

Türkiye's Public Diplomacy in Latin America and the Caribbean: An Analysis through Nicholas Cull's Approach

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Türkiye'nin Latin Amerika ve Karayipler'deki Kamu Diplomasisi: Nicholas Cull'un Yaklaşımı Üzerine Bir Analiz

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Öz

Türkiye, bölgesel ve küresel bir güç olarak konumlanma hedefini yansıtan, komşu ülkelere ve Afrika, Latin Amerika ve Karayipler (LAK) gibi daha uzak bölgelere de dâhil olarak giderek daha proaktif bir dış politika izlemektedir. Kamu diplomasisi, bu stratejide Türkiye'nin güçlü bağlar kurmasını, uluslararası arenada etkisini artırmasını ve geleneksel Batı merkezli yaklaşımına bir alternatif sunmasını sağlayan temel araçlardan biri olmuştur. Bu çalışma, LAK bölgesindeki kamu diplomasisi girişimlerine odaklanarak Türkiye'nin dış politikasına ilişkin literatürdeki önemli bir boşluğu gidermektedir. Nicholas Cull'un kamu diplomasisi sınıflandırmasından yararlanan araştırma, Türkiye'nin dinleme, savunuculuk, kültürel diplomasi, değişim diplomasisi ve uluslararası yayıncılık stratejilerini incelemektedir. Bu bakış açısıyla analiz, Türkiye'nin gelişen küresel varlığı ve LAK bölgesindeki konumunu güçlendirmek için kamu diplomasisini stratejik olarak nasıl kullandığı konusunda kapsamlı bir anlayış sunmaktadır.

Abstract

Türkiye has pursued an increasingly proactive foreign policy, extending its engagement to neighboring countries and more distant regions such as Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean (LAC), reflecting its ambition to position itself as a regional and global power. Public diplomacy has been one of the key instruments in this strategy, enabling Türkiye to build strong ties, enhance its influence on the international stage, and offer an alternative to its traditional Western-centric approach. This study addresses a notable gap in the literature on Türkiye's foreign policy by focusing on its public diplomacy initiatives in the LAC region. Drawing on Nicholas Cull's public diplomacy classification, the research examines Türkiye's listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting strategies. Through this lens, the analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of Türkiye's evolving global presence and its strategic use of public diplomacy to strengthen its position in the LAC region.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kamu diplomasisi, Türkiye, Latin Amerika ve Karayipler, Nicholas Cull

Keywords: Public diplomacy, Türkiye, Latin America and Caribbean, Nicholas Cull

Makale Türü: Araştırma makalesi

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1. Introduction

Türkiye's public diplomacy in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) remains an underexplored dimension of its foreign policy, especially compared to its traditional engagements with the West or its more recent outreach to Africa. While scholarly attention has extensively covered Türkiye's relations with Western states and its growing ties with Africa, systematic analysis of its engagement

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with LAC countries, particularly through the lens of public diplomacy, remains scarce. Addressing this gap, this study applies Nicholas Cull's public diplomacy framework to assess Türkiye's strategies for building long-term relationships and expanding influence in the region (Cull, 2008). Nicholas Cull's public diplomacy framework offers a comprehensive analytical model for understanding how states engage with foreign publics to advance their strategic interests. The framework identifies five key components: listening (gathering information about foreign publics), advocacy (promoting specific policies or positions), cultural diplomacy (projecting cultural values and heritage), exchange diplomacy (facilitating educational and professional exchanges), and international broadcasting (using media to reach and influence external audiences). This multidimensional structure provides a systematic basis for evaluating Türkiye's public diplomacy efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean within the broader context of its evolving foreign policy.

In an increasingly multipolar order, where influence is no longer concentrated in traditional Western powers, public diplomacy has become an essential tool for countries seeking to enhance their international standing. For Türkiye, this approach aligns with its ambition to act more independently and navigate shifting geopolitical dynamics. Exploring these ambitions leads to the central questions driving this research. Accordingly, this study is guided by the following research question:

In what ways has Türkiye deployed public diplomacy to advance its strategic interests and influence in Latin America and the Caribbean, as interpreted through Nicholas Cull's public diplomacy framework?

Sub-research questions:

How are the five pillars of Cull's framework reflected in Türkiye's engagement with LAC states?

How does Türkiye's public diplomacy approach in LAC compare with its strategies toward Western countries and Africa?

What structural challenges and strategic opportunities shape Türkiye's public diplomacy in LAC, given competition from actors such as the United States, China, Russia, and the European Union?

How do Türkiye's initiatives in LAC contribute to its broader aspiration of exercising a more autonomous role in a multipolar order?

Since the 2000s, Türkiye has shifted toward a proactive, multi-dimensional foreign policy, extending its influence beyond its immediate neighborhood to Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Public diplomacy has been central to this transformation, enabling Ankara to diversify partnerships and move away from Western-dominated frameworks. The African experience offers a useful reference point for understanding how Türkiye adapts its public diplomacy across regions. In Africa, Türkiye began in 2005 with humanitarian initiatives, later expanding into political, economic, and cultural partnerships. Strategic tools, such as the export of unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs), reinforced its presence and positioned Türkiye as a significant actor on the continent. These successes provided both a model and momentum for engaging other emerging regions, most notably LAC.

Building on this momentum, Türkiye launched its LAC initiative in 2006, following the 1998 Latin America and Caribbean Action Plan, to position itself as both an economic and political partner. However, the region's established ties with the United States, and in some cases Russia, particularly in states aligned with the Soviet Union during the Cold War, (Domínguez, 1989), as well as the growing influence of China after its economic reforms (Roy, 2025), presented significant challenges. Other emerging actors, such as the European Union, India, and Indonesia, have also increased their presence in LAC. Despite these constraints, Türkiye capitalized on regional tensions with the U.S. and cultivated

ties with countries such as Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, and Mexico, gradually expanding its diplomatic footprint. This evolving presence provides fertile ground for applying Cull's framework to evaluate Türkiye's strategies in the region.

By applying Cull's framework (2008), this study examines the specific ways Türkiye has used listening and advocacy, alongside cultural and exchange diplomacy, to strengthen its position in LAC. The role of international broadcasting, including outlets such as TRT, is also assessed. Through this analysis, the research identifies the challenges, opportunities, and broader geopolitical implications of Türkiye's engagement in LAC, offering insights into how public diplomacy can be leveraged to build sustainable relationships and enhance influence in other emerging regions.

Methodology

This study adopts Nicholas Cull's (2008) five-component public diplomacy framework as its primary analytical lens. The reason for this choice lies in the model's operational clarity: Cull conceptualizes public diplomacy through a set of clearly defined policy instruments and institutional practices, thereby enabling systematic empirical analysis. By categorizing public diplomacy into listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting, the framework provides a structured basis for examining state-led public diplomacy initiatives in a comparative and observable manner.

Within this analytical structure, Türkiye's public diplomacy activities in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region can be examined through concrete mechanisms, such as listening practices conducted via diplomatic missions and multilateral summits; advocacy efforts articulated through high-level official visits and strategic discourse production; cultural diplomacy initiatives implemented by institutions such as the Yunus Emre Institute; exchange diplomacy facilitated through educational scholarship programs; and international broadcasting activities carried out by platforms such as TRT Español. The component-based nature of Cull's model thus allows for a nuanced assessment of how Türkiye operationalizes its public diplomacy instruments in a geographically distant region.

Moreover, Cull's framework is theoretically consistent with Joseph Nye's concept of soft power (2004), insofar as it translates the abstract dimensions of attraction, culture, values, and political narratives, into empirically traceable public diplomacy practices. Rather than treating soft power as an intangible or purely ideational capacity, Cull's approach enables the analysis of how soft power is produced, communicated, and institutionalized through specific foreign policy tools. This alignment is particularly valuable for examining emerging or middle-power actors, whose influence is often exercised through indirect and non-coercive means.

Alternative public diplomacy models, while theoretically significant, exhibit different analytical priorities that limit their suitability for the empirical objectives of this study. Eytan Gilboa's relational public diplomacy framework (2008), for instance, offers a compelling conceptualization of public diplomacy as a process of mutual engagement, emphasizing networks, dialogue, and multi-actor interaction. However, its analytical focus on relational dynamics and processual interaction renders it less effective for systematically categorizing state-led public diplomacy initiatives according to discrete components. Consequently, while Gilboa's model provides valuable complementary insights, it offers secondary analytical utility for a component-based, instrument-oriented examination of Türkiye's activities in the LAC region.

Similarly, Mark Leonard's time-scale approach to public diplomacy (Leonard et al., 2002) introduces a crucial temporal dimension by distinguishing between short-, medium-, and long-term public diplomacy effects. Yet this framework prioritizes the duration and impact horizon of public diplomacy outcomes rather than the specific instruments and institutional mechanisms through which

such outcomes are generated. As a result, Leonard's model lacks the categorical precision required for a systematic evaluation of public diplomacy tools across a defined regional context.

In light of these considerations, Cull's five-component public diplomacy framework demonstrates a higher degree of analytical compatibility with the core objective of this study: to examine Türkiye's public diplomacy strategies in the Latin America and Caribbean region through concrete, institutionalized tools within the broader context of an increasingly multipolar international order. By bridging theoretical coherence with empirical applicability, Cull's model offers a robust foundation for analyzing how Türkiye seeks to project influence and cultivate soft power beyond its immediate geopolitical environment.

2. Cull's five components and Türkiye's LAC public diplomacy

2.1. Listening: Opening of mutual embassies and Türkiye-LAC Summits

Listening, the first of Cull's five components of public diplomacy, is considered the foundational responsibility of public diplomats. It involves gathering and analyzing the opinions of foreign publics, thus providing insight into how the international community perceives the country in question. Cull emphasized that effective public diplomacy begins with listening, as it allows diplomats to understand the perspectives and sentiments of foreign audiences. The concept of gathering information about foreign public opinion has existed since ancient times, but in modern public diplomacy, it is now framed as "listening". This practice has evolved into a core public diplomacy function, integral to two-way communication. According to Cull, listening represents an actor's effort to manage the international environment by collecting and organizing data about foreign publics and their viewpoints, which can inform and adjust broader public diplomacy strategies. Cull argues that listening holds two critical values in public diplomacy. First, it enables formulating a sensitive and effective policy that facilitates engagement with foreign societies (Cull, 2009a). On the other hand, Martino presents two interpretations of listening: it can be viewed narrowly as a tactical tool for implementing and reorganizing existing strategies or, more broadly, as an activity aimed at fostering greater international understanding (Di Martino, 2020).

Several factors contribute to the effectiveness of the listening activity in public diplomacy. The first and most traditional of these is the role of embassies and consulates. Since ancient times, embassy officials have played a central role in the listening component of public diplomacy (Cull, 2009a). As civilizations interacted through ambassadors' efforts, conflicts and mutual sentiments of admiration or animosity emerged (Wright, 2006). Ambassadors serve as the key link between a country and the outside world, acting as accessible representatives who embody the culture, lifestyle, and language of their respective nations in the host country.

The listening activity facilitated by embassies remains highly relevant today, with embassies holding significant responsibilities in public diplomacy. In 2023, Türkiye celebrated the 500th anniversary of Hariciye, becoming the fifth-largest diplomatic network globally, with 261 foreign representatives. The expansion of Türkiye's diplomatic presence has been notably influenced by its growing relations with African countries and its initiatives in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region. As of September 2025, Türkiye has 19 embassies in LAC countries and LAC countries have 18 embassies in Türkiye (Efesoy, 2025).

In cases where direct embassies are not present, some countries are accredited to specific embassies in other locations. For example, the Turkish embassy in Santo Domingo represents Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Haiti, and Saint Kitts and Nevis; the embassy in Havana covers the Bahamas and Jamaica; the embassy in Port of Spain represents Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Saint Lucia, Saint

Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago; and the embassies in Belize, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua are accredited to San José (Compiled from RTMFA website).

The recent increase in Türkiye's diplomatic representations in the LAC region underscores the country's growing importance in these relationships. The embassies established by Türkiye in LAC countries and those of LAC countries in Türkiye create essential opportunities for mutual listening and provide a platform for developing shared perspectives and collaborative initiatives. LAC countries where Türkiye has embassies are Argentina, Cuba, Brazil, Mexico, Bolivia, Panama, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Ecuador, Peru, El Salvador, Chile, Guatemala, Uruguay, Colombia, Venezuela, Costa Rica (Compiled from RTMFA website).

Revolutionary advancements in communication technologies during the 2000s facilitated the shift of listening activities in the digital realm. Social media platforms, often called tools of "instant diplomacy," now play a central role in modern public diplomacy by enabling real-time engagement with foreign publics (Seib, 2016). These platforms, where individuals from target countries can express their views directly, have become crucial elements in the listening process. Messages and feedback gathered from various digital sources, such as websites, blogs, and online forums, have become integral components of this activity.³

However, states' effective use of social media requires a global rather than national approach. To this end, public institutions often maintain social media accounts in multiple languages, with English as the primary language, to reach a broader international audience. For example, the Turkish Embassy in Ecuador (@TC_KitoBE), the Embassy in Paraguay (@TC_AsuncionBE), and the Embassy in El Salvador (@TC_SanSalvador) post in Spanish, while the Embassy in Brazil (@TC_BrazilyaBE) uses Portuguese. Despite these efforts, an analysis of engagement metrics—such as the number of followers, likes, retweets, and comments—reveals that Turkish embassies in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region do not receive substantial feedback or engagement on their social media posts.⁴

Effective listening in public diplomacy requires independent research, surveys, and media analysis. Using Switzerland as an example, Cull demonstrates that surveys have proven to be an invaluable tool for identifying discrepancies between the country's image and local perceptions and uncovering specific issues in host countries (Cull, 2009a). He further emphasizes that no public diplomacy campaign can succeed without thorough research and an appropriate response to the target audience's feedback (Cull, 2009a).

In contrast, listening has had a limited role in Turkish public diplomacy activities, mainly due to the need for more public opinion polls and evaluations of public diplomacy efforts. Sancar highlights the challenges in obtaining relevant research and argues that Turkish public diplomacy often operates as a one-way communication process, lacking the necessary reciprocity. He stresses the importance of prioritizing research to develop an effective public diplomacy strategy grounded in listening. He suggests that the research process is the most reliable means of understanding the target audience (Sancar, 2015).

A central aspect of Türkiye's listening practices toward Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) countries is the Türkiye-LAC Summits and various forums and meetings facilitating strategic

³ The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about significant transformations in diplomacy, as it has in many other sectors. Diplomats now rely heavily on digital communication tools, such as video conferencing and phone calls, to conduct their most crucial meetings. In fact, one year before the onset of the pandemic, in 2019, Türkiye's Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu introduced the "digital diplomacy" initiative at the 11th Ambassadors Conference. He emphasized that Turkish foreign policy would increasingly embrace technological innovations as part of its diplomatic efforts.

⁴ It is possible to see this when looking at the social media interactions and follower numbers of Turkish embassies in LAC.

partnerships between Türkiye and the region. These summits provide a platform for Türkiye and LAC countries to openly communicate their respective demands, concerns, and expectations. The gatherings, which involve representatives from international and regional organizations and officials from LAC countries, foster dialogue on various critical issues, including health, agriculture, food security, trade, safety, and education. These discussions are vital in identifying collaborative solutions and determining the necessary steps for addressing shared challenges.

Türkiye has gained observer status in several key regional organizations in the Americas, including the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1998, the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) in 2000, and the Pacific Alliance in 2013. In 2008, Türkiye signed an agreement with MERCOSUR, the world's fourth-largest economic bloc, to create a Free Trade Area. However, despite the first negotiations held in Ankara on November 12-13, 2008, no subsequent rounds have occurred (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı. Güney Ortak Pazarı (MERCOSUR)). In addition, Türkiye established a consultation and cooperation mechanism with the Caribbean community (CARICOM) in 2011. In 2014, Türkiye participated as a special guest in the CARICOM Heads of State and Government Summit in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The same year, Istanbul hosted the 1st Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the CARICOM Consultation and Cooperation Mechanism, marking the highest-level event held between Türkiye and CARICOM (RTMFA, a, n.d).⁵

A memorandum of understanding establishing institutional relations between Türkiye and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) was signed on the sidelines of the 7th ACS Summit in Havana on June 4, 2016. Additionally, during the 1st Forum of Foreign Ministers of the Türkiye-Central American Integration System (SICA) in 2015, Türkiye was granted the status of extra-regional observer member of SICA. Türkiye-SICA's 2nd Forum of Foreign Ministers took place in Istanbul on April 20, 2017 (RTMFA, a, n.d).

The Türkiye-CELAC Quartet Foreign Ministers Meetings began in 2013 with the participation of the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ecuador, and Guyana, and culminated in the fourth meeting held in Istanbul on April 21, 2017, following the 2nd Forum of Foreign Ministers of Türkiye-SICA. Türkiye's application for membership in the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), based in Chile, was approved and officially confirmed at the July 25, 2017, ECOSOC meeting (RTMFA, b, n.d). In addition, Türkiye gained Permanent Observer Status in the Andean Community (CAN) following a decision made on August 29, 2022. Türkiye's visibility and influence in the region have grown significantly through its active participation in various summits and forums involving Latin American and Caribbean countries (RTMFA, c, n.d).

In parallel with the growing number of mutual visits, friendship groups have been established between the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) and the parliaments of various countries. These friendship groups are essential to institutionalizing political relations, and their number continues to increase yearly. During the 28th Legislative Term of the Assembly, the number of such groups reached 147. Currently, inter-parliamentary friendship groups are active in 19 countries within the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region, including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Chile, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Venezuela (Yılmaz, 2024).

In addition to strengthening relations with national parliaments, Türkiye aims to establish institutional ties with regional parliamentary organizations. As part of this effort, the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) became an observer member of the Latin American Parliament

⁵ 11 of the 14 member countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago) were represented at the Ministerial level.

(PARLATINO) through a protocol signed in October 2021 (Uslu, 2022). Türkiye has also initiated contacts with other regional parliamentary bodies, including the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN), the Forum of Presidents of Parliaments of the Central American and Caribbean Basin (FOPREL), the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA), the MERCOSUR Parliament (PARLASUR), and Parliamentarians for the Americas (ParlAmerica) (RTMFA, a, n.d). Inter-parliamentary friendship groups are being established to foster closer ties and promote sincere cooperation between people based on mutual respect and understanding. It is emphasized that the formation of these groups and broader institutionalization will contribute to advancing “parliamentary diplomacy,” a concept that has emerged as a complement to traditional diplomacy in today’s global landscape (Elibol, 2008).

2.2. Joint Advocacy with LAC Countries: Emphasis on Democracy

Advocacy, the second component of public diplomacy, refers to an actor’s efforts to engage in international communication activities to promote a particular policy, idea, or self-interest to foreign publics (Cull, 2009b). Advocacy involves actions, practices, or processes designed to defend or promote a cause, individual, movement, legislation, or project. It is a dynamic process that requires not only articulating messages effectively but also actively listening, understanding, and empathizing with the perspectives and emotions of others (Mueller, 2013).

In the context of Türkiye’s relations with Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries, advocacy efforts are focused on promoting shared values, particularly the emphasis on democracy. Through joint advocacy initiatives, Türkiye and LAC countries work together to advance democratic principles internationally, highlighting their mutual commitment to democratic governance, human rights, and political stability. This collaborative approach fosters deeper diplomatic ties and amplifies the voices of both parties in advocating for democracy in global forums.

Countries use different advocacy strategies to align with their strategic interests, with advocacy being especially prominent in U.S. public diplomacy. During the Cold War, the U.S. used advocacy to regain influence, particularly in arms reduction talks. These efforts were seen as successful in changing perceptions, particularly in Europe. Cull highlights how, under the Reagan administration, Europeans began to trust America’s arms reduction initiatives, leading to a shift in public opinion that enabled missile deployments. (Cull, 2009a). Countries that listen to their target audiences’ expectations often aim to become centers of attraction by promoting policies based on shared values. Advocacy, which is second in Cull’s public diplomacy framework, involves efforts to promote a state’s policies or interests abroad. This includes embassy-press relations, lobbying, and information dissemination (Cull, 2009a). Public diplomacy also serves other key purposes, such as correcting misunderstandings and fostering agreement on common issues (Leonard et al., 2002). Defending core values is an effective way to address these challenges and build consensus.

Advocacy plays a significant role in Türkiye’s public diplomacy at the institutional and leadership levels. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which emphasizes peace-based approaches in its foreign policy, advocates for contributing to global peace, stability, and prosperity. Additionally, it works to strengthen and expand Türkiye’s international political, economic, and cultural relations, both bilaterally and within multilateral platforms (RTMFA, d, n.d).

Türkiye encapsulates one of the most essential values it defends in its foreign policy: “The world is bigger than five.” Through this discourse, Türkiye asserts that the five permanent United Nations Security Council (UNSC) members, the United States, China, France, the United Kingdom, and Russia, should not have exclusive authority to decide global issues. Türkiye and many other countries criticize the veto power held by these five permanent members, arguing that it often leads to decisions driven by national interests rather than the collective good. In response, many countries contend that

international peace and security cannot be effectively achieved under the current UNSC structure. Led by countries such as Türkiye, Germany, Brazil, India, and Japan, these nations are calling for reforms to the UNSC to reflect the current geopolitical realities better and ensure broader representation in decision-making processes.

A core value defended by Türkiye is the supremacy of national will, which became particularly prominent after the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016, when both government and opposition parties held a joint rally in Yenikapı to condemn coups. This emphasis on democracy and national will is an advocacy tool, especially relevant in Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries historically affected by military coups. In 2019, Türkiye strongly opposed attempts to alter governments in Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Chile, and Venezuela, calling for a balanced approach and advocating for the sovereignty of national will. During the Venezuelan crisis, Türkiye, along with Russia, China, and others, recognized Nicolás Maduro as the legitimate president, while many Western countries, including the U.S., Canada, and several European countries, recognized Juan Guaidó (Demirel, 2020). Even in the event of Maduro's abduction from his official residence and his subsequent transfer to the United States, Turkey maintained its consistent and principled stance, explicitly stating that it "does not condone any action that undermines political legitimacy and violates international law." Thus, in opposition to U.S. efforts to shape its "backyard," one of Türkiye's essential advocacy tools in the region has been its steadfast support for democracy and the principle of national sovereignty. This approach underscores Türkiye's commitment to supporting the democratic processes and nations' will in the LAC region, in contrast to external interference.

Ankara's emphasis on democracy and constitutional order in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region is part of a broader communication strategy. In this context, the Directorate of Communications emerges as a strategic actor that goes beyond being merely a publicity center, presenting Turkey's discourse in a language understandable to the international public. This role, undertaken by the Directorate of Communications, can be understood particularly through themes such as "national will" and "opposition to the coup" that emerged after the July 15th coup attempt. From digital content to briefings for the international press, Turkey is carrying its democratic experience to the global level. Looking at the history of the LAC region, the frequency of military interventions and government overthrows is striking. At this point, Turkey's sensitivity to democracy creates a common emotional and political ground with the countries of the region. By bringing these shared sensitivities together within an institutional framework, the Directorate of Communications plays a supportive and complementary role in Turkey's advocacy diplomacy towards the LAC region.

Mediation and peace initiatives have become essential advocacy tools in Türkiye's Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) policy. A notable example is Türkiye's strategic partnership with Brazil, particularly around the common objective of controlling Iran's nuclear program. The cooperation between Türkiye and Brazil, which gained momentum with signing the Strategic Cooperation Action Plan in 2010, significantly enhanced Türkiye's diplomatic engagement in the LAC region and Brazil's influence in the Middle East (RTMFA, e, n.d). This partnership culminated in joint mediation efforts to address the international concerns surrounding Iran's nuclear program. As part of these diplomatic efforts, Türkiye and Brazil successfully negotiated an agreement with Iran, under which Iran agreed to store its enriched uranium in Türkiye. The three countries declared their commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and reaffirmed their support for the peaceful use of nuclear energy (RTMFA, 2010).

Through this mediation role, Türkiye has positioned itself as a proactive player in international diplomacy, particularly in conflict resolution and non-proliferation, while strengthening its bilateral relations with Brazil and Iran. This initiative is a significant example of how Türkiye has utilized

diplomacy and peace-building efforts as advocacy tools in its broader foreign policy strategy towards the LAC region (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2020).

State visits by heads of government and other high-ranking officials can also be viewed as a significant form of advocacy. These visits, often accompanied by symbolic gestures, serve as non-verbal messages to the host country and, in some cases, the broader international community, including neighboring nations. The first foreign visit made by a new leader is essential, as it conveys strategic priorities and diplomatic intentions. For instance, when Xi Jinping became President of China and chose to visit South Korea instead of North Korea in July 2014, it sent a clear signal about China's evolving defense policy, leading to disappointment in Pyongyang (Perlez, 2014). Similarly in 2014, Finnish Prime Minister Alexander Stubb's first visit abroad was to neighboring Estonia, a NATO member, rather than to Sweden, signaling Finland's interest in deeper ties with NATO (Helsinki Times, 2014).

In a similar vein, Türkiye has employed high-level state visits as part of its advocacy strategy in the LAC region. These visits have played a crucial role in enhancing Türkiye's diplomatic presence and fostering closer relations with LAC countries. The visits have been instrumental in establishing or reinforcing bilateral cooperation agreements while also underscoring shared values between Türkiye and the LAC countries. The first presidential visit by Türkiye to Latin America occurred in 1995 when President Süleyman Demirel visited Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. This visit marked a turning point in Türkiye's engagement with the region. The creation of the "Latin America and the Caribbean Action Plan" in 1998 followed this, which involved discussions among public and private sector representatives. In 2006, Türkiye updated this action plan and declared the year the "Year of Latin America and the Caribbean," launching a more comprehensive roadmap to strengthen relations with the region (RTMFA, a, n.d.).

High-level visits are not only opportunities for diplomatic exchange but also serve as powerful advocacy tools. They symbolize Türkiye's commitment to foster closer ties with the LAC region and promote values such as democracy, economic cooperation, and mutual respect. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye underscores the importance of these visits in further developing relations with countries across all continents, particularly with neighbors and strategic partners (RTMFA, a, n.d.).

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's visits to LAC countries have played a pivotal role in strengthening Türkiye's diplomatic and economic ties with the region. His first visit as Prime Minister in December 2009 was to Mexico, marking the beginning of a series of high-level visits to deepen Türkiye's engagement with the region. In 2010, Erdoğan's official visit to Brazil resulted in the signing of a "Strategic Partnership Action Plan", making Brazil Türkiye's first strategic partner in Latin America.⁶ This visit symbolized a significant shift in Türkiye's foreign policy, emphasizing Türkiye's desire to strengthen its relations with LAC countries, particularly in the political and economic spheres (RTMFA, a, n.d.).

Over the years, Erdoğan's visits to LAC countries have continued to build on this foundation. His 2012 visit to Brazil and Mexico further solidified bilateral ties, while his 2013 trip to Argentina, coinciding with the 125th International Olympic Committee General Assembly, was part of his broader efforts to increase Türkiye's global visibility and influence. During his time as Prime Minister, Erdoğan's engagement with LAC countries steadily expanded, helping to foster new partnerships and deepen existing ones (RTMFA, a, n.d.). In February 2015, Erdoğan conducted his first presidential tour of Latin

⁶ Prime Minister Erdoğan's planned 2010 visit to Latin America, including Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, faced cancellations due to diplomatic tensions. The visit to Argentina was called off after the Armenian lobby opposed the opening of the Atatürk Monument in Buenos Aires. The visit to Chile was canceled in response to the "Mavi Marmara" incident, where Israeli forces attacked a Turkish aid ship. It resulted in the deaths of nine Turkish citizens. This led to a sharp deterioration in Türkiye-Israel relations, prompting Erdoğan to return to Türkiye. Despite these setbacks, Türkiye continued its diplomatic efforts in LAC.

America, visiting Colombia, Cuba, and Mexico (RTMFA, 2015). This trip was significant not only because it marked his first visit to the region as president, but also because it reflected Türkiye's growing interest in cultivating stronger relationships with diverse countries in LAC, particularly with those in the Caribbean and Central America. A year later, in January-February 2016, Erdoğan undertook another regional tour, this time visiting Ecuador, Peru, and Chile (RTMFA, 2015). These visits were noteworthy because they marked the first presidential visits from Türkiye to these countries, further expanding Türkiye's diplomatic footprint in the region. In 2018, Erdoğan visited Argentina, Paraguay, and Venezuela, further demonstrating Türkiye's commitment to enhancing its ties with LAC nations (RTMFA, a, n.d).⁷ These visits were part of Türkiye's broader strategy to engage with countries across the region, both bilaterally and through multilateral organizations.

In addition to presidential visits, Turkish ministers have supported Türkiye's diplomatic efforts in the LAC region through high-level visits. They have focused on specific work programs, bilateral cooperation, and engagements at regional summits and conferences. For example, during the 2015 "Türkiye-SICA First Foreign Ministers' Forum" held in Guatemala, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu met with his Honduran counterpart, Arturo Corrales Alvarez. This meeting helped establish the first contact between Türkiye and Honduras at the ministerial level. Foreign Minister Alvarez visited Türkiye two years later, underscoring the importance of continuous dialogue and high-level exchanges (RTMFA, f, n.d). These high-level visits are essential to Türkiye's public diplomacy strategy in the LAC region. They facilitate the signing of cooperation agreements and serve as a platform for Türkiye to advocate for shared values, such as democracy, sovereignty, and economic cooperation. They also allow both countries to exchange views on international issues, build mutual understanding, and create long-term partnerships. Türkiye has significantly increased its visibility and influence in the LAC region through these diplomatic efforts, solidifying its status as an essential partner in the Americas.

Minister Çavuşoğlu's visit to Latin America from April 23-29, 2022, which included Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, Uruguay, and Venezuela, marked the most comprehensive visit by a Turkish official to the region. The visit received significant media coverage and highlighted the growing partnership between Türkiye and Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries, which also reflects Türkiye's increasing presence and diplomatic engagement (RTMFA, 2022).

High-level visits to the region have continued under Hakan Fidan's tenure as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan visited Brazil for the G20 Foreign Ministers Meeting in February 2024, followed by official visits to Venezuela and Mexico that same month. In June 2024, he hosted Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira in Ankara, and in 2025, he received the foreign ministers of Chile and El Salvador in Türkiye. In July 2025, he represented President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the 17th BRICS Summit in Brazil (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024a; 2024b; 2024c; 2025a; 2025b). These ongoing contacts have facilitated increased bilateral cooperation and strengthened Türkiye's influence in the LAC region, consistently upholding shared values and principles.

The frequency of high-level visits from Türkiye to LAC countries and from LAC countries to Türkiye has risen since 2008. Notably, hosting LAC heads of state in Türkiye has become a strategic element of Türkiye's Latin American outreach, helping to strengthen trade relations and foster cooperation in areas like security and education. Venezuelan presidents have been the most frequent visitors to Türkiye, with visits in 2010, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2022, and 2023, followed by Brazilian, Colombian, and Chilean presidents, each of whom has visited Türkiye twice (Compiled from RTMFA website).

⁷ President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited Argentina between 29 November and 01 December 2018 to hold official talks and attend the G20 Leaders Summit.

2014 marked a significant milestone in Türkiye's relations with the LAC region, as it hosted the 1st Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Consultation and Cooperation Mechanism in Istanbul. This event resulted in the highest number of visits to Türkiye from LAC countries at the ministerial level that year. In 2015, Türkiye joined the Central American Integration System (SICA) as an observer member, strengthening its ties with the region. The following year, in 2017, Türkiye hosted the second Foreign Ministers Forum of SICA, providing an essential opportunity for Central American foreign ministers to visit Türkiye. Costa Rica was the most active among the countries that visited frequently during this period, sending multiple high-level delegations from various ministries, including foreign affairs. These reciprocal visits played a crucial role in advancing the institutionalization of Türkiye's political, cultural, and economic relations with LAC countries, helping to build stronger, more structured ties between the regions (Yetim, 2016). Additionally, "TRT Spanish", which began broadcasting on April 26, 2024, is expected to strengthen further Türkiye's outreach to the LAC region. By broadcasting in Spanish, TRT Spanish will directly engage with local audiences, enabling Türkiye to communicate its values, policies, and perspectives to a broader population in the LAC region. This development marks a significant step in enhancing Türkiye's media presence and influence in Latin America, building upon its diplomatic and political relations with the region (Demir, 2024).

2.3. Cultural Diplomacy: Cultural Orientation to the Continent

As Nicholas Cull outlined, cultural diplomacy is a crucial aspect of public diplomacy that seeks to shape the international environment by showcasing a country's cultural resources and achievements. It aims to facilitate cultural exchange, enhance mutual understanding, and present the country's cultural identity to foreign publics. Cultural diplomacy is essential in promoting soft power, offering a more persuasive and engaging approach than traditional diplomacy. People often see culture as a powerful tool in reshaping perceptions and overcoming stereotypes or prejudices. Nicholas Cull expresses that cultural diplomacy offers a unique opportunity to reach large audiences and create a more favorable environment for public diplomacy (Cull, 2009a). It can reach beyond political or economic interests, helping foster goodwill and long-term relationships based on shared cultural values. As the U.S. Department of State has emphasized, cultural diplomacy is a cornerstone of public diplomacy (US Department of State, 2005).

Cultural diplomacy serves as a bridge for dialogue, especially when traditional diplomatic channels face obstruction. An example of this appears in the U.S.-Cuba relationship, where cultural exchanges - such as performances by famous American artists in Cuba - fostered mutual understanding despite the political tensions between the two countries. Similarly, during the Cold War, the Soviet Union used cultural diplomacy to present a more human side of the USSR to the world, with the Bolshoi and Kirov ballet performances offering a glimpse of Soviet culture to international audiences (Cull, 2009a). These show how culture can become a primary means of international communication. Language is a powerful tool in cultural diplomacy, bridging cultures and fostering deeper connections. By promoting its language, a country can gain a competitive edge and strengthen cultural ties. Zaharna highlights the role of cultural and language institutes in making these connections effective, ensuring the target audience is receptive to the country's culture (Zaharna, 2009). Countries like France (Alliance Française, 1883), the UK (British Council, 1934), Germany (Goethe Institutes, 1951), and China (Confucius Institutes, 2004) have established cultural institutions to promote their language and culture, boosting soft power and global influence.

In the case of Türkiye, "cultural diplomacy" represents a strategic and influential component of its public diplomacy efforts in LAC countries. Türkiye's cultural presence in the region has steadily increased through various initiatives, such as promoting Turkish art, music, film, cuisine, and language. By emphasizing cultural exchanges, Türkiye can build more profound and lasting connections with LAC

countries, promoting mutual understanding and showcasing shared values in an increasingly interconnected world. Türkiye's cultural diplomacy will be vital in improving its image and strengthening ties in Latin America and the Caribbean. By showcasing its identity, values, and heritage, Türkiye can shape foreign perceptions. Success depends on understanding both its own culture and how it resonates with the target audience (Karadağ, 2016).

The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism coordinate initiatives to promote Turkish culture abroad, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Cultural diplomacy plays a key role in Türkiye's foreign policy, with efforts including language promotion, cultural institutions, and events. The Yunus Emre Institute (YEI) is central to this, operating in Argentina, Mexico, and Venezuela to promote Turkish language, culture, and art through activities like Turkish days, photo exhibitions, and gastronomy workshops (YEE, 2023a, 2022). Türkiye's historical ties with the LAC region further strengthen its cultural diplomacy efforts. Cultural exchanges like Turkish carpets, coffee, art, and architecture help strengthen ties between Türkiye and LAC countries (Kalyoncuoğlu, 2024). During the pandemic, the Yunus Emre Institute (YEI) offered online Turkish courses in LAC countries, including Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico (YEE, 2020). Türkiye also provides Turkish language courses at the University of Havana and supports the Turkish department at Colombia's National University. In December 2023, YEI held a conference in Buenos Aires and a Turkish Film Festival in Venezuela (YEE, 2023b), promoting Turkish cinema and coffee, recognized by UNESCO. On World Turkish Coffee Day, YEI organized workshops across LAC countries to showcase Turkish coffee and delight (YEE, 2023c). Turkey's cultural diplomacy activities in Latin America have gained significant momentum during the 2020-2025 period. Abdurrahman Aliy, President of the Yunus Emre Institute (YEE), emphasized that they will open new centers in addition to Mexico, Argentina, and Venezuela, stating, "by 2026, we will have opened nine new centers and will have a presence in a total of 12 Latin American countries" (Tarhan, 2025).

In addition to YEI's efforts, other Turkish institutions have played a role in advancing cultural diplomacy in the region. For example, in 2014, Türkiye was accepted as a "joint observer" in the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP), which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs saw as an essential step in expanding Türkiye's cultural and diplomatic outreach to Latin America (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2014). In 2016, the Anatolian Fire Dance team, supported by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, performed in Santiago, Chile, showcasing Turkish culture and artistry (Özmüş, 2018). Cultural infrastructure projects also play a key role in cultural diplomacy. For instance, in 2010, Türkiye contributed to restoring the Ottoman Clock Tower in Mexico, commemorating Mexico's bicentennial and centennial celebrations, in collaboration with local and Lebanese communities (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Meksika Büyükelçiliği, 2023). In 2011, Türkiye's TİKA and the University of Havana established a Turkish History and Culture Department, renovating classrooms and offices (TİKA Annual Report, 2011).

In Brazil, Türkiye completed the maintenance of the Rio de Janeiro Cultural Center Mosque in 2015, preserving cultural heritage (TİKA Annual Report, 2015). In 2017, Türkiye inaugurated the Ecuador-Türkiye Friendship Park, promoting peace and cultural exchange, and also decorated the Ebubekir Sıddık Mosque in Bogotá, Colombia (TİKA Annual Report, 2017). In 2019, Türkiye established the Mexico-Türkiye Friendship Public Library in Zapopan, offering educational and social programs for youth in an area with significant income inequality (TİKA Annual Report, 2019). In 2020, TİKA renovated a building in Tlalpan, Mexico, turning it into the 'Cappadocia' cultural center, hosting theater performances, concerts, and educational programs for disadvantaged groups (TİKA Annual Report, 2020). TİKA also inaugurated a Turkish Hall at Mexico City's National Museum of World Cultures, showcasing 62 historical replicas from Anatolia (TİKA Annual Report, 2022). In Colombia, the Bogotá Mobile Library Project, launched in 2022, provided books and Turkish culture resources to rural areas

(TIKA Annual Report, 2020). These initiatives reflect Türkiye's ongoing use of cultural diplomacy to strengthen ties with Latin America and the Caribbean.

TIKA, has carried out a wide range of development, humanitarian, and cultural cooperation projects across Latin America. These initiatives include the preservation of cultural heritage and promotion of tourism in Panama, educational infrastructure and library projects in Ecuador, and extensive support for schools, digital literacy, and social inclusion in Guatemala and El Salvador. In Mexico and Peru, Turkey has focused on education, health, and social welfare, including mother-and-child health projects implemented in cooperation with UNFPA. In Colombia, TIKA has partnered with the World Food Programme to combat hunger, support peace-building efforts, strengthen rural livelihoods, and provide humanitarian assistance. In Venezuela, Turkey contributed to public health by renovating a healthcare center within one of the country's major cultural complexes. Collectively, these projects reflect Turkey's multidimensional engagement in Latin America, emphasizing sustainable development, social welfare, and international cooperation. (Çeliker, 2024; <https://tika.gov.tr>)

Türkiye also contributed to tourism and cultural development in Latin America. In Paraguay, Türkiye established a Tourist Information and Handicraft Sales Office at the UNESCO-listed Jesuit Missions (TIKA Annual Report, 2022). Additionally, TIKA supported educational initiatives, including material aid to Türkiye Schools in Argentina, Mexico, and Paraguay, and renovations at Mustafa Kemal Atatürk College in Chile (TIKA Annual Report, 2017). In Haiti, TIKA installed solar panels and built security fences for the Read Foundation (TIKA Türkiye Development Assistance Report, 2013), while in Colombia's Orejón region, TIKA constructed a school to support the peace process (TIKA Türkiye Development Assistance Report, 2016). In Uruguay, TIKA provided transportation for disabled students, and in Argentina, it helped establish an IT lab for a digital literacy program (TIKA Annual Report 2019, 2020).

Tourism diplomacy has also played a key role in Türkiye's cultural outreach. Initiatives like the "Home Türkiye" and "ComeSeeTürkiye" projects, launched by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, promote Türkiye's cultural and natural heritage through digital platforms (Susam Uyar, 2014). Despite challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, Türkiye saw a steady increase in visitors, including a fourfold rise in arrivals from Latin America and the Caribbean between 2008 and 2023. (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Annual Bulletins). Most tourists traveling from the LAC region to Türkiye come from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Chile, and Venezuela. In 2008, Brazil was the leading source of tourists from the region; however, by 2023, Mexico had surpassed Brazil, becoming the top contributor of visitors from LAC to Türkiye. Notably, Colombia has seen a significant rise in tourist numbers, with Colombian visitors increasing dramatically from 6,070 in 2008 to 69,257 in 2023, making it the third-largest source of tourists in the region. On the other hand, Venezuela, which ranked fourth in 2008 with 9,604 visitors, has seen a more modest increase, reaching 22,753 tourists in 2023, causing it to drop to sixth place among LAC countries sending tourists to Türkiye (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Annual Bulletins).

Sports diplomacy often complements cultural diplomacy by engaging broad audiences, making it an effective tool for international relations. During the Cold War, the U.S. and Soviet Union used sports to promote their ideologies, and China enhanced its global image through the 2008 Beijing Olympics (Finlay & Xin, 2010). In Latin America, Brazil's sports leadership contributed to its ranking as the 28th most influential country in the 2022 Global Soft Power Index (Brand Finance, 2022). France also leverages sports, particularly football, with its diverse team composition, including many players of Sub-Saharan African descent, which played a key role in its success. Argentina's 2022 FIFA World Cup win further exemplified sports as diplomacy, as global leaders, including President Erdoğan, congratulated the country (Tosun, 2022). In Türkiye, high-profile Latin American football players like

Brazil's Roberto Carlos, Alex de Souza, and Robson de Souza, and Argentina's Ariel Ortega and Mauro Icardi, have bolstered relations between Türkiye and the LAC region. With 497 LAC players in Turkish football leagues, Brazil contributing the most at 323 players, sports continue to strengthen diplomatic ties. Türkiye also supports Chile's Deportivo Palestino Club, founded by the Palestinian community, showcasing its sports diplomacy in the region (TIKA, 2017).

2.4. Türkiye's Exchange Diplomacy: A Cultural and Educational Tool

Exchange diplomacy involves sending citizens abroad and hosting foreign nationals for work, study, or cultural immersion, promoting mutual understanding (Cull, 2009a). Education-focused exchange programs allow participants to learn about different cultures and languages while building global networks. The number of international students grew from hundreds in the late 19th century to 6.3 million by 2020, with projections suggesting 8 million by 2025 (Migration Data Portal, 2023). These programs also serve strategic purposes, engaging various social groups and fostering intergovernmental networks. Short-term exchanges, particularly for government officials or civil society representatives, can strengthen diplomatic relations. An example is the U.S.-EU civil servant exchange, which has been crucial since 1959 (Scott-Smith, 2003). However, the impact of exchange programs is long-term and difficult to measure. As Cull notes, exchanges are a distinct form of public diplomacy with specific goals and results, and Seib highlights their uncertain nature (Cull, 2008; Seib, 2016).

Türkiye's educational exchange with the LAC has seen limited growth compared to its engagement with African countries. Despite factors like cultural, religious, and ethnic affinities, scholarships, and the perceived quality of education, the geographic and cultural distance between Türkiye and many LAC nations contributes to the relatively low number of students from the region (Özoğlu et al., 2012). Türkiye aims to leverage educational exchange as part of its broader soft power strategy, cultivating future leaders who can foster cooperation with Türkiye upon their return. The Türkiye Scholarships program is central to this, offering scholarships and building alumni networks. Data from the YÖK (Higher Education Council) shows limited growth in the number of LAC students in Türkiye, rising from 131 in 2013/14 to 704 in 2023/24. Haiti, Venezuela, and Colombia are the top contributors, but countries like the Bahamas, Barbados, and Uruguay have sent no students in recent years (YÖK Data, 2024; <https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>). This suggests Türkiye faces challenges in attracting students from a broader range of LAC countries. On the other hand, according to the data of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, more than 300 students from LAC countries have benefited from Türkiye Scholarships to date (RTMFA, a, n.d.). On the other hand, while a total of 5,251 international students from Sub-Saharan and North Africa were studying at universities in Türkiye in the 2013/14 academic year, this number increased 12-fold in the 2023/24 period and reached 61,149 (YÖK Data, 2024; <https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>).

The Türkiye Maarif Foundation is Türkiye's key actor in international education, operating in the public interest and running educational institutions worldwide, alongside the Ministry of National Education (MEB). The Foundation has a significant presence in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region, operating in 67 countries, including Colombia and Venezuela. As of October 2020, it runs five schools in Venezuela, enrolling 437 students, providing primary and secondary education, and serving as gateways for students interested in pursuing higher education in Türkiye (Türkiye Maarif Foundation).

In addition to student exchanges, Türkiye facilitates professional exchanges through short-term training programs for foreign professionals, especially in higher education. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, via its Diplomacy Academy, plays a key role, offering in-service training, orientation courses for officials abroad, and training for foreign diplomats. In 2018, 378 foreign diplomats participated in these

programs. The International Young Diplomats Training Program has trained 1,255 diplomats worldwide, including those from LAC countries, fostering bilateral relations and deepening understanding of Türkiye's diplomatic practices (Diplomasi Akademisi).

A significant element of exchange diplomacy is transportation, which has dramatically enhanced the growth of fast and accessible travel options. This has contributed significantly to global connectivity and the effectiveness of exchange diplomacy. Turkish Airlines (THY), which flies to more countries than any other airline, plays a central role in Türkiye's exchange diplomacy efforts. Founded in 1933 with just five aircraft and fewer than 30 employees, THY now operates flights to 127 countries, 320 cities, and 325 airports (THY, 2024). In 2023 the airline carried 83.4 million passengers, facilitating global travel and conveying Türkiye's cultural and political messages worldwide (Sancar, 2012). As THY expands its reach, it has begun flying to several Latin America and the Caribbean countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Panama, Chile, and Venezuela (THY). This expansion of flight destinations has led to a noticeable increase in the number of students from the LAC region traveling to Türkiye and the number of tourists visiting Türkiye from these countries. By enhancing transportation links, Turkish Airlines has played a crucial role in strengthening Türkiye's influence in the LAC region, further supporting Türkiye's broader diplomatic goals.

2.5. International Broadcasting: Multilingual Broadcasting

International broadcasting is a key element of public diplomacy, using radio, television, and the internet to shape a nation's image and communicate with foreign publics. It helps promote national policies, defend interests, and influence perceptions abroad. According to Nicolas Cull (2009a), international broadcasting is essential for public diplomacy in a globalized media environment. A key feature of international broadcasting is its role in delivering "news" and shaping public opinion. The media serves as a channel for a country's message, but, as Cull notes, broadcasting must be strategic. If used for mere propaganda, it will fail. Successful international broadcasting should aim to inform, build credibility, and foster understanding, not manipulate or distort facts (Bostancı, 2012). Countries have long recognized the media's power to influence public opinion and advance diplomatic goals. With the rise of the internet and social media, the reach of international broadcasting has expanded, enabling governments to engage directly with global audiences. While some view the internet as a "communicative nirvana" for free information flow, others warn of its potential threats to societal communication due to its unregulated nature (Campbell, 2003). Wang (2006) highlights that the proliferation of media technologies challenges traditional government communication, forcing states to adapt to new dynamics.

In modern public diplomacy, international broadcasting is essential and Türkiye has embraced this tool through both traditional media channels like TRT and AA, as well as newer platforms like social media. By adopting a multilingual approach and tailoring its messages to diverse audiences, Türkiye has enhanced its global influence and diplomatic relations, reflecting its commitment to projecting its voice on the world stage and engaging meaningfully with foreign publics. Türkiye has significantly advanced its "media diplomacy" strategy since the 2000s to reshape its global image and strengthen its foreign policy influence. Previously struggling with misrepresentation, Türkiye began an aggressive approach to international broadcasting to better communicate its foreign policy and present itself as a key global player. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has collaborated with outlets like Anadolu Agency (AA) and Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), engaging directly with foreign media to shape perceptions and disseminate information. Regular briefings and targeted messaging help ensure Türkiye's positions are understood abroad. TRT, especially with the launch of TRT World in 2015, has been central to this effort, offering an alternative to Western media narratives. The English-language channel broadcasts global news from a Turkish perspective, covering often overlooked issues

in regions like the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. TRT World's multilingual content in English, Arabic, and Spanish expands Türkiye's reach.

Anadolu Agency (AA) also plays a key role, providing timely news in multiple languages, English, Arabic, French, and Spanish. With its global network, AA supports Türkiye in shaping international narratives on political, economic, and diplomatic issues. "Multilingual broadcasting" is a cornerstone of Türkiye's international media strategy. Türkiye ensures its media outlets can reach diverse audiences across different regions by offering content in various languages, such as English, Arabic, French, and Spanish. This approach is critical in regions like "Latin America", "the Middle East", and "Africa", where Türkiye has strategic interests and seeks to strengthen its diplomatic relationships.

By offering content in languages such as English, Arabic, French, and Spanish, Türkiye leverages its media to project its values, culture, and policies, thus strengthening its "soft power" and improving its global image. This multilingual approach helps Türkiye connect with different linguistic and cultural communities, broadening its diplomatic outreach and fostering positive international relations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs plays a key role in coordinating Türkiye's media diplomacy, ensuring the consistency and effectiveness of its messaging through press briefings, foreign media engagement, and information distribution to shape global perceptions and support foreign policy goals. Through regular press briefings, foreign media engagement, and information distribution, the Ministry helps to shape global perceptions of Türkiye and advance its foreign policy objectives (See <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/>).⁸

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs engages with international media to promote Türkiye's stance on key issues such as the Syrian conflict, EU relations, and economic partnerships. By strategically leveraging media, the Ministry enhances Türkiye's public diplomacy efforts, ensuring that its policies are effectively communicated and supported globally. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs invites foreign journalists to Türkiye for interviews with high-ranking officials, ensuring international media accurately covers Türkiye's perspectives. TRT plays a key role in this effort. Initially focused on Turkish expatriates, TRT has expanded to directly engage local audiences worldwide. By launching multilingual channels, TRT broadcasts in regional languages, allowing Türkiye to effectively communicate its views on international issues. This strategic approach allows Türkiye to convey its viewpoints and positions on international issues (Kılıç, 2015).

Today, TRT operates 18 television channels, 17 radio stations, and a range of digital platforms, including the websites trt.net.tr and www.trtworld.com, available in 41 languages and 5 printed magazines (See <http://www.trt.net.tr>). As part of its strategy to expand its international digital news presence, TRT has launched several regional channels, including TRT Arabi (2010), TRT World (2015), TRT Russian (2020), TRT Deutsch (2020), TRT Français (2022), TRT Balkan (2022), TRT Afrika (2023), and TRT Persian (2024).⁹ To strengthen its presence in Spanish-speaking communities, TRT organized the 1st TRT Spanish-Speaking Countries Broadcasting Summit and launched TRT Español on April 26, 2024. This channel targets Spanish-speaking populations in Spain, Latin America, and the U.S., featuring

⁸ In 2021, the Ministry issued 435 press releases and responded to 50 inquiries. Meanwhile, the Minister of Foreign Affairs conducted 59 joint press conferences, with 26 held domestically. Additionally, the Minister participated in 6 oral interviews with national media, four telephone interviews, and 25 press briefings. He also engaged in 2 written interviews with newspapers and magazines, one oral interview with an international media outlet during his foreign visits, and 14 written interviews with foreign publications. Furthermore, the Minister's contributions included ten articles published in the international press.

⁹ Seventeen general managers, twenty-one journalists, and sixteen executives from media organizations across Spanish-speaking countries, including Spain, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Peru, Venezuela, Guatemala, Ecuador, and Bolivia, attended the summit. Additionally, forty Latin American and Spanish students studying in Türkiye, along with high-ranking diplomats and members of the press, were present at the event.. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/trt-istryanolyca-yayinhayatina-basladi/3202977>, Accessed 26 November 2024.

content from Turkish reporters and journalists from Colombia, Argentina, and Mexico. TRT Español emphasizes Türkiye's non-colonial stance and aims to improve its image in the region. Prior to the launch, TRT engaged Spanish-speaking audiences through its website offering Spanish-language news.

Another key component of Türkiye's international broadcasting is the TRT World Forum, established in 2017. The forum brings together experts from various fields to discuss global issues and promote diverse voices in international decision-making. President Erdoğan, in his 2021 message, highlighted the marginalization of regions such as the Islamic world, Africa, South Asia, and Latin America, aligning with Türkiye's broader diplomatic objectives. This highlights Türkiye's stance on strengthening its relations with the LAC countries.¹⁰

Anadolu Agency (AA), a key tool in Türkiye's international broadcasting efforts, has evolved since its founding during Türkiye's War of Independence to become a vital platform for projecting Türkiye's global voice. In 2023, AA disseminated over 1,362 news items, 3,912 photographs, and 429 videos daily in 13 languages, including Arabic, English, Spanish, and French. This multilingual approach enhances Türkiye's global presence, providing real-time updates on international developments. AA further strengthened its reach by establishing a Spanish Broadcasting Center in Bogota, Colombia, in 2017, expanding its influence in Latin America and the Caribbean (İlhan, 2017).

In addition to AA, the Yunus Emre Institute (YEI) supports Türkiye's media diplomacy through programs fostering media collaborations, such as those held in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, and Venezuela. A notable 2024 event in Mexico City brought together Turkish and Mexican journalists to discuss strengthening bilateral ties (Kalyoncuoğlu, 2024). Türkiye has also focused on building local communication infrastructure in regions like Latin America. For example, TİKA and Cuban State Television signed a cooperation protocol in 2015 to provide a Spanish dubbing system (TİKA Annual Report, 2015). Türkiye has supported regional media organizations and trained media professionals through programs like the Reporter Training Program (MEP), which has equipped 488 journalists—177 of them foreign—on crisis reporting (AA Akademi).

In 2019, TİKA and the Anadolu Agency News Academy organized the Reporter Training Program (MEP), specifically inviting journalists from Sub-Saharan Africa. Colombian press members were the only representatives from the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region. Additionally, the AA News Academy conducted various specialized training programs. One notable example is the "Energy Reporting" training, which took place in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, the Energy Market Regulatory Authority, and the Turkish Petroleum Corporation (Alaca, 2019). This program, held in 2019, attracted journalists from Venezuela and other countries, focusing on equipping them with the skills necessary to report on energy-related issues.

3. Conclusion

Türkiye's multifaceted public diplomacy has played a pivotal role in strengthening its diplomatic footprint and fostering durable partnerships in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region. By strategically combining listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting, Türkiye has positioned itself as an increasingly influential actor in global affairs, underlining principles of mutual respect, shared values, and inclusive international cooperation.

Though still developing, the listening dimension remains central to Türkiye's engagement. Actively seeking to understand the perspectives of foreign publics enhances its strategies' responsiveness and relevance, enabling Türkiye to address regional priorities and foster genuine two-way dialogue. In

¹⁰ See TRT World Forum 2021 Highlight – Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. <https://www.trtworldforum.com/talk/trt-world-forum-2021-highlight-recep-tayyip-erdogan/>

parallel, Türkiye's advocacy for sovereignty, political stability, and peaceful diplomacy resonates strongly with LAC countries, reinforcing its image as a reliable partner in promoting democracy and equitable international relations.

Cultural diplomacy, implemented through the Yunus Emre Institute, cultural exchange programs, and tourism initiatives, has further deepened bilateral and multilateral ties, demonstrating the potential of cultural engagement to transcend political and economic divides. Complementary tools such as sports diplomacy and infrastructure development have strengthened people-to-people connections, adding breadth to Türkiye's soft power.

Exchange diplomacy, particularly through scholarships, educational collaborations, and professional training, has contributed to nurturing future leaders and expanding Türkiye's influence among emerging generations in the LAC region. Likewise, investments in international broadcasting, exemplified by TRT World and Anadolu Agency, have amplified Türkiye's voice globally, enabling it to shape narratives, promote policies, and foster media cooperation through regional journalism training.

Despite notable progress, challenges persist, including the need for more comprehensive public opinion research and deeper integration of digital platforms into public diplomacy strategies. Nonetheless, Türkiye's evolving approach in the LAC region demonstrates adaptability and strategic foresight. Continued investment in listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, education, and media outreach will further align Türkiye's regional engagement with its broader foreign policy objectives. Through these sustained efforts, Türkiye is consolidating its ties with Latin America and the Caribbean and contributing to a more inclusive, multipolar, and dynamic global diplomatic order. Ultimately, the findings also underscore the utility of Nicholas Cull's public diplomacy framework as a robust analytical lens for evaluating Türkiye's strategic engagement in geographically distant yet increasingly significant regions.

From a policy perspective, the study highlights that sustained investment in culturally sensitive, mutually beneficial, and digitally integrated public diplomacy strategies can enhance Türkiye's long-term influence in the LAC region while reinforcing its broader goal of shaping a more balanced and multipolar international system.

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Extended Summary

Türkiye's Public Diplomacy in Latin America and the Caribbean: An Analysis through Nicholas Cull's Approach

This article investigates Türkiye's expanding public diplomacy in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) through the analytical lens of Nicholas Cull's five-pillar framework, listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting. While Türkiye's relations with the West and, more recently, Africa have attracted sustained scholarly attention, its engagement with LAC

remains understudied. By situating public diplomacy at the centre of Türkiye's outreach, the study fills a significant gap in the literature on its foreign policy diversification in an era of multipolarity.

Background and Research Focus

Since the early 2000s Türkiye has moved from a regionally confined posture toward a multidimensional, proactive diplomacy that encompasses Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and the Americas. Public diplomacy has been integral to this transformation, offering tools to cultivate long-term relationships, challenge Western-centric alignments, and consolidate an autonomous global profile. The LAC initiative, formally launched in 2006 and built on the 1998 Latin America and Caribbean Action Plan, exemplifies Ankara's drive to extend its influence beyond its immediate geography. Yet entrenched U.S. hegemony, China's growing presence, and residual Russian ties create a competitive environment in which Türkiye must operate strategically. Guided by the main question, how Türkiye deploys public diplomacy to advance its interests in LAC, the article examines the manifestations of Cull's five components and compares them with Ankara's experience in Africa and the West. It also assesses structural challenges and opportunities, including media dynamics, institutional cooperation, and societal linkages.

Listening: Diplomatic Infrastructure and Dialogic Platforms

Listening, regarded by Cull as the foundation of public diplomacy, entails collecting information on foreign publics' perceptions and feeding insights into policy design. Türkiye's listening capacity in LAC has grown with the rapid enlargement of its diplomatic network. By 2024, Ankara had reciprocal embassies in 17 LAC states, complemented by cross-accreditation arrangements for smaller islands. Embassies are hubs for opinion gathering, facilitating two-way communication through meetings, receptions, and informal contacts. Listening also occurs through multilateral venues. Türkiye's observer status in organizations such as the OAS, ACS, MERCOSUR, CARICOM, SICA, CELAC, ECLAC, and the Andean Community enables exposure to regional discourses. Regular ministerial forums, the Türkiye-CARICOM mechanism, Türkiye-SICA summits, and CELAC Quartet meetings, offer occasions to gauge expectations and craft cooperative agendas on health, agriculture, security, education, and trade. Digital diplomacy represents a newer listening channel. Turkish embassies in Ecuador, Paraguay, Brazil, and El Salvador maintain Spanish or Portuguese Twitter accounts, signalling adaptation to local audiences. However, engagement levels remain modest, indicating the need for more substantial research, polling, and analytics. Scholars note that Turkish public diplomacy often retains one-way tendencies; institutionalized opinion studies could sharpen message calibration.

Advocacy: Promoting Sovereignty, Democracy, and Mediation

Advocacy refers to articulating and defending policies or values abroad. In the LAC context, Türkiye emphasizes democratic legitimacy, sovereignty, and balanced multipolar governance. Its global slogan, "The world is bigger than five," criticizes the veto privileges of the UN Security Council's permanent members, resonating with states seeking fairer representation. Türkiye's stance after the 2016 coup attempt, foregrounding the "national will," aligns with Latin America's own history of contesting military interventions. Ankara condemned extra-constitutional changes in Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Chile, and Venezuela, backing constitutional order. During Venezuela's leadership crisis, it supported Nicolás Maduro's legitimacy against external pressures, framing its advocacy around non-interference. Mediation further enriches advocacy. Cooperation with Brazil in negotiating the 2010 Tehran Declaration on Iran's nuclear programme illustrated how collaboration with a prominent LAC actor can elevate Türkiye's diplomatic weight while advancing global peace initiatives. High-level visits amplify advocacy messages. Starting with President Demirel's 1995 tour and the 1998 Action Plan, successive visits, by President Erdoğan to Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, and Venezuela, have entrenched bilateral relations and underscored shared democratic and

developmental aspirations. Ministerial missions, such as Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu's extensive 2022 itinerary, sustain momentum.

Cultural Diplomacy: Soft-Power Bridges

Cultural diplomacy enables states to cultivate goodwill by showcasing artistic, linguistic, and culinary heritage. Türkiye has institutionalised this pillar through the Yunus Emre Institute (YEI), operating branches in Argentina, Mexico, and Venezuela. Programmes include Turkish-language courses, film festivals, photography exhibitions, coffee workshops, and gastronomy days, often linked to UNESCO-listed traditions such as Turkish coffee. Development agency TİKA complements these efforts by restoring monuments (e.g., the Ottoman Clock Tower in Mexico), supporting museums, libraries, and cultural parks, and funding artistic performances such as the Anatolian Fire dance troupe in Chile, infrastructure with social utility—friendship libraries, cultural centres, playgrounds, cements people-to-people relations. Tourism diplomacy enhances visibility. Campaigns like “Home Türkiye” and “ComeSeeTürkiye,” along with expanded air connectivity, have driven a fourfold rise in visitors from LAC since 2008, with Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia emerging as leading sources. Sports diplomacy reinforces cultural bonds: renowned footballers from Brazil and Argentina have shaped Turkish club culture, while Türkiye's solidarity with Chile's Deportivo Palestino illustrates values-driven cooperation.

Exchange Diplomacy: Education, Training, and Mobility

Exchange diplomacy centres on mutual learning via academic and professional circulation. Türkiye Scholarships constitute the flagship, offering full support to international students. Although numbers from LAC remain limited (704 in 2023/24), enrolments from Haiti, Venezuela, and Colombia are growing. Building alum networks would enhance long-term influence. The Türkiye Maarif Foundation manages schools in Venezuela and Colombia, preparing students for tertiary studies in Türkiye and promoting cultural literacy. Professional exchange occurs through the MFA's Diplomacy Academy, which hosts training for foreign diplomats, and through thematic workshops such as Anadolu Agency's energy reporting courses. These schemes cultivate sympathetic elites who can interpret Türkiye in their societies. Logistical connectivity underpins exchanges. Turkish Airlines' flights to eight LAC countries facilitate student flows, business links, and tourism, projecting Turkish hospitality as part of the soft-power repertoire.

International Broadcasting: Media Diplomacy and Multilingual Reach

Broadcasting allows states to narrate their stories and contest unfavourable framings. Türkiye's media diplomacy has expanded since the 2000s through the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) and the Anadolu Agency (AA). TRT World (2015) delivers news from a Turkish perspective in English, later joined by Arabic, Russian, German, French, Balkan, African, Persian, and, notably, Spanish services. The 2024 launch of TRT Español, preceded by a Spanish-language web portal and a summit with journalists from Spain and Latin America, targets 500 million Spanish speakers, stressing Türkiye's non-colonial stance. AA disseminates multimedia content in thirteen languages and operates a Spanish Broadcasting Centre in Bogotá. Joint training with TİKA—such as the Reporter Education Programme and dubbing support for Cuban state television—builds professional networks and technical capacity, deepening trust in Turkish information outlets. The TRT World Forum convenes global thinkers, highlighting regions often marginalised in decision-making, including Latin America.

Findings and Implications

Applying Cull's framework reveals that Türkiye's LAC policy employs a comprehensive public-diplomacy mix: Listening through embassies, summits, and digital channels is expanding but requires systematic research and metrics to achieve reciprocal dialogue. Advocacy stresses equitable

governance, democracy, and mediation, delivered via rhetoric, peace initiatives, and symbolic visits. Cultural diplomacy leverages art, language, cuisine, heritage restoration, tourism, and sports, fostering empathetic connections beyond politics. Exchange diplomacy invests in scholarships, schools, diplomatic training, and aviation routes, though alum mobilisation remains a gap. International broadcasting multiplies Türkiye's voice, using multilingual newsrooms and journalist exchanges to shape narratives. Collectively, these pillars strengthen Türkiye's credibility as a constructive partner, diversify its alliances, and enhance its profile in a crowded geopolitical arena. Yet several challenges persist: geographic distance, limited student inflows, competition from larger powers, and uneven engagement on social media. Addressing these will demand an evidence-based strategy, closer cooperation with regional research institutes, and stronger integration of digital analytics.

Conclusion

Türkiye's engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean exemplifies the adaptation of public diplomacy to a multipolar order. Ankara is crafting a distinctive brand of soft power by embedding listening, advocacy, cultural initiatives, educational mobility, and transnational media within a coherent framework. The case also validates Cull's typology as a robust tool for evaluating outreach to remote yet strategically relevant regions. Sustained commitment to culturally sensitive, mutually beneficial, and technologically attuned practices promises to consolidate Türkiye's standing in the Americas and contribute to a more balanced, dialogic international system.

