

The Evolution of TİKA: A Case Study in Turkish Soft Power Projection

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Abstract

This article examines the development of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) as a case study in Türkiye's soft power projection. As an important instrument of Türkiye's foreign policy, TİKA plays a critical role in promoting cooperation, development and cultural exchange with partner countries around the world. Through a historical analysis of TİKA's establishment, mandate and early initiatives, this study provides insights into its evolving role within Türkiye's diplomatic apparatus. By examining the expansion of TİKA's activities, shifts in focus areas and strategic priorities over time, this paper assesses TİKA's impact on promoting Türkiye's interests and strengthening Türkiye's image abroad. In this framework, TİKA contributes to Türkiye's humanitarian diplomacy objectives as a soft power tool.

Keywords: Soft Power, TİKA, Foreign Policy, Power Projection, Humanitarian Diplomacy.

TİKA'nın Evrimi: Türkiye'nin Yumuşak Güç Gösteriminde Bir Vaka Çalışması Öz

Bu makale, Türkiye'nin yumuşak güç projeksiyonunda bir vaka çalışması olarak Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı'nın (TİKA) gelişimini incelemektedir. Türkiye'nin dış politikasının önemli bir aracı olan TİKA, dünya çapındaki ortak ülkelerle işbirliği, kalkınma ve kültürel alışverişi teşvik etmede kritik bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu çalışma, TİKA'nın kuruluşu, görevi ve ilk girişimlerinin tarihsel bir analizi yoluyla, Türkiye'nin diplomatik aygıtı içinde evrilen rolüne dair analizleri sunmaktadır. Zaman içinde TİKA'nın faaliyetlerinin genişlemesini, odak alanlarındaki değişimleri ve stratejik önceliklerini inceleyen bu makale, TİKA'nın Türkiye'nin çıkarlarının desteklenmesi ve Türkiye'nin yurtdışındaki imajının güçlendirilmesi üzerindeki etkisini değerlendirmektedir. Bu çerçevede, TİKA, bir yumuşak güç aracı olarak Türkiye'nin insani diplomasi hedeflerine katkı sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yumuşak Güç, TİKA, Dış Politika, Güç Yansıtma, İnsani Diplomasi.

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Introduction

Power constitutes a foundational concept within the realms of political science and international relations, manifesting in diverse forms including wealth, military authority, civil authority, and influence over opinions (Russell, 1960: 9). This multifaceted nature of power prompted the categorization into “hard power” and “soft power” within the discourse of international relations and political science, a classification introduced by Joseph Nye in 1990. Historically, hard power has maintained preeminence among states, denoting the ability to coerce other actors within the international arena. This encompasses the military and economic capabilities of states utilized to pursue national interests. States typically resort to hard power when perceiving threats to their security, thus adhering to a pattern where the heightened perception of security threats correlates with increased reliance on hard power strategies (Oğuzlu, 2007: 81).

Nye delineates soft power as a distinct facet of influence, juxtaposed with the more conventional notions of hard power (Nye, 1990: 2). While hard power relies on tangible inducements or threats to shape the behavior of others, soft power operates through subtler mechanisms. The concept encompasses the ability to achieve desired outcomes in the absence of explicit coercion or material incentives, often referred to as “the second face of power” (Nye, 1990: 2). Soft power dynamics are characterized by a country’s capacity to garner support and emulation from other actors in global politics, stemming from admiration for its values, emulation of its practices, and aspirations toward its levels of prosperity and openness. Unlike hard power strategies centered on coercion, soft power entails setting agendas and attracting others through non-coercive means. It involves the art of persuasion and influence, co-opting individuals and entities into desiring the outcomes advocated by the influencing entity (Nye, 1990: 2).

Joseph Nye’s conceptualization of soft power extends to the collaborative pursuit of state objectives through inter-state cooperation. Delving deeper into the analysis, soft power encompasses the endeavor to influence and mold the desires of other actors in accordance with a state’s own aspirations. Nye posits that the decline of the Soviet Union precipitated a reevaluation of military power employment among states. The proliferation and impact of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), coupled with diminishing effectiveness of military coercion, have rendered traditional military power less viable for achieving state objectives. Nevertheless, the coercive potential of military power persists, albeit to a reduced extent, alongside the burgeoning

significance of soft power. Conversely, the utilization of hard power imposes substantial economic burdens on states, prompting a gradual shift towards the adoption of soft power strategies. Soft power operates on the premise of attraction rather than coercion, drawing upon cultural, historical, economic, and intellectual assets such as culture, historical legacies, economic development, and intellectual pursuits to exert influence (Kalathil, 2011: 2).

Scholars in the field of international relations have provided diverse conceptualizations of soft power, elucidating its nuanced dimensions and implications for global diplomacy. For instance, Melissen and Berridge have emphasized the role of public diplomacy as a crucial instrument of soft power projection, stressing the significance of strategic communication and image management in shaping international perceptions (Melissen: 2005). Similarly, Keohane and Nye mentioned the interconnection of soft power within the context of other power forms by highlighting the importance of economic and military capabilities in terms of influencing global affairs (Keohane, Nye: 1998). Moreover, scholars such as Baldwin have indicated the role of institutions and norms in soft power dynamics. Baldwin mentioned that the importance of shared values and cooperative frameworks fostered influence and legitimacy (Baldwin: 1985). Furthermore, Joseph Grieco presented the concept of structural power that explain how institutional arrangements and patterns of cooperation can influence and shape outcomes in the international system (Grieco: 1990). To put all approaches at the same box for evaluation, these perspectives demonstrate that soft power is a multifaceted phenomenon including various instruments, strategies, and institutional dynamics in the pursuit of international influence and objectives. In this context, effective deployment of soft power requires a multifaceted approach that extends beyond conventional state actors.

The enclosure of non-state entities and autonomous state institutions such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and agencies highlight the evolving increase of soft power dynamics in international system. In other words, the effective deployment of soft power requires strategic 'presentation' to influence other actors in international stage. Moreover, the realm of soft power is not only implemented through traditional state actors but also significantly applied and developed by on-state entities and autonomous state institutions. Among these entities, NGOs and autonomous state agencies have pivotal roles in enhancing the soft power capabilities obtainable to states. By engaging in activities that draw foreign audiences' attention and promoting cultural exchange, these organizations create soft power strategies of their particular states.

Türkiye has consistently employed the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) to assert its soft power. TİKA is in charge of directing Türkiye's humanitarian aid campaigns, cultural diplomacy initiatives, and capacity-building projects in a wide range of regions. The primary goal is to extend Türkiye's assistance, and through these initiatives, the country is also able to engender goodwill. Hence, TİKA is the keystone of Türkiye's soft power strategy in terms of asserting influence and cooperating with other countries through cultural and historical roots.

Historical Background of TİKA

Following the dissolution of the Communist Bloc and the Soviet Union, the TİKA was established in 1992 under Decree-Law No. 480 to operate as the Turkish Cooperation and Development Administration within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (TİKA: 2016). Subsequently, TİKA's institutional framework and operational guidelines were delineated in Article 1 of Law No. 4668, which was promulgated on May 12, 2001, and published in the Official Gazette (TİKA: 2016). This legal enactment outlined TİKA's foundational principles and objectives, emphasizing its role in assisting the development of developing countries, particularly Turkic-speaking republics, related communities, and Türkiye's neighbors. Further reforms were instituted through Decree-Law No. 656, enacted on October 24, 2011, aimed at enhancing the efficiency of technical cooperation and coordination efforts. This legislative amendment restructured TİKA as a specialized public legal entity under the Prime Ministry with the aim of fostering economic, commercial, technical, social, cultural, and educational relations to states and communities in need. These reforms started to implement after the ratification of the related rule of law and publication in the Official Gazette on November 2, 2011 (TİKA: 2016).

TİKA fulfills a multi-layered role including a range of functions such as promoting bilateral and multilateral cooperation, providing socio-economic development, and advancing mutual understanding among countries and communities that needs help. Some of these functions can be summarized as follow:

- Endeavoring improvement in economic, commercial, technical, social, cultural, and educational relations by implementing numerous projects and activities
- Planning organizations and projects by considering the developmental needs of partner countries

- Designing and implementing economic infrastructural instruments and assistance programs
- Facilitating development processes, promoting economic growth, reducing poverty and unemployment of countries in need
- Increasing education, governance, and environmental management through projects

Furthermore, TİKA coordinates humanitarian and technical assistance efforts to other countries and communities as needed. Collaborative efforts with public institutions, universities, NGOs, and the private sector are also prioritized to ensure comprehensive and specialized assistance where required. Additionally, TİKA facilitates projects and programs focusing on public management, law, education, culture, and social fields, providing scholarships and educational opportunities to individuals from beneficiary countries. Cultural cooperation programs, including partnerships with centers promoting Turkish culture, are also administered. TİKA assumes responsibility for technical coordination, monitoring, and reporting on development assistance initiatives undertaken by Türkiye, alongside engaging in social and cultural projects aimed at preserving shared heritage and fostering dialogue between societies. Moreover, TİKA actively participates in international cooperation efforts within its areas of expertise, ensuring effective coordination and implementation of joint projects with international organizations. Beyond designated countries, TİKA extends technical contributions and assistance to nations sharing historical, geographical, and cultural ties with Türkiye, regardless of their developmental status, thereby demonstrating a commitment to broader regional collaboration and mutual support (TİKA, 2016: 11).

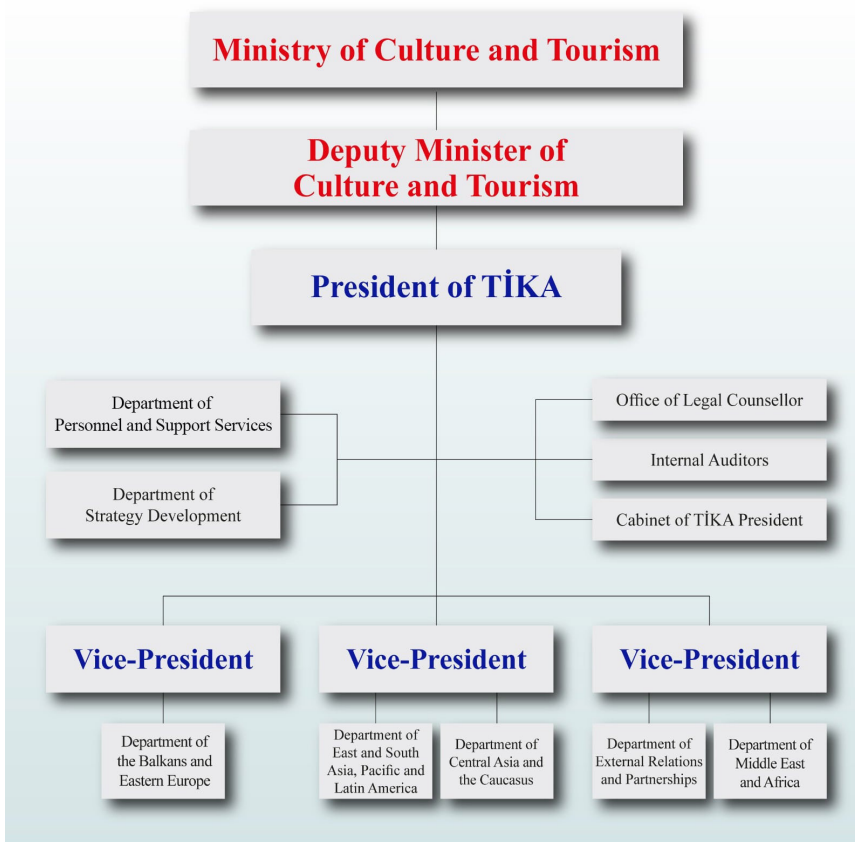
Organizational Structure of TİKA

The organizational structure of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency is designed by a hierarchical framework in order to ensure efficient management of its strategic, operational, and administrative functions. This structure highlights TİKA's comprehensive approach in terms of international development and cooperation, positioning its internal units and regional departments.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey provides main governance and strategic direction for TİKA, confirming that its initiatives associate with national policies, specifically priorities in cultural diplomacy and international cooperation. Under the control of The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, central leadership of TİKA is managed by the President of

TİKA. The President is responsible for the complete administration and strategic management of the agency, guaranteeing that its mission and vision are effectively practiced. The President's role covers the supervision of various departments and units, ensuring interrelated and harmonized operations within the agency (TİKA, 2024). Reporting directly to the President, there are several significant units and advisory bodies that are responsible for particular functions crucial to the smooth operation of TİKA such as Legal Consultancy, Internal Auditors, and Private Secretary Directorate (TİKA, 2024).

Table 1: Organizational Structure of the TİKA (TİKA: 2024)



Beneath the President, the organizational structure includes Personnel and Support Services Department and Strategy Development Department that are crucial for handling specific administrative and operational functions. Personnel and Support Services Department is responsible for human resources management containing recruitment, training, and staff welfare. This department also manages operation of TİKA's facilities and logistical

needs (TİKA, 2024). Strategy Development Department focuses on the preparation and implementation of TİKA's strategic plans by conducting research and analysis on policy development. This department also safeguards that TİKA's initiatives are strategically aligned with its long-term objectives.

Further down the hierarchy, TİKA's organizational structure involves several Vice Presidents. Each president oversees specific regional and thematic departments in order to ensure the tailored execution of TİKA's mission in numerous geographical areas. Balkan and Eastern Europe Department focuses on initiatives in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, enabling projects that promote development, cooperation, and cultural exchange in the region (TİKA, 2024). Middle Asia and Caucasia Department manages TİKA's activities in Central Asia and the Caucasus that are accepted as strategically important for Türkiye's cultural and economic diplomacy (TİKA, 2024). East and South Asia, Pacific and Latin America Department supervises projects and cooperation efforts in East and South Asia, the Pacific, and Latin America (TİKA, 2024). This department reflects TİKA's inter-continental projects that make Türkiye's humanitarian diplomacy efforts visible. Middle East and Africa Department is dedicated to initiatives in the Middle East and Africa, focusing on projects that provide socio-economic development, humanitarian aid, and cultural exchange in these regions (TİKA, 2024). Last but not least, Foreign Relations and Partnerships Department handles TİKA's international partnerships and external relations which is a crucial role in establishing and maintaining cooperative agreements with other countries and international organizations (TİKA, 2024).

The organizational structure of TİKA demonstrates a well-structured hierarchy and division of responsibilities that facilitate the efficient management and execution of its varied programs and initiatives. The structure ensures that strategic oversight from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Deputy Minister is integrated into the operative context of TİKA, enabling it to fulfill its mission of promoting international development and cooperation through culturally agreed and strategically aimed initiatives. This robust organizational structure positions TİKA as a pivotal actor in Türkiye's international development efforts.

Early Projects of TİKA

Given the breadth and scope of TİKA's annual project portfolio, the organization's initiatives are typically categorized according to geographic regions that are Central Asia and the Caucasus, the Balkans and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa, East Asia and South Asia, and the Pacific and Latin

America region. Since the latest publication of TİKA's regional activity output is due in 2014, early project assessment is based on that year's data.

Central Asian and Caucasia Projects

Since its establishment in 1992, TİKA has undertaken significant projects aimed at supporting the developmental endeavors of Turkic Republics. In the context of regional distribution of TİKA assistance in 2014, South and Central Asia emerged as the foremost recipient, accounting for 53.03 million USD and representing 28.60% of the total TİKA-mediated aid (TİKA: 2016). Within the Central Asia and Caucasus region, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan emerged as the primary beneficiaries of TİKA initiatives in 2014. Remarkably, Azerbaijan received significant support for numerous sectors through projects including vocational courses themed as "I Have a Vocation". With the Cooperation Network of Active Women and Girls project, TİKA aimed to provide employment to youth and women. In addition to this, to improve maternal and child health, the Welcome Baby Newborn Health Training project was organized. With the aim of expanding aid in various sectors, projects such as Dairy Cattle Husbandry Development and Melioration were realized to support the recent agriculture and livestock sector. (TİKA: 2016). Similarly, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan received a range of training programs in terms of improving education, health, and economic infrastructure.

Moreover, TİKA introduced various projects supplying both the material and cultural needs of these nations. For instance, with the help of TİKA, the construction of the Bishkek Public Bread Factory in Kyrgyzstan is completed in order to meet local bread demands of citizens. The renovation of technical equipment for water supply system in Kenesh village was another example that provided clean water to numerous surrounding communities. In Kazakhstan, the milk collection centers near the city of Kostanay were constructed to improve economic prosperity. In Turkmenistan, TİKA focused on locating the tomb of Sultan Alparslan and preserving the genetic purity of the esteemed Akhal-Teke horses (TİKA: 2016).

Projects in Balkans and Eastern Europe

In 2014, TİKA allotted a total assistance budget of 39.4 million USD which constituted 21.25% of its overall aid disbursements for its Balkans and Eastern Europe projects (TİKA: 2016). Within this region, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Albania were major beneficiaries of TİKA's assis-

tance initiatives. A varied range of projects including education, healthcare, cultural heritage preservation, and cultural enrichment were implemented. Notable examples include the construction of the Hamdija Kreševljaković Primary School and II. Srednja Škola in Bosnia-Herzegovina in addition to the refurbishment of village schools in Macedonia and the Mustafa Kemal Atatürk School in Vlorë, Albania that were indicative of TİKA's commitment to educational advancement (TİKA: 2016). Furthermore, TİKA took on the restoration of numerous Ottoman-era architectural marvels in Kosovo as for the preservation of cultural heritage. Beyond infrastructure projects, TİKA actively promoted cultural revival initiatives in the region such as providing support for various conferences in Bosnia-Herzegovina and restoring the birthplace of Alija İzetbegović, the Wise King. Last but not least, TİKA extended its assistance in diverse sectors such as fruit cultivation and beekeeping for reinforcing economic development within the recipient countries.

Projects in the Middle East and Africa

In 2014, TİKA offered assistance in the Middle East by considering ongoing political instability and internal conflicts in the region. TİKA's total allocation for Middle Eastern help amounted to 39.1 million USD, representing 21.1% of TİKA's overall aid payments (TİKA: 2016). Particularly, Palestine emerged as the primary recipient of TİKA's assistance in the region: Palestine received a total of 31.22 million USD (TİKA: 2016). Projects in the Middle East included various sectors including education, healthcare, clean water provision, transportation infrastructure enhancement, and heritage restoration. In Palestine, TİKA focused on enhancing educational capacity through the construction of the Al-Khalil (Hebron) Turkish School. With TİKA's helping hand, 550 students reached accommodation chance related to the restoration project of the Reshadiye Girls School, originally built in 1911. Street lighting installations and water well drilling initiatives were started across several cities and districts in Gaza. To keep Turkish cultural heritage in the region, projects such as the restoration of the Sultan Abdülhamid II Public Fountain were completed.

Since Türkiye's declaration of the "African Year" in 2005, diplomatic ties with African nations have significantly strengthened. In line with this strategic shift in Turkish foreign policy, TİKA expanded its presence through projects and aid programs across Africa in addition to forming new offices for coordination. TİKA's assistance to African projects in 2014 amounted to 44.24 million USD, constituting 23.86% of its budget allocation (TİKA: 2016). In this regard, Africa became the second-highest recipient region after South

and Central Asia. TİKA also established new program coordination offices in Tunisia and Algeria in line with its projects and aid programs to improve political and economic stability. As a part of Türkiye's soft power projection covering safeguarding shared cultural legacies, the Ketchaoua Mosque renovation in Algeria was completed by the TİKA.

Projects in the East, the South Asia, Pacific and Latin America

TİKA's humanitarian initiatives did not only include close regions but other geographies. Demonstrating Türkiye's ties of global common decency and friendship, TİKA had accepted the principle of lending a helping hand to all humans in need. Related to TİKA's projects and activities, Türkiye's humanitarian help reached out to Bhutan, Indonesia, Kiribati, Malaysia, Palau, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu in 2016. To put it in numbers, TİKA had allocated 4.15% of its budget, 7.74 million dollars to development assistance for the Far East, 1.02% and 1.89 million dollars for the Americas, and 0.02% and 0.45 million dollars for Oceania in 2016. (TİKA: 2016).

Noteworthy initiatives included the establishment of ten community clinics in Bangladesh aimed at addressing various health concerns including diabetes management and pediatric and maternal health. In the Philippines, TİKA provided medical devices and equipment to the Marawi Amai Pak Pak Health Center to enhance healthcare services. Following the earthquake in Haiti, TİKA completed the construction of 60 water wells to facilitate access to clean water (TİKA: 2016). In Pakistan, TİKA distributed 200 sewing machines to disadvantaged women and provided 20 milk cows to families in need, supporting livelihood enhancement efforts (TİKA: 2016). Furthermore, TİKA contributed to infrastructure development in Afghanistan by constructing the Kabul International Airport Command Mosque and installing trial gardens, water wells, and drip irrigation systems at the Agricultural Faculty of Kabul University, thus bolstering education and agriculture sectors simultaneously. Through these projects, TİKA demonstrated its commitment to improvement against suffering and promoting development across distant corners of the world.

The TİKA and Humanitarian Aid Coordination

As a part of humanitarian diplomacy, Türkiye is recognized as one of the world's leading countries in terms of providing humanitarian assistance. To put it in numbers, as of 2020, Türkiye had provided \$30.9 billion worth of humanitarian assistance, representing 26% of the world's total humanitarian aid (Ergocun, 2021). In this sense, Türkiye ranked second after the United

States in terms of humanitarian spending, with an expenditure of \$8.04 billion (Ergocun, 2021). Türkiye allocates 0.98% of its gross domestic product to humanitarian aid, which seats it at the vanguard of countries engaged in this field of endeavour (Ergocun, 2021).

A substantial ration of Türkiye's humanitarian assistance is coordinated through TİKA. In addition to its direct activities, TİKA also takes an active role in coordinating Türkiye's humanitarian aid activities. This coordination has enabled Turkey to become one of the largest humanitarian aid donors in the international system. For instance, Türkiye's assistance to Palestine and Gaza was realized through TİKA, providing significant support to people in the region. Türkiye has provided Gaza with 3,000 tons of food, medicine, and other essential items, which were sent in early 2024 (UNDP, 2024). The aid was transported in 200 trucks to reach Gaza with the intention of sustaining Palestinian hope in the lead-up to Ramadan. Türkiye provided this aid in collaboration with the Egyptian Red Crescent. Apart from this, Türkiye's humanitarian aid activities coordinated by TİKA extend beyond Gaza and Palestine to encompass other crisis regions, including Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In particular, humanitarian assistance to Syria is delivered through Türkiye's border gates, with 31% of total humanitarian aid provided through Türkiye (UNDP, 2024).

In this context, Türkiye's humanitarian aid activities that are coordinated by TİKA have gained an important place in international platforms and are carried out in cooperation with organizations such as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (Yılmaz, 2024). Turkey, as a member of the OCHA Donor Support Group (ODSG), contributes to the shaping of humanitarian aid policies (Yılmaz, 2024). With the efficient coordination of TİKA, Türkiye has emerged as a significant player in the realm of humanitarian assistance on the global system, maintaining its position as a leading contributor to this field.

The Role of TİKA in Türkiye's Humanitarian Diplomacy

Within the framework of its rooted tradition in its history and culture, Türkiye continues to keep the principle of aiding oppressed nations and individuals without discrimination. This commitment to international assistance dates back to the 1980s when the Turkish Republic initially provided technical support to underdeveloped and developing nations of the world. Over time, Türkiye expanded its assistance to the different regions of the globe by focusing sharing cultural ties especially in the Balkans, Central Asia, and

the South Caucasus. Since 1992, Türkiye has extended its aid efforts globally, reaching communities in need across various geographies. Despite being a developing nation, Türkiye sets an exemplary standard in humanitarian aid, surpassing many developed countries in its commitment to global assistance. Beyond responding to natural disasters, Türkiye extends aid to communities affected by conflicts and economic crises, providing medical supplies during epidemics, and engaging in collaborative efforts in cultural, educational, agricultural, and animal husbandry domains through both state institutions and non-governmental organizations.

Carrying out cooperation projects within the scope of development assistance in more than 140 countries on five continents, TİKA is one of Türkiye's brand engines at both the national and international level. Numerous projects and activities undertaken by TİKA significantly contribute to the positive recognition of Türkiye around the world (Akıllı, Çelenk: 2019). In recent years, thanks to its economic development track, Türkiye has been taking significant steps with activities involving technical and foreign aid assistance in its region of operation (Kardaş, Erdağ: 2012). 'Soft power,' a concept coined and theorized by Joseph Nye and further developed by Geun Lee, is undoubtedly turned into practice via foreign aid; in this regard, studies have revealed that foreign aid is an important tool for foreign policy in the international system (Morgenthau: 1962). One could argue, then, that TİKA plays an instrumental role in the increase of Türkiye's soft power.

Türkiye's national identity and soft power have experienced an upward trajectory in terms of nation branding, largely attributed to TİKA's endeavors. Humanitarian aid, although primarily aimed at addressing societal needs, significantly influences a nation's branding. While foreign aid should ideally be driven by altruistic motives rather than economic gains for the donor country, it inevitably enhances the nation's image, ingraining it deeply in the hearts of recipients. As evidenced below, TİKA plays a pivotal role in bolstering Türkiye's nation branding efforts, elevating its global stature and reputation. Since assuming power in 2002, leaders of the Justice and Development Party have displayed a notable focus on TİKA and its financial allocations. The budget allocated to TİKA increased between the years 2003-2013 to almost five times that of the term between 1992-2002, and as of 2011, \$1.2 billion in foreign aid was extended to over a hundred countries.⁴⁶ In 2017, those numbers exceeded \$6.4 billion to over 140 different countries (Akıllı, Çelenk: 2019). Today, those numbers have risen to \$8.14 billion to 170 countries; of this amount, \$7.2 billion is earmarked for humanitarian assistance (Akıllı, Çelenk: 2019).

Aligned with the evolving discourses within Turkish foreign policy, TİKA has embarked on various initiatives, notably in the reconstruction endeavors of Afghanistan. Moreover, it extends its involvement to diverse regions such as Africa, where it facilitates access to clean water by drilling wells and constructing water infrastructure, and addresses the aftermath of natural disasters by providing shelter and sustenance. These endeavors not only serve as immediate aid but also contribute to the institutional development of recipient nations. Türkiye's provision of technical assistance and foreign aid to these regions fosters bilateral relations, aligning with the overarching goal of a proactive and multifaceted foreign policy aimed at fostering goodwill.

Beginning with Turkish-speaking nations, Türkiye endeavors to establish and strengthen relations grounded in shared historical and cultural ties. TİKA's activities span education, training, and seminars, aimed at cultivating skilled human resources and enhancing infrastructure. Through capacity-building programs, individuals from various nations, including the autonomous Tatarstan Republic of the Russian Federation, personnel from the Albanian Export Promotion Agency, and experts from the Republic of Uzbekistan's State Society and Institution Academy, undergo training in Turkish institutions. Consequently, TİKA's initiatives contribute to the institutionalization processes within these states. With its expansive array of projects spanning Central Asia, the Caucasus, Eastern Europe, and Africa, TİKA assumes a role akin to Türkiye's "vanguard" in executing foreign policy objectives (TİKA: 2016).

Since its establishment in 1992, TİKA has consistently played a pivotal role in Turkish foreign policy. Initially being focused on providing joint projects and development assistance to newly independent Turkic states in South Caucasus and Central Asia, TİKA has evolved into a global institution with 60 program offices operating in 170 countries worldwide. Over the years, TİKA's humanitarian contributions have amounted to \$8.14 billion, significantly enhancing Türkiye's nation branding value and soft power on the global stage (Yılmaz: 2024). As one of the world's most generous nations, Türkiye holds a prominent position in the collective consciousness of people worldwide, largely attributable to its nation branding endeavors facilitated by TİKA. The significant impact of TİKA on Turkish nation branding is underscored by its recognition in the Good Country Index, where Türkiye ranks 38th overall (Yılmaz: 2024). This underscores TİKA's role as a key player in bolstering Türkiye's prestige and reputation internationally. Despite encountering challenges stemming from both external factors such as the Syrian Civil War and instability in the Middle East, Balkans, and South Caucasus, as well as internal factors

including coup attempts and terrorist attacks, Türkiye has remained steadfast in its commitment to providing assistance to other nations through TİKA.

Evolution of TİKA's Activities as a Soft Power Instrument

An examination of the projects completed by TİKA between 2019 and 2023 in these areas reveals its effective utilization as a soft power tool. To analyze it, TİKA's activities can be examined within the scope of education, health, water and sanitation, the development of administrative and civil infrastructures, other social services, the development of communication infrastructures, energy production, distribution and efficiency, production sectors, industry, trade, tourism, and finally emergency and humanitarian aid fields. In this context, projects completed by TİKA during the periods of 2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2023 are analyzed below. Project information is compiled from TİKA's annual activity reports.

The Period of 2019-2020

Due to the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in much of 2020, TİKA's activities aimed at increasing cultural events and enhancing human capacity were limited compared to previous periods, as human mobility was heavily restricted. Moreover, the varying conditions of the pandemic across different countries adversely affected the procurement of goods and services required for project implementation in some countries, leading to the cancellation or delayed execution of certain projects.

Consequently, the number of projects realized in 2020 fell slightly below the targets set in the TİKA Strategic Plan. Activities aimed at preserving our common historical and cultural values in the Turkic world, which often require gatherings of large numbers of people, were particularly impacted by the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, a more noticeable difference was observed in this performance indicator.

As a result of the pandemic's impact, many of TİKA's projects and initiatives focused on the health sector, production sector, and emergency and humanitarian aid. Projects in the health sector included the establishment of hospitals, support for medication procurement, and the enhancement of healthcare service support. In alignment with projects in the health sector, assistance was provided to many countries under emergency and humanitarian aid. The projects implemented by TİKA during the 2019-2020 period are listed in the table below:

Table 2: Projects Completed by the TİKA during 2019-2020 (TİKA: 2020; TİKA: 2021)

Field of Activity	Projects Completed
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afghanistan - Kandahar School Construction and Renovation • Pakistan - 2 Girls' School Renovation and Equipping • Mongolia - Yösönzuil State School Music Classroom Renovation • Algeria - Support to Education Infrastructure • North Macedonia - Education Support • Paraguay - Republic of Turkiye School Renovation • Niger - Support to Education Infrastructure • Mongolia - Support to Preschool Education Infrastructure • Montenegro - Support for Computerised Education • Ethiopia - School Renovation • Uganda - Support to Education Infrastructure • Mexico - Türkiye Primary School Renewal • Serbia - Education Support to Sandzak Region • Tajikistan - Software Training Centre Establishment • Pakistan - Support to Education Infrastructure
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montenegro - Medical Equipment Support to Biyelo Polye State Hospital • Libya - Misrata Physical Therapy Centre Installation • Kyrgyzstan - Bishkek Turkish-Kyrgyz Friendship Hospital Medical Equipment Support • Namibia - Support to the Faculty of Health • Paraguay - New Birth Unit Renovation and Equipping • Myanmar - Support to Health Infrastructure • Lebanon - Sayda Turkish Trauma and Rehabilitation Centre Renovation • Tajikistan - Establishment of a Contemporary Diabetes School • Palestine - West Bank Al Israa Hospital Equipment Support • Afghanistan - Otorhinolaryngology Surgeries • 4th International Pregnancy, Childbirth and Puerperium Congress • Kingdom of Bhutan - Support to Improvement of Health Services

Water and Sanitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mongolia - Support to Access to Clean Water • Kenya - Supporting Flood Victims with Access to Drinking Water • Pakistan-Karachi Water Treatment Plant Construction
Development of Administrative and Civil Infrastructures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Azerbaijan - Establishment of State Migration Service Training Centre • Algeria - Support to Health Sciences Research Agency • Afghanistan - Library Setup • North Macedonia - Renovation of the Constitutional Court Meeting Room • Cameroon - Mobilisation to Combat Urban Waste • Ukraine - Gagauz Culture House • TRNC - Support for Contemporary Turkish Women Painters Exhibition • Kenya - Technical Equipment Support to Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission • TRNC - Support for Women Entrepreneurs
Development of Communication Infrastructures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senegal - Support to Radio and Television Institution • Mozambique - Support for State Television's Digital Transition • Romania - Support to Local Radio Broadcasting in Turkish
Energy Production, Distribution and Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libya - Training in Renewable Energy • Palestine- Solar Energy Support for Paralysed Patients
Production Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mozambique - Support for Cotton Production • Kyrgyzstan - Training Support to Agriculture Experts • Afghanistan - Greenhouse Construction for Agricultural Development • Georgia - Sharing Experience in Agriculture • Montenegro - Support to Agriculture and Employment • Somalia - Technical Beekeeping Support • Kenya - Support to Women Farmers in Poultry Farming • Colombia - Support to Fish Processing Plant

<p>Industry, Trade and Tourism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kyrgyzstan - Establishment of Textile Development Centre • Sudan - Khartoum Vocational Trainers Training Centre • Libya - Technical Equipment Support to Girls Vocational Institute • Pakistan - Support to Vocational Training • Niger - Technical Assistance to Chamber of Commerce • Mongolia - Support for Milk and Dairy Products Production • Tajikistan - Support for Modern Exhibitions
<p>Emergency and Humanitarian Aid</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yemen - 1500 Food Parcel Aid • Colombia - Assistance to those affected by Hurricane IOTA • Mexico - Flood Disaster Relief Package Distribution • Uzbekistan - Support for Flood Victims • Afghanistan - Food and Cleaning Package Support to 1350 Families in Need • Bosnia and Herzegovina - Search and Rescue Vehicle Support • Philippines - Support for Mask Production • Tajikistan - Protective Mask and Medical Coverall Support • Namibia - Medical Equipment Assistance to the Ministry of Health and Social Services • Moldova - Food Aid to Needy Families • North Macedonia - Medical Equipment Support to Kindergartens • Bosnia and Herzegovina - Mask Production with 3D Printer and 3D Printer Training • Costa Rica - Supply of Masks for Health Personnel • Colombia - Support for Mask Production • Guinea - Food Aid to Orphans and Disabled People under Covid-19 • Namibia - Hygiene and Stationery Supplies to Police Station • Chile - Covid-19 Aid to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk Primary School Students • Afghanistan - Support to Vocational Courses in Combating the Pandemic

When examining the activities and projects carried out by TİKA during the years 2019-2020, it is evident that cultural events could not be realized due to the pandemic. However, TİKA's longstanding aid efforts continued unaffected by the pandemic. Furthermore, the impact of the pandemic led to a focus on projects in the health, production, and emergency and humanitarian aid sectors.

During a period when masks were scarce in many countries and sold at double the price, TİKA's distribution of masks and aid to various countries serves as an example of effective soft power usage. Projects such as the opening of hospitals, support provided to the elderly and children affected by COVID-19, and assistance provided for mask production have contributed to supporting Türkiye's humanitarian diplomacy.

The Period of 2021-2022

The year 2021 witnessed the continuation of significant challenges globally as a result of the pandemic, necessitating major changes to address and cope with these difficulties. The COVID-19 pandemic remained one of the main agenda items worldwide. On one hand, Türkiye successfully managed the fight against the virus within its borders due to robust healthcare infrastructure, trained human resources, and effective measures. Türkiye did not remain indifferent to support requests from around the world, providing various forms of assistance to recipient countries within its means. Despite the transportation and working conditions created by the Covid-19 pandemic, TİKA provided assistance to many countries in 2021. Within the scope of combating the Covid-19 pandemic, TİKA supported a total of 5,951,023 individuals through the production of 1,075,630 masks, 569,500 overalls, 65,172 hygiene kits, and the donation of 1,069,295 masks and 29,308 overalls in 77 different countries (TİKA: 2020).

Two sectors that hold significant importance among TİKA's activities are education and healthcare. In 2021, TİKA contributed to the education sector by constructing three schools and educational facilities, renovating and refurbishing 14 schools, equipping 39 classrooms, and providing vocational training for 141 teachers and supporting the education of 150,000 students (TİKA: 2020). Similarly, five hospitals and healthcare facilities were constructed, three were renovated, and 76 were equipped, with training support provided for 587 doctors/healthcare personnel (TİKA: 2021).

Many developing countries struggle to effectively deliver public services to their citizens due to inadequate infrastructure and a low level of expertise. In line with this, TİKA continued its activities by providing construction, renovation, and equipment to a total of 29 administrative and civil facilities (TİKA: 2021). At the table below, projects completed by the TİKA are listed:

Table 3: Projects Completed by the TİKA during 2021-2022 (TİKA: 2022; TİKA: 2023)

Field of Activity	Projects Completed
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia - Slatina Zeko Children's Home Capacity Building Project • Mexico - Establishment of Mathematics and Design Workshops in Mexico City Türkiye Primary School • BİTEP - Science and Technology Education Programme • Nigeria -Government Secondary School Support Project • Montenegro - Golubovci Mixed Vocational High School Hairdressing Education • Argentina - Supporting Digital Literacy Education Project • Chad - Turkish Friendship Complex Anatolian Agricultural Vocational High School • Kyrgyzstan - Support to Vocational Training Activities • CEZERI-LAB -
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bangladesh - Construction and Equipping of Outpatient Unit at Dhaka Children's Hospital • Lebanon - Sayda Turkish Rehabilitation and Trauma Hospital Modernisation • Kyrgyzstan - Bishkek Kyrgyz-Turkish Friendship Hospital • Pakistan - Equipment Support to Gynaecology Operating Theatre in Jinnah Training and Research Hospital • North Macedonia - St Panteleymon Faculty of Dentistry Clinic Repair, Furniture and Medical Equipment Project • Senegal - Consumables Support to Dakar National Orthopaedic Equipment Centre • Mexico - Mobile Clinic Provision to Oaxaca State • Establishment of Physical Support and Rehabilitation Unit in a Special Education School in Azaz, Syria • Palestine - Gaza Prosthetic Eye Applications Support • Niger - Health Organisation • Sarajevo - Angelus Speech and Language Therapy Kit for Children with Special Needs • Türkiye - Support for the 6th Paediatric and Adult Foregut Symposium

<p>Water and Sanitation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bangladesh - Drilling 42 Water Wells in Rural Barishal District • Libya - Zawiyah City Water Well Support • Afghanistan - Drilling Water Wells in Atatürk Children's Hospital and Ibni Sina Dependent Treatment Hospital
<p>Development of Administrative and Civil Infrastructures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algeria - Support to Disability Employment Activity • Ukraine - IT Laboratory Hardware and Software Procurement • Djibouti - Cultural and Handicraft Cooperative of Persons with Disabilities (CACPH) Capacity Building Project • Türkiye - UN Police Unit Training/International Police Training Co-operation Project • Türkiye - Reporter Training Programme (MEP)
<p>Development of Communication Infrastructures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hungary - Equipment Support to Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design (MOME) Media Laboratory • North Macedonia - MTV Studio Installation, Technical Hardware and Software Support Project • Kyrgyzstan - Kyrgyzfilm National Film Studio Digitisation of Important Documents and Works Project • Uzbekistan - University of Journalism and Mass Communication Television Studio Establishment Project
<p>Energy Production, Distribution and Efficiency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palestine - Hebron Yatta Bedouins Solar Energy System Installation • Moldova - Establishment of an Exemplary Micro-Scale Solar Power Plant at Comrat State University
<p>Production Sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Georgia - Hydroponic Strawberry and Soilless Vegetable Greenhouse Facility Project • Azerbaijan - Agricultural Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (Ziha) Support • Ukraine - Sheep Breeding Project for Gagauz Families in Odesa Region • TRNC - Famagusta Laguna Fishing Harbour Project • Chad - African Women Development and Solidarity Cooperative 2nd Stage Agricultural Production Capacity Increase Support Project • Uzbekistan - Rehabilitation of the Research Greenhouse of the Research and Production Centre of Agri-Food Supply Research and Production Centre of the Ministry of Agriculture • Montenegro - Greenhouse Training • Lebanon - Olive Paste Production Project • North Macedonia - Strawberry Growing Project • Azerbaijan - "Return to the Nest" Equipment Support Project for Karabakh Beekeepers

<p>Industry, Trade and Tourism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Africa - Business World Education Programme (İŞDEP) • Georgia - Establishment of Caucasian Jewellery Research Workshop • Djibouti - Pastry Training of Trainers Project • TRNC - Esentepe Ceramic and Tile Workshop Establishment Project • Mexico - Establishment of Carpentry Training Centres in Oaxaca and Noçislan • Ukraine - Crimean Tatar Embroidery Course • Bosnia and Herzegovina - Sarajevo Bazaar Culture and Art Community Production Workshop Renovation and Equipment Project • Syria - Ahtarin Paint Production Merk • Angola - Angola Women Entrepreneurs Support Project (Da Mama Project) • Tanzania - Supporting Women’s Employment through the Establishment of a Bakery in Kisarawe
<p>Emergency and Humanitarian Aid</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia - Support to Disabled and Needy People in the Earthquake Region • Yemen - 2021 Emergency Humanitarian Aid Operations • Bangladesh - Shelter Construction Support to Arakanese Refugees • Haiti - Support for Earthquake Victims in Haiti • Emergency and Disaster Response Training Programme (ADAMEP) - • Emergency Medicine Capacity Building Programme (AT-KAP) - Disaster and Emergency Response Trainer Training

When examining the period of 2021-2022, it is evident that TİKA has implemented more projects in the fields of production and education. This trend can be largely attributed to TİKA’s support for mask production due to the pandemic. Although TİKA has shown more projects in the fields of education and production, it has continued to support other countries without reducing its other activities, particularly in the area of emergency and humanitarian aid.

During the pandemic, TİKA’s sending of masks to other countries and its support for mask production has been frequently mentioned in the international media. The inclusion of quotes from famous Turkish thinkers such as Yunus Emre and Mevlana on the aid packages sent by TİKA, reflecting generosity and tolerance, is an example of effective soft power usage. TİKA’s projects carried out in various fields around the world are closely monitored by

the international press. The recognition of Türkiye as a tolerant and compassionate country through these aids is an example of humanitarian diplomacy-based foreign policy supported by soft power. In this context, the crescent and star of TİKA bring hope to many people.

The Period of 2023

Following the pandemic period, it is observed that TİKA's activities have continued to increase in 2023 and the present day. Unlike previous years, TİKA has undertaken and begun to implement signature projects that will elevate Türkiye's international standing. In this context, TİKA completed 1,326 projects and activities in 2023 (Yılmaz: 2024).

TİKA's projects and activities across a wide geographical area, from Palestine to Arakan, Bosnia-Herzegovina to South Africa, Mongolia to Latin America, have contributed to Türkiye's efforts in international cooperation. Collaborating with international organizations, TİKA highlights Türkiye's philanthropic identity through various projects. Collaborating with prominent international organizations and promoting its name holds significant importance in Türkiye's promotion.

Distinct from previous years, TİKA has garnered more attention through news, social media, and promotional campaigns for emergency and humanitarian aid projects aimed at alleviating humanitarian crises in different regions of the world. Accordingly, TİKA's assistance to those in need following the earthquakes in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as flood disasters in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Libya, received widespread coverage and sharing in the international media.

As an example of Türkiye's desire to strengthen its ties with the Turkic world, TİKA conducts restoration projects for structures recognized as common cultural heritage. The number of artifacts restored by TİKA has reached 140 in 40 countries (Yılmaz: 2024). Efforts to preserve common cultural heritage continued in 2023. Restoration work has commenced on the Külliye in Tripoli, Libya, where the tomb of the famous Turkish seafarer Turgut Reis, known as the "Conqueror of Tripoli," is located (Yılmaz: 2024). Additionally, a Türkiye Hall, the first of its kind in Central and Latin America, has been established at the National Museum of World Cultures in Mexico.

In addition to these developments, TİKA initiated comprehensive renovation work on the former battery factory in Potočari, Bosnia-Herzegovina, one of the centers of the genocide, to transform it into the Srebrenica-Potočari

Genocide Victims Remembrance Museum in early 2023. In response to recent heinous attacks by Israel, TİKA extended a helping hand to Palestine. Through TİKA, nearly 1100 projects have been implemented in Palestine for delivering essential items such as food packages, blankets, sleep sets, winter clothing, and medical supplies (Yılmaz: 2024).

Conclusion

An understanding of the compound nature of TİKA's role in Turkish foreign policy endeavors results into realization that TİKA is crucial towards promoting "soft power" for Türkiye across the globe. In this regard, soft power which was coined by political scientist Joseph Nye refers to a country's capacity to affect others based on its culture and values rather than coercion or force. Consequently, humanitarian assistance, development programs and cultural preservation activities that TİKA carries out in various parts of the world show how determined Türkiye is to create goodwill between nations and contribute towards global well-being.

Türkiye's present humanitarian diplomacy reflects the proactive approach of addressing global challenges and fostering cooperation among nations. In continuation, as an extension of Türkiye's humanitarian outreach programs, TİKA plays a major role. By implementing projects that put premium on education, health services delivery as well as infrastructure building and emergency aid provision, TİKA ensures not only tangible assistance to needy communities but also enhances diplomatic relations between Türkiye and receiving countries. In its moves however, this act displays some strong messages about peace stability and prosperity throughout the world.

TİKA's education projects are a powerful means of soft power initiatives that foster goodwill and build durable relationships with its partner countries. TİKA also increases human capacity by investing in educational infrastructure, training and skill development programs, thereby showcasing Türkiye's values and culture abroad. TİKA has since promoted education exchanges, scholarships for the young people and vocational training programs as a way of empowering individuals to have skills necessary for personal and overall growth. Additionally, TİKA stresses on education which is one of Türkiye's ways of exhibiting commitment towards global growth and belief about transformative nature of knowledge. Supporting these projects through educating people not only enhances Türkiye's soft power but it also contributes to long-term stability, prosperity and mutual understanding among nations.

Health and emergency aid projects carried out by TİKA stand for one of the most important instruments of soft power, once again proving the global stance of Türkiye in terms of solidarity and humanitarian values. In both times of natural disaster, and even in health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, TİKA has shown a quick response in the provision of medical assistance, equipment, and relief. This is just how compassionate and prepared Türkiye is in offering its helping hand to people in need across the globe. TİKA not only relieves the present suffering by delivering essential health care services, emergency relief supplies, and disaster response assistance but also contributes to the goodwill between the country of origin and the recipient state and their subsequent diplomatic relations. These efforts underline Türkiye's position as a reliable partner in adversity and a leader in international humanitarianism. Through the projects in the health and emergency aid field, TİKA enhances Türkiye's soft power, providing an image of sympathetically, sustained, and forward-looking in international relations.

In conclusion, the growth of TİKA into a soft power instrument reflects Türkiye's increasing international prominence and its dedication to global humanitarianism. For many years, however, TİKA has been engaged in other forms of activities apart from the conventional modes of development assistance such as education, medicine, infrastructure, disaster response plus cultural conservation. Through its varied programs and projects TİKA has effectively showcased Türkiye's values, priorities and great influence internationally by strengthening ties with beneficiaries. In doing this, it used tactics like diplomacy through culture and tradition roots. The role played by TİKA is expected to always remain significant in shaping Türkiye's global position and encouraging cooperation among different countries as it continues adapting to new challenges that arise due to changing dynamics globally.

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