TURKISH SOFT POWER IN AFRICA

Abstract. During the Cold War era, Türkiye’s foreign policy was limited by bloc politics, which were dominated by the US rivalry with USSR. As a partner of the Western Bloc, Türkiye had to develop and act her foreign policy according to the general approach of the Western Block. Thus, Türkiye’s foreign policy was locked with US/NATO axis, so Türkiye could not extend her foreign policy to other regions, such as the African continent. After the dissolution of the USSR, Türkiye started to develop her foreign policy in new geographies such as Africa. But the immersive breakthrough for Türkiye’s African politics is with the Justice and Development Party (AK Party/AKP). For instance, in 2005, its announced “African Year,” and this new foreign policy approach helped Türkiye extend and enhance relations with African countries. It’s important to emphasize that while creating representation offices in every African country is critical for cultivating Turkey's relationships with the continent, doing so will not be enough to further strengthen and improve relations. In order to accomplish this, Turkey used and is still effectively using soft power tools in the area. The institutions used by Turkey as a soft power tool, which are the focus of this study, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), Yunus Emre Institute (YEE), Turkish Maarif Vakfi (TMV), and Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) are actively involved in the area and trying to strengthen ties between Turkey and Africa on a variety of fronts. Türkiye’s foreign policy’s extension toward the African continent was boosted by the state institutions of Türkiye, which are wielding Turkish soft power in the region. This paper its aimed to shed light on Turkish soft power in the African region and evaluate the state institutions mentioned above that operate in the area.

Keywords: Türkiye-Africa Relations, Turkish Soft Power, Foreign Aids, Africa.
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ТУРЕЦЬКА М’ЯКА СИЛА В АФРИЦІ

Анотація. В епоху холодної війни зовнішня політика Туреччини була обмежена блоковою політикою, в якій домінювало суперництво США з СРСР. Як партнер Західного блоку, Туреччина мала розвивати та діяти у своїй зовнішній політиці відповідно до загального підходу Західного блоку. Таким чином, зовнішня політика Туреччини була пов’язана з вісью США/НАТО, тому Туреччина не могла поширити свою зовнішню політику на інші регіони, такі як Африканський континент. Після розпаду СРСР Туреччина почала розвивати свою зовнішню політику в нових географічних регіонах, таких як Африка. Але найбільший прорив в африканській політиці Туреччини відбувся завдяки Партії справедливості та розвитку (AK Party/AKP). Наприклад, у 2005 році, оголошенному «Африканським роком», цей новий зовнішньополітичний підхід допоміг Туреччині розширити та зміцнити відносини з африканськими країнами. Важливо підкреслити, що хоча створення представництв у кожній африканській країні має вирішальне значення для розвитку відносин Туреччини з континентом, цього буде недостатньо для подальшого зміцнення та покращення відносин. Щоб досягти цього, Туреччина використовувала і досі ефективно використовувала інструменти м’якої влади в цьому регіоні. Інституції, які використовуються Туреччиною як інструмент «м’якої влади» і є предметом цього дослідження, Турецька агенція співробітництва та координації (TIKA), Інститут Йоунса Емре (YEE), турецький Мааріф Вакфі (TMV) і Президентство з ліквідації наслідків стихійних лих і надзвичайних ситуацій (AFAD) беруть активну участь у цьому регіоні та намагаються зміцнити зв’язки між Туреччиною та Африкою на різних фронтах. Поширення зовнішньої політики Туреччини на африканський континент було посилене державними інституціями Туреччини, які використовують м’яку силу Туреччини в регіоні. Цей документ мав на меті пролити світло на турецьку м’яку силу в африканському регіоні та оцінити державні установи, згадані вище, які діють у регіоні.

Ключові слова: турецько-африканські відносини, м’яка сила Туреччини, зовнішня допомога, Африка.
Problem statement. The African region, the second biggest continent, regarding the UN statistics, has been suffering from inhumane conditions and poverty for long years. These conditions consist of humanitarian needs, lack of educational infrastructure, lack of physical infrastructure, and in some sub-regions, lack of state authority [1]. As colonial states controlled the continent until the 1960s, Türkiye’s interaction with the region was limited. Of course, this limitation was not only about the colonial states’ existence and their control of African politics [2] but also the orientation of the Turkish foreign policy, which was solely locked to the West (US/NATO and Europe) during the Cold War era [3].

Analysis of the resent research and publications. After that time, 52 sovereign states emerged in the region, and in 1985 Türkiye started its first foreign aid expansion toward Africa. Türkiye, officially for the first time in 1985, has provided 10 million dollars of food aid to Sub-Saharan African countries experiencing drought problems. Türkiye’s active role in development cooperation is undoubtedly closely related to its institutionalization in development cooperation. The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) was established in 1992 under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure the Turkic Republics’ economic development as independent nations following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Another critical turning point in the field of development cooperation in Türkiye is the political stability and economic development process that started in 2003 [4]. Thanks to the paradigm shift in Turkish foreign policy, Türkiye extend her foreign policy actions all around the World. Especially during the Cold War era, Türkiye’s foreign policy was limited to Western Bloc politics; thus, Türkiye could not have been effective as desired in the African region from that time on. But after 2003, there was an apparent breakthrough in Turkish foreign policy based on extension and dynamism. It was declared that 2005 would be “the Year of Africa” due to Türkiye’s dynamism, which stimulated Türkiye’s expansion of the African continent [5]. After this announcement, Türkiye-Africa relations were gradually enhanced by state-level diplomatic ties and Türkiye’s soft power presence with state institutions in the region. In the central part of the article, we will expand and explain Türkiye’s soft power presence in Africa. Apart from that, the Covid-19 pandemic and providing humanitarian aid for combating the virus became essential to Türkiye’s foreign policy approach. During the Covid-19 pandemic, 47 countries were affected by the virus, there were 8,659,127 cumulative cases, and 172,512 deaths occurred in Africa [6].

The objective of the study. To explain and review Türkiye’s soft power presence in Africa by Turkish government institutions such as the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), Yunus Emre Institute (YEE), and Turkish Maarif Vakfi (TMV), and Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD).

Main part. Opening representative offices in every African nation is crucial for fostering Türkiye’s ties with the continent. In contrast to the 12 embassies that
Türkiye had in Africa in 2002, there are now 43 of them there by the year 2021. The number of African embassies in Ankara expanded from 10 at the beginning of 2008 to 37 due to African nations’ continued interest in Türkiye. Mutual high-level visits are crucial to upholding Türkiye’s foreign policy toward Africa. For instance, the President of the Republic of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, visited 28 African nations, namely: Algeria, Djibouti, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Morocco, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Republic of South Africa, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Egypt, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia. Thanks to those visits by President Erdoğan, Türkiye’s Africa policy gained momentum more than ever in the history of modern Türkiye. Of course, those mentioned high-level visits are pioneers for establishing the suitable and solid ground for building everlasting partnerships with the African states. Through Türkiye’s soft power instrument institutions, which are the subject of this study, TIKA, YEE, TMV, and AFAD are actively working in the region [7].

Apart from that, Türkiye’s expanding economic ties and rapidly rising trade numbers are two of the most evident signs of improving Türkiye-Africa relations. By 2020, Türkiye’s overall trade with the African continent will have grown from 5.4 billion dollars in 2003 to 25.3 billion dollars. From $1.35 billion in 2003 to $10 billion in 2020, Türkiye’s commerce with African nations increased significantly. Despite the pandemic conditions, maintaining a consistent commerce volume in 2020 is a significant accomplishment [7].

The measures Türkiye has undertaken on the African continent in recent years have attracted attention due to this goal, both domestically and internationally. Today Türkiye has 42 Embassies in more than 50 countries in the African region. Also, apart from the formal diplomatic missions, Türkiye supports her initiative in Africa with state and non-state actors. First and foremost, Turkish Airlines (THY), Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), Anadolu Agency (AA), Yunus Emre Institute (YEE), Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), and Turkish Maarif Foundation (TMV) are acting in the region. Furthermore, Türkiye’s Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK), Independent Industrialists’ and Businessmen’s Association (MUSIAD), non-governmental organizations, and companies establish contact with the people of the continent [8].

Before shedding light on the state mentioned above institutions’ activities, explaining the concept of soft power is crucial. In 1990, Joseph S. Nye’s book “Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power” introduced the idea of soft power to the field of international relations [9]. More complex new sub-concepts have either begun to receive renewed attention in the literature or have been the subject of several investigations by academics like Joseph Nye and others that have followed this novel idea [10]. In the work mentioned above, Nye introduced the concept of “Soft Power,” which he defines as “the ability to achieve what you want by attracting it rather than using orders/force or persuading it somehow (such as
providing money).” In other words, exporting a country’s positive image attracts other countries to reach foreign policy goals [3]. In its broadest definition, soft power refers to the circumstance in which a state achieves its foreign policy objectives solely through the attraction effect on other nations, without any material, moral, indirect, or direct intervention. The essence of a country’s “Soft Power” potential, according to Nye, is its ability to attract people with its culture, political ideals, and policies. The soft power of a nation will expand or diminish depending on the legitimacy of its policies in the eyes of the general public because Nye asserted that “soft power is needed to create peace” and that “making peace is tougher than winning the war” [9].

The political and military crises of the early 1990s marked the end of the Cold War and the beginning of a new age to which the Cold War-era balance of power strategies was ill-equipped to adapt. Because state-centered strategy and bilateral agreements are no longer successful at preventing conflicts, as seen by the bloodshed experienced on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. In such a setting, Türkiye has established new institutions that will serve as the pinnacle of regional and global cooperation and the power-related aspects of its foreign policy. However, Türkiye’s sensible use of its “Soft Power” capability is the only means by which the new direction taken over its foreign policy can be realized [3].

According to Ibrahim Kalin, Spokesperson of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, the traditional definition of foreign policy is no longer relevant. Because foreign policy and international relations now involve a broad range of actors, including businesspeople, non-governmental organizations, intellectuals, opinion leaders, journalists, think tanks, humanitarian aid, and international law, in addition to states and diplomats, according to Kalin, “national interest”-centered policies developed and implemented by states and diplomats no longer determine the framework of international relations. In addition, Kalin, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, does not alone construct the Republic of Türkiye’s foreign policy, which aspires to become a global power. Kalin implies that Türkiye’s foreign policy is also directly influenced by organizations like TIKA, Anadolu Agency, Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities, YEE, TRT, Turkish Red Crescent, and AFAD [11]. According to Kalin, “Soft Power” refers to a conception of foreign policy based on aspects like diplomacy, culture, discussion, collaboration, interdependence on one another’s economies, and historical accumulation [12].

But according to Kalin, Türkiye’s soft power is distinct from other nations’ structure and reach. He emphasized that Türkiye’s soft power potential reflects its rich historical and cultural heritage. He implies that Türkiye’s subtle power potential begins in the Balkans and extends into Central Asia and Africa, which originates from its inherited history and culture rather than its advantage in terms of technology or military might [13].

**Presenting main material.**

*Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA)*
From its founding until the conclusion of the Cold War, the Republic of Türkiye had only limited contact with the Turkic republics of the Soviet Union. Türkiye made significant efforts by making drastic decisions to develop its bilateral ties with the aforementioned Turkic Republics after turning its attention to this region following the fall of the Soviet Union. With the vision of Turgut Ozal and the TIKA, established in 1992 under the leadership of Umut Ark, the first and maybe most significant of these steps was achieved. Türkiye’s relations with the mentioned Turkic Republics remained strained in the world order that the Soviet Union presided over, making the desired actions impossible. However, one of the crucial stages stated above was the founding of TIKA in the early 1990s, at the time of the Soviet Union’s collapse and the end of the bipolar international system. To advance relations between the Turkic Republics and Türkiye more quickly, TIKA, in particular, conducted significant research on collaborative projects, infrastructure, and technical support during its development [3].

It is feasible to divide TIKA’s actions since its founding in 1992 into two distinct periods, 1992-2002 and 2002-2013. The institution operated to provide technical assistance to the newly independent states in the former Soviet geography, namely the Caucasus and Central Asia, between 1992 and 2002, when TIKA was founded and can be considered in its infancy. During the ten years, that is, between 1992 and 2002, 2241 projects were completed. Between 2003 and 2011, TIKA signed roughly four times as numerous projects. Within the parameters of the 2011 research, the following nations utilized the most resources: Afghanistan is first with 20.61 percent, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina with 6.76 percent, Palestine with 5.47 percent, and Lebanon with 3.89 percent [3].

The new discourse that governs Turkish foreign policy, known as TIKA in the form of humanitarian diplomacy, has drilled water wells and installed water pipelines to address the urgent need for clean water, not only for the local geography but also for the nations on the African continent, such as the crucial role it plays in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, TIKA’s projects and activities, which provide for meeting the basic needs, such as shelter and food, of countries that have not yet established diplomatic relations with Türkiye. The technical assistance and foreign aid supplied by the completed projects helped build cordial and positive ties between Türkiye and the nations providing these services. Because its main objective is to reach the heart of the historical and cultural depth in the countries where the Turkish language is spoken and revitalize it, it is an extension of an active and multi-dimensional foreign policy concept. By 2022, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency Presidency will have 62 Program Coordination Offices spread across 60 nations, operating in 150 countries. The Republic of Türkiye has an active and principled foreign policy, and as a result, the number of nations we collaborate with grows daily [14]. TIKA’s main priorities in its activities in Africa:

- To ensure sustainable development in Africa,
To help Türkiye share its experience, knowledge, and resources in line with the principle adopted to find “African solutions to Africa’s problems” to provide mutual benefit,

- To accelerate Türkiye’s development assistance activities while also fulfilling its commitments to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and

- To improve the relations between Türkiye and Africa [15].

**Yunus Emre Institutes (YEE) in Africa**

The Yunus Emre Institute (YEE), founded by the Yunus Emre Foundation, conducts educational and training initiatives, as well as scientific research and applications, to carry out the legal objectives. In keeping with its original goals, the Institute engages in activities to better promote and teach Turkish culture, history, language, and literature. It also supports scientific research in collaboration with other institutions and disseminates its findings through various publications. In addition to realizing educational practices through certificate programs, YEE seeks to assist in training qualified academics and researchers in the Turkish language, history, culture, art, and music domains. YEE, which has locations internationally, promotes Türkiye, the Turkish language, culture, art, and history [3].

Research, cultural activities, and classes at YEE Culture Centers, on the other hand, aim to strengthen the relationship between Türkiye and other nations and improve connections between cultures while promoting Türkiye. People who want to learn Turkish as a foreign language now can do so thanks to the Turkish language courses YEE Culture Centers will offer. Additionally, Turkish citizens in the relevant countries will have the opportunity to learn their native tongues more thoroughly, preserving their cultural ties to Türkiye. The center of YEE Culture Centers’ operations is the goal of accessing the heart of the problem, just as it constitutes the core of TİKA’s actions. Regarding the African region, YEE is also actively working in the continent. From South Africa to Tunis, YEE Culture Centers provide Turkish language courses, promoting Turkish culture, art, history, and, most importantly positive Türkiye image. Currently, YEE has nine culture centers spread in Africa, which are: South Africa (Johannesburg), Senegal (Dakar), Somalia (Mogadishu), Morocco (Rabat), Tunis (Tunis), Algeria (Algeria), Egypt (Cairo), Nigeria (Abuja), and Sudan (Hartum) [16].

**Turkish Maarif Vakfi (TMV)**

The Turkish Maarif Foundation serves as the nation’s international educational entry point. Our Foundation is an organization having the right to carry out academic operations overseas on behalf of the Republic of Türkiye. It was created with Law No. 6721 dated 17.06.2016. Preschool through higher education, formal and non-formal education, and other teaching areas are all effectively addressed by the Turkish Maarif Foundation. This nonprofit organization works for the common good [17]. Turkey has risen to the top 5 countries in the World in terms of the prevalence of international school chains thanks to the efforts of the Turkish Maarif Foundation.
The Turkish Maarif Foundation operates in 49 countries, 27 of which are in Africa, parallel to the expansion and strengthening of ties with the continent [18].

With 461 educational establishments in 49 nations worldwide, the Turkish Maarif Foundation offers formal and non-formal education and housing services to more than 50,000 students of various ethnicities. Turkey has risen to the top 5 countries in the World in terms of the prevalence of international school chains thanks to the efforts of the Turkish Maarif Foundation, which conducts educational initiatives in 20 of the least developed nations. 27 of the 49 countries where the Turkish Maarif Foundation operates business are in Africa, which goes hand in hand with the expansion and development of ties with that continent [18]. The main contribution of Turkish Maarif Foundation schools will be a distinctive teaching strategy tailored to regional circumstances and fundamental requirements. The cornerstone of this novel method is the dynamic curriculum design that responds to actual demands and changes to local conditions while maintaining standards with a strong learner profile. While the students are given a solid education that will enable them to pursue higher education wherever they choose after high school and to build a life as they please in any part of the World, the students must safeguard their own historical and cultural identities as intelligent, responsible, independent, and active people and avoid becoming alienated from their essence [18].

Disaster and Emergency Management Directorate (AFAD)

Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency; It was founded in 2009 in place of the General Directorate of Civil Defense and the General Directorate of Disaster Affairs. It ran as an institution formally connected to the Prime Ministry until 2018. AFAD was a part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs after Türkiye switched to the Presidency System in 2018. As determined to be a guiding and coordinating institution that can be used as a model at the international level, providing risk-oriented, efficient, effective, and trustworthy services based on sustainable development in studies related to disasters and emergencies reads the mission statement of the organization. It has been decided that AFAD’s goal is to “build a resilient civilization to natural disasters. As is clear from this, it can be claimed that AFAD has a global perspective [19].

According to the ninth article of the law on the Organization and Duties of the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, the Response Department’s responsibilities include: “During disasters and emergencies, there are provisions to make use of all types of resources belonging to public, private, and non-governmental organizations, foreign persons and organizations, to carry out intervention studies to eliminate the effects of disaster or emergency, to cooperate with foreign parties. AFAD is approved in terms of planning, implementing, and reporting in an extensive chain of actions classified as post-disaster development and cooperative help, particularly humanitarian relief needing an international emergency response. The AFAD backs comparable studies conducted domestically and overseas in underdeveloped nations. In light of its standards and ongoing improvement in
cooperation, the institution was also qualified to receive various accolades. According to reports, most relief consists of necessities like food, health and hygiene supplies, transportation, and equipment. It was also mentioned that numerous AFAD teams had been dispatched to these nations [19].

In conclusion, AFAD appears as an official and significant entity in Türkiye’s foreign aid. AFAD conducts national and international assessments on catastrophes and crises [19]. People in the area, particularly in Somalia, suffer from a human tragedy due to the starvation, hunger, and thirst brought on by the drought in the east of the African Continent. Humanitarian campaigns are organized under AFAD coordination to meet the needs for humanitarian aid [19].

**Conclusions.** As mentioned above, Türkiye is actively developing foreign policy steps in the African region through TIKA, YEE, TMV, and AFAD. As those institutions grow in the region, Türkiye’s positive influence and effectiveness in Africa also grow.

Again it’s essential to imply that opening representative offices in every African nation is crucial for fostering Türkiye’s ties with the continent but not enough to strengthen and enhance relations. For doing so, Türkiye used and currently successfully used her soft power instruments in the region. Through Türkiye’s soft power instrument institutions, which are the subject of this study, TIKA, YEE, TMV, and AFAD are actively working in the region and enhancing Türkiye-Africa ties on a multi-dimensional level.

As the President of the Republic of Türkiye, H. E. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said, “In Africa, we do not leave any friend whose door has not been knocked, any heart whose wound has not been healed, any country we have not collaborated” [15], Türkiye’s soft power is an extension of Türkiye’s helping hand toward to Africa.

**References:**


Література:


