

TÜRKİYE'S SOFT POWER IN THE BALKANS AND KOSOVO CASE

TÜRKİYE'NİN BALKANLARDAKİ YUMUŞAK GÜCÜ – KOSOVA ÖRNEĞİ

Ayşegül KETENCİ* 

Abstract

States have important effects on each other; factors such as history, language, culture, belief, geography, and common history are the main components that provide this effect. During the Ottoman period, a large Turkish population lived in the Balkans, which was important for the Ottomans geopolitically. The young Turkish Republic embarked on reforms within the country after the War of Independence. It failed to maintain sufficient connections and soft power in the Balkans during the Second World War and the Cold War, but the situation changed after the Cold War. With the disappearance of the Soviet threat and Türkiye's desire to pursue a more active foreign policy, the Balkans became very important again. The Balkans have a dense Turkish population, are Türkiye's open door to Europe, and are closely linked to Türkiye by common historical and cultural ties.

The study examined Türkiye's efforts to increase its soft power in the Balkans after the Cold War. While examining the study, the example of Kosovo, one of the most fragile countries in the Balkans, will be detailed. The study aimed to evaluate the results of these efforts by considering the policies implemented by Türkiye to be effective in the Balkans after the end of the Cold War, the activities of TİKA and Yunus Emre Institute, and Türkiye's soft power in Kosovo / efforts to increase this power. The policies implemented by Türkiye have made significant contributions to the stability of Kosovo, especially the Balkans, and to the development of mutual education, culture, and social ties. These contributions of Türkiye strengthened Kosovo's integration with the West. This situation indicates Türkiye's effective use of soft power tools in Kosovo.

Keywords: Türkiye, the Balkans, soft power, Kosovo

Öz

Devletlerin birbirleri üzerinde önemli etkileri vardır, tarih, dil, kültür, inanç, coğrafya, ortak tarih gibi unsurlar bu etkiyi sağlayan temel unsurlardır. Osmanlı döneminde Balkanlar'da büyük bir Türk nüfusu yaşıyordu, Balkanlar jeopolitik olarak Osmanlılar için çok önemliydi. Genç Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, Milli Mücadele'den sonra ülke içinde reformlara girişmiş, ardından İkinci Dünya Savaşı ve Soğuk Savaş'ta

* Assistant Professor, İstanbul Kültür University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, İstanbul, Türkiye
Email: a.ketenci@iku.edu.tr ORCID: 0000-0003-3165-7358.

Türkiye'nin Balkanlarla bağlantısı ve yumuşak gücü yeterli olmamış, Soğuk Savaş'tan sonra ise durum değişmiştir. Sovyet tehdidinin ortadan kalkması ve Türkiye'nin daha aktif bir dış politika izleme isteği ile Balkanlar yeniden çok önemli hale gelmiştir. Balkanlar, Türkiye'nin Avrupa'ya açılan kapısı, Türk nüfusunun yoğun olduğu, ortak tarihi ve kültürel bağlarla birbirine sıkı sıkıya bağlı bir coğrafyadır.

Çalışmada, Türkiye'nin Soğuk Savaş sonrasında Balkanlar'da yumuşak gücünü artırma çabaları incelenmektedir. İnceleme yapılırken, Balkanlar'ın en kırılgan ülkelerinden biri olan Kosova örneği detaylandırılacaktır. Çalışmada, Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesinden sonra Türkiye'nin Balkanlar'da etkili olmak için uyguladığı politikalar, TİKA ve Yunus Emre Enstitüsü'nün faaliyetleri, Türkiye'nin Kosova'daki yumuşak gücü/ bu gücü artırma çabaları ele alınarak bu çabaların sonuçlarını değerlendirmek amaçlanmaktadır. Türkiye'nin uyguladığı politikalar, başta Balkanlar olmak üzere Kosova'nın istikrarına, karşılıklı eğitim, kültür ve sosyal bağların gelişmesine önemli katkılar sağlamıştır. Bu durum, Kosova'nın Batı ittifaklarına entegrasyonu açısından önemli sonuçlar doğurmuş olup, Türkiye yumuşak güç politikalarını Balkanlar'da etkili bir araç olarak kullandığının da bir göstergesidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, Balkanlar, yumuşak güç, Kosova.

1. Introduction and Literature Review

In today's international conjuncture, the importance of soft power is increasing. Instead of using methods such as direct war and conventional conflict, which can be costly, states use other methods to expand their spheres of influence. For example, soft power tools such as diplomacy, directing different actors by becoming a center of attraction, and cultural components are used intensively. In the study, the aforementioned soft power tools are discussed from the perspectives of scientists such as Wendth and Nye within the framework of their contributions to the literature. While Wendth figures out that states influence other states through culture, norms, and institutions from a constructivist perspective, Nye figures out that the state directs other actors through persuasion through effective communication channels.

In the study, Türkiye's use of soft power in foreign policy is elaborate after sharing theoretical information about soft power tools. In this context, it can be evaluated that Türkiye has started to use soft power tools more effectively in many geographies, especially near abroad after the Cold War, depending on the changing structure of the international conjuncture. One of the geographies where Türkiye uses its soft power the most is the Balkans. The common historical and cultural heritage of multidimensional economic-social and human relations from the Ottoman Empire to the present ensures that Türkiye's soft power tools are used effectively in this geography. Also, the actions carried out by institutions such as TİKA and Yunus Emre Institute¹ However, using Türkiye's soft power is included in the study, and how Türkiye uses its soft power in Kosovo is detailed.

The Balkans are Türkiye's open door to the West and are connected to Türkiye by historical and cultural ties. Security threats that may occur in the Balkans can directly affect Türkiye, and this

1 For some example actions:

"TİKA Strengthens the ties of friendship between Türkiye and Kosovo through hundreds of projects", https://www.tika.gov.tr/en/news/tika_strengthens_the_ties_of_friendship_between_T%C3%BCrkiye_and_kosovo_through_hundreds_of_projects-64043

"Kosova'da Yunus Emre Enstitüsü ve Türkiye Maarif Vakfı İşbirliği Anlaşması İmzalandı"

<https://www.yee.org.tr/tr/haber/kosovada-yunus-emre-enstitusu-ve-turkiye-maarif-vakfi-birliigi-anlasmasi-imzaladi>

geography is the most fragile geography of Europe, where security risks are very intense. As a regional power sensitive to the developments in its near abroad, Türkiye spends effort to use soft power policies effectively to implement an atmosphere of prosperity and security without interfering in the internal affairs of the Balkan countries.

2. Soft Power in International Relations

In the international relations literature, the concept of “power” has been discussed in depth with its dimensions. Constructivism discusses the relationship between power and interest through the characteristics of culture and identity. Constructivism considers state interests in a central position and explains the interests in the social context, according to which a state’s desire for power, existence, and security are vital. The state’s interest is shaped by historical processes (Hurd, 2008). According to Wendt, there is a relationship between interest and power; the distribution of interests affects the distribution of power, and ideas are used to explain both. Material elements such as geography and technology are not completely unimportant, but the basis of power and interest is based on thoughts. Many factors, such as social factors, perceptions, and how actors understand the world, effectively form the actors’ identities (Wendt, 1999).

Nye (2012) used the “soft power” arguments and introduced this concept to the international relations literature. According to Nye, “soft power” is about the ability of states to lead other actors by their own will and their achievement in this regard. The actor imposes his wishes on other actors by imposing norms and institutions. The tools that do not contain the elements of coercion, persuasion, and attraction are important. For the effective use of soft power, it is important that the information presented is persuasive and the persuasive actor creates a sphere of influence in line with his legitimate interests. One of the most important advantages of using soft power is that it enables the actor to achieve his desired goal through attraction rather than expensive economic and military methods (Keohane & Nye, 2012).

Nye conceptually analyzed how states use soft power. In this framework, states need to shape and influence the public opinion of other states in the desired direction. The use of soft power is one of the main issues of great importance in democracies. Authoritarian governments and democracies employ different perspectives. While persuasion and attraction come to the fore in democracies, the use of force has the upper hand in authoritarian regimes. Culture, political values, and morally based practices are important in gaining an attractive character, and having such a character makes it easier to accept differences across preferences. When leaders have the mentioned values, they will be followed more. Similarly, it is very important to share values as good examples instead of giving orders and putting pressure on business life. In order to have soft power, it is necessary to have reliable communication channels that can raise important issues and inspire confidence in the local and international arena. Soft power has social and economic dimensions in addition to official government practices and contributes to strengthening countries and becoming a center of attraction. Creating policies that protect and promote admirable values should be among decision-makers’

priorities. Soft power tools such as human rights, transparency, open democracy, tolerance, and respect for different views can be used domestically and internationally (Nye, 2004).

In summary, different perspectives in the international relations literature try to explain power based on thoughts, perceptions, and attractiveness rather than material factors. This study dwells upon how, in today's world, where soft power elements are used intensively, and their importance is increasing, Türkiye uses soft power elements in the Balkans.

3. Soft Power in Türkiye's Foreign Policy Approach

In international relations, diplomatic relations carried out only at the level of statesmen/policy-makers are insufficient; other components also come to the fore. In this context, soft power tools have increasing importance. Using only traditional diplomacy results in countries not being sufficiently recognized/promoted in international public opinion (Bekfelavi, 2017).

Turkish foreign policy has priorities such as proactively approaching events, offering alternative solutions with a multidimensional vision, and solving problems through diplomacy and common sense. Thanks to these features, Türkiye wants to increase its prestige in the international conjuncture. It can be considered that Türkiye plays a role in the resolution of disputes by acting as a mediator (Mandacı, 2013).

Türkiye was on its way to becoming a central actor by going beyond its assigned role during the Cold War. Regional and global changes also shaped Türkiye's priorities. Türkiye no longer considered himself an actor with a minor role in Europe. Turkish history had a power that shaped the past, and Türkiye had a new vision that produced active policies and took the initiative (Kalın, 2011).

According to Kalın (2011), the depth of Turkish foreign policy is related to many components that take their basis from Turkish history, such as constitutionalism, justice, transparency, respect for different beliefs, and protection of fundamental rights and freedoms. Through public diplomacy, Türkiye can express itself effectively to the world, and with the correct construction of social image, Türkiye can become a center of attraction for both the East and the West. While many debates continue in the context of modernity's relationship with the global order, it can be stated that Türkiye has approached and fused traditional Ottoman (Islamic) culture with the needs of the modern world in harmony with socio-cultural and socio-economic modernization.

When Ahmet Davutoğlu became Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2009, Türkiye adopted a different foreign policy vision and started creating more active and visible policies. Similar to İbrahim Kalın, Davutoğlu also underlined the importance of soft power, and the terms related to this subject began to be used frequently (Benhaim & Öktem, 2015).

According to Davutoğlu, Türkiye's role in the Cold War was to be a "wing country." Accordingly, Türkiye was an active country in the geographical area specified by NATO. However, later on, it became an actor with a significant influence in the Caucasus, the Balkans, and the Middle East and

followed an active foreign policy. Türkiye is focused on establishing sustainable relations with its allies and neighbors based on peace and stability. Türkiye has its unique demographic reality, which shapes Türkiye's foreign policy. Türkiye struggles to implement a foreign policy in line with the realities and trends of the 21st century if it adheres to its historical and geographical location (Davutoğlu, 2010).

In this framework, "The vision of Türkiye's foreign policy is based on five principles:

- Freedom (respect for human rights);
- Politics of "0" (zero) problems with neighbors;
- Versatility of Turkish foreign policy;
- A new style of diplomacy (the position of the "Centre" for the neighboring regions);
- Dynamic diplomacy (see more countries and be visited)" (Tahirovic, 2014).

The importance of public diplomacy has been increasing. With the proper use of information and communication technologies, states can seize international opportunities influence and guide other states. If a state can influence other states this way, its prestige increases. The Public Diplomacy Coordination Office of Türkiye was established in this framework in 2010 (Kamu Diplomasisi Koordinatörlüğü ile İlgili 2010/3 Sayılı Başbakanlık Genelgesi, 2010). Türkiye's "Administrative Activity Report," published in 2021, includes information on the use of soft power. Duties of the Department of Public Diplomacy include sharing Türkiye's policies at the national and international levels through strategic communication that will have an impact on public opinion and promoting the country, preparing and executing projects for the promotion of Türkiye, and ensuring NGO-academia-public coordination (2021 Administrative Activity Report, Türkiye Directorate of Communications).

Published in 2021 by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the "Our Initiative and Humanitarian Policy" report specifies and elaborates on the importance Türkiye attaches to the use of soft power. Regarding the Balkans, it underlines Türkiye's efforts to preserve the region's fragile and sensitive stability and to avoid artificial divisions/conflicts. The principles of "inclusiveness" that includes all countries in the region and "regional ownership" that will contribute to solving problems are important. For example, during the pandemic, Türkiye provided food and medical supplies to many Balkan countries. In 2019, Türkiye's exports to the region increased to \$11.8 billion and investments to \$16.6 billion (2021 Yılına Girerken Girişimci ve İnsani Dış Politikamız Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021).

The activities carried out by Turkish non-governmental organizations in different geographies of the world contribute to Türkiye's soft power. These organizations play an active role in spreading Türkiye's soft power by carrying out activities related to different religious and ethnic groups besides the Islamic world. In education, scholarships for undergraduate and graduate students and many

educational institutions established with the support of Turkish businesspeople are among the tools that serve this purpose (Karagül, 2013).

After the 2000s, decision-makers underlined public diplomacy's importance; Yunus Emre Institute and TİKA stand out as important organizations for effectively using soft power and public diplomacy (Ekşi & Erol, 2018).

TİKA: It is an institution that tries to provide cooperation with and integration to the countries neighboring Türkiye and where the Turkish language is spoken through projects in different fields such as technical, commercial, social, cultural, and educational (Yılmaz & Kılıçoğlu, 2017).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, many states in Central Asia gained their independence, and Türkiye recognized the independence of these states. Strengthening relations with these states, which have a common history and culture with Türkiye, enabled Türkiye to follow proactive and effective policies in the region. The support to the Central Asian States turned into collaborations and long-term projects based on development over time. TİKA was established in 1992 to coordinate all these policies and actions. The purpose of TİKA in its founding years can be summarized as follows: "Turkic Republics maintain their social structure, construct their own identity in a good way, develop cultural and political rights, and eliminate deficiencies in technical infrastructure.... Many projects and activities in the fields of education, health, restoration, agricultural development, finance, tourism, and industry were carried out by TİKA." After 1995, TİKA focused on activities in education and culture. With the 2000s, TİKA expanded the geography in which it carries out its activities and strives to create an atmosphere of peace and prosperity with its activities in sister and related countries (Hakkımızda, TİKA Official website, <https://www.tika.gov.tr/tr/sayfa/hakkimizda-14649>).

Yunus Emre Institute: Yunus Emre Foundation was established for the following purpose: "To promote Türkiye, Turkish language, history, culture, and art; to present relevant information and documents to the use of the world; to provide services abroad to those who want to receive education in the fields of Turkish language, culture, and art; to increase Türkiye's cultural exchange with other countries and to develop friendship." Yunus Emre Institute also carries out cultural and artistic activities and scientific studies to promote Türkiye abroad and disseminate the Turkish language. It started its activities in 2009 (Kurumsal Yapı, Yunus Emre Institute Official Website). Yunus Emre Institute operates in two fields: education and culture-art activities. Many Turkic Language and Culture centers were opened to make the Turkish language a world language (Erol & Ekşi, 2018).

Presidency for Turks Abroad (YTB): Since the 1960s, there has been immigration from Türkiye to many countries, especially European countries, and a Turkish society has been formed outside of Türkiye. The need for state support has gained importance for Turkish citizens who have acquired citizenship in their countries of residence and has become an essential element. The Turkish citizens living abroad have maintained strong ties with Türkiye, and the Presidency for Turks Abroad carries out many projects to ensure this relationship is sustainable and developable. Studies are carried out in order to understand the cultural, legal, social, and economic demands and needs of Turkish citizens

and to produce policies for this (Yurtdışı Vatandaşlar, Çalışma Alanları, <https://ytb.gov.tr/daireler/yurtdisi-vatandaslar/>).

With the soft power tools and its multidimensional foreign policy understanding, Türkiye follows a more active policy in the Balkans and uses soft power tools intensively in this geography.

4. Türkiye's Soft Power in the Balkans

As it is today, the Balkans had been a very important geography for the Turks for centuries. The Ottoman Empire was a Balkan Empire, and its geography was the state's military, cultural, and economic heart. During the Ottoman period, important rulers and elites came from the Balkans. With the weakening of the Ottoman Empire, the Balkan lands were lost, and the importance of Anatolia for the Balkans decreased. The Balkans is the most vital transit route of a geography stretching from the heart of Europe to the Middle East (Muhasilovic, 2020).

Because Italy influenced the Balkans between the 1st and 2nd World Wars, so the Turkish Republic could not follow effective policies towards this geography. After the Second World War, the Balkans were accepted as a sphere of influence for Soviet Russia. Turkish politicians preferred to stay away from the region, as it was seen as a complex region where minority problems were intense – where many groups from different ethnic backgrounds lived. With the end of the Cold War and Türkiye's rapprochement with the Atlantic alliances, the mentioned conditions changed. Türkiye started to show more interest in the Balkans inherited from the Ottoman Empire and spent great efforts on Turkish mission in this geography (Sağır, 2017).

During the Cold War, Türkiye was considered as a bulwark against the spread of the Soviet regime to the West. Although it was not a regional power capable of acting independently, it was an important actor and a lever for implementing Western policies. In the international order, Türkiye was important as a power between Europe and Eurasia, associated with different cultural and political systems (Vardağlı, 2020).

During the Cold War, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, and Yugoslavia were under the influence of the communist regime, and the oppression of the Turkish minorities caused Türkiye to face the "minorities problem" in this geography (Bekfelavi, 2017). In Yugoslavia, the Tito regime refused to become a satellite state of the Soviets, and due to its policies of independence from Moscow, its rapprochement with Türkiye and Greece led to the signing of the Balkan Alliance (Armaoğlu, 2014).

After the collapse of Yugoslavia, the Balkans were dragged into an atmosphere of chaos and bloody wars. Türkiye, on the other hand, made efforts to build peace and stability in this region. For example, Türkiye undertook important duties by preventing religious extremism from disrupting peace and stability in the Balkans and by contributing to the prevention of marginal views and radical tendencies (Sorularla Dış Politika, Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Official website). Türkiye's integration with the Balkans strengthened during Turgut Özal's administration. As a NATO ally and as part of its reaction to the wars in Yugoslavia, Türkiye tried to increase its economic, political, and

cultural ties with countries such as Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania, and Romania. Türkiye's main goal was not to revive the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans. Although there is a large Muslim population in the Balkans, Türkiye's ministerial policy cannot be reduced to Islamic solidarity. Türkiye seeks to establish close relations with Muslim and non-Muslim Balkan states (Bechev, 2019).

Due to the disagreements and conflicts in the Balkan geography, Türkiye, as an important actor, had to take the initiative and play an active role in ensuring peace. Since the 2000s, using soft power and effectively implementing public diplomacy in the Balkans have increased Türkiye's attractiveness internationally. As a member of the NATO alliance, in the 1990s, Türkiye played an active role in the Western alliances that ended the wars in Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Kosovo (Muhasilovic, 2020).

Looking at the main arguments of Türkiye's Balkan policy, the four main axes are as follows:

“-high-level political dialogue,

-safety for all,

-maximum economic integration,

– preserving the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious society structure” (Mandacı, 2013).

For Türkiye, as a Balkan country, the development of stability, peace, and prosperity in this geography is important. Türkiye's Balkans policy is carried out by considering the principles of “inclusiveness” and “regional ownership.” The Balkans is a geography where many conflicts exist, and Türkiye plays an important role in resolving the conflicts between Muslim communities peacefully and within the rules of diplomacy. Thus Türkiye's mediation role in the region gains a legitimate ground (Mandacı, 2013).

The presence of Turkish and Muslim minorities living in the Balkans plays a role in shaping Türkiye's Balkan policies. Many people living in different countries in the Balkans speak the Turkish language, and this is effective in the use of public diplomacy (Yılmaz and Kılıçoğlu, 2017).

Although it is a key region for peace and stability in Europe, the Balkans is a geography with many vulnerabilities. Türkiye supports the multi-cultural structure of the Balkans to ensure peace and prosperity. In addition, Türkiye supports the efforts of the Balkan countries to integrate with the Western alliances (especially the EU and NATO) (2021 Yılına Girerken Girişimci ve İnsani Dış Politikamız, Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Official website).

Economic concerns were important in Türkiye's relations with Balkan countries in 2018-2019. The significant depreciation of the Turkish lira against the US dollar in 2018 called into question Türkiye's goal of increasing its economic influence in the Balkans. Despite Türkiye's efforts to achieve economic integration with the Balkans, its trade volume with this geography lagged far behind the EU's. However, while Türkiye's trade volume with the Balkans is increasing, it remains below the expected potential. The efforts of new actors to increase their trade share in the region in the coming years are being carefully monitored by Türkiye (Beşgöl, 2020).

The 2021 report “Our Entrepreneurial and Humanitarian Policy” includes information on the Balkans. The South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) is the only platform that brings the Balkan countries together under the same roof, and Türkiye strives to make this platform effective. The SEECP was established in 1996, and Türkiye has held the organization’s rotating presidency 3 times, the last time being in 2020-21. The member states are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Montenegro, Moldova, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, and Greece. The cooperation aims to develop and strengthen the member states’ political, economic, and security cooperation. As a platform that reflects the region’s unique characteristics, SEECP is recognized in the EU and internationally (Güneydoğu Avrupa İşbirliği Süreci, Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Official website).

Through various policies, Türkiye endeavors to develop cooperation and dialogue among Balkan countries. For example, Türkiye welcomed the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue process and the agreement on economic normalization between the parties. After the earthquake in Albania in 2019, Türkiye provided significant support to the country. There were long waiting times at the Türkiye-Bulgaria border gates (especially Kapıkule) due to the congestion, and steps were taken to resolve the issue in consultation with the Bulgarian authorities (2021 Yılına Girerken Girişimci ve İnsani Dış Politikamız Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Official website).

5. Kosovo Case

Turkish-Albanian relations have a very deep historical background. Close relations were established between Albanians and Turks, who remained under Ottoman rule for centuries. During the first independence movements in Yugoslavia, Kosovo declared its independence in 1991, upon which Türkiye recognized Kosovo. Until 1999, Kosovo’s Istanbul/ Türkiye representation was active. Considering Kosovo to be a close ally, Türkiye immediately recognized Kosovo’s independence in 2008. Considering peace, stability, and prosperity in the Balkans as its top priority, Türkiye attaches great importance to the cultural, human, and historical ties between the two countries (Ayhan, 2008).

Turkish governments have been important actors in many international fora, including the UN, the European Commission, and the United States. Türkiye’s Western identity and its interest in the West played an active role in this endeavor. The continuation of Türkiye to keep its Western identity in the aftermath of the Cold War enabled Türkiye to pursue its policies in this direction. Türkiye’s supportive attitude towards Bosniaks strengthened its presence. Türkiye warned the Western states not to react too late in the Kosovo war. Türkiye became an actor in the Balkans geography that would not remain unresponsive and silent but one that finds solutions. In the case of Kosovo, Türkiye presented itself as an effective and important ally of the West (Demirtaş, 2013). Wendth (1999) considers power and state interest together. The actor’s interests depend on historical processes, and Türkiye’s western identity and security concerns have pushed it to use soft power effectively in the Balkans. After World War II, the Soviet takeover of various countries in the Balkans and especially Türkiye’s turning to the West in the face of the Soviet threat are important milestones. Türkiye’s western identity has a deep-rooted and profound history dating back to the Ottoman Empire. Türkiye continued to keep its

Western identity after the Cold War and influenced its policies in the Balkans, pushing it to use its soft power effectively in this geography.

Kosovo called for its independence in 2008, which was received in different regions of the world. For example, Great Britain, USA, Germany, Albania, and Türkiye were the countries that responded positively to this call. Türkiye was one of the first countries to recognize Kosovo's independence. Also, Türkiye's efforts were very influential in Pakistan's and Egypt's recognition of Kosovo's independence (Yenigün, 2010). Metin Hüsrev Ünler became the first Ambassador of Türkiye to Pristina in Kosovo. While diplomatic relations were previously carried out through the coordination office from 1999 to 2008, relations were raised to the level of ambassadors after Kosovo declared its independence (Haberler.com, 2009).

In 2012, Kosovo's Foreign Minister Enver Hoxhaj visited Ankara, where he discussed with Davutoğlu the Serbia-Kosovo conflict and Türkiye's support for Kosovo. Hoxhaj emphasized that Türkiye was the most important supporter of Kosovo in many fields trade, culture, economy, and education (Dışişleri Bakanı Sayın Ahmet Davutoğlu'nun Kosova Dışişleri Bakanı Enver Hoxhaj ile Ortak Basın Toplantısı, Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Official website 2012).

Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu stated that Türkiye was supporting Kosovo's active role in international platforms and its membership in international organizations and said that Türkiye was working on Kosovo's membership in the EU, NATO, and the Council of Europe. In 2015, Kosovo's Foreign Minister Hashim Thaçi said that most of the countries that recognized Kosovo did so because of Türkiye's efforts, persuasiveness, and influence (Dışişleri Bakanı Sayın Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu'nun Kosova Dışişleri Bakanı Haşim Thaçi ile Düzenlediği Ortak Basın Toplantısı, Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Official website, 2015).

Nye (2004, 2012) emphasizes the importance of persuasion and attraction in using soft power to achieve an effective result. As can be considered in the examples given, Türkiye is making an intense effort to ensure Kosovo becomes a more active and influential actor in the international arena, and in doing so, it intensively uses soft power elements such as persuasion, orientation, and attraction instead of coercive elements.

Kosovo has a large Turkish population, meaning the Turks represent a large ethnic group. Türkiye is trying to protect these people's rights and keep their ties with Türkiye. The two countries have signed 45 agreements in many fields, such as culture, health, economy, and education. Abolishing visas has increased interaction and communication between the two countries (Bekçi, 2021).

Kosovo-Türkiye Chamber of Commerce was established immediately after Kosovo declared its independence. The main objectives of the Chamber of Commerce are to develop investment and trade relations between the two countries, to protect common interests, and to evaluate investment opportunities. Activities such as developing public-private sector cooperation, organizing seminars and conferences, and conducting sectoral studies aim to improve economic relations between the

two countries. (Kosova Türkiye Ticaret Odası hakkında, Kosovo Türkiye Chamber of Commerce website).

Due to Türkiye's close ties and kinship relations with Kosovo, it is seen that economic relations have also improved. It could be mentioned that there are large investments (such as banking insurance) in addition to businesses such as restaurant owners and barbers (Ayhan, 2008). The FTA (Free Trade Agreement) between Türkiye and Kosovo, signed in 2013 and entered into force in 2019, is a great gain for both sides. After the FTA, exports to Türkiye increased by 78%, and imports from Türkiye increased by 28%. With this upward trend, Türkiye has become Kosovo's second largest import partner after Germany. In 2019, direct investment of Türkiye in Kosovo amounted to 272 million euros (Türkiye-Kosova İş Konseyi DEİK Balkan Talks: Türkiye-Kosova Serbest Ticaret Anlaşması İş Fırsatları, 2020).

During his visit to Serbia in September 2022, President Tayyip Erdoğan said that permanent solutions were needed to solve the problems in the Balkans immediately and that Türkiye was ready to support Serbia and Kosovo so that they could solve the problems from the past (Euractiv, 2022).

In February 2023, the Presidents of Kosovo and Türkiye came together, and the increasing cooperation between the two countries was mentioned at the meeting. President Erdoğan stated that Türkiye fully supported Kosovo's NATO, Council of Europe, and European Union membership vision. He mentioned that Türkiye was the country with the highest exports to Kosovo, that it aimed to increase the foreign trade volume from 610 million Euros in 2022 to 1 million Euros in the following

years, and that the investments of Turkish companies in Kosovo were around 400 million Euros. President Erdoğan stated that Türkiye was trying to create an environment of trust and stability in the region, and that the relations between Kosovo and Serbia would develop on the axis of friendship and peace. That permanent stability would be ensured (Kosova'nın tüm komşularıyla barış ve huzur içinde ilişkiler geliştirmesine büyük önem atfediyoruz, Turkish Republic Presidency official website, 2023).

Türkiye attaches particular importance to its kin communities (in geographies such as the Balkans, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe) with whom it shares a common history and cultural heritage. Relevant policies are being developed to strengthen ties with Turks who emigrated for various reasons and to meet their needs. YTB was established for this purpose and developed cooperation in coordination with many institutions abroad. In addition, through institutions such as TİKA and Yunus Emre Institute, Türkiye strives to create a positive image and strengthen lobbying activities abroad (Cupcea, 2022). Through various institutions, Türkiye is trying to increase its soft power in the Balkans. As Nye (2012) mentions "The actor imposes its wishes on other actors by imposing norms and institutions", the abovementioned institutions have been established to make the Turkish image strong and effective, to make it positive, and to increase its prestige. In parallel with Nye's statements, Türkiye cooperates with these institutions to impose its ideas and influence other actors in line with its will.

TIKA: Since 2005, many projects (more than 650 projects) have been implemented in Kosovo, including agriculture and animal husbandry, preservation of common cultural heritage, health, and education. TIKa does not discriminate (religion/ethnicity) in projects and tries to implement projects throughout Kosovo (Strengthens the Ties of Friendship Between Turkey and Kosovo Through Hundred of Projects, TIKa Official Website, 2021).

Health – TIKa has implemented more than 100 Projects in this field. Activities such as providing equipment support, renovating health centers, and training health personnel are important projects' activities.

Education – TIKa has implemented more than 250 educational projects and has re-established the infrastructure of many schools. “TIKa built renovation, equipment supply, and sensory perception rooms in the “Prizren Lef Nosi Rehabilitation Center for Disabled Children” and “Pristina Perparimi Rehabilitation Center for Disabled Children”, which provide free special education within the scope of Republic Education, Science, and Technology.

Restoration of the common cultural and historical heritage – TIKa undersigned important projects such as the Suşitsa Mehmet Akif Ersoy Mosque, Pristina Grand Mosque, Prizren Sinan Pasha Mosque, Prizren Emin Pasha Mosque, and Yanova Murat Bey Mosque. Restoration, and works on the protection of the common cultural and historical heritage continue.

Animal husbandry and agriculture – TIKa has carried out nearly 40 projects in this regard. Equipment support was provided to protect animal health. TIKa carried out projects that would contribute to the country's economy in order to make women stronger in rural areas.

Other Projects – More than 2000 Kosovar academics, civil servants, and experts were trained. TIKa has helped many people needing economic support regarding important health problems such as the pandemic and chronic diseases.

Yunus Emre Institute (YEI) – Many students graduated from the Turkish courses given by YYI in Kosovo, and on this occasion, the Turkish language spreads in Kosovo, and mutual cultural ties are strengthened. In July 2022, a cooperation agreement was signed between the Kosovo Yunus Emre Institute (YEI) and the Turkish Maarif Foundation. The cooperation of these two important institutions, which ensure the effective use of public diplomacy, will create an important synergy. Regarding this cooperation, Türkiye Maarif Foundation Kosovo Representative Oğuz Hamza Yılmaz said: “The Turkish Maarif Foundation, which set out with the claim of being a universal education brand in 2016, continues its educational activities in many parts of the world today. With the cooperation agreement, it will be able to benefit more effectively from the opportunities offered by Yunus Emre Institute” (Kosova'da Yunus Emre Enstitüsü ve Maarif Vakfı Birliği Anlaşması İmzalandı, Yunus Emre Institute Official Website, 2021).

6. Conclusion

As Nye emphasizes, it is increasingly important that an actor creates a sphere of influence and directs other actors using soft power, diplomacy, and attraction-persuasion abilities. Westernism and status quoism have shaped Turkish foreign policy since the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Türkiye's efforts to join Western alliances, especially the EU and NATO, manifest this understanding. Türkiye's foreign policy in the Balkans is not independent of this understanding. Establishing close relations with the peoples of the Balkans who have a common culture and history with Türkiye, supporting and encouraging the integration of the Balkan countries with the West without interfering in the internal affairs of these countries and disrupting the existing status quo, strengthening mutual ties in the fields of education, art, and culture are the arguments that shape Turkish foreign policy. Türkiye intensively uses soft power tools in the Balkans.

Türkiye has intensively implemented soft power elements in the Balkans after the Cold War. The efforts to establish peace and unity in the Balkans should be a priority issue for Türkiye because the Balkans is both the open door to Europe for Türkiye and any conflicts that may occur would directly affect peace in Türkiye. For all these reasons, Türkiye needs to follow the ebb and flow of relations between East and West constantly and carefully. It is important for Türkiye to act proactively and be an actor who can effectively communicate with as many actors as possible in the Balkan geography by using intensive soft power tools. Only in this way can Türkiye lead the way in the Balkans peacefully and properly respond to the challenges that may arise against its soft power, communication power, and steering power in this geography. Türkiye's priority is to strengthen its ties with the Balkan states in fields such as education and culture and to encourage the integration of Balkan countries into Western alliances. As examined in the Kosovo case, it can be evaluated that Türkiye effectively uses its soft power tools in this country and supports the country's integration with Western alliances.

In response to the research questions, it can be concluded that after the Cold War, Türkiye used soft power tools effectively in the Balkans and became a more effective actor in the Balkan geography with many different instruments. It can be argued that Türkiye carries out important activities in Kosovo, one of the most fragile countries in the Balkans. Türkiye has been one of the first countries to recognize Kosovo's independence and has taken the initiative to ensure recognition of other countries. TİKA and Yunus Emre Institute carry out activities in many areas, such as the spread of the Turkish language in Kosovo, health, and education. Türkiye supports Kosovo's integration into Western alliances.

References

- AYHAN, H. (2008). Kosova'nın Bağımsızlığı Sürecinde Uluslararası Güçlerin ve Türkiye'nin Tutumu, *Avrasya Etüdüleri*, 33 (1), 113-134.
- BENHAIM, Yohanan & Kerem Öktem. (2015). The Rise and Fall of Türkiye's Soft Power Discourse – Discourse in Foreign Policy under Davutoğlu and Erdoğan, <https://journals.openedition.org/ejts/5275>
- DAVUTOĞLU, A (2010). Türkiye's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy, *Foreign Policy*, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/05/20/Turkiyes-zero-problems-foreign-policy/>
- EKŞİ, M. & Mehmet Seyfettin Erol. (2018). The Rise and Fall of Turkish soft Power and Public Diplomacy, *Akademik Bakış*, 11 (23), 15-45.
- HURD, I (2008). "Constructivism", The Oxford Handbook of International Relations (Oxford Handbook of Political Science, Christian Reus, Suncan Snidal), Oxford University Press,
- KALIN, İ. (2011). Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Türkiye, *Perceptions*, 16 (3), 5-23.
- KARAGÜL, S. (2013). Türkiye'nin Balkanlardaki "Yumuşak Güç" Perspektifi: TİKA, *Girişimcilik ve Kalkınma Dergisi*, 8 (1), 79-102.
- KATZENSTEIN Peter J. (1996). The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics, New York: Columbia University Press.
- KEOHONE Robert O. and Joseph S. Nye (2012) Power and Interdependence, Boston: Longman, 4th Edition.
- MANDACI, N. (2013) O Türkiye'nin Balkan Politikası 2012: Yükselen Yumuşak Güç? *Türk Dış Politikası Yılığ 2012*, Burhanettin Duran, Kemal İnat ve Ufuk Ulutaş (Ed.), Ankara: SETA.
- MUHASİLOVIĆ, J. (2020). Türkiye's Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Sandzak (2002-2017), İstanbul. <http://www.tdbb.org.tr/tdbb/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Jahja-Muhasilovic-11022021-internet-icin.pdf>
- NYE, Joseph S. (2004). Soft Power: The Means To Success in World Politics, New York: Public Affairs.
- SAĞIR, G. Türkiye'nin Bosna Hersek Savaşındaki Politikası, Uluslararası Politika Akademisi, <http://politikaakademisi.org/2017/08/17/turkiyenin-bosna-hersek-savasindaki-politikasi/>
- TAHIROVIĆ, M. (2014). Relations between Türkiye and the Balkan Countires as in a Function of Improving the Regional Peace and Stability *ADAM Akademi*, 4 (2), 59-76.
- WENDT, A. (1999). Social Theory of International Politics, Cambridge Studies in International Relations, Series Number 67.
- YENİGÜN, C. & Ertan Efegil (2010). Türkiye'nin Değişen Politikası, Nobel Yayıncılık, Ankara.
- YILMAZ, Ayhan N. & Gökmen Kılıçoğlu. (2017). Balkanlar'da YTB ve TİKA'nın Türk Kamu Diplomasisi Kurumları Olarak Faaliyetleri ve Türkiye'nin Bölgedeki Yumuşak Gücüne Etkileri, *Finans Ekonomi ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 2 (2), 115-131.
- Kosova Büyükelçisi Metin Hüsrev Oldu", *Haberler.com*, 10 February 2009, <https://www.haberler.com/guncel/kosova-buyukelcisi-metin-husrev-unler-oldu-haberi/>
- Kosova'nın tüm komşularıyla barış ve huzur içinde ilişkiler geliştirmesine büyük önem atfediyoruz, Turkish Republic Presidency, 03.02.2023, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/142744/-kosova-nin-tum-komsularıyla-baris-ve-huzur-icinde-iliskiler-gelistirmesine-buyuk-onem-atfediyoruz->
- Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Official website, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sorular.tr.mfa>
- TİKA Official Website, <https://www.tika.gov.tr/tr/sayfa/hakkimizda-14649>
- TİKA Official Website, https://www.tika.gov.tr/en/news/tika_strengthens_the_ties_of_friendship_between_turkiye_and_kosovo_through_hundreds_of_projects-64043

Türkiye prepared to support Serbia, Kosova in overcoming challenges, says Erdogan, Euractiv, 8 September 2022, https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/Türkiye-prepares-to-support-serbia-kosovo-in-overcoming-challenges-says-erdogan/

Yunus Emre Enstitüsü Official Website, <https://www.yee.org.tr/tr/kurumsal/yunus-emre-enstitusu>

Yunus Emre Institute Official Website, <https://www.yee.org.tr/tr/haber/kosovada-yunus-emre-enstitusu-ve-turkiye-maarif-vakfi-birligi-anlasmasi-imzaladi>

Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Toplulukları (YTB) Official website, <https://ytb.gov.tr/daireler/yurtdisi-vatandaslar/>