

CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AND TURKEY IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract

In today's political world, diplomatic means play a significant role in a country's efforts to achieve political goals and to promote its image in the international arena. Diplomatic channels are also being used by the governments rather than relying solely on military and economic means in their interactions with other countries. Moreover, in contrast to state-based diplomacy, which involves interactions between governments, nowadays, states' diplomatic efforts are targeted at people as well.

This paper examines the concept and practice of cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy is carried out by a government to support its foreign policy goals or diplomacy-or both- by using a wide range of cultural manifestations for a number of purposes. In line with these discussions, the paper examines aspects of the cultural diplomacy of Turkey in order to understand how cultural diplomacy has been used as an important tool by Turkey within its relations with the Middle East in recent period with its limitations.

Key Words: Diplomacy, Cultural Diplomacy, Turkish Foreign Policy, Turkish-Middle Eastern Relations

KÜRESELLEŞME ÇAĞINDA KÜLTÜREL DİPLOMASİ VE TÜRKİYE

Özet

Günümüz siyasi dünyasında, bir ülkenin siyasi hedeflerine ulaşmaya ve uluslararası arenadaki imajını desteklemeye yönelik çabalarında diplomatik araçlar önemli bir rol oynamaktadırlar. Devletler diğer ülkeler ile olan etkileşimlerinde yalnızca askeri ve ekonomik araçlara güvenmek yerine, diplomatik kanalları da kullanılmaktadırlar. Bununla birlikte, yalnızca hükümetler arasındaki etkileşimleri içeren devlet-merkezli diplomasinin aksine, günümüzde devletlerin diplomatik çabaları insanlara da yöneliktir.

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Bu çalışmada kültürel diplomasi kavramı ve uygulamaları incelenecektir. Kültürel diplomasi bir devlet tarafından kendi dış politika amaçlarını, diplomasisini ya da her ikisini de desteklemek amacıyla bir dizi kültürel tezahürlerin geniş bir yelpazede kullanılmasıyla gerçekleştirilir. Sözü edilenler ışığında, bu çalışmada son dönem Türkiye-Orta Doğu ilişkilerinde, kültürel diplomasinin önemli bir araç olarak nasıl kullanıldığını anlamak amacıyla, Türkiye'nin kültürel diplomasi yönleri kısıtlamaları ile beraber araştırılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Diplomasi, Kültürel Diplomasi, Türk Dış Politikası, Türkiye-Orta Doğu İlişkileri

1. INTRODUCTION

Diplomacy is regarded as a crucial way in which states represent their interests overseas. However, in today's world, it is no longer possible to consider diplomacy only in terms of relations centered on central governments or foreign ministries. In recent years, diplomacy has become much more complex, because the international environment, where diplomacy takes place, has become more multi-faceted. In the world of the 21st century, diplomats of sovereign states have to deal with more issues and more actors in a more globalized environment. Beside political relations, economic and trade interests gained importance, and there emerged a variety of important tasks such as presenting abroad a state's national image. And in today's international atmosphere, all these issues to have to be applied more quickly than before and in a more public manner.

It can be said that "cultural diplomacy" is an important type of diplomacy, since it allows states to present their culture internationally. States also use cultural diplomacy in order to build and maintain relationships with other global actors. In other words, a country's soft power capacity has crucial role in the success of its cultural diplomacy as much as does the integrity and efficacy of its policies. It is generally argued that the concept of cultural diplomacy rest on the fundamental distinction of hard and soft power of political entities, which evolved in the international relations rather in the analysis of post-Cold War phenomena. This theoretical distinction emphasizes traditional forms of power based on economic or military means – the power of coercion called as hard power –on the one hand; and a nation's soft power dimensions based on information, preferences, attractiveness on the other. With respect to boundaries of the concept of cultural diplomacy, public opinion and images have become essential assets for a country's foreign policy agenda. These are important points

in the analysis of Turkey's relations with the Middle East as well as security considerations. Although security, economic and identity considerations have to be considered together to provide a coherent explanation throughout the study, it will be tried to pay attention to the vital role of culture and cultural attempts in international relations.

Accordingly, the study consists of two parts. The first part discusses the concept of "diplomacy", its instruments, and its evolution from traditional to new types of diplomacy. After analyzing "diplomacy" as a general framework, the concept of "cultural diplomacy" will be tried to evaluate. The second part discusses the new concepts of Turkey's foreign policy and its conceptual sources. The debates on Turkey's new foreign policy vision through the new concepts will be touched upon. The impact of the use of soft power and cultural diplomacy will try to be understood by analyzing the recent examples with their challenges.

2. CULTURAL DIPLOMACY: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Diplomacy is generally identified as a key process of communication and negotiation in world politics, and as an important policy instrument used by global actors. However, it can be argued that among the scholars, who have been studying International Relations, diplomacy is one of those terms that have been given a number of definitions. Oxford dictionary defines diplomacy as "management of a country's affairs by its agents abroad, and the activity of managing relations between different countries".¹ In addition, while some definitions equate diplomacy with foreign policy, the others equate the term with the instrument or technique of foreign policy. Thus, diplomacy is considered as one of the vague terms which can have different meanings depending on user and usage.

Diplomacy is essentially regarded as political activity and an instrument of statecraft, and communication has been considered as the focal point of diplomacy. It is argued that diplomacy consists of communication between officials designed in order to promote foreign policy by formal agreement or tacit adjustment.² Accordingly, diplomacy attempts to manage the goals of foreign policy by implementing goals and by preparing foreign policy decisions. As a governmental activity, diplomacy is considered as the whole process of policy making and implementation rather than only a particular policy instrument.

¹ Oxford Dictionary, ed. Miranda Steel, (Oxford University Press, 2000).

² G.R. Berridge, **Diplomacy: Theory and Practice** (NY: Pelgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.1.

Many commentators view diplomacy as the mean for allies to cooperate and for adversaries to resolve conflicts without force. States communicate, bargain, influence one another, and adjust their differences through diplomacy. Formal diplomacy is perceived as a regularized system of official communication between states, which include the exchange of ambassadors, the maintenance of embassies in foreign capitals, participation in conferences and other direct negotiations.³ Through diplomacy, a state asserts itself and represents its concerns to the world; on the other hand, diplomacy also aims to further a state's particular goals while preserving international order. It is the tool that states use to protect their interests without arousing the animosity of other states.

As stated in the previous lines, diplomacy is generally perceived as an instrument of statecraft, and it originally was regarded as an instrument of states to deal with other states.⁴ However, it is apparent that even the most powerful states are no longer the only important actors in a global diplomatic system. Although bilateral state to state diplomacy remains a significant feature of the system, it has been supplemented by "multilateral" forms of diplomacy with both state and non-state actors. As mentioned before, International organizations tend to act as the same way as the states diplomatically. They can communicate their interests and use their resources in order to influence the outcome of the negotiations. Furthermore, there are also many non-state actors on the world stage, such as citizens, multinational corporations, the media, and many international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Especially, NGOs are seen particularly important, since they have many tasks that used to be performed by states.⁵ They fight hunger, poverty, drought, and the pollution of the environment. They promote education and health care. They try to advance peace. Moreover, in today's world, citizens from different countries can quickly be informed by the media and can easily communicate by the Internet.

As mentioned before, in recent years, diplomacy has become much more multifaceted, as the world of the 21st century requires states to deal with more issues with more actors in a more complex environment. States need to undertake a wider set of issues like presenting abroad a state's national image and brand, as well as to put more emphasis on economic and trade interests.⁶ Issues

³ Martin Griffiths, Terry O'Callaghan and Steven C. Roach, **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: The Key Concepts** Second Edition, (NY: Routledge, 2008), p. 81.

⁴ Juergen Kleiner, **Diplomatic Practice: Between Tradition and Innovation** (SGP: World Scientific Publishing Co., 2009), p.1.

⁵ Ibid.,p.23.

⁶ Simon Mark, "A Comparative Study of the Cultural Diplomacy of Canada, New Zealand and India", (Unpublished Phd. Thesis, The University of Auckland, 2008): p.34.

such as trade, finance, migration, human rights, and environmental concerns have begun to matter more in global affairs. As a result, diplomacy cannot be considered only in terms of relations regarding central governments or foreign ministries. In today's global environment, many people in the world have easy and instant access to all kinds of information, and many of them have the ability to influence their governments' positions. Such openness and multi-level cooperation necessitates the pursuit of more collaborative diplomatic relations with various types of actors.⁷ As a result, the need to build cooperation has gained importance for diplomats throughout the world.

Of course, this does not mean that hard power, which will be mentioned in the following lines, has completely lost its matter in the conduct of international affairs. Nevertheless, in the information society "soft power"- used by Joseph Nye, in his book "*Bound to Lead*"⁸- becomes more important, which based on the attractiveness of a nation's values, culture and policies and it causes people to act through co-operation rather than coercion. In other words, it is generally said that international relations has witnessed the growing use of "soft power" mechanisms in diplomatic relations.

The discipline of International Relations (IR) is generally distinguished into two broad approaches while studying the use of power by the actors: one is "hard power", the other is "soft power".⁹ It can be argued that hard power is achieved through military threat or use, and by means of economic menace or reward, and it obliges its addressees to consider their interests in terms of calculable costs and benefits. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, Nye used the concept of "soft power" in his book, and he described it as: "*the ability to persuade through culture, values and ideas, as opposed to 'hard power', which conquers or coerces through military might*". In this context, Nye used "soft power" to call attention to the ability to get others to want what you want. This ability to affect the preferences of others tends to be associated with culture, ideology and institutions, which are distinguished from the hard power resources like military and economic strength.¹⁰

⁷ Jan Melissen (ed.), "The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice" in **The New Public Diplomacy Soft Power in International Relations**, (NY: PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2005), p.5.

⁸ See: Joseph S. Nye, **Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power** (NY: Basic Books, 1991).

⁹ In addition, in recent years "Smart power" has been increasingly used by the scholars, which is the ability to combine hard and soft power in successful strategies in different contexts.

¹⁰ David A. Baldwin, "Power and International Relations", in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth A. Simmons (eds.), **Handbook of International Relations**, (London: Sage Publications, 2005), p.186.

Culture, education, arts, print and visual media, film, poetry, literature, architecture, higher education (universities, research centers, etc.), non-governmental organizations, science and technology, the capacity for innovation, tourism, platforms for economic cooperation and diplomacy are regarded as important factors that feed soft power. Soft power includes a combination of these elements, and it gives people an idea about a country's cultural richness and social capital. In addition, a political system that prioritizes freedoms and liberties, guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms, and that is also just, transparent and democratic is another key factor, which defines a country's soft power capacity.¹¹

It can be argued that the "hard power" approach has historically used as the policy of governments in conducting their international and regional relations. However, as mentioned before, the increasingly interconnected world stage highlights the need for cooperation at a new level. This is where cultural diplomacy as a form of "soft power" becomes significant. With reference to Nye, in international politics, the resources that produce soft power arise largely from the values an organization or country expresses in its culture. And, it is claimed that cultural diplomacy has the potential to become a more powerful tool for improving a country's image and its relations with other countries when it is better understood.¹² It may also contribute to domestic nation-building. Accordingly, it can contribute to national social cohesion within a political system which prioritizes freedoms and liberties, guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms, and which is also transparent, just and democratic. In other words, a country's soft power capacity has crucial role in the success of its cultural diplomacy as much as does the integrity and efficacy of its policies.

Culture can provide numerous opportunities for establishing meaningful connections between international actors. Even though understanding through intercultural exchanges unites societies and facilitates further intercultural interactions, the relationship between diplomacy and culture has been somewhat neglected in academic studies. There are different opinions about the exact role of the culture in diplomacy, but it is apparent that culture continues to impact relations between states. Culture can be defined as the way in which humans transmit knowledge and give meaning to our lives. It can be said that culture

¹¹ İbrahim Kalın, "Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey", *Perceptions, Volume XVI, Number 3*, (Autumn 2011): p.9.

¹² Simon Mark, "A Greater Role for Cultural Diplomacy", *Discussion Papers in Diplomacy*, (April 2009):p.1.

contains information about the society in which individuals find themselves. It also provides information about social roles and the structure of relationships.¹³

Culture can also be an instrument of power. It is considered as a soft power resource that produces attraction that can be measured by asking people through focus groups.¹⁴ According to Nye, in order to understand the relationship between soft power and cultural diplomacy, it is necessary to grasp the distinction between power measured in behavioral outcomes and power measured in terms of resources. In international politics, the resources that produce soft power could be seen in the values an organization or country expresses in its culture, in its internal practices and policies, and in the way it establishes its relations with others. Although they are sometimes used synonymous terms, “cultural diplomacy” is regarded as one of the public diplomacy instruments that governments use to mobilize these resources to produce attraction.

Cultural relations are maintained by a mosaic of human encounters fostered by films and media, trade, tourism, intermarriage, the arts of imagination, foreign study, books, and etc. Cultural diplomacy, on the other hand, only begins when a nation-state steps in and tries to manage this natural two-way cultural flow so as better to advance national interests, preferably on both sides of borders.¹⁵ For instance, some cultural relations are teaching opportunities, others learning situations; both processes educate the teachers as much as the student. The goal is to move from teacher-student to colleagues. The term “cultural diplomacy” is defined by, the American political scientist and author, Milton C. Cummings as *the exchange of ideas, information, values, systems traditions, beliefs, and other aspects of culture, with the intention of fostering mutual understanding*.¹⁶

Accordingly, it can be argued that this cultural exchange can take place in fields such as “art”, “sport”, “literature”, “music”, “science” and the “economy”, and it implies communication. Moreover, it enables appearance of respect between the cultures through understanding of respective values and reducing susceptibility to stereotypes. The potential of an improved knowledge might be beneficial for improvement of interaction and cooperation. It is generally argued

¹³ Wilfried Bolewski, “Diplomatic Processes and Cultural Variations: The Relevance of Culture in Diplomacy”, *The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, (Winter/Spring 2008):146.

¹⁴ Nye, “Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy”, pp.120-121.

¹⁵ Richard T. Arndt, “The Hush-Hush Debate: The Cultural Foundations of U.S. Public Diplomacy”, *Public Diplomacy Magazine*, Issue 3, (Winter 2010):p. 26.

¹⁶ Milton C. Cummings, *Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: A Survey*, (Washington, D.C: Center for Arts and Culture, 2003), p 1.

the initiation or facilitation of such exchanges is for gaining long-term benefits, whether they promote national interests, build relationships or strengthen socio-cultural understanding.¹⁷

Cultural Diplomacy can be employed in many ways and for various purposes. First of all, in the Public Sector, it is used by governments or other politically motivated organizations for the promotion of national or regional interest through providing information regarding the country or region of origin, specifically its people and culture; and those governments and organizations have a clear intent to promote their native values and culture.¹⁸ Second, as the components of the civil society, non-governmental organizations and individuals, motivated by the opportunity to develop and encourage platforms for mutual cultural exchange. Their activity could take the form of cooperation through the sharing of valuable professional information and networks, such as academic exchanges, international forums and tourism. Third, in the private sector, private companies are interested in the development of intercultural communication. Global businesses are also increasingly interested in intercultural communication and cross-cultural learning as a means of improving their own effectiveness and practices.¹⁹

In other words, cultural diplomacy activities are undertaken by a wide range of participants such as artists, singers and so on, but also the manifestations of their artistry (such as a film), the promotion of aspects of the culture of a state, such as language, and the exchange of people, such as academics. The range of activities is wide, and examples of this broader scope of cultural diplomacy includes educational scholarships, visits of scholars, intellectuals, academics and artists both domestically and abroad, cultural group performances, artist performances and exhibitions, seminars and conferences, the operation of libraries, festivals abroad and support for festivals of other countries held domestically, establishing and maintaining professorships and chairs in universities abroad, the commissioning of busts, statues and portraits of national leaders, the presentation of books and musical instruments to visiting dignitaries and diplomatic missions abroad, an essay award and an annual lecture and sports.²⁰ It can be argued that Turkey's recent cultural diplomacy, which has included many of these activities, has also incorporated the production and screening of many TV series abroad, especially to the Middle Eastern countries. Nevertheless, in examples of state-sponsored cultural diplomacy programs, each source

¹⁷ Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, <http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/index.php?en>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Mark, "A Greater Role for Cultural Diplomacy", p.10.

nation is interested in the relaying of information regarding its values and way of life, with a view to fostering sympathy or acceptance. The result is better economic or political connections with other countries. In other words, national culture is utilized for the intention of promoting that nation's standing on an international stage.²¹

In short, cultural diplomacy can be used by different groups for different purposes. This can be conducted by governments for a distinct political purpose, by academic institutions through academic exchange, or by independent organizations for the benefit of demonstrating their work and ideas to a new audience. In addition, in an increasingly globalised international environment, companies and foundations are becoming ever more central as forums of international dialogue and cooperation.

3. A NEW LOOK AT CULTURAL DIPLOMACY IN TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY

Turkey has been traditionally viewed mostly as a hard power in the Middle East, due to its military and economic strength. In recent years, however, there has been an increase discussion on Turkey's soft power. It is argued that Turkey is generally more willing to project soft power as well as having increasing credibility in the region.²² At this point, Turkey's use of non-military tools in its relations with the region, particularly its potential for playing a third-party role in the management and resolution of regional conflicts, the use of more active cultural diplomacy and the role civil society front will be taken into consideration.

According to some arguments, Turkey's involvement in the Middle East has become more comprehensive, multi-dimensional, and deeper in the last decade. Turkish foreign policy also went through a program change in this period. Turkey mainly pursued its goals through diplomatic negotiation rather than military force, focused on its soft power instruments, emphasized engagement and economic interdependence, and promoted mediation roles in the 2000s. In other words, Turkey has much more used different means in order to achieve its foreign policy objectives in the region. It is argued that this represented an important contrast with Turkish foreign policy in the region for most of the 1990s. Turkish foreign policy was highly securitized, and used mostly military means

²¹ Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, <http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/index.php?en>,

²² Meliha Benli Altunışık, "The Possibilities and Limits of Turkey's Soft Power in the Middle East", *Insight Turkey* Vol. 10 / No. 2 / (2008): p.41.

such as balancing alliances, military relations, military threats and interventions in most of that decade.²³ Although, the AKP policy has tried to form a deeper relationship with the region, on the other hand, there have been a number of continuities in terms of some particular goals. For instance, Turkey continued to promote Iraqi territorial integrity, promoted regional stability, supported the resolution of the Palestinian issue.²⁴ Nevertheless, there emerged some changes in the kind of strategies and instruments in order to deal with these problems. In this context, especially during AKP era, Turkey has left behind the cold war period's foreign politics, and turned towards the new world's public diplomacy. With the acceleration of internal and external change of dynamics, Turkey has taken place in a wide range of areas from economics to the foreign policy, from science and technology to the arts. All these wide range of areas also enables the existence of both new risk and opportunity environments.²⁵

It is argued that Turkey's soft power capacity comes from its democracy, history, culture and geography; also Turkey's expanding soft power in the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus. As Turkey engages new regions and emerging actors as well as continues relations with its old allies, it develops new capacities for the various elements of soft power and strategic communication in regional and global contexts.²⁶ It is underlined that the values that Turkey represents in its geography, its historical background and its cultural depth, provides the creation of opportunities for new areas of interaction. During the AKP era, Turkey increased executing its foreign policy through based on its historical background. The Ottoman experience has considered as an effective tool in order to diminish the emotional and political distance, and raise familiarity with a large geographic area extending from the Balkans to the Middle East.²⁷

Turkey stands at the location, where regions with different characteristics and resources, as well as roads between continents meet. Also, as a result of its social and historical relations with countries in the region, Turkey deals with a variety of foreign policy issues and problems at the same time. Thus, cultural diplomacy on an international scale plays a vital role for the image of a country

²³ Altunışık, "Worldviews and Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East", p. 187.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Vedat Demir, "Public Diplomacy and The Contributions Turkey Has Made in the Relationship Among Its Neighbouring Countries," <http://www.kamudiplomasisi.org/pdf/Vedat%20DemirPUBLIC%20DIPLOMACY%20and%20THE%20CONTRIBUTIONS.pdf>, p.13. (accessed 4 November 2011).

²⁶ Kalın, p.5.

²⁷ Demir, p.20.

and increasing its prestige, as well as the effectiveness of the foreign policy it desires to initiate. In that sense, in order to implement a successful cultural diplomacy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs collaborates with several institutions and organizations which perform cultural activities.²⁸ Moreover, several Turkish Cultural Centers have been established abroad for promoting Turkish culture, language and art and in order to contribute to the bilateral relations between Turkey and other countries, as well as to help Turkish citizens in their adaptation to the country in which they live. Currently, Turkish Cultural Centers are operating in many capitals including Tehran, Amman, Baghdad, Jerusalem and Damascus. These cultural centers function according to the Regulations on Turkish Cultural Centers dated 1986 and under the Law on the Establishment and Functioning of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey.²⁹

Pursuit of effective cultural diplomacy is regarded as essential tool for strengthening mutual understanding among countries, creating an appropriate platform for joint action and for creating networks. The need for multi-dimensional approach in diplomacy, covering broad ranging areas from economy and trade to culture, from education to tourism is also an important matter for Turkey. It is very crucial to use the universal language of culture and art in order to create a great impression in the minds of people.

During AKP era, Turkey has increasingly continued to use its “culture” in order to develop its relations with the region. The growing importance of cultural diplomacy now is reflected in a number of recent developments. In this period, there have been number cultural activities with the enforcement of both Turkish Embassies and Turkish Consulate Generals. Based on the scope and specifications; cultural initiatives can mainly be categorized under wider range of fields. Accordingly, it can be argued that in recent years, the development in the level of Turkey’s cultural diplomacy with the Middle East depends on “*increase in the number of actors*”, “*widening of the scope of the activities*”, yet with “*some challenges in recent period.*”

a. The Rise of Actors in Building Relations through Culture

In the recent decade, Turkey gives a high importance for building trusted relations between the actors in the Middle East region. In that framework, several existing institutions within the Turkish governmental structure seem to host the coordination of the country’s different cultural diplomacy efforts. Various

²⁸ <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/promotion-of--turkey-abroad.en.mfa>(accessed 4 November 2011).

²⁹ http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkish-cultural-centers_-turkish-language-and-literature-departments-andturkish-education-centers.en.mfa .(accessed 4 November 2011).

organizations and institutions are taking part in a number of projects including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of National Education and the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA). In that respect, Turkish Language and Literature Departments and Turkish Courses, which have been established within the foreign universities, are being supported by providing technical equipment and lecturers. Several Turkish Education Centers have also been functioning abroad under the management of the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Turkey and Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency.

In that context, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism put a great importance to the promotion of Turkey's cultural heritage aside from the holiday tourism that includes sun, sand and sea. Thus, according to officials, the activities of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism for promotion of cultural heritage; and the initiatives for encouragement of people to meet this cultural heritage are being conducted in coordination with other Ministries. For instance, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism are cooperating with the Ministry of Education for training of young artists abroad, who would come back to Turkey in the future.³⁰ As it is known, in the past, the Ministries of Culture and Tourism were separated ministries, which were united under the name of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism later. Thus, according to officials, in order to enhance the number and effectiveness of the initiatives in cultural field, it is primarily necessary to increase the amount of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's share within the general budget. It is stated that the activities of the Ministry would rise in parallel with the increases in the mentioned rate. Nevertheless, in the recent years, there have been many great changes within the Ministry of Culture and Tourism compared to the past. According to the gathered information, throughout the last decade, there emerged important expansion in the number of theatre houses, which is an indication of effort and development. It is also mentioned that the priority of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism is to increase the number of tourists coming to the big cities. Accordingly, "there are 31 million visitors, who came to Turkey at the moment. It is important to increase this amount to 50 million in 2023. The aim is not only to host of these 50 million visitors around the triangle of sea, sand and sun; but also to introduce these people with the cultural assets."³¹ The development of "congress tourism" is considered as an important matter for improving cultural dialogue with the

³⁰ Interview with Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism Abdurrahman Arıç, (9 April 2012), Istanbul.

³¹ Interview with Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism Abdurrahman Arıç, (9 April 2012), Istanbul.

Middle East region, which has partially been accomplished in Istanbul. Nevertheless, the Ministry is also aiming to open large convention centers in other cities. It is believed that cultural relations will improve together with these activities at both bilateral and regional level.

In addition, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism has also put greater importance to the development of cinema and qualified movies in recent years. Accordingly, they have been keeping their support for the screening of those high qualified movies within the organized movie festivals in the Middle East. Furthermore, through the Yunus Emre Cultural Centers –which will be pointed in the following lines- in the Middle East, the exhibition of the works are being carried out in the conference rooms and exhibition areas. In order to increase the number of Yunus Emre Cultural Centers in the region, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism have been making joint efforts with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was asserted that the Ministry would increase its efforts in order to extend the number of these centers throughout the region in the following periods. In this region, another intention is to increase the numbers of consultancies for culture and tourism.³²

Apart from the relevant ministries, *TIKA* is a government organization and is a department of the Prime Ministry that designates development projects in various sectors of the economy in the developing world by providing know-how, personnel training and technical equipment. *TIKA* also implements projects for promotion of Turkey in order to establish cultural relations and increase the number of the people having information about Turkey. Turkish pavilions arrangements; opening exhibitions; inviting the top-ranking officials to give speeches about the activities of Turkey in different areas; issuing various publications about Turkish World and organizing programs including workshops regarding Turkish culture and traditions can be included in the promotion aids organized by *TIKA*.³³ In addition, for provision of working coordination and harmonization between these mentioned institutions, the “Office of Public Diplomacy” was established under the supervision of the Prime Ministry.³⁴

Furthermore, the external promotion of Turkish culture has recently been made by the newly established *Yunus Emre Cultural Centres* for strengthening of regional ties. These centers are located particularly in the Middle East, as

³² Ibid.

³³ For detailed information see: <http://www.tika.gov.tr/> .

³⁴ Servet Yanatma, “Turkey takes care of Ottoman legacy abroad,” (5 June 2011): http://www.sundayszaman.com/sunday/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=246215, (accessed 12 February 2012).

well as Balkans, Caucasus and in Central Asian Turkic republics. The Yunus Emre Institute³⁵ is a public foundation established by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, but it is the Minister of Foreign Affairs who is the director of the board of trustees. The Yunus Emre Institute, established under the Yunus Emre Foundation, conducts educational activities and scientific research and applications. The activities of the Institute include conducting research for the improved promotion and teaching of Turkish culture, history, language and literature, supporting scientific studies by cooperating with various organizations. The Yunus Emre Institute seeks to contribute to the training of academicians and researchers in the fields of Turkish language, history, culture, art and music and attempts in order to provide training through certification programs. The Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centers overseas function under the direction of the institute in Ankara, which started its activities in May 2009.³⁶ They have been located in different countries in the world in order to promote Turkish language, culture, arts and history.

In addition to Egypt and Syria from the Middle East region, in the years 2011 and 2012 Yunus Emre Cultural Centers have also become active in Jordan, Lebanon and Iran from the region. This increase in the number of the cultural centers located in the Middle East might heighten the cooperation between Turkey and the region. In that sense, on the one hand, the Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centers aim to contribute to the promotion of Turkey through scientific projects, cultural activities and courses, while on the other hand, the Centers also aim to strengthen friendship ties and increase the cultural exchange with other countries.

Apart from these activities, the Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centers also making contributions to the academic field along with its support to the studies concentrating on the Turkish courses, Turkish music, Turkish art and studies on Turkey with “Turcology Success Scholarships”, “Evliya Çelebi Scholarships”, “Ahmet Yesevi Scholarships” and “Yunus Emre Scientific Research Scholarships”. Second, “Libraries of Turkey”, including reference books and textbooks and principal works of the Turkish language, history, culture and arts (in Turkish or in the languages of the relevant countries on Turkey), has been established in the Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centers. Additionally, scientific works, textbooks and reference books are provided for the Departments of Tur-

³⁵ http://www.yunusemrevakfi.com.tr/turkiye/index.php?lang=en&page=68&anIicat_1=0&anIitm_1=1

³⁶ Albania, Belgium, Bosnia, Georgia, England, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, TRNC, Kosovo, Lebanon, Macedonia, Egypt, Romania, Syria, Jordan are the countries where YunusEmre Centers are located. (February 2012).

cology and to the university libraries at the universities where Turkish courses are offered.

Furthermore, the Yunus Emre Institute has concluded cooperation agreements with many national and international universities. Various contributions have been provided to scientific meetings, arts and cultural activities organized by the Turkish universities and foreign universities within the context of these agreements. Promotion of the Turkish Universities that have concluded cooperation agreements are carried out at the Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centers, and efforts are made to bring more and more foreign students to Turkey. The officials of the Yunus Emre Institute state that they aim to open up at least one center in all of the major capital cities, as well as in the cultural capitals, by 2023. In addition to promoting the Turkish language and culture, one of the major functions of the cultural centers is to promote Turkey and its people in a truthful light. It is believed that “if Turkey could promote itself in a correct way, then there is no need to do much else.”³⁷

Apart from the Yunus Emre Institute, *The Office of Public Diplomacy* was generated by the Prime Ministry Circular No. 2010/3, which was published in the Official Paper No: 24, 478 dated on January 30, 2010. In that Circular, “public diplomacy”, as a mean of influencing and directing the international community, was emphasized beside the official diplomacy. The term is defined as “the ability to convince the recipient in order to reach a country, a political opinion or masses”.³⁸ Thus, effective coordination, close cooperation and the quick decision-making process among the institutions in charge of public diplomacy are considered as a necessity, as a result of recent developments especially in information and communication technologies, as well as opportunities and threats emerging in the international arena. The officials in the Office of Public Diplomacy mention that public diplomacy is expressed via the concept of “soft power” in the world literature. Although Turkey has not completely caught it yet, serious steps have been taken. It is also very important to feel the necessity of this. For them, public diplomacy presents Turkey to the world in the most accurate way, and the establishment of the Office of Public Diplomacy was a message against the ones who did not accept the image of ‘new Turkey’. In this regard, the Office of Diplomacy was founded in order to provide cooperation and coordination between civil society organizations and the public agen-

³⁷ “Head of YunusEmre Institute: Turkish becoming language that provides job opportunities” (12 June 2012) <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-283303-head-of-yunus-emre-institute-turkishbecoming-language-that-provides-job-opportunities.html> (accessed 18 June 2012).

³⁸ Interview was conducted with İlker Astarçı in Directorate General of Press and Information, 14.05.2012, Istanbul.

cies and organizations that have carried out studies in the field of public diplomacy and strategic communication.

In Turkey, a number of institutions started to work in coordination with the Office of Public Diplomacy in order to take contributions for their projects. For example, the Foreign Ministry asked trainers, who would give information about the public diplomacy, at Turkish Consulate- Generals abroad. Second, Turkish Grand National Assembly and Ministry of Education also asked a training program about public diplomacy for its expert staff who would be sent abroad. Thirdly, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality asked a public diplomacy education for its staff from the Public Diplomacy Office. It is asserted that the coordination among these institutions and the Public Diplomacy Office has increased, since -especially regarding the foreign contacts- the importance of diplomacy language has been needed in recent years.

In addition to those government institutions, Turkish NGOs have also become much more active in using the tools of cultural diplomacy. “Kimse Yok mu?”, “Yeryüzü Doktorları” and “İnsanı Yardım Vakfı” can be considered as important actors which have been working for humanitarian aid campaigns in many regions including Middle East. These organizations have mainly sought to aid in earthquakes, fires, floods, hurricanes and other natural disasters; to offer health services to those who require but cannot afford them; to provide education for children and youth who don’t have access to proper schooling for economic or other reasons; and to play a leadership role in social gatherings during cultural celebrations.

b. The Rise of Projects in Building Relations Through Culture

Cultural diplomacy activities are involving a wide range of areas with different participants such as artists, singers and so on, but also the manifestations of their artistry such as a film, the promotion of aspects of the culture of a state such as language, and the exchange of people, such as academics.³⁹ Activities undertaken within cultural diplomacy’s scope manifest an aspect of the culture of the polity the government represents. It can be argued that in recent years, over the past few years, Turkey has become increasingly sophisticated and proactive in developing cultural relations with the Middle East region with various projects.

For instance, as an important project, *Turcology Project* started by the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) in 1999, and it has been first implemented in 2000-2001 academic year. Within the con-

³⁹ Mark, “A Greater Role for Cultural Diplomacy”, p.10.

text of the Turcology Project, academics from Turkey for the 29 Turkish Language and Literature/Turcology Departments and Turkish Courses, local academics are supported and material and equipment aid is provided for the departments opened at the Universities in 21 countries in total; these countries are Afghanistan, Albania, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Estonia, Palestine, Georgia, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, Slovakia, Syria, Russian Federation, Tatar Autonomous Republic in the Russian Federation, the Ukraine, Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Yemen. A project led by the TİKA, which has been promoting the Turkish language and study of Turkology abroad since 1999, has been handed over to the Yunus Emre Institute on 20 September 2011.

The main objective of the Turkology project is to promote and expand the use of the Turkish language abroad, in addition, the efforts for increasing Turkish cultural influence during the AKP governments, *Turkish Language Olympiads* can also be considered a case in point. Language is regarded as an important factor for people to be able to understand each other and become friends, and the Olympiads have been organized since 2003 to reward those who are the best at learning Turkish and have inspired great interest in the Turkish language abroad. The Olympiads are hosted by a civil society organization, the International Turkish Education Association (TÜRKÇEDER). The competition has itself been developing since 2003. In 2003, only 62 students from 17 countries took part in the Olympiads, whereas in 2011 this number raised to 1000 students from 130 countries including United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Jordan from the Middle East.⁴⁰ And, only Iraqi students from the Middle East participated in the First Turkish Language Olympiads in 2003; in 2015 students from UAE, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Yemen and Tunisia took part in the Olympiads among 139 different countries.⁴¹ This increase show the fact that Turkish-related languages are spoken in much more cities and countries around the world including the Middle East today, and the Olympiads gives young people from all over the Turkish-speaking world an opportunity to perform in front of the public and display their cultural and linguistic talents in various forms of the arts. Accordingly, the foreign students from different countries have participated in the Olympiads with their poems, songs, presentations, essays and Turkish language skills. The contests are organized under such categories as speaking, writing, song, poetry, reading, folk-dance, essay and country exhibition stands.

⁴⁰ For detailed information see: <http://www.turkceolimpiyatları.org/website/content/45>.

⁴¹ <http://www.turkceder.org/yarismalar/website/content/109>

Apart from those organizations, *Translation Subvention Program of Turkey*- “TEDA” is an important attempt by which Turkish culture, art and literature have contributed to universal culture and science through its literary products flowered in various geographies in different languages and in different styles throughout the history. TEDA, which is a translation and publication subvention project, was initiated in 2005 for the wider dissemination of Turkish culture through the translation or publication of Turkish cultural, artistic and literary work outside of Turkey. Within the framework of TEDA aiming to share Turkish cultural, artistic and literary spirit with the readers outside of Turkey in their languages; the Ministry of Turkish Culture and Tourism has been providing subventions to international institutions, enterprises, companies, foundations and publishing firms which will publish such books. From the Middle East region Iran, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria are the countries, which have been supported in the framework of TEDA project.

Beside the efforts of above-mentioned institutions, the increase and expansion of airline flights and radio and television broadcasts has contributed country's reach around the globe.⁴² For example, Turkish Airlines has broadened its flight network and the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) has expanded its broadcasts to reach Turks living outside Turkey. Especially considering Arab media's interest on Turkey, Turkey's cultural affinities attract the attention of the Arab people in recent years. For instance, Arab television Al Jazeera's second office in non-Arab territories is located in Ankara. Moreover, a state television channel (TRT El Türkiye) in Arabic was launched in April 2010, which is accessible to more than 300 million Arabic speakers through broadcasting in the Middle Eastern region via Turksat, Nilsat and Arabsat satellites.⁴³

Other important tool for strengthening of Turkish cultural relations with the Middle East has become *Turkish serial films*. Although, there emerged some initiatives for expansion of Turkish programs in the region⁴⁴, today Turkish soap operas are being watched by over 20 countries, which have been support-

⁴² Fulya Özerkan, “Turkey goes global as cultural outreach follows foreign policy forays,” (08.09.2010): <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=after-foreign-policyturkish-culture-reaching-out-to-world-2010-08-09> (accessed 12 February 2012).

⁴³ <http://www.trt.net.tr/haber/HaberDetay.aspx?HaberKodu=1585f56c-a353-4a76-8808-b307c54c4c42>, (4 April 2010), (accessed 12 February 2012).

⁴⁴ Milliyet, 21.11.1985: “Türk Programları Mısır TVsinde”, (accessed 27 April 2012). Accordingly, TRT personel went to Egypt to sell some Tv programs to Egyptian TV channel. After the bilateral talkings, soap opera “Bugünün Saraylısı”, a kid show “Topkapı” and concert programmes of HülyaSözer and Emel Sayın was sold to Egyptian TV Channel.

ing Turkish cultural diplomacy. Turkish TV series are breaking viewer records in the Middle Eastern and North African countries. The soaps and serials that are being scheduled into prime-time viewing are creating a desire for cultural exchange. As a result, an intercultural rapprochement is occurring through building bridges between peoples and cultures. This popularity has also another visible impact on the region. Tourism from Middle Eastern countries has increased since the soaps gained popularity on the viewing charts. With the popularity of Turkish soaps and an increasing desire for Arab people to come to Turkey, an important opportunity for cross-cultural exchange to the wider regions has been appeared for Turkey. Visitors to Turkey in 2002 from the Arab countries numbered 975,000⁴⁵, in 2012, 2013 and 2014 this number increased to 1.710.000, 2.077.000 and 2.495.000 respectively.⁴⁶ In short, the popularity of Turkish television series in the Middle East, has brought Turkey to an international audience, and has transformed the image of the country abroad. According to a recent Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation report entitled "The Perception of Turkey in the Middle East 2010", 78% of the respondents said they have watched a Turkish TV series. The report states that the series have become an important part of Turkey's soft power by creating a lasting influence on Turkey's image in the region.⁴⁷

c. Challenges to Turkish Cultural Diplomacy

Although Turkey's attractiveness in the region has risen in the last decade, Turkish foreign policy faced with some difficulties particularly in the Middle East. Especially after Arab uprisings, the scene for Turkey presented more difficult challenges. It can be stated that the onset of "Arab Spring" movements have the influence on Turkish soft power as well as cultural diplomacy. These movements have affected called soft power through forcing it and showing its limits and contradictions. As it is known, the main challenge to Turkey's regional policy comes from the Syrian crisis, and this situation has created new dilemmas in the country's foreign policy.

According to TESEV (Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etüdler Vakfı) reports titled "The Perception of Turkey in the Middle East" high number of participants in the seven Arab states surveyed had a positive view of Turkey in

⁴⁵ Özdem Sanberk, "How Strong is Turkey in The Middle East" (10 May 2012), <http://www.eurasiareview.com/10052012-how-strong-is-turkey-in-the-middle-east-analysis/> (accessed 4 July 2012).

⁴⁶ TURSAB, http://www.tursab.org.tr/dosya/12852/dubai-2015-fuar-raporu_12852_4290183.pdf

⁴⁷ Mensur Akgün and others, Ortadoğu'da Türkiye Algısı, Tesev Yayınları (Şubat 2011): p.15.

2010. Comparing the results of 2009 to 2010, positive opinion of Turkey actually increased while favourable opinion of most countries fell. On a seven country regional weighted average, favourable opinion of Turkey increased from 75% in 2009 to 80% in 2010. When including Iran into this average, favourable opinion of Turkey increased to 85%. In addition in 2010, 76% of the respondents felt that Turkey had a significant impact on the Middle East. Further, 73% felt that Turkey had become more influential in the region in recent years.⁴⁸ Interestingly, Turkey was perceived more as an economic than a political power. The TESEV report conducted in 2011 showed that despite its decline in some countries, such as Syria and Iran, the generally positive perception of Turkey in the region had not changed fundamentally with 78%, and despite a hardening in Turkey's foreign policy, support for Turkey's mediatory role persisted. Although the 2011 survey posted the first signs of reputational difficulty, the 2012 survey confirmed a marked decline in Turkey's popularity. According to 2012 report, the perception of Turkey's leadership potential had declined. More specifically, Turkey had lost credibility in its role as a regional mediator, as a convincing example of coherence between Islam and democracy, and as a country able to exercise influence throughout the Middle East. Moreover, in 2013 the survey reveals that the sympathy for Turkey has dropped by 19 % points over the last three years. The decrease of sympathy in Egypt has a large impact in this decline. In Egypt, where the expression of affinity for Turkey was at 84% in 2012, this rate has dropped to 38% in 2013. The lowest rate is in Syria with 22%.⁴⁹ As can be expected, in the period between 2011 and 2013 there has been a dramatic increase in the number of people from Egypt and Syria who think that Turkey, or more precisely the AKP government, does not treat their governments friendly. In Syria, 88% of respondents stated that they find Turkey's government unfriendly to their own administration. In addition, 68% of participants from Egypt think that the government of Turkey is unfriendly, even though in 2012 only 8% from the country was of this opinion. Iraq is another country where the government of Turkey is not regarded as a friendly one. 58% think that the government of Turkey adopts an unfriendly attitude towards their government. Libya (90%), Tunisia and Jordan (88%), Palestine (87%), and Yemen (85%) are countries where participants most pervasively find Turkey to be friendly. Similarly, respondents from Iran express positive opinions at 78%. The regional support for Turkey playing a bigger role in the Middle East is at

⁴⁸ Mensur Akgün and others, *Ortadoğu'da Türkiye Algısı*, 10-12.

⁴⁹ Mensur Akgün and Sabiha Senyücel Gündoğar, "The Perception of Turkey in the Middle East 2013", TESEV Yayınları, İstanbul.

60%. Again considering the three-year findings, this rate represents a gradual decline. While it was at 71% in 2011, it dropped to 66% in 2012.⁵⁰

The ongoing turmoil and instability in the Middle East leads to conduction of less cultural diplomacy activities for Turkey. For different reasons, Turkey's relations with Iran, Israel, Syria, Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon are unstable in recent years. There emerged realities of hard power on the ground such as the terror of the ISIS and the humanitarian crises in Iraq and Syria has prevailed over soft power-related issues in the region. Also, relations between Israel and Turkey have worsened, above all in the wake of the Mavi Marmara issue, which led to Turkey's downgrading of diplomatic relations with Israel in September 2011. All these have affected the extent for Turkey's cultural diplomacy initiatives, with the exception of humanitarian assistance. Driven by the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, there are now more displaced people in the Middle East. According to the Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) report, Turkey was ranked third in humanitarian assistance (after US and UK) with its contributions worth \$1.6 billion spent on hosting Syrian refugees in 2013.⁵¹

It is argued that the deceleration in Turkey's internal democratization process; demonstrations linked to Gezi Park in İstanbul's Taksim Square in the summer of 2013; the stagnation of EU-Turkish relations; an increase in the polarization and radicalization of the Muslim world as a result of Arab revolts; the inability to maintain a cooperative foreign policy that facilitates Turkey's role as both a regional and an international mediator have encountered many limits and obstacles for Turkish soft power capability.⁵² According to Nye, Turkey has less soft power than it did a few years ago, noting that a thriving economy and democratic governance were ingredients of the country's soft power.⁵³

Furthermore, it can be stated that that the connections between the Gülen movement and the AKP were strong throughout the first decade of AKP government, and, as mentioned above, the movement played an important role in the creation of an economic, administrative, social, and educational network. The government's domestic struggle with the Gülen movement has also created repercussions abroad. Both the AKP and Gülenists have launched international

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ For more details see: <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/GHA-Report-2015-Executive-summary-Final.pdf>

⁵² Carola Cerami, "Rethinking Turkey's Soft Power in the Arab World: Islam, Secularism, and Democracy", *Journal of Levantine Studies*, (Vol. 3, No. 2, Winter 2013): 146.

⁵³ "Joseph Nye says Turkey has less soft power, less democracy", April 05, 2015, http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_joseph-nye-says-turkey-has-less-soft-power-less-democracy_377198.html (accessed on 14 October 2015)

campaigns against each other, and the government has intended to persuade various foreign governments to crack down on Turkish schools run by Gülenists in countries abroad.⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

Diplomacy is generally considered as a key process of communication and negotiation in world politics, and as an important policy instrument used by global actors. However, especially after the end of the Cold War, the state monopoly on diplomacy faced inevitable decline as a result of several factors. First of all, states were no longer the only actors, and they had share the international stage with other actors like international organizations including both intergovernmental and non-governmental ones, multinational companies, civil society organizations and individuals. With the emergence of these new actors, states continued to negotiate bilaterally with each other on a state to state basis, however, groups of states negotiated multilaterally through the intergovernmental organizations, which objected to facilitate technical cooperation, to accelerate economic cooperation, to fight hunger, promote development assistance, foster cultural relations, protect human rights, save the natural environment, and avoid wars. Their numbers have increased, and the scope of their decision-making authority has expanded. Moreover, with respect to the agenda of the new diplomacy, diplomatic activity began to focus more on economic, social and cultural issues beside its emphasis on military-security. Additionally, with the developments in the technological technology, people have met new opportunities that have not been available in the previous decades. These improvements have brought a change especially in the social and economic life. With the removal of time, space and geographic boundaries in terms of communication, the term “globalization” has placed in the agenda of people; and beside the social, economic and political areas, there have emerged some changes in the areas of international relations and diplomacy.

The increasingly interconnected world stage highlights the need for cooperation at a new level. This is where cultural diplomacy as a form of “soft power” becomes significant. As Nye argues the resources that produce soft power arise largely from the values an organization or country expresses in its culture. And, cultural diplomacy has the potential to become a more powerful tool for improving a country’s image and its relations with other countries when it is better understood. It may also contribute to domestic nation-building.

⁵⁴ Emre Kucukkaya, “Restoring Turkish Soft Power With Ahmet Davutoglu” (October 4, 2014) http://www.fairobserver.com/region/middle_east_north_africa/restoring-turkish-soft-power-with-ahmet-davutoglu-19314/ (accessed on 15 October 2015).

It can be claimed that with these above mentioned developments throughout the world, Turkish foreign policy has also entered into a process of adaption to the changes in internal and international conditions. It can be claimed that until the last two or three years, the countries in the Middle East region have had positive opinions toward Turkey in many aspects including culture. The role of cultural diplomacy is very crucial for people living in different countries in order to live in peace and friendship with each other. Thus, it is considerable to preserve and enhance of the cultural activities among societies. As mentioned before, especially in the last decade, there have been number cultural activities with the enforcement of both Turkish Embassies and Turkish Consulate Generals; and the development in the level of Turkey's cultural diplomacy with the Middle East has reflected on "increase in the number of actors", "expansion of the activities both at bilateral and regional level", and "widening of the scope of the activities". In recent years, both Official state and non-state actors have been implementing their projects in the Middle East strengthen Turkey's image in the eyes of the other countries.

As it is known, the uprisings that started in early 2011 have lead to dramatic changes across the North Africa and Middle East Region. The uprisings have been triggered in all countries by similar mixes of economic hardship and lack of civil and political rights.⁵⁵ The Arab spring has not produced similar outcomes in all countries. In addition, the movements across the Middle East and North Africa, called as the Arab Spring, brought a number of contradictions and influences in Turkish foreign policy. Over the past decade, Turkey has developed relations with Syria within the framework of "zero problems with neighbors" policy, and Syria was considered the most successful example of Turkish soft power in the Middle East. However, in recent dates, the deterioration of relations with the countries in the region, especially with Syria, has become the most difficult challenge for Turkey's soft power policy. The process has created uncertainties about the implications of Arab Spring on the new Middle East; the future role of Turkey in the region, and the effect of the Arab Spring on Turkey's zero problems with its neighbours policy. In that sense, the scope for foreign policy dialogue between Turkey and the actors in the region would determine the directions of future relations in the framework of cultural diplomacy.

⁵⁵ Marina Ottoway, "The Middle East is in Transition—to What?" *Insight Turkey* Vol. 13 / No. 2,(2011) p.:1.

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