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EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS IN TURKEY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF «SOFT» POLICY

The previous century began with the First World War and ended with the end of the Cold War. In contrast to forceful actions, the concept of soft power has come into use. Unlike hard power, soft power did not use coercion. It was implemented through public diplomacy. This method was used by countries to clarify their political goals and strengthen friendly ties. Public diplomacy, carried out on the basis of cultural commonality, allowed countries to build their political courses. The primarily element of public diplomacy is two-way communication with the public, and the participants in the dialogue could be not only the government and the public, but also the general public with the general public. Student and teacher exchange programs, as part of higher education's internationalization, are an important part of this communication.

This was especially true for Turkey in the post-colonial era, given the development of new Turkic-speaking countries on the global scene. These events, together with Turkey's geographic placement between Europe and Asia, will accelerate the development of diverse international educational programs. This not only allowed for the restoration of lost cultural links with Turkic countries, but also improved Turkey's international image. Projects like the Great Student Project, Turkey Scholarships, and the Mevlana exchange program are discussed as soft power instruments in this article. The impact of events in Turkish foreign policy in the twenty-first century on the establishment of academic exchange programs will also be examined.

Key words: soft power, education, exchange programs, Mevlana.

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Түркияның білім беру жобалары «жұмсақ күш» саясаты құралы ретінде

Өткен ғасыр Бірінші дүниежүзілік соғыстан басталып, қырғи-қабақ соғыстың бітуімен аяқталды. Күш әрекеттеріне қарама-қарсы жұмсақ күш ұғымы қолданысқа енді. Қатты күшке қарағанда жұмсақ күш мәжбүрлеуді қолданбаған. Ол қоғамдық дипломатиясы арқылы жүзеге асты. Бұл әдісті елдер өздерінің саяси мақсаттарын нақтылау және достық байланыстарды нығайту үшін пайдаланды. Мәдени ортақтық негізінде жүзеге асырылатын қоғамдық дипломатия елдерге өздерінің саяси бағыттарын құруға мүмкіндік берді. Қоғамдық дипломатияның басты ерекшелігі – халықпен екі жақты қарым-қатынас жасау, диалогқа тек билік пен қоғам ғана емес, сонымен бірге халықтың өзара араласуына да мүмкіндік беру. Бұл коммуникацияның маңызды құрамдас бөлігі жоғары білімді интернационалдандыру шеңберінде студенттер мен оқытушылардың алмасу бағдарламалары болып табылады.

Түркия үшін бұл әсіресе отарлаудан кейінгі дәуірде әлемдік аренаға жаңа түркітідес елдердің шығуы маңызды болды. Түркияның Еуропа мен Азия арасындағы географиялық орналасуымен бірге бұл іс-шаралар әртүрлі халықаралық білім беру бағдарламаларын құруды күшейтеді. Бұл түркі елдерімен жойылған мәдени байланысты қалпына келтіруге ғана емес, Түркияның халықаралық аренадағы беделін көтеруге мүмкіндік берді. Бұл мақалада Түркияның жұмсақ күші құралдары ретінде Ұлы студенттік жоба, Түркия стипендиялары, Mevlana сияқты жобалар талқыланады. 21 ғасырдағы түрік сыртқы саясатындағы академиялық алмасу бағдарламаларының іске қосылуына әсер еткен оқиғалар да талданады.

Түйін сөздер: жұмсақ күш, білім, алмасу бағдарламалары, Mevlana.

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Образовательные проекты Турции как инструмент «мягкой» политики

Прошлый век начался с Первой мировой войны и завершился окончанием Холодной войны. В противовес силовым действиям в обиход вошло понятие мягкой силы. В отличие от жесткой силы, мягкой сила обходилась без использования принуждения. Она реализовывалась с помощью публичной дипломатии. Этот метод использовался странами для разъяснения своих политических целей и укрепления дружеских связей. Публичная дипломатия, проводимая на основе культурной общности, позволяла странам выстраивать свои политические курсы. Основной чертой публичной дипломатии является двустороннее общение с общественностью, причем участниками диалога могли быть не только правительство и общественность, но и общественность с общественностью. Важной составляющей этого общения являются программы обмена студентами и преподавателями как часть интернационализации высшего образования.

Для Турции это было особенно актуально в свете появления новых тюркоязычных стран на мировой арене в постколониальной эпохе. Вкупе с географическим расположением Турции между Европой и Азией, эти события активизируют создания различных международных образовательных программ. Это позволило не только восстановить утраченные культурные связи с тюркскими странами, но и повысить имидж Турции на международной арене. В данной статье рассматриваются такие проекты, как Великий студенческий проект, Стипендии Турции, Мевлана, как инструменты мягкой силы Турции. Также будут разобраны события во внешней политике Турции в XXI веке, которые повлияли на запуск программ академического обмена.

Ключевые слова: мягкая сила, образование, программа обмена, Мевлана.

Introduction

Culture is an important part of one's identity. As a result, it is extremely important in international relations. Throughout history, each country has developed its unique cultural identity. This resulted in the formation of their domestic and foreign policies, as well as the emergence of international ties between them (Reeves, 2004).

Different cultures, of course, led to misunderstandings and conflicts between countries, which became especially severe after Samuel Huntington's article "The Clash of Civilizations", which eventually turned to a book. He put forward the idea that further conflicts would be between cultures, not states. This became a prerequisite for the emergence of many works on the role of culture in the relations between different states. This created a precondition for the birth of several studies on the importance of culture in the relations between different states.

The history of the twentieth century, which saw two world wars and several lesser conflicts, shown that the use of aggressive means to achieve goals needs to be reconsidered (Baldwin, 2016). The result of these reflections was the emergence of such a term as "soft power". Professor Joseph Nye of Harvard University coined the phrase in the late 1980s. "Soft power" refers to a country's ability

to attain its ultimate purpose without resorting to coercion. If culture, social initiatives, and principles elicit empathy, they will get more supporters (Nye, 1990: 182).

As part of their international interactions, great powers are beginning to employ "soft power". The formation of numerous institutions that promote these countries' culture is one of the outcomes of such a policy. The Goethe Institute, the Confucius Institute, the Yunus Emre Institute, and others are among them. As a result of the widespread employment of cultural promotion in foreign policy, "soft power" is frequently referred to as "cultural power" (Ferguson, 2006: 18-24). Cultural policy began to play a significant role in building ties between countries and pushing state interests once it became the most essential aspect of "soft power". It may be possible to facilitate international relations by promoting a favourable image of countries (Sancar, 2012: 169).

The promotion of national interests on the basis of cultural policy is mainly based on two factors: language and education. In this context, In this context, the fall of the Soviet Union was a watershed point in Turkish history. The emergence of new independent Turkic-speaking states has provided Turkey with additional opportunity to increase its influence. Linguistic, historical and religious kinship was a prerequisite for the successful implementation

of the cultural policy of Turkey in the Turkic-speaking countries (Sancak, 2016: 16-26). The formation of organizations like TIKA, TURKSOY, TURKPA, and others only strengthened these beliefs.

Materials and methods

The purpose of this article is to highlight the function of educational programs as a tool of Turkish cultural policy through historical analysis. In the article, the following tasks were assigned:

- a definition of soft power in international relations;
- a review of materials and an assessment of the relationship between educational projects and Turkish foreign policy.

The article drew on the work of Turkish and Western scientists and politicians, including K. Turan and G. Chetinsaya, J. Nye, as well as official Internet resources.

This allowed for a better understanding of the major motivations for the formation of educational programs, as well as Turkey's attempts to achieve a prominent position in world society under the new globalization conditions.

Results and Discussion

The "Great Student Project" and the "Türkiye Scholarships"

The "Great Student Project" was the start of Turkey's "soft power" policy in the realm of education. This project, which began in the academic year 1992-1993, allowed ten thousand students from Turkic states to study in Turkey on a scholarship. (Öztürk, 2014: 52). Three thousand of them were secondary school students, and seven thousand were representatives of higher education (Kavak, Baskan, 2001:96).

The objectives of the "Great Student Project" are as follows:

- 1) To raise a generation that is tolerant to Turkey and to foster a lasting friendship in the Turkic world;
- 2) To satisfy the needs of new independent Turkic countries (Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) for trained personnel;
- 3) To provide knowledge about Turkish culture and language;
- 4) To strengthen bilateral ties in the Turkic world and deepen partnerships between new independent Turkic countries (Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan,

Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) (Ahmetbeyoğlu, 2007: 401).

The project had several organizational issues at first, and the number of scholarships issued declined from 8195 to 1548 over a five-year period from 1993 to 1995 (Kavak, Baskan, 2001: 92-103). Despite the fact that economic complexity was added to this, Turkey continued to invest in this project and by 2010 the number of students studying in Turkey during this time amounted to 27 383 (Çubukçu, 2010).

In 2010, the "Great Student Project" began to be restructured and renewed in order to meet international standards. The future policy of Turkey regarding foreign students has begun to be discussed. As a result of these conversations, the "Türkiye Scholarships" program (Türkiye Bursları) was established in 2012 (Kaya, 2014: 89-90). The Presidium of Turks Abroad and Associated Communities (Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı (YTB)) oversaw the implementation of this project. This project offers students, including doctorate students, the option to obtain a scholarship that covers their hostel accommodations, tuition, Turkish language studies, and round-trip tickets, as well as a monthly stipend. And if 40 000 applications were received in the first year of the program's inception, about 100 000 students from 140 countries applied for scholarships the following year, in 2013. In 2016, this number grew to 122 000 applications, with 172 nations represented.

The first International Student Congress on Social Sciences was also held in 2015 under the auspices of the "Türkiye Scholarships". His purpose was to assist international students with any issues that may arise in their academic careers. Foreign students gave presentations, gave talks, and exchanged ideas with each other on a wide range of themes during this congress.

Through a people-centered approach, "Türkiye Scholarships" aims to promote connections between Turkey and other nations while also contributing to global knowledge (Türkiye Bursları).

Academic mobility on the example of the "Mevlana" exchange program

International student mobility is viewed as a valuable instrument of cultural policy since it fosters mutual understanding, communication, and sympathy among countries and cultures, as well as helping to peace in the world (Bevis, Lucas, 2007: 27). Such projects are carried out to disseminate state ideals, cultures, and languages. Human-

centered scholarship and exchange programs could make a substantial contribution to the long-term views that integrating countries aim to develop. Scholarship programs in education are elements of governments' cultural policy efforts to enlighten, develop, and guide public opinion in other states in accordance with their own national goals (Lima, 2007: 239-241). These projects help to attempts to educate and inform other communities in terms of acknowledging the states' strengths and values. Through direct communication with the peoples of other states, long lasting conceptions of states can be formed.

At the beginning of its existence, participation in scholarship programs was the prerogative of a privileged layer of society. And here it is impossible not to note the influence of individuals who received foreign education on the course of history and international relations. For instance, Alexander Yakovlev, a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's Politburo who influenced Mikhail Gorbachev, established a good relationship with David Truman, who worked at the Columbia University as a political scientist and administrator. It has also been suggested that the exchange programs led to the USSR's demise, as more and more people became poisoned with foreign ideology over time (Nye, 2005: 50-51).

Scholarship programs, which have been used for many objectives in the past, are today seen as a significant tool of spreading cultural values as well as economic advantages by developed countries and multinational corporations (for instance, the European Union). Scholarship programs are recognized as a communication process, not manipulation, as part of cultural policy operations. Because developing cultural and social relationships is the most effective approach for achieving inter-state cooperation. Scholarship programs are one of the simplest and least expensive ways to do this. Scholarship programs are now seen as a significant diplomatic tool in many developed states (Nye, 2005: 60).

The "Mevlana" exchange program was formed by a resolution of Turkey's Council of Higher Education (Yüksek Öğretim Kurumu (YÖK)) announced on August 23, 2011. Despite the fact that it only started acting two years later, in the 2013-2014 academic year. This initiative allowed for teacher and student exchanges between Turkish and international universities.

The program is open to all universities worldwide, regardless of geographical location.

This allowed teachers and students from any country to use the program without restrictions. The duration of courses for students is from one to two semesters, and for teachers – from one week to three months.

The "Mevlana" exchange program set itself the following goals in order to increase cultural impact in other nations and raise the level and prestige of education in Turkey:

1) Making Turkey a highly regarded destination for higher education;

2) Steadily rising Turkish universities' scientific potential;

3) Participating to the process of higher education globalization;

4) On a worldwide scale, promoting Turkey's cultural and historical heritage;

5) Increasing intercultural communication to enrich the culture of tolerance and mutual understanding for distinctions.

Named after the XIII century Persian Sufi poet Jalaladdin Rumi, also known as Mevlana, the exchange program sought to "befit" the great scholar who visited many countries and cities, both as a student and as a teacher.

One of the most essential aspects of the Mevlana exchange program was that it may be used without limitation by any state that signed the program's agreement. This element helped to make the program more accessible and set it apart from other scholarship programs around the world. According to Turkish authorities, their specific regulations and constraints relating to a variety of issues, such as the student's degree, citizenship, and so on, impeded both globalization in general and the internalization of higher education in particular.

Despite the fact that the "Mevlana" exchange program promotes itself as a program with no geographical limitations, the European Union countries that participate in the Erasmus program were not included in the program's list of participants. This was due to the fact that the Erasmus program was already in place in Turkey at the time, and it was decided to create an independent program rather than a replacement for it.

Even before the foundation of the "Mevlana" exchange program was officially announced, 37 Turkish higher education institutions signed 228 protocols with universities from 32 other states. These agreements covered a wide range of topics, from visa application simplification to document and diploma compliance with international standards (Hürriyet, 2013).

In the first year of launch, which covered the 2013-2014 academic year, students and teachers from countries such as the USA, Japan, Russia, etc. took part in the program. The total number of students who participated in the program in the first academic year was 997 students, of which 402 left Turkey, 595 – those who came to study in Turkey. The total number of teaching staff was 931, of which 622 left Turkey for other countries, and 309 came to Turkey (Çetinsaya, 2014: 163).

Here it is appropriate to compare these data with the data of the “Erasmus” program for the same 2003-2004 academic year, when “Mevlana” was launched, and for the 2004-2005 academic year, when Turkey became part of the “Erasmus” program.

In the 2004-2005 academic year, 1142 students left Turkey and 229 students came, for a total of 1371 students. There were 339 teachers who left Turkey and 223 who came to Turkey, bringing the total number of instructors to 562.

In the 2013-2014 academic year, 15 060 students left Turkey and 6818 students came, for a total of 21 878 students. A total of 8099 teachers took a part in the program, with 5838 leaving Turkey and 2261 arriving (Yılmaz, 2019: 152).

The “Erasmus” exchange program has grown to become the largest and most popular exchange program in the world, as well as a role model for numerous scholarship programs. As a result, she had an impact on the “Mevlana” as well.

The “Erasmus” was started in 1987 as a European Union student exchange program. It broadened the scope of its activities throughout time (Maiworm, 2001: 460).

The “Erasmus” became a global brand and cultural phenomenon as a result of this. Students that participate in the program contribute to lay the groundwork for European integration. One of the program’s policy priorities was to plant the seed of a European identity in the minds of future generations (Kuhn, 2012: 997).

The “Erasmus” was instrumental in reinforcing Europe’s solidarity and integrity as a form of soft power (Corradi, 2015: 19-21). In view of the requirement to establish its own sources of soft power, the next chapter will look at why Turkey has its own exchange programs.

Political prerequisites for the creation of exchange programs

The reasons for the appearance in Turkey in the early 2010s of such exchange programs as the “Türkiye Scholarships” and the “Mevlana” should

be sought in changes in the country’s foreign policy. It is worth mentioning the personality of Akhmet Davutoglu, who served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey from May 1, 2009 to August 28, 2014 and was the designer of the country’s policy (Dogan, 2014: 265).

Akhmet Davutoglu’s foreign policy was based on the concept of “strategic depth”, which entails using soft power and the Ottoman past to increase Turkey’s impact as a regional force in the Middle East (Müftüler-Bac, 2011: 281–282). Davutoglu began to alter Turkey’s foreign policy after taking office as Minister of Foreign Affairs, based on 5 principles:

1) Policy of “zero problems with neighbors”. Turkey’s relations with its neighbors are increasingly cooperative these days. Turkey and neighboring nations are expanding commercial ties and holding joint conversations on political and economic issues;

2) Achieve a balance between liberty and security. Any political regime’s legitimacy is based on its ability to protect the liberty and safety of its citizens; yet, this security should not come at the expense of the human rights;

3) Political activity aiming at preventing a crisis by adopting preventative measures before it occurs;

4) Foreign strategy with multiple axes. Turkey aspires to collaborate rather than compete with other countries as it develops partnerships with them;

5) Rhythmic diplomacy. This principle has aided Turkey in becoming a more active participant in international affairs. Turkey, as a member of already existing international organizations such as the UN and NATO, becomes the driving force behind the formation of new organizations such as TURKSOY, TURKPA. These trends open up new horizons for Turkey to conduct foreign political activities based on “soft power” (Mavrina, 2014: 72).

These principles become especially relevant in the light of uprisings and protests in the Arab countries in 2011. The “Arab Spring” is the name given to these occurrences. Turkey is being pushed to deploy soft power more actively and widely as a result of the rising crises in the Middle East (Turan, 2012: 75). This is a new subject in the country’s foreign policy. Turkey, despite its military might, seeks collaboration in the political, economic, and social areas without posing any threats. International connections have borne fruit as a result of political interactions based on cultural mutual respect.

By disseminating their culture, cultural policy aids states in advancing their objectives (Angey-Sentuc, Molho 2015, 4). Education and international

exchange programs become the most significant aspects of cultural policy in this context. Most notably and meaningful here, exchange programs in higher education play an important role in the globalization by fostering multinational connections, cultural exchange, and the development of host country-friendly generations abroad who will become the future leaders of their states, as well as improving the countries' global reputation (Peterson, 2014: 2–3). As a result, the “Mevlana” exchange program is an important source of information and an instrument for Turkish “soft power”.

The words above were also conveyed in many YÖK documents, and in the statements of Gokhan Çetinsaya, who served as president of the YÖK, and Ahmet Davutoğlu. Noting the growth in the quality of the higher education system in Turkey in his report, Çetinsaya noted that it has become an important part of Turkish soft power in the context of globalization (Çetinsaya, 2014: 187). Turkey has taken a significant step toward improving its worldwide reputation by launching exchange programs and enhancing its soft power through the process of internationalization in higher education.

Noting that although Turkey occupied only a small share of the education sector in the world, Davutoğlu noted the importance of quick action under the “Mevlana” exchange program to reach parity. He went on to say that mixing cultures and encouraging future generations to appreciate Turkey wherever they return after their studies, whether in Asia, South America, or Africa, is an important element of the “Mevlana” (Hürriyet, 2013).

Conclusion

Changes in the political world at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century led to the emergence of new concepts and methods of conducting international politics. One of them is soft power. These changes also affected Turkey, which, being at the intersection of Western and Eastern culture, sought to increase its role in solving both regional and global problems.

The experience of Western countries has shown that good results in the field of education can be the reason for success in foreign policy. The growing internationalization of education, which is a relatively new trend, has resulted in increasingly direct links between education and international affairs.

In this context, student exchange programs are an important part of educational policy. The first significant project in Turkey in this area was the “Great Student Project”, which was focused on the Turkic-speaking countries that emerged after the collapse of the USSR. Despite the fact that the project had organizational problems and uneven results, it allowed Turkey to gain a lot of experience, which led to the creation of international exchange programs such as the “Türkiye Scholarships”, the “Mevlana” exchange program.

The establishment of these programs was a significant milestone for Turkey, as it helped to strengthen its position in the international community and create a reputation as a country capable of providing high-quality education.

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