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Persuading through Culture, Values, and Ideas: The Case of Turkey's Cultural Diplomacy

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ABSTRACT *Cultural diplomacy always links to and often overlaps with soft power and public diplomacy. Thus, the three notions have entered the lexicon of International Relations, and have become standard terms in foreign policy thinking. Drawing on the conceptualization of cultural diplomacy, this article examines the features, structure, actors, and possibilities of Turkey's foreign cultural strategy. Specifically, it focuses on an analysis of the double dimension of Turkish cultural diplomacy, the high-culture, and the pop-culture, asserting that the success of the latter has allowed Turkey to limit the damage to its soft power caused by domestic political turmoil. Furthermore, the research aims to highlight how Turkey has used culture as a resource for its diplomacy –useful for strengthening relations with other countries, enhancing cooperation, and promoting Turkish interests abroad.*

In the 1960s, Canadian Philosopher Marshall McLuhan predicted one of the main outcomes of the process of globalization: that mass media would be able to convert the world into a village.[1] Nowadays, in the post-modern wired society, a statement or simply a tweet of 280 characters can reach and affect audiences across the world. In the current interdependent world dominated by globalized media, collective cultural identities are no longer delimited by national borders and the shortening of time and space span has become a reality while geographic boundaries have begun losing its meaning.[2] These developments have caused important changes not only in the social, economic and political arenas, they have also affected the areas of world politics and diplomacy. Notably, the latter has experienced a period of great changes, which witnessed the emergence of new kinds of initiatives encompassing international relations and going beyond traditional diplomacy.[3] Among these, public diplomacy is fed by the possibilities and opportunities brought by globalization. According to Nicholas Cull, "public diplomacy is an international actor's attempt to manage the international environment through engagement with a foreign public,"[4] or, in other words, "a government's diplomatic efforts that target citizens, the press, and foreign country constituencies directly rather than their governments."[5]

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Although public diplomacy is a notion traceable back in time, its implementation started after the Cold War period, alongside the growing interest in soft power tools.[6] Indeed, the fundamentals of public diplomacy can be traced to Joseph Nye's idea of soft power as "the ability to influence the behavior of others to get desired outcomes one wants."[7] He argues that soft power is as important, even more, as hard power in international politics. In a post-modern and globalized society, soft power, predicated on a 'value-based' notion of power, has the advantage of considering the economic, political, and cultural dynamics of globalization, along with the consequences of the information revolution. According to Nye, soft power derives from the "attractiveness of a country's culture, political notions, and policies;"[8] that is, the power of attraction, as opposed to the power derived from military force and economic sanctions. In sum, soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others (co-opt), without the use of force, coercion or violence. For that reason, public diplomacy plays a central role for the emerging middle powers, which are trying to gain international visibility and political significance, relying on a smaller number of material resources than the great powers.[9]

As a consequence, an increasing number of emerging powers understand the importance of culture and are consciously using it as a means to project themselves into global public opinion through what is commonly known as cultural diplomacy. The most oft-cited definition is the one suggested by Milton Cummings: "cultural diplomacy is the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their people to foster mutual understanding."[10] The term cultural diplomacy has broadened considerably over the years and now applies to any practice related to purposeful cultural cooperation among nations or groups of nations.[11] Cultural diplomacy always links to and often overlaps with soft power and public diplomacy. Indeed, employing effective cultural diplomacy is intrinsically connected to a country's soft power attributes and capacity, especially after the social media revolution which affected mass communication at the global level. Indeed, the most common opinion is to consider cultural diplomacy as a tool, a method of public diplomacy or one of its types. Thus, the three notions –soft power, public diplomacy, and cultural diplomacy– have entered the lexicon of International Relations (IR) and have become standard terms in foreign policy thinking.

Turkey is among the emerging powers that use public diplomacy. Its master narrative projected abroad has been based on its domestic development of de-

mocracy and fast economic growth, with the opening toward the global economy. After a 'golden period' (2007-2013), the effectiveness of Turkish public diplomacy has fallen dramatically, and Turkey's global image has been undermined by domestic political turmoil, growing international isolation and the resulting instability. Nowadays, Turkey is attempting to depict a different image to promote itself abroad –a portrait that is able to overcome the declining notoriety of recent years. Indeed, due to the effects of these intermestic contingencies, Turkish public diplomacy has had to shift from a model of democracy in a Muslim state to an approach more focused on the Turkish worldview, lifestyle, and cultural appeal. In recent years, Turkey has focused its efforts on pop-culture, especially television broadcasts, with the intention of projecting winning stories of the country to foreign publics.

Drawing on the conceptualization of cultural diplomacy, this research analyzes features, structures, and actors of Turkey's foreign cultural strategy. Cultural diplomacy is a subject still little studied in the field of IR; however, starting from the analysis of specific cases such as the Turkish one, it is possible to achieve a broader understanding of how countries use culture as a foreign policy tool. This research aims to highlight how Turkey has used culture as a resort of its soft power to strengthen relations with other countries, bolster the nation's image and to promote Turkish interests abroad. Overall, an analysis of Turkey's cultural diplomacy will not only underline features and peculiarities of Turkey's soft power, but it will also help enrich the literature in the field of cultural diplomacy.

The Debate on the Power of Attractiveness

Systemic change from a bipolar to a multipolar world has had a profound impact on the ways in which nations construct and project their national identity through adopting a cultural strategy. Indeed, nowadays cultural, religious, and ethnic factors play a larger part in defining our sense of self and community.[12] The discussions of public and cultural diplomacy are largely based on the notion of soft power, and these two terms are often conflated.[13] The main assumption behind Joseph Nye's idea of soft power is that there are sources of power beyond material assets. He asserted that power is "the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the desired outcomes one wants."[14] Nye built his definition as a behavioral outcome, or, as he calls it, a 'relational power concept' attentive to the multiple faces of power.[15] Therefore, soft power is neither evolution or involution of nor a substitute for hard power; it is simply another form of power. In the three-dimensional chessboard model that typifies Nye's theory, world politics is divided into three closely interdependent levels/spheres of influence: a country's hard power consists of two spheres –military and economic power– and another sphere at the base of his model called

In an information age, one of the most effective means of public diplomacy is, undoubtedly, cultural and intellectual exchange assisted by the new communication technologies

soft power.[16] Recently, he extended his earlier definition of soft power as "the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes."[17] Nye also introduced the notion of 'smart power,' that is to say, the balanced use of soft and hard power according to the needs of the specific scenario. This strategic concept, openly adopted by the Obama Administration, contrasts the misperception that soft power alone can produce effective foreign policy.[18] In other words, soft power, like public and cultural diplomacy, always needs material resources to support it and to substantiate its efforts.

Some scholars are still skeptical about soft power, and consider that it would be more effective if more money were allocated to it.[19] Others assert that in today's global information space, soft power is becoming more influential, and it needs less hard power support.[20] Both sets of theorists consider soft power not merely as an influence, and as more than just persuasion or the ability to move people by argument. For them, soft power is based on setting the agenda and attracting others through the deployment of cultural and ideological means of provoking acquiescence.[21] For Nye, soft power is better seen as a malleable strategy that a country may use in order to gain its objectives by attraction founded on culture, political values, and a legitimate and moral foreign policy. In order to better understand the flexible nature of soft power, Nye distinguished between behaviors, resources, and actors.[22] Resources are tangible or intangible capabilities, goods, and instruments at one's disposal; behavior is the action itself, the manner or way of acting, and the conduct of an agent. In behavioral terms, soft power is an attractive power. In terms of resources, soft power resources are the assets that produce such attraction. Nye argued that the soft power of a country is primarily the product of three main resources: "its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when values are widely accepted and implemented), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)."[23]

In the contemporary world order characterized by a condition of rule or 'no anarchy'[24] and by 'global civil society,'[25] attractive power could be a means to success in international competition. For instance, in several competitive areas, such as export sales markets or foreign direct investment, the relatively higher attractiveness of a country can have a positive impact on selling goods and services made in the country of origin, and on the hosting of industries, companies, and factories, by attracting international consumers and inves-

One of the state agencies involved in cultural diplomacy, TİKA, conducting free-of-cost eye surgeries in Kenya and sending humanitarian aid materials to Gaza, Palestine.

ANDREW WASIKE / ALI JADALLAH / AA Photo

tors.[26] Many states have strengthened their 'nation branding' means by "the application of corporate marketing concepts and techniques to countries, in the interests of enhancing their reputation in international relations."[27] Therefore, there has been a growing consciousness of the importance of influencing foreign citizens, as well as their decision makers. As a consequence, public sector agencies are urged to adopt marketing and promotion strategies to raise public awareness of their country's image and brands to attract diverse customers including citizens, tourists, and companies.[28] These strategies shape what is known as public diplomacy.

As with most IR concepts, public diplomacy is a term much used, but there is no consensus about its aims and methods. A concise definition is offered by the U.S. Department of State Dictionary of International Relations Terms: "public diplomacy refers to government-sponsored programs intended to inform or influence public opinion in other countries; its chief instruments are publications, motion pictures, cultural exchanges, radio, and television."[29] There is an interdependent connection between public diplomacy and soft power, both of which point to an understanding of world politics beyond interstate relations by accentuating the role of public.[30] The first one is understood as a trans-national process that can be created not just by governments and their agencies but by civil society and/or private sector stakeholders as a form of an intercultural dialogue based on mutuality and reciprocal listening.[31] Where traditional diplomacy is the art or practice of conducting international relations, as in negotiating alliances, treaties, and agreements, focused on relationships between a small number of elites, public diplomacy aims to reach the masses.[32] Traditionally, public diplomacy has taken the form of a bond between a government and the people of another state,[33] or as an "instrument that governments use to mobilize these resources to communicate with and attract the public of other countries, rather than merely their governments."[34]

The recent trend in literature talks about new public diplomacy, highlighting attention to key shifts in the practice of public diplomacy.[35] According to this tendency, the new public diplomacy is about "building relationships with civil society actors in other countries and about facilitating networks between non-governmental parties at home and abroad."[36] The main characteristics of new public diplomacy are the new media, the rising involvement of non-state actors, the blurring of domestic and international news spheres, and horizontal structure aiming at relationship-building instead of just influencing foreign audiences.[37] For example, Benno Signitzer points out that there has been an increased shift in public diplomacy activities from actors related to the state to both non-governmental and non-state actors.[38] Nowadays, public diplomacy refers to a national government's effort to influence international opinions on its domestic or foreign policies through "public relations activities or intellectual exchanges targeting the media or citizen groups,"[39] or in other words, "a government's communication with foreign audiences in order to positively influence them."[40] This article considers cultural diplomacy as an integral part of public diplomacy, or one of its tools, an expression of a state's willingness to exploit cultural elements to project its soft power abroad in the current globalized and interconnected world.

The Rise of Cultural Diplomacy in Promoting Relationships Across Borders

Even though there are several instances of public diplomacy that do not involve a state's culture,[41] in an information age, one of the most effective means of public diplomacy is, undoubtedly, cultural and intellectual exchange assisted by the new communication technologies.[42] As Wilson Dizard points out, public diplomacy tends to focus on promoting the ideas and values of one society to another through cultural programs and information.[43] Therefore, culture is a field of international relations itself, as well as a tool of foreign policy. This is because, in international politics, the resources that produce soft power arise in large part from the values an organization or country expresses in its culture. According to Nye, culture is "the set of practices that create meaning for a society, and it has many manifestations."[44] Other authors have defined culture as both the means by which we come to understand others and an aspect of life with an innate worth that we enjoy and seek out.[45]

Culture as a kind of soft power is a precious resource in international politics. This is because, all human activity –including foreign policy– becomes both a product and a component of culture, that is conceived as the 'transitory results of social discourse'[46] or, as most constructivists define it, as 'socially shared beliefs.'[47] However, as argued by Ang, Isar, and Mar, cultural attractiveness per se is not soft power. It can be a soft power resource, provided it is deployed

to achieve clearly defined policy objectives under a thought-out strategy.[48]

In the course of human history, there are several examples of the promotion of national culture abroad as a foreign policy tool. From the remote past to the present day, people have used culture to display themselves, to assert their power, and to understand others. As explained by Richard Arndt, since the 3rd millennium B.C.E. cultural diplomacy –meant as a cluster of rituals, ceremonies, chants, dance, and language– has been a norm, permitting cooperation between large groups.[49] This kind of early public diplomacy was a constant feature in all of the great civilizations from the Roman Republic's policy of inviting the sons of foreign 'friendly kings' to be educated in Rome, to Sufi mystics who spread an ascetic and tolerant message across boundaries during the early Ottoman period. The institutionalization of cultural diplomacy as an integral part of diplomatic activity dates back to the end of the 19th century with the establishment of the first specialized cultural-diplomatic institutions, such as the Alliance Française (1883) and Società Dante Alighieri (1889).[50]

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Nowadays, after more than four decades of so-called cultural war as part of the Cold War, where the culture was an axis of propaganda,[51] there has been a greater emphasis on using cultural diplomacy to present a national image of the state. While policymakers and politicians have increasingly engaged in the realm of culture over several decades, the notion of cultural diplomacy is not easily defined. Although countries such as France have used the term since the late 19th century, cultural diplomacy entered common parlance in most other countries only in the 1990s.[52] Since then, the term has progressively evolved, but even now there is no broad agreement among specialists about what cultural diplomacy is, its objectives, practitioners, activities, and timeframe. For example, some academicians argue that cultural diplomacy differs from other diplomatic practices by the long term of its objectives,[53] but others consider cultural diplomacy's main characteristic to be the fact that it is carried out abroad. Confusion also surrounds its definition. The notion was originally used to refer to the processes occurring when diplomats serving national governments took recourse to cultural exchanges and flows for the advancement of their perceived national interests.[54] Nowadays, there is almost unanimous agreement on the Cummings' definition mentioned above, i.e. "the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding."[55]

For the first scheduled international flight, a Turkish Airlines' plane took off from the new *İstanbul Airport* to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on October 31, 2018.

ERHAN ELALDI / AA Photo

In recent years, cultural diplomacy has become one of the most interesting trends of foreign policy development. Generally, it is seen –conceptually and practically– as a subset and an integral part of public diplomacy, or the operation of a state's culture in support of its foreign policy goals. Its aims are combating stereotypes, developing mutual understanding, and advancing national reputation and relationships across borders.[56] In some cases, cultural diplomacy is understood as a particular form or dimension of public diplomacy, enough to be its 'linchpin.'[57] Like public diplomacy, the practice of cultural diplomacy has gradually been taken over by branches of government other than foreign ministries and has been deployed in the service of goals such as nation branding and portfolio promotion. Yet, cultural diplomacy has the potential to

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contribute much more effectively to foreign policy goals, to diplomacy, and to governments' domestic objectives.[58] Therefore, in the current interdependent and globalized world, cultural diplomacy has gained more significance because the new world politics has had a profound impact on the ways in which states construct and project their national identity and their (soft) power.[59]

Soft power generated from culture, also called cultural soft power,[60] comes from many different sources including pop and high-culture.[61] The majority of scholars that work on the topic, consider cultural tools –such as education, arts, media, film, literature, higher education (universities, research centers, think tanks, etc.), non-governmental organizations, tourism, platforms for economic cooperation, and diplomacy– as soft power resources.[62] Cultural soft power emerges as a combination of these resources and gives us an idea about a country's cultural richness and social capital. Additionally, cultural contact provides a natural platform for unofficial political relationship-building and people-to-people contact, feeding knowledge and mutual trust.[63] This suggests that "culture is not just as the arts, but in its broad definition, as reflected in the growing recognition of culture's role in promoting human development, fostering intercommunity dialogue and understanding, building peace, and broadening education."[64]

Cultural Diplomacy as a Topic of Study

Traditionally, governments undertake cultural diplomacy to achieve idealistic purposes –to develop mutual understanding, and to combat ethnocentrism, stereotyping, and conflicts.[65] Scholars, furthermore, disagree on the scope of cultural diplomacy as well. For some, the aim may be very broad, "entailing many forms of cultural recognition between nations and cultures;"[66] others consider it in a narrow sense as an 'overplayed hand,'[67] prone to 'ambiguous and overstated' claims, such as the ability 'to manage the international environment.'[68] Moreover, there are several functional objectives of cultural diplomacy, including political, diplomatic, and economic interests, connecting with groups abroad that are important to the cultural diplomacy practitioner

In the last decade, Turkey has developed its cultural diplomacy on two complementary levels: *high* and *popular* culture, each of which presents both public agencies and civil organizations

–such as diasporas– and helping to maintain bilateral relationships in times of tension.[69] According to Kazou Ogoura, the aim of modern cultural diplomacy is "to improve a nation's image and prestige through such aspects of culture as fine and performing arts, language education, and intellectual traditions."[70] Further, cultural diplomacy could also have some domestic effects, contributing to national social cohesion and improving identity awareness within the country.[71]

The topic of a country's cultural strategy is broad, and what various actors in cultural diplomacy do involves an incredible array of activities ranging from using arts engagements to educate and develop economies in rural communities, to leveraging culture to support national interests. Traditionally, the 'cultural' part of cultural diplomacy is defined as the expression of the intellectual elites. In recent years, this assumption has changed, and cultural diplomacy now frequently includes 'popular culture,' namely cultural activities that attract mass audiences.[72] Today, it is common to distinguish between *high* cultures such as literature, art, and education, which appeals to elites, and *popular* culture, which focuses on mass entertainment.[73] The practice of cultural programs between different countries can be a powerful weapon in countering negative stereotypes and perceptions,[74] and the visual and performing arts in particular have "the power to engage citizens on a personal rather than a political level."[75]

As a topic of study, cultural diplomacy is recent, and it has attracted little scholarly attention. The general lack of interest is due to several factors: (i) the fact that it is considered a minor tool of diplomacy and foreign policy, and, as noted by Shaun Riordan, cultural promotion 'is not regarded as a serious part of diplomacy;'[76] (ii) the low priority accorded to cultural diplomacy is exacerbated by the difficulty in determining cultural diplomacy's long-term impact on the behavior of audiences; (iii) lack of clarity about what precisely the practice entails, not least because of the difficulty that lies in the varying terminology used by countries in defining cultural diplomacy;[77] (iv) and finally, cultural diplomacy is often confused with other related and overlapping terms and practices such as public diplomacy, international cultural relations, and propaganda.[78] However, recent years have witnessed a wealth of interest in the topic among scholars, and currently there are several studies that analyze the cultural strategies carried out by traditional powers (the United States,[79] Russia,[80] the United Kingdom,[81] Japan[82]), emerging powers (China,[83] South Africa,[84] Canada,[85] New Zealand,[86] Australia,[87] South Korea[88]), and non-state organizations such as UNESCO.[89] The current scholarly debate focuses on cultural diplomacy actors. To this end, the Turkish case study can contribute to

the literature by providing insight to a peculiar inter-agency approach to cultural diplomacy based on the complementarity of action between governmental and non-governmental actors.

The Twofold Dimension of Turkish Cultural Diplomacy

As argued by Evan Potter (2008), cultural diplomacy, like any other form of diplomacy, needs a political purpose.[90] Any activities aimed at promoting national culture, but without any government input –either financial or ideological– may not be called cultural diplomacy. The Turkish case is no exception. Like other emerging middle powers, Turkey has discovered public diplomacy as a tool to cope with its negative image and a way to establish the country's presence in the regional and global fora. Although there were some early examples of public diplomacy in the 1990s, professionalized public diplomacy efforts in Turkey began only after 2000. Since the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AK Party) came into power in 2002, Turkey has tapped into its soft power in order to strengthen its relations with traditional partners and to engage with long-ignored regions such as the Balkans and the Middle East.[91] In the latter, more than everywhere else, Turkey has had to make efforts in order to change the perception of the neighboring countries.[92] Realizing that it has an unfavorable reputation in the region, Turkey has implemented a number of efforts to project a more positive image. To this end, Turkey has begun to develop a more comprehensive public diplomacy, making greater use of the cultural tool. Therefore, Turkish cultural diplomacy was born as a branch of a wider public diplomacy agenda, which was institutionalized in 2010 through the establishment of the Office of Public Diplomacy (*Kamu Diplomasisi Koordinatörlüğü*, KDK). Beside the KDK, the Prime Ministry Office has developed other agencies with the aim of strengthening Turkey's cultural diplomacy, such as the Directorate General of Press and Information (DGPI), the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Relative Communities (YTATB), the Yunus Emre Institute, *TRT6*, and the Maarif Foundation.

In the last decade, Turkey has developed its cultural diplomacy on two complementary levels: *high* and *popular* culture, each of which presents both public agencies and civil organizations. Indeed, the Ankara government has not only focused its attention on developing a cultural agenda, but also on promoting non-state actors' activities within a common framework. The public and cultural diplomacy actors employ strategic communication in projecting Turkey's standpoint and its national brand. Thus, the KDK cooperates with different non-governmental organizations on various specific projects in the field of cultural diplomacy. It acts as a coordinator of their campaigns and a financial provider. The first official organization dealing with cultural diplomacy was the Yunus Emre Foundation (YEF), established in 2007 to foster Turkish

language, history, culture, and society globally, and to promote cultural and scientific exchanges with other countries. The foundation is not the first organization in the history of Turkey whose goal is specifically to build cultural links with foreign societies, but it is the first public one that performs this task systemically both at home and abroad. Indeed, the YEF was established with the aim to better organize and coordinate pre-existent Turkish Cultural Centers into a government-affiliated structure. The most important affiliated institution is the Yunus Emre Institute (*Yunus Emre Enstitüsü*, YEE), ramified in centers or institutes abroad. Although the institutes are registered as foundations and therefore work as NGOs, in practice they have strong connections to the state by way of its organizational framework and function. The first center abroad was opened in Sarajevo in 2009, and currently there are more than 40 centers. Since 2007, the YEE has improved the promotion and teaching of Turkish culture, history, language, and literature, and it has supported scientific studies by cooperating with several organizations and informing the wider public with various publications.[93] The YEE is Turkey's cultural diplomacy tool modeled upon other international cultural institutes. Indeed, the centers operate similarly to the German Goethe Institute, the Spanish Instituto Cervantes, or the British Council not only through language courses but also by regularly organizing festivals and exhibitions in the fields of film, dance, music, theatre, literature, and translation in different countries. Currently, there are 50 centers in 41 different countries; the aim of increasing this number to 100 is part of Turkey's 2023 vision.[94] Furthermore, the locations of the centers reflect the emphasis on the Balkans and the Middle East, which is in accordance with Turkish promotion of awareness of the common cultural heritage or cultural proximity. The logic of cultural proximity works not only at the national and supranational level, but also at the subnational and regional ones, fostering the formation of cross-national spaces of cultural identity.[95]

In addition to the YEE's actions, there are several state initiatives directly sustained by some ministries. Among the state agencies involved in cultural diplomacy, TİKA plays a special role, especially in Central Asia, the Balkans, and recently also Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). In Sub-Saharan Africa, TİKA has invested in youth education not only through the construction of schools and the provision of scholarships, but also by preparing the ground for another state institution: the Directorate for Religious Affairs (DİB). In Africa, DİB acts through its non-profit foundation *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı* and promotes the spread and development of Sunni-Hanafi education by opening Turkish religious schools (*İmam Hatip*), distributing materials, and organizing meetings between African religious leaders and their Turkish counterparts. In the field of education, the Turkish Ministry of National Education has also worked extensively with Africa by allocating several types of grants for African students and distributing materials for African schools. Turkish interventions in the education sector have the long-term goals of supporting African social recon-

struction and training future generations. Alongside the governmental agencies, faith-based NGOs have increased their presence in SSA.

A special place among civil society organizations has until recently been held by the Fetullah Gülen organization (*Hizmet*). *Hizmet* was at the forefront of Turkey's educational projects with nearly 100 schools in SSA and a university in Abuja, called the Nigerian Turkish Nile University. However, in 2014, the Turkish state initiated a policy of pressuring and, if possible, closing down the organization's institutions in African countries. This pressure increased after the July 15 coup attempt because the organization, now known in Turkey as FETÖ (the Fetullah Gülen Terrorist Organization), has been indicted by the Turkish state as being responsible for the coup. As a consequence, Ankara has put pressure on African leaders to shut down the organization's schools and transfer them to the control of the state-funded Turkish Maarif Foundation. Undoubtedly, the global *Hizmet* school system was and still is an important source of revenue for the FETÖ and, above all, the wellspring of indoctrination for future generations. The latter is one of the main reasons why Turkey perceives it as a real threat to its own interests and security. FETÖ's network of magazines, television, and web channels constitutes a threat to Turkish cultural diplomacy efforts. Indeed, the current FETÖ propaganda against the Turkish state is an example of a counter-narrative aimed at discrediting the Turkish brand within the country and abroad.

Turkish scholarships represent an example of a cultural diplomacy tool, with the aim of improving mutual understanding with other countries through a people-oriented approach

Returning more specifically to the article's topic, it should be noted that the promotion of Turkey through cultural diplomacy is directed not only to foreigners but also to Turkish communities living abroad. The Presidency for Turks Abroad and Relative Communities (YTATB), founded to oversee projects involving Turkish citizens abroad, carries out activities to improve social, cultural and economic relationships within Turkish communities.[96] Therefore, Turkish cultural strategies are also employed in Western Europe with the aim of reinforcing relations with the diaspora of over 5.5 million Turks, facilitating cultural dialogue and promoting a positive image of the country's culture and history. Besides these initiatives, YTATB established scholarship programs to favor exchanges between students (*Türkiye Bursları*) and researchers (*Türkiye Bilimsel ve Teknolojik Araştırma Kurumu*, TÜBİTAK). Turkish scholarships represent an example of a cultural diplomacy tool, with the aim of improving mutual understanding with other countries through a people-oriented approach.[97] Moreover, universities play an important role in cultural diplomacy by holding international conferences and congresses. Their worldwide recog-

nition and their international reputations hold an essential value for Turkey's image and brand.

Pop-Culture as a Nation Branding Tool

In addition to the high culture initiatives, Turkey has undertaken a series of initiatives ascribable to the second level of cultural dimension, namely popular culture. Popular culture is described by John Fiske as the totality of ideas, perspectives, and norms in the mainstream, which is heavily propelled by the mass media and has an immeasurable impact on people's values and attitudes.[98] It is a powerful political tool because it is able to produce and articulate feelings which can form the basis of an individual's identity and become a potential source for political thought and action.[99] In the Turkish case, these kinds of cultural activities are usually very influential, and they help to overcome prejudices and stereotypes about Turkey and Turkish society.[100] The Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (*TRT*) plays a central role in cultural diplomacy with its broadcasts on radio, television, and the internet. Indeed, its international broadcasting is a substantial and effective cultural diplomacy tool, which enables the source to control both the content and the medium of the message.[101] Furthermore, its English-language news platform, *TRT World*, launched in 2015, as well as its Arabic-language channel, *TRT al-Arabiya*, favors the spreading of 'Turkish sight,' which bears great importance in creating an image and an impact in terms of public and cultural diplomacy. Turkish TV dramas (*Dizi*), broadcast after their success in domestic ratings in the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Balkans, Latin America, Western Europe, and North Africa are another marker of the increase of Turkey's cultural diplomacy, or better said, of Turkish 'soap power.'

In recent years, the high visibility acquired by Turkish Airlines has made it possible to raise awareness and spread a winning image of Turkey to a mass audience

In 2014, Turkey reached the 2nd highest ranking of television drama production worldwide after the United States, with export revenues of $200 million. Turkish series combined are estimated to have reached 400 million viewers worldwide in 2014, across the Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia, with new markets opening up in Scandinavia and Latin America.[102] One of their main contributions is of an economic nature. However, its ramifications go far beyond its direct sale revenues. Indeed, Turkish shows have emerged as valuable instruments for the promotion of tourism and the popularity of many Turkish products.[103] In addition, Turkish series have not only attracted Arab viewers to visit Turkey and consume national products

A group of students are seen at an Ebru (marbling) course, organized by the Yunus Emre Institute in London, United Kingdom on September 21, 2018.

YUNUS EMRE INSTITUTE / HANDOUT / AA Photo

but, even more, they have affected the lives of many of them, especially young people and women. Furthermore, within the framework of cultural diplomacy, the dramas serve as one of the main instruments for spreading Turkish cultural influence in the neighboring regions and as such have enhanced the soft power of the Turkish government.[104]

The rapid growth in TV series exports has transformed Turkish soap operas into a powerful soft power instrument, triggering a controversial pop-culture phenomenon resulting in growing interest by scholars and global media.[105] As in the 1980s, when American drama series such as 'Dallas' and 'Dynasty' dominated the global television audience for years, projecting a certain image of family and capitalist business, and hence providing clues for international audiences to understand the American culture of that day, Turkish series are doing almost the same now. They question and often challenge existing norms, cultural values, and socio-political circumstances in Turkish society and the Muslim world in general.[106] The response, however, has not been unanimously positive: Turkish soaps have stirred anger among religious figures, and have been accused of pushing a neo-Ottomanist political agenda and of having a destructive effect on local television markets.[107]

Despite these criticisms, the Turkish series' outstanding success among Middle Eastern societies has led to a representation of Turkey that is more idealized than ever before. And while this trend is both a cause and a consequence of Turkey's rapprochement with the region,[108] currently, many Arab people are

charmed by Turkish lifestyles, and the series' presentation of an image of a Muslim society that is dynamic and modern, yet loyal to its traditions and history.[109] Turkish TV series are not seen as new, but rather as more professionally organized instruments for capturing the hearts and minds,[110] by making alternative socio-cultural and spatial possibilities available for Arab audiences, especially women, and housewives in particular. The TV dramas have introduced new types of questions that radically contest and challenge existing socio-cultural roles within Arab societies, providing a different vision of the world.

Recently, Turkish series have become a cultural diplomacy tool in African countries as well. For example, Sudanese youth watch and identify with Ottoman dramas like *Ertuğrul* and *Sultan Abdul Hamid II* in far greater numbers than they do the Arabic dramas which are broadcast from Cairo and Beirut. By capturing these audiences, Turkey has managed to carve out a leading role with the masses of Muslims around the world. In fact, it has presented a way of reconciling Islamic values and tradition with the lifestyles and problems of modernity and has legitimized its role through reference to its imperial past. To a certain extent, the Ottoman past is central because it serves Turkey to say 'we have already been the epicenter of the Islamic world, we know how to do it and we can do it again.'

Finally, among the pop-cultural tools, there is Turkish Airlines (THY), arguably Turkey's leading national brand that contributes to boosting the reputation of the country and the quality of its services all over the world. In addition to its increased global presence –flying to 222 international destinations in 117 countries– THY has contributed to communicating Turkey's message by introducing its guests to Turkish culture and modernity.[111] Moreover, it has recently increased its own, and Turkey's, visibility by serving as an official sponsor for famous football teams such as Barcelona FC, Manchester United, and Borussia Dortmund, and for international events such as Basketball Euroleague, UEFA Euro 2016, and the European Rugby Champions Cup. In recent years, the high visibility acquired by Turkish Airlines has made it possible to raise awareness and spread a winning image of Turkey to a mass audience.

Conclusions

The Turkish case highlights some points of interest and reflection useful to the study of global diplomacy. First of all, cultural diplomacy, conceived as a branch of public diplomacy, can be a useful tool for states that do not have considerable material resources but who are looking to gain international influence and visibility. In addition, investing in cultural diplomacy can be effective in countering the negative repercussions and loss of popularity caused by po-

litical actions unpopular in international public opinion. In particular, skillful use of pop-culture diplomacy is effective thanks to its ability to reach –and in some case to conquer– the hearts and minds of the masses. That said, the impact of television and the arts on Turkish public diplomacy and soft power cannot be overestimated.

If we consider culture as one of three soft power sources, as Joseph Nye did, we can assert that the Turkish experience shows how cultural soft power still works even though the other two variables –political values and foreign policy actions– may decline. Indeed, recent developments in domestic politics as well as foreign policy behaviors have exposed Turkey to much international criticism, undermining its credibility and its national brand. However, the skillful use of pop-culture diplomacy tools has allowed Turkey to strengthen its cultural proximities with a multifaceted international audience, managing to arouse feelings of sympathy and admiration. In other words, the Turkish brand is holding up, despite the cooling of relations with few regional and international players. This dynamic has highlighted how soft power is not an absolute concept but rather a dynamic construct that is changing by the minute together with social, political, and cultural circumstances. Further, during the last five years, Turkey's soft power, generated by culture resources, has shown a high resilience, suitable to aiding the country in facing regional challenges.

Despite many pitfalls and its short life, however, Turkish cultural diplomacy has made indisputable progress; nowadays, it represents an essential asset of Turkey's foreign policy, useful in fostering the country's image as a rising power worldwide

Cultural diplomacy needs to be continuously nurtured and supported by the state's material resources, otherwise, it risks being an end in itself. The challenges, as well as potential limits of Turkish cultural diplomacy, for the near future, lie in the mismatch between rhetoric and reality. In the medium term, the Turkish state's strict control over the media and some civil society organizations could jeopardize the achievements and the future potential of Turkey's cultural diplomacy. Finally, a further issue of concern is related to the Turkish financial economy. Indeed, supporting a long-term cultural diplomacy strategy requires resources which the recent instability and the fluctuations of the Turkish Lira risk reducing. Turkey's cultural diplomacy is still a work in progress and its effectiveness is undermined by the patchy framework of its stakeholders and by the lack of a comprehensive grand strategy. Despite many pitfalls and its short life, however, Turkish cultural diplomacy has made indisputable progress; nowadays, it represents an essential asset of Turkey's foreign policy, useful in fostering the country's image as a rising power worldwide.

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