking the bulk of Turkey's official development assistance to developing countries, with a particular focus on Turkic countries and communities. TİKA runs official foreign assistance operations implemented in parallel to the established foreign policy, and it is given responsibility of handling the cooperative framework among institutions in areas of external support (aid, investments, reconstruction projects etc.) The agency also provides scholarships for thousands of students and co-ordinates student exchanges. During AKP's rule, TİKA was developed to become an integral part of Turkish foreign policy, sizing up its financial budget and personnel, and placing particular focus on the Balkans, Africa, and the Caucasus regions.

⁴⁷ TİKA is a public legal entity with a private budget and it carries out its activities under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA). TİKA Official Website Av.at: https://www.tika.gov.tr/en/page/history_of_tika-8526

TIKA's political character is clearly manifested in its own mission description: "Turkey and the countries in Central Asia consider themselves as one nation containing different countries. Our foreign politics displayed a multilateral and proactive understanding in the region. Our country's priority became the recognition of the young Turkic countries by the international community... [Therefore] the need of an organization that can practice and coordinate operations in this area for foreign policy priorities arose."⁴⁸

"TIKA became an implementing intermediary of Turkish foreign policy, particularly in the countries with whom we have shared values."

The organization's mission statement clearly mentions, "TIKA became an implementing intermediary of Turkish foreign policy, particularly in the countries with whom we have shared values."⁴⁹ In addition, the organization pinpoints, "The character of our work in our flourishing and improving ancestral lands ("The Turkic Republics") has changed over time to concentrate on cooperation in the field of education (school construction) and culture (mosque restoration)."⁵⁰ The idea that "projects that our country [Turkey] and TIKA realize in the ancestral lands with the proper pride of being the inheritors of a common history" coincides with Davutoğlu's strategic depth narrative and it is aligned with AKP's active foreign policy for the reinvigoration of Turkey's historical and cultural ties in Eurasia and the Balkans. Besides, compliance with Turkey's foreign policy goals is evidently set forward as one of the core values upon which TIKA operates.⁵¹

⁴⁸ TIKA Official Website Av.at: https://www.tika.gov.tr/en/page/about_us-14650

⁴⁹ TIKA Official Website Av.at: https://www.tika.gov.tr/en/page/about_us-14650

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ TIKA Annual Report, 2017. Av at: https://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/2018/2017%20Faaliyet%20Raporu/AR_2017%20web.pdf

Moreover, the drastic growth of systematic pro-government lobbying in Europe and the US has become central to Turkey's foreign policy activity. Lobby groups, such as the Turkey-U.S. Business Council (TAİK, American Turkish Council (ATC), Turken Foundation, Turkish Coalition of America (TCA) and the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA) serve at the forefront of Turkey's soft power pressure in the US. In Europe, and more particularly in Germany, The Union of European Turkish Democrats (renamed to Union of International Democrats), a collective of Erdoğan supporters, plays an active role in supporting Erdoğan's public image and policy orientation in Europe by lobbying on his behalf.⁵² The Turkish government regularly briefs UID representatives on its policies and priorities and coordinates UID activities.⁵³

Finally, soft power is ultimately a matter of effective communication, inspiration, persuasion and motivation, and to this purpose, the Turkish media play a key role in promoting Turkey's foreign policy objectives, often resorting to overt propaganda, tactical agitation and the spread of intentional misinformation. Naturally, international public media (TRT/TRT Satellite, Anadolu Agency) are exclusively under government control, functioning as government-captured assets rather than public services.⁵⁴

Following the post-2016 purges in the media sector, large media conglomerates have come totally under AKP's guidance and control, and international news, especially those affecting Turkey's vital foreign policy objectives (Syria, Iraq, Kurdish Question, Greco-Turkish relations etc.) are practically adjusted to government objectives. The main issues concerning mainstream media in Turkey are the heavy concentration of ownership in

⁵² Steudel, Nastasja (May 21 2014). "The lobby behind Turkey's prime minister". Deutsche Welle. Av.at: <https://www.dw.com/en/the-lobby-behind-turkeys-prime-minister/a-17652516>

⁵³ Nordic Monitor (December 23 2019). "Erdoğan asked his supporters to secure important jobs in European countries" Av.at: <https://www.nordicmonitor.com/2019/12/erdogan-asked-his-supporters-to-take-up-critical-posts-in-european-countries/>

⁵⁴ Anadolu Agency (AA) is Turkey's official news agency. Most shares belong to the Under-secretariat of the Treasury. Şenol Kazancı, AA's General Director, was an adviser to President Erdoğan for three years until December 2014, when he was appointed to the helm of AA. (For more see: Media Ownership Monitor in Turkey Av.at: <https://turkey.mom-rsf.org/en/findings/political-affiliations/>)

pro-government hands (e.g. Demirören Group, Albayrak Grubu, Ciner Medya Grubu, İhlas, Turk Medya Grubu, Zirve Holding),⁵⁵ the widespread self-censorship of journalists and media professionals, and the presence of extreme nationalist rhetoric and hate speech.

However, despite the low-credibility scores of Turkey's extremely problematic government-controlled media environment, the Turkish media industry has developed many TV soap opera series and film productions exported to several countries abroad (known as "dizi"). Turkish television channels producing dramas include pro-government TV channels TRT, Kanal D, SHOW, STAR, ATV, FOX, TV8, and Kanal 7. Many of these mainstream film productions contain a mixture of historical narratives, Ottoman romanticism, heroism, contemporary Turkish norms, and folk culture. The melodramatic and heroic depiction of Turanic (early Turkish) tribe leaders in historiography and the sentimental image of the Ottoman Empire is central to the development and exercise of entertainment-led soft power, and it is meant to demonstrate valour, prosperity and prestige (Muhteşem Yüzyıl - Tims Productions). (Diriliş: Ertuğrul – Tekden Film, Fatih – Med Yapım, Payitaht: Abdülhamid – ES Film, Filinta – ES Film).

⁵⁵ Media Ownership Monitor in Turkey Av.at: <https://turkey.mom-rsf.org/en/findings/political-affiliations/>