

The Public Diplomacy of Emerging Powers, Part 1: The Case of Turkey

By Ellen Huijgh and Jordan Warlick

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The Public Diplomacy of Emerging Powers, Part I: the Case of Turkey

ABSTRACT

This paper demonstrates that domestic socio-cultural historical developments, including politics, have always played a part in Turkey's evolution as a re-emerging power on the world scene. Its "intermestic" (domestic-international related) feature comes to the foreground to such an extent that its public diplomacy whims can be traced back to deeper domestic hurdles. The ruling political elite and the Turkish government should think twice before further neglecting the intrinsic intermestic nature of the country's public diplomacy; especially where human and civil rights are concerned and with a civil society increasingly objecting digitally to political suppression.

The paper introduces the complex historical developments within which Turkey's current situation as an emerging power must be comprehended. It then explains the influence of domestic transformations, and democratization in particular, on the re-emergence of Turkey, and on its foreign policy narratives, with a focus on its public diplomacy. The Turkish government's inconsistent and even old-fashioned authoritarian behavior in dealing with the country's citizens is shown through a few examples. The typically intermestic nature of emerging powers' public diplomacy narratives requires the realization that a strict line between abroad and at home is a relic of the past. It also implies an increased comprehensive and balanced approach between old and new, pro- and counter-narratives, and the dominant stories of governmental and public opinion.

Historical Background

While Turkey has long been an important nation given **its geographical location, its status as an emerging power is equally the result of the nation's domestic developments.**

Briefly, in 1923, only five years after the Ottoman Empire collapsed following WWI, Turkey was proclaimed a republic under the nationalist Kemal Ataturk. A number of reforms were made under Ataturk, including making primary education free and compulsory, giving women equal civil and political rights and, most notably, transforming Turkey into a secular nation-state. Yet he also ruled as a virtual dictator. Ataturk remained President for 15 years and, with only brief interludes, established the Republican People's Party as the sole legal party. Ataturk ruled under a belief system that saw the West as Turkey's future and path to prosperity, changed the alphabet from Arabic script to Latin, westernized traditional clothing, and instituted other cultural shifts.¹

The Democratic Party, established in 1946, defeated the Republican People's Party in the elections of 1950, in which Adnan Menderes became Prime Minister. Under his new administration Turkey became a full member of NATO, and the Central Treaty Organization (with Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and UK) was formed. Yet an economic crisis in the late 1950s led to domestic unrest, resulting in government crackdowns including the jailing of journalists and the suppression of protests. Kemalist democratic principles were diverted. General Cemal Gursel organized a coup in May 1960, which resulted in the execution of Menderes and many other leaders for constitutional violations.²

The second Turkish Republic was established in 1961 with the signing of a new constitution. However, domestic and foreign strife continued into the 1970s: tension and violence with the separatist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) often erupted in Kurdish regions of Turkey, and disputes with Greece over Cyprus were continuous. Those long-standing issues have continued to trouble Turkey and

have contributed to negative perceptions of Turkish foreign policy. The electoral victory of The Islamist Welfare Party in 1995 and the nomination of its leader Necmettin Erbakan as Prime Minister marked the end of 75 years of secular government. The Party's Islamist ruling style broke with Turkish norms, and thus Erbakan was forced to resign in June 1997.³ Aside from this brief diversion, secularism has defined Turkish political culture since Kemal Ataturk.

In 2002, the coalition government led by Bulent Ecevit was divided over making tough reforms necessary for European Union (EU) membership candidacy. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) ran on the platform of reform and Euro-Atlantic integration, and won by a wide margin, thus securing Recep Tayyip Erdogan's position as Prime Minister.⁴ Since then the AKP has represented the largest political party in Turkey, and Erdogan's power has gone nearly unchallenged, remaining either the nation's Prime Minister or President since 2003. Under his leadership, Turkey has sought to match its economic growth, political stability, and overall domestic advancement with a rising position in the international system.

Domestic Transformation and Emerging Power Growth

Since Turkey became an independent republic on October 29, 1923 the country has experienced a series of economic ups and downs, including two wars, recessions, and a series of sometimes painstaking reforms. Turkey suffered from economic mismanagement and experienced two decades of double-digit inflation. Its currency tumbled in value to 1.65 million lira on the dollar between 1995 and 2001.⁵ Though reforms to bring Turkey's inflation under control were undertaken in 2000 with a \$7.5 billion loan from the IMF, economic strife continued well into 2002.⁶ With its prosperous end goal in sight, **Turkey's EU bid incentivized the government to undertake economic reforms**, considering them to be worth a temporary downturn.

Since then, economic growth has boomed and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Turkey has doubled from \$8.5 billion in 2009

to \$16.2 billion in 2011.⁷ In 2010, the Ford Motor Company demonstrated its confidence in the security of the Turkish economy by adding an additional \$630 million to its existing investments.⁸ In less than a decade, per capita income in the country has nearly tripled and the economy has almost doubled in size, making Turkey the 18th largest economy in the world.⁹

Of course, despite Turkey's growth its economy must still confront certain challenges. The AKP government faces a growing national deficit and tightening credit, and despite the creation of new jobs, unemployment has mostly remained at or above 10%. Furthermore, certain public institutions, such as education, have lagged behind the nation's economic growth.¹⁰

As a result of its flourishing economy, Turkey is a **member in a number of informal and formal groups of other emerging powers**. The term BRIC was launched in 2001 by then-chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management, Jim O'Neill, as an acronym for an association of major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China (South Africa was added in 2010). The Developing-8 (D-8) is an example of a more formal economic partnership among leading Muslim nations and was actually proposed by Turkey in 1997. The D-8 has been successful in fostering trade relations and economic cooperation, and engages in summits on a biennial basis.

The Group of Twenty (G-20) is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from 20 major economies to promote global financial stability and engage in yearly summits to discuss key issues affecting the global economy. A different country assumes the G-20 presidency each year, and Turkey was responsible for hosting the major 2015 G-20 summit on November 13-15.

MIKTA, which includes the nations of Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey, and Australia, is a middle power alliance which seeks to collaborate on areas of common interest, but it needs to work hard to increase its visibility and identify objectives if it is to participate in concrete undertakings and make its voice heard.

Turkey's democratization process and political stability undoubtedly contributed to its economic success, and congruently to its status as an emerging power. Not only has its authoritarian past receded, but Turkey's EU aspirations have given the government incentive to make **political reforms that encourage democracy**, including the banning of torture, strengthening civilian control of the military, and changes in municipal governance that give citizens more say over local matters.¹¹

Balancing traditional religious identity and secular democracy is delicate, but appeared successful in Turkey. While the Turks are a people greatly steeped in their cultural and religious heritage, the Kemalist ideology that religion is best separated from politics has been widely accepted in Turkish political culture and narratives, until recently. EU and Euro-Atlantic aspirations have helped guide Turkey towards legislating democratic structures.

With the lifting of authoritarian restrictions, the Turkish people have become increasingly engaged in political processes and have sought to have their voices heard. Discussions on controversial issues that were once taboo, such as the Kurdish issue or the “events of 1915” in Armenia, have become much more commonplace. The Turkish people and their politicians alike aspire for Turkey to become a bigger player on the international stage, and voters want to see their country advance through an active foreign policy.¹²

Demographic changes—such as younger, growing populations, urban migration, and ethnic diversity—are often symptoms of the emergence of a nation, and Turkey has proven to be no exception. Demographically, the population has increased from its 1990 level of 56 million to over 75 million today. Turkey is also a young society, with 60% of its population under 35. Around 75% of the population lives in urban areas, as compared to 50% in 1990, and Istanbul has doubled in size from 7.2 million people in 1990 to 15 million people or more in 2010.¹³ This rural to urban migration, and the trend of people moving east to west, has drawn a greater number of members of the religious, conservative middle class to the cities.

In Former U.S. Ambassador Ross Wilson's Atlantic Council report on Turkey's transformation in the 21st century, he predicts that this emerging traditional, conservative class of citizen will begin to play a larger role in Turkish politics, a sphere that has recently been dominated by liberal Western-leaning thought.¹⁴ However, the recent parliamentary elections in June 2015 showed a 13% win for the pro-Kurd HDP Party, whose young liberal leaders advocate for human rights, climate change, and gender equality. While the conservative class of Turkish citizens may begin to play bigger roles, so are the liberal youth.¹⁵

Since 2002, the Justice and Development Party has managed to retain enormous domestic support, winning 47% of the vote in parliamentary elections in 2007, 49% in 2011, and most recently, 41% in 2015.¹⁶ The AKP Party has managed to be attractive to the Turkish masses, including both those with nationalist and liberal sentiments, and has overseen a tremendously prosperous period for the country, which naturally appeals to all sides.

Many Kurdish people have also migrated from their traditional southeast territories to cities, and as many as 2 million Kurds now live in Istanbul. This has made the Kurdish issue more national, rather than one stuck to regional confines. Yet these population trends have resulted in the emergence of challenges, including urbanization bringing an increased demand for services, and disadvantaged youth receiving inadequate access to education.¹⁷

To a certain extent, its increased economic relevance and democratic identity in the global arena has contributed positively to Turkey's international and domestic image. When a nation is seen as economically successful and politically stable, its power increases regionally and globally. Published on the global affairs website "Project Syndicate" (see www.project-syndicate.org) and subsequently disseminated in a number of other publications in the region, a December, 2010 article¹⁸ written by Prime Minister Erdogan titled "Turkey as an Emerging Power" emphasized Turkey's successes and how its leadership will be an asset to the region.

Foreign Policy Narratives

In a discussion at the Brookings Institution in November, 2013 entitled “Turkish Foreign Policy at a Time of Global and Regional Transformation: Vision and Challenges,” Former Minister of Foreign Affairs H. E. Ahmet Davutoglu (Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2009-2014; prime-minister since 28 August 2014) identified **Turkey’s three dominant foreign policy goals: (1) EU accession and Euro-Atlantic integration; (2) strengthening ties with neighbors and neighboring regions; and (3) opening up to new areas of the world.**¹⁹

Turkey’s EU integration process has been tumultuous and a source of controversy in Turkish-European relations. In 1999, Turkey was invited to apply for membership, which reversed a 1997 decision that blocked its candidacy due to its poor human rights record (the Kurds, Armenia, etc.). In December 2002, and again due to EU uneasiness about Turkey’s human rights record, the EU refused to set a date for talks on Turkey’s accession.²⁰ Turkey perceived this decision as being related to EU discomfort with the country’s identity as a Muslim nation as well as age-old misconceptions of Turkey.

In 2003, however, Turkey passed a series of reforms aimed at facilitating the membership process, and its EU accession appeared to once again be on track. Despite the final part of the reform package (concerning the penal code) being passed in September 2004, further resistance was seen from some EU countries and the suggestion of further conditions arose. The possibility of additional obstacles was met with strong opposition from Erdogan and other leaders and at the end of 2004, the EU agreed to begin formal membership negotiations the following year.²¹

Former Foreign Minister Davutoglu has asserted that while EU integration is still the chief foreign policy goal for Turkey, this drawn-out accession process has led some Turks to make allegations of unfairness; arguing that they are judged by their country’s past rather than its present. Professor Ibrahim Kalin argues that despite Turkey’s

rapid transformation, changing deep-rooted perceptions overnight is unrealistic. For example, despite five million Turks living in Europe, as well as efforts by Turkey to make necessary reforms, images of Turks, Ottomans, Muslims, and Middle Easterners continue to be shaped by perceptions dating back to the Middle Ages.²²

Davutoglu has also asserted that Turkey has been compliant with EU demands, and that he is confident that Europe would be better off with Turkey as a member. In a speech at the Brookings Institution, he said, “If [Turkey] had become a member of EU in 2006 or 2007... I am sure today we should have a new Europe, a much more creative, dynamic Europe, even responding to economic crisis in a much better way. But that did not happen and nobody can blame Turkey because of this, because, you know, remember how we had a very active diplomacy regarding integration with EU, also regarding Cyprus issue [sic] in 2004.”²³

Although he still hopes for EU integration as soon as possible, there is a sense that Turkey’s efforts are futile and that its accession depends on the EU’s cultural acceptance. Though **the EU’s reluctance to admit Turkey can certainly be partially attributed to unfair perceptions, the remnants of autocracy and the undemocratic behavior of Turkey’s past are undoubtedly on the EU’s radar as well.** Turkey’s relationship with Europe is still strong—the EU is Turkey’s largest economic partner, making up 46% of Turkey’s trade in 2011.²⁴ If Turkey remains resolved to EU integration, membership is likely in their future.

While Turkey’s **strategic relationships in the Middle East, Eurasia, and Eastern Europe have always been present, an emphasis on its leadership in these areas has moved to the forefront.** Turkey’s ongoing policy of “zero problems” with its neighbors was a signature phrase of the former foreign ministry under Davutoglu. By pursuing this policy today, Turkey aims to not only strengthen ties with neighbors and thaw frozen relations with others, but also to work towards engagement with countries it may have previously avoided or ignored. It is a policy of regional stability, and

Turkey is seeking to position itself as a leader promoting regional peace.²⁵

In Davutoglu's Brookings address, he stressed that Turkey will not idly stand by waiting for EU integration and will continue to develop its own foreign policy and form its own vision.²⁶ Citing Turkey's focus on strengthening ties with neighbors and neighboring regions, Davutoglu stated that high-level strategic cooperation consultations have been initiated with 15 neighboring countries and that 358 agreements have been signed with 14 countries in 4 years.²⁷ **This displays not a shift in orientation from West to East, but a restructuring of foreign policy goals.** Furthermore, Turkey tried—with varied success—to **achieve regional peace** through numerous regional conflict resolution initiatives.²⁸

Over the last decade, a key element that has differentiated Turkey as an emerging leader is its **pursuit of an independent yet multilateral foreign policy.** The view that **Turkey's foreign policy goals are best realized through bilateral and multilateral partnerships, and that success in a globalized world is best achieved through intergovernmental cooperative agreements and adherence to international law, has also emerged under the AKP government.**²⁹

Its membership in the G-20 since 1999; in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation since 1969; in the Council of Europe since 1949; in NATO since 1952; OSCE since 1973; and other international organizations demonstrates Turkey's emphasis on global governance. At the same time, however, it asserts an independent foreign policy that is not particularly hindered by the influence of great powers and which is guided by ideology and principles. Professor Ibrahim Kalin claims that Turkey is not interested in passively conforming under a great power system, and instead wishes to adopt an active foreign policy through a unique point of view based on its own geography and history.³⁰

For example, Turkey gained (albeit temporarily) credibility in the Middle East when the Turkish parliament refused in March, 2003 to authorize access to its territory for the U.S. invasion of Iraq, despite a multi-billion dollar aid package offered in exchange.³¹ **By showing that it is subservient to no state, Turkey elevated its credibility as an evenhanded player on the global stage.**

Empowered Public Diplomacy

Master narratives and Emergence

Recognizing its economic clout and growth, the government of Turkey has also empowered public diplomacy. As Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated in his 2010 article, “Turkey as an Emerging Power,” emerging powers require increased public diplomacy strategies that highlight the nation’s successes, compared to established powers that have already proven their position in the global order. If an emerging power seeks to be more highly regarded in the global arena, it requires that states acknowledge and appreciate its progression. Thus, Turkey’s increased public diplomacy efforts concerning their domestic transitions to a flourishing economy and strengthened democracy are a result of their emerging power status.³²

As its recent entrance into normative Turkish foreign policy language shows, “public diplomacy” has been openly acknowledged as a fundamental tool for increasing Turkish international stature and soft power. The country’s **public diplomacy appears to have currently two prominent narratives: one conveys a new Turkish identity and highlights its economic prosperity and commitment to democracy; and another focuses on enhanced international credibility, which in turn reinforces Turkey’s regional leadership.**

The Turkish government actually has an advantage over established powers, and has benefited from this, as have its emerging state peers. They have all come to the field of public diplomacy relatively late and so were able to learn from predecessors’ failures. One of the lessons drawn here is that in the 21st “digital” century,

it no longer makes sense to strictly distinguish between at home and abroad. So Turkey began, as did many of its peers and other newcomers, with an intermestic public diplomacy stance (a blend of international and domestic public diplomacy). **Moreover, Turkey's current public diplomacy master narratives primarily concern its domestic achievements.** Master narratives are stories that reflect a community's identity and help community members to understand who they are and what they stand for, and make sense of the developments around them.³³

Effective communications strategists and public diplomacy practitioners invoke these master narratives to move audiences in certain directions, but all narratives have their detractors. Some analysts of master narratives believe that the failures of an emerging power's public diplomacy or communication narrative can be explained by looking deeper into the domestic acceptance of and reaction to the projected dominant narrative. This is an interesting and revealing conceptualization for the analysis of public diplomacy in different countries and is applicable to understanding present-day Turkish public diplomacy within its broader context.³⁴

In short, Turkey has historically had several dominant (sometimes conflicting) narratives, each comprised of the following:

(1) Core Audience

- Mainstream (deeply embedded, broad audiences, influencers likely to manipulate)
- Outsiders' rallying cry (deeply embedded by outsiders, alienating broader audiences, understanding minority-majority dynamics)
- Opposition voices (narrow appeal, counter-narratives, primarily secularist)
- Trendsetters (broad appeal, prevailing socio-political winds)

(2) Theme (summary of most prominent)

- The Injustice of Sèvres; The Arab Betrayal; The Deep State; One Identity, One Turkey; The Lausanne Betrayal;

Restoring the Kurdish Homeland; The Sharia Trojan Horse;
 The Moderate Islam Project; The New Modernization;
 Reclaiming the Ottoman Past

(3) Audience segments

- Old guard: military and judiciary (high ranking influential leaders of the Turkish Military and Judiciary), Kemalist Urbanists (middle upper class elites who trace their authority and role within Turkish society to Atatürk and the founding of the modern republic);
- The new order: Religious reformers, Anatolian Tigers, Kurdish Autonomy Advocates;
- Challengers/potential destabilizers: Turkish Neo-Nationalist, Kurdish Separatists

(4) Level of embedment (broad, narrow appeal/emergent or embedded)

Table: Turkey’s Public Diplomacy Master Narratives in Perspective

THEME	NARRATIVE	TYPE	LEVEL OF EMBEDMENT	AUDIENCE SEGMENTS
The Injustice of Sèvres	After WWI, Western powers unjustly divided Turkish homeland in effort to undermine Turkish influence. This persists today in attempts to undermine Turkey’s security and unity. Turks must remain vigilant.	Mainstream	Broad appeal Emergent	Old guard: Military & Judiciary New Order: Religious reformers, Anatolian Tigers Challengers: Turkish Neo-Nationalist
The Arab Betrayal	During WWI, Arabs stabbed Turks in the back by revolting against the Ottomans. This will happen again if possible, so Turkey cannot rely on the friendship of Arab Nations.	Mainstream	Broad appeal Embedded	Old guard: Military & Judiciary, Kemalist Urbanists

The Deep State	Turkish democracy is under threat from the deep state, a powerful secret unit of well-connected figures in the military. Turks must rally against these adversaries and support legislative and juridical efforts to punish deep state plots to destroy Turkish democracy.	Mainstream	Broad appeal Embedded	New Order: Religious reformers, Anatolian Tigers Kurdish Autonomy Advocates
One Identity, One Turkey	Turkish culture predates its modern founding by hundreds of years and its survival relies on a uniform national identity centered on Turkish ethno-cultural heritage. The country must be united, through violence if necessary, under a single identity and a strong central government.	Outsiders' rallying cry	Narrow appeal Embedded	Challengers: Turkish Neo-Nationalist
The Lausanne Betrayal	The founding of Turkey was based upon an injustice in which Kurds were deprived of the promised independent state. This became the basis for Turkish occupation and oppression, and Kurds should use their strength to rise against Turkish occupiers.	Outsiders' rallying cry	Narrow appeal Embedded	Challengers: Kurdish Separatists
Restoring the Kurdish Homeland	Kurds have always lived on the land in southeastern Turkey. Turkey today occupies this historical homeland and tramples on the Kurdish community's identity. Kurds should reject assimilation in order to defend Kurdish heritage from extinction.	Outsiders' rallying cry	Narrow appeal Embedded	Challengers: Kurdish Separatists Kurdish Autonomy Advocates

The Sharia Trojan Horse	Islamists want to take over the entire region, and ‘moderate’ Islamist democracy is a myth perpetuated by those who want to see Sharia spread everywhere/ the AKP hides its Sharia agenda behind this myth today. Turks should be fearful of Islamization and return secularization to power.	Opposition voices	Narrow appeal Emergent	Old guard: Military & Judiciary, Kemalist Urbanists
Moderate Islam Project	Turkey is threatened by a secret American project to install U.S.-friendly, ‘moderate’ Islamic governments across the region. In Turkey, the U.S. is propping up the AKP to this end. The only way to prevent Islamists from destroying Ataturk’s legacy is to restore authority to Turkish secularists.	Opposition voices	Narrow appeal Emergent	Old guard: Military & Judiciary, Kemalist Urbanists
The New Modernization	The Old Guard ruined Turkey with its rigid secularism and economic mismanagement. The AKP and the Anatolian Tigers emancipated average Turks from this backwardness by liberalizing the economy, expanding trade, and allowing free religious practice. The Old Guard must be kept out of power.	Trendsetters	Broad appeal Emergent	The new order: Religious reformers, Anatolian Tigers
Reclaiming the Ottoman Past	Turkey has a long history of power and greatness dating back to the Ottoman era. Turkey should look eastward to rekindle relations with former Ottoman nations and reassume its rightful place as a bridge between East and West.	Trendsetters	Broad Appeal Embedded	The new order: Anatolian Tigers

Linking domestic developments to public diplomacy, and even framing domestic achievements as a master narrative, can boost a country's positive image and foreign policy clout. Or, as B. Senem Çevik and Philip Seib conclude in their latest book's introduction (*Turkey's Public Diplomacy*, 2015, pp. 11): Consolidating Turkey's public diplomacy strategy would require Turkey to bring more sophistication into the intricate relationship between domestic and foreign policy and how they influence one another.³⁶

Indeed, as the following research shows, such sophistication is lacking when the story told abroad does not entail or equal the entire domestic reality, or when the voices of opponents at home undermine the dominant narrative projected abroad. It may be impossible to craft a single grand narrative and dispose of the others, given humanity's knack for being contrary. Thus, it is the search for a balance between pre-existing and new narratives that must sit at the core of this quest for a claimed grand strategy—regardless of whether the latter is simply a country's or scholar's illusionary ideal.

It is against the complex background of co-existing conflicting and commonly held narratives abroad and at home that the public diplomacy of Turkey must be understood. It is within this broader context that the public diplomacy narratives and initiatives described below can be more profoundly understood and placed.

Considering the enormous reform and progress Turkey has undergone in the last decades, it is no surprise that Turkey wishes to be recognized and not be held back because of past actions. In *Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey*, Kalin describes the government's strategic reasoning for its new emphasis on public diplomacy: "In order for us to achieve success in explaining Turkey's position in the face of accusations and problems our country has long endured in the international arena, it is necessary to use public diplomacy tools and methods to inform accurately the international community."³⁷ With rational, transparent and defensible policies, Turkey can increase its credibility in the international arena. Kalin acknowledges that he believes most countries recognize Turkey's

social change and economic growth, but age-old narratives are difficult barriers to overcome.³⁸ By gaining better control over its narrative, Turkey's public diplomacy strategy appears to be guiding narratives in a certain way so as to steer nations' perceptions of Turkey's actions. However, such a desire for control may backfire in the long run.

In **January 2010**, Prime Minister Erdogan announced the launch of **the Office of Public Diplomacy**, signifying a new focus on the importance of public diplomacy as a tool for influencing Turkey's international image. The Office of Public Diplomacy would be tasked to "provide cooperation and coordination between public agencies and non-governmental organizations in their activities related to public diplomacy" for the promotion and presentation of Turkey. The Office of Public Diplomacy **is a separate entity under the auspices of the Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister**, with its secretarial services carried out by the General Directorate of Press and Information.³⁹

Since the Office of Public Diplomacy is involved in the management of perceptions in and promotion of a number of areas, including "diplomacy, foreign aid, science and technology, economy, higher education, tourism, culture, arts and media" (read: control of the master narratives), *the office is organized into five units*: Media Studies; Political Communication; Cultural Studies; Institutional Studies; and Project Development.⁴⁰ Their activities involve a number of initiatives to **engage domestic and international students, academics, journalists, and policymakers** in events and programs aimed at engaging on a variety of relevant foreign policy and public diplomacy topics. They also inform the international media through meetings and briefs. The Office of Public Diplomacy was established with the government's Circular of the Prime Ministry No: 2010/3, published in the Official Gazette No. 27478 dated January 30, 2010 to serve as an effective public relations tool for the Turkish government. Its aim is to manage international perceptions and convey a new Turkish narrative.

Naturally, Turkey's public diplomacy efforts are focused on areas of the world where the country has some kind of greater foreign policy strategy, and where it hopes to increase its soft power. Its **concerted efforts can be seen most predominantly in the Middle East, Eurasia, and Eastern Europe**, and in **nations that share with Turkey a notion of common memory, conscience, and cultural depth** where Turkey aims to reinforce its position as a regional leader through public diplomacy activities.⁴¹

Public diplomacy activities, compounded with Turkey's reputation as a stable and prosperous nation, increase Turkey's reputation, and therefore their leadership capacity. Turkey's ability to fuse secular democracy and socio-economic modernization with the preservation of Islamic-Ottoman culture and conservative values provides a powerful example to other states in the Middle East. The Arab Spring, which left Turkey nearly untouched, also reaffirmed Turkey's political stability in the region.⁴² Establishing people-to-people relations has reinforced Turkey's cultural bonds and soft power with the region's countries.

Turkish public diplomacy strategies are also employed in Western Europe and other EU member states. Considering the **diaspora** of over 5 million Turks living in Europe and Turkey's EU aspirations, facilitating cultural dialogue and exchange is important to the promotion of Turkey's new narrative. The majority of public diplomacy activities in Europe are related to Turkish cultural promotion so as to convey a positive image of Turkish culture. The EU is also home to a number of Turkish schools and centers aimed at reinforcing relations with the Turkish diaspora.

Capitalizing on its political stability and economic growth, the Turkish government has taken ownership of its public diplomacy in order to foster its emergence as a regional and global leader. Davutoglu has made **furthering Turkey's soft power a conscious priority**. Turkey's efforts focused on former Turkic republics and the Middle East prove that regional leadership is a priority.

Maintaining public diplomacy relations with EU member states shows that Turkey's EU aspirations remain high on its agenda, as does preserving relations with Turkish diaspora populations. To this end, the government has not only focused its attention on developing public diplomacy agencies, but also on promoting non-state actors' activities. Turkey continues to try to put its best foot forward, emphasizing the progress it has made and maintaining a position of regional and global leadership, especially in two areas: cultural promotion and humanitarian aid.

Cultural Promotion and Humanitarian Aid

Cultural promotion and dialogue are key avenues for public diplomacy to flourish. Inspired by religious scholar Fethullah Gulen, **the Hizmet, or Gulen, movement**, is one of the first and most successful at promoting Turkish culture. It is Islamic and conservative, yet tolerant, in nature. The Hizmet (meaning "service") movement has no formal structure or membership, but is a loose network of volunteers and civil society organizations inspired by Gulen's vision. The movement is therefore difficult to track, but it may be one of the **largest Islamic movements in the world, and is certainly the most influential socio-religious movement Turkey has ever seen.**⁴³

Gulen's movement emerged in the early 1990s with the mission of developing institutions to benefit both Turkish migrants and host communities in areas such as education, commerce, and culture. Gulen's ideology promotes traditional, yet open-minded, conservative, yet tolerant, Islam, and is based on volunteer action and contribution. The Gulen movement community seeks to forge closer ties with Christian and Jewish organizations in order to promote cultural dialogue and understanding, and strives to remain apolitical in all aspects, which allows the movement to foster close relationships with host governments. With education as a particular focus, approximately 1,000 schools have opened around the world, operated by Turkish entrepreneurs guided by Gulen's vision.⁴⁴

The movement originated in post-Soviet Central Asia with the goal of reinvigorating the nations' Turkic roots and it has subsequently expanded to Western Europe, the U.S., and Africa. Despite the enormous success it has had in promoting Turkish culture and soft power around the world, deep political tensions have arisen between Fethullah Gulen and the AKP Party. **The movement's success was only beneficial to the government as long as the Gulen-Erdogan team remained functional and not oppositional.**⁴⁵

The **Yunus Emre Foundation** is another more recent, and government-affiliated, structure for cultural promotion. The foundation was created in **2007 as an addition to preexistent Turkish cultural centers, with the goal of exporting Turkish culture, society, and language abroad.** In a 2010 Yunus Emre bulletin, then Minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoglu noted that "foreign policy is not carried out solely with diplomacy but also with cultural, economic, and trade networks...this will enable us to place our historical-cultural richness in our current strategy."⁴⁶

Yunus Emre centers exist throughout Europe and the Middle East. The first center opened in Sarajevo, followed by Skopje, then Cairo. In Davutoglu's speech at the Sarajevo center's inauguration in 2011, he explained that Sarajevo was chosen as the first location because "if we thought about where Turkish culture was reflected best, this place would be the city of Sarajevo."⁴⁷ Neo-Ottoman undertones are implicit in Davutoglu's statement, which appeals to cultural similarities between the two nations. The president of the Yunus Emre Institute, Hayati Develi, stated to the popular news source, *Today's Zaman*, that another goal of the centers is to "change the negative image of Turkey in certain European countries by means of introducing a different image of Turkey."⁴⁸ **It has also been suggested that Erdogan created the centers to co-opt the Gulen movement.**

The Ministry of Tourism and Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have both also been very active in promoting Turkish culture in Europe. In 2013, Turkey ranked 6th globally in

tourism, with 37.8 million visits. This was a 5.9% jump from the previous year and was indicative of both better global economic conditions and the promise of Turkey's tourism industry.⁴⁹

The **annual London Turkish Film Festival** is one example of such promotion; it is sponsored by the Turkish Ministry of Culture and features a variety of Turkish films and documentaries for an international audience. While it began in 1993 as a three-day event, it is now a full-fledged two-week festival. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' pursuit of hosting a future **Expo World Fair** in Izmir, Turkey is another example of the Turkish government's cultural promotion. The Expo is held every five years, lasts for a total of six months, and is attended by 157 countries convening on ideas, innovation, and culture. The promotion of Turkey for Expo 2020 is an important agenda item for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁵⁰ "Spot On, Turkey Now," a Turkish festival in Vienna that took place in October 2009, was an example of effective coordination between government and civil society to promote cultural diplomacy. In collaboration with the Wiener Festwochen (Vienna Festival), one of the world's largest cultural festivals, the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts initiated the festival, which featured Turkish and Austrian literature, music, and dance performance collaborations.⁵¹ The event was supported and sponsored by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Promotion Fund of the Turkish Prime Ministry, and was backed by the public support of both the Turkish and Austrian governments.⁵² This cross-cultural action is an innovative, often-used model for multilateral Turkish public diplomacy engagements.

The impact of **television and the arts on Turkish public diplomacy** and soft power cannot be overestimated. "It's one thing if there were a couple of popular Turkish series, but they are on every single major Arab channel," says Beirut-based media critic and blogger Habib Battah.⁵³ **Turkish dramas and soap operas** have swept the Arab world in recent years, making Turkey more idealized than ever before. Many Arabs are charmed by the Turk's liberal lifestyles, presenting an image of a Muslim nation that is dynamic and modern, yet loyal to its traditions and history.

It is significant that Turkish series deal with issues that Arab series typically avoid, such as gender equality, love affairs, and treason. Mazen Hayek, spokesman for the Saudi-backed Middle East Broadcasting Centre believes that these Turkish series have also displayed an ideal for male-female romantic relationships, where women are adored and respected. In Turkey, a comparatively liberal nation in the region, shifting gender roles are less of a taboo. The Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism even believes this cultural export has contributed to the increase in tourism, due to the depiction of Turkey's beautiful scenery, lifestyle, and culture.⁵⁴

Turkey has increasingly become a donor country, which reasserts its economic stability. Humanitarian aid provides another vehicle than cultural promotion for public diplomacy. Turkey's spending on official aid has risen from \$73 million in 2002 to \$3.3 billion in 2013.⁵⁵ **The Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) is a central agency for Turkey's aid work** that operates in 34 coordination offices in 31 countries, primarily in the Balkans, the Middle East, and Central Asia.

TIKA was first established in 1992 to respond to the restructuring and development of former Turkic Republics in the post-Soviet era, but since 2002, the organization has effectively taken off and expanded.⁵⁶ No longer limited to countries with Turkish cultural or historic ties, today TIKA invests in a total of 100 nations on various projects, such as giving agricultural training to potato farmers in Peru, or investing in Turkology departments in Cuban universities, such as Havana University.⁵⁷ While TIKA president Dr. Serdar Cam acknowledges that TIKA has become a soft power tool, he underlined that "these steps were not consciously taken to increase Turkey's soft power," and that they are sincerely in humanitarian interest.⁵⁸ Aside from TIKA, Turkey has also spent over \$3 billion to host Syrian refugees since their country's crisis began in 2011. In a demonstration of its leadership in this area, Turkey is hosting the first international summit on humanitarian aid in 2016, sponsored by the United Nations.⁵⁹

Turkey's Red Crescent Society, or Kizilay, is a Red Cross member society that engages in disaster response and has benefited from approximately 1.2 million volunteers to date. In existence since the late 19th Century (still the Ottoman era), the Red Crescent Society is **one of Turkey's oldest and largest civil society organizations**.⁶⁰ Like its Red Cross and Red Crescent counterparts, it is a non-governmental organization, but is a critical component in the government's international presence and soft power. The Red Crescent Society has worked closely with the Turkish government to accommodate the influx of Syrian refugees, and with an estimated 65,000 Syrian refugees in nine camps in Turkey, camps and services provided by the Red Crescent Society have helped reduce tension (see e.g. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65814>).

Although traditionally focused on more regional crises, such as the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 and the ongoing crises in Gaza and Lebanon in 2008 and 2009, the Red Crescent Society has raised its profile outside of the Muslim world as well. Examples include the building of "Turkish towns" for tsunami survivors in Sri Lanka in 2004, and search-and-rescue missions after the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile in 2010. These humanitarian missions are undoubtedly a positive representation for Turkey, and are a positive force for the country's public diplomacy.⁶¹

Domestic Civil Society and the Contradictions in Public Diplomacy

Engaging domestic stakeholders in foreign policy decisions, including civil society organizations (CSOs) and citizens, is essential to successful public diplomacy. **The Office of Public Diplomacy recognizes the importance that domestic public opinion plays in support of or against international policy and public diplomacy.**

Its website, which explains the concept of public diplomacy, states: "Another important element of public diplomacy is the public opinion, which has increasingly undertaken a more central role in determining the national and international policies. The national and international policy processes are monitored closely, and are

announced to world public opinion through the media. Without a certain support from the public opinion, it does not seem possible to determine or implement a policy in the fields of economy, foreign policy, energy or environment.⁶² Therefore, **in evaluating Turkey's public diplomacy abroad, it is important also to evaluate the state's engagement in public diplomacy's domestic dimension**, loosely defined⁶³ as the government's involvement of civil society at home in international policy making and conduct.

Although Turkey's civil society sector has grown tremendously over the past twenty years, its voice is still very small compared to most European countries, and the **success and growth of the sector's organizations will be compromised** unless their rights are protected and they are supported.⁶⁴

The **2013 CIVICUS Civil Society Index Report** found that Turkey's civil society is most hindered in the area of structure, referring to the small size and depth of civil society organizations, undeveloped linkages, and inadequate resources. With a **highly-centralized state administration, pre-existing corruption and a lack of adherence to the rule of law, it is difficult for civil society to thrive and not have its impact limited.**⁶⁵

A **2011** study by the **Third Sector Foundation of Turkey (TUSEV)** found that the autonomy of civil society is at risk, with 78% of NGOs saying they **were subject to frequent or occasional illegitimate government interference**. Government-civil society dialogue is limited, with 68% stating that the state only engages with a selective group of CSOs, and only as needed. A staggering 97% describe the state support they receive as limited or very limited.⁶⁶

The editor-in-chief of *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Diba Nigar Goksel, describes the state's priorities in supporting CSOs: "More often than not, domestic resources available to Turkish NGOs for neighborhood engagement are linked to Turkish government interests or affiliated with Islamic networks. Turkish official narratives are emphasized and sticky human rights issues often avoided." The

idea of a “civil society endowment” fund, which the government could use to develop the breadth and depth of Turkish NGOs, has been discussed for years (Goksel).⁶⁷ However, considering that the government’s public diplomacy priorities are guided by the promotion of the state, **the fairness of initiative selection would be questionable.**

Despite certain challenges, Turkey’s civil society is in a state of transition and the rapid growth of Turkey’s civil society is promising for the future of civic discourse. Reform designed to create space for the development of civil society was only significantly undertaken from 2002-2004, and then only because of EU requirements. Civil liberties reform continues to this day.⁶⁸

Third sector organizations have also stepped up to protect and empower the non-profit world. The Third Sector Foundation of Turkey (TUSEV) was established in 1993 and has grown into a network of over 100 CSOs, and includes in its main objectives “non-profit law reform, research on civil society and philanthropy, promoting social investment and social justice philanthropy, and facilitating partnerships across sectors, as well as across borders.”

Strengthening Civil Society Development and Civil Society–Public Sector Dialogue in Turkey Project, a civil society-public cooperation project funded by the European Union and Turkish government, is one of many third sector initiatives. **It holds as one of its main objectives** “to bring the relations between civil society and public institutions to a new level where a permanent dialogue is held and participation of civil society organizations in public debate and decision-making is visibly increased.” The project involves creating tangible measures, including conferences and frameworks, which will promote civil sector-public sector dialogue.⁶⁹

Apart from Turkish CSOs, the Turkish government has also sought to engage **other stakeholders** in the public diplomacy dialogue. The Turkish Office of Public Diplomacy has a **number of university programs** that involve students discussing foreign policy

issues. For example, **once a month, panels on public diplomacy and foreign policy issues are held in different Turkish cities**, where students and academics are able to voice opinions and pose questions to high ranking foreign policy experts and bureaucrats.⁷⁰ The Office of Public Diplomacy also facilitates Foreign Policy Promotion Programs at universities, which bring together students, academics, experts, and decision-makers to set up a network for dialogue.⁷¹

Furthermore, the Office of Public Diplomacy arranges panels, conferences, forums, and other think tank-like events with different thinkers, academics, and journalists to encourage interaction with policymakers. **While it is commendable that steps have been taken to include various publics, the government still needs to take additional actions to listen better to and include the narratives of stakeholders who challenge the government's policies, such as politicians from opposing parties or controversial journalists.** Erdogan has become resistant to challenges to his rule, which is partly reflected in how often two phrases crop up in his justifications for subduing domestic protests: "Know your limits and place (Haddini bilmek)" and "What is necessary is being done (Gereğini yapmak)."⁷²

Ever-growing discord between the government's democratic rhetoric and some autocratic tendencies hinder Turkey's new projected narrative, however. Turkish public diplomacy and soft power can only be credible with rational and defensible policies. Here again, if the master narrative projected abroad is based on the domestic development of democracy, and civil society is only heard when its narrative pleases the government, and counter-narratives are suppressed, the narrative shows a skewed version of reality, and may be a sign of underlying problems and upcoming public diplomacy contradictions.

The vestiges of Turkey's authoritarian past linger to this day. Between unresolved Kurdish issues, a tense relationship with Armenia on its borders, political corruption, and public censorship,

Turkey has its fair share of problems, as the master narratives in the table above indicate. Like other nations, Turkey will continue to be judged by its flaws, but the government hopes to simply overshadow its flaws by highlighting its successes.

However, **Turkey's international stature is threatened by some authoritarian elements and the resulting instability.** **Freedom of the press**, for example, has been suppressed to the point where journalists face a precarious existence. In fact, Turkey holds the dubious record of jailing more journalists than any other country in the world, followed by Iran and China.⁷³ Prime Minister Erdogan even briefly banned Twitter and YouTube, a ruling that was subsequently deemed unconstitutional by the highest court. After mounting pressure against certain authoritarian elements of the Erdogan regime, the Taksim Square protests in the summer of 2013 sparked a major Turkish movement, which brought to light internationally some of the AKP government's behavior.

The Gezi Park protests in the summer of 2013 were a turning point in domestic dissatisfaction with certain AKP domestic policies. The protests began as a peaceful sit-in at Istanbul's Taksim Square on May 28, 2013, against the government's decision to turn one of Istanbul's last urban public parks into a mall or museum. Many citizens felt that this decision was made too quickly without public or media discourse, and in the eyes of many, it underscored the AKP government's repeated disregard for public opinion.

What changed everything in the #occupygezi movement was **the intensity of the police brutality that ensued.** Police met the protestors with enormous force, and images of police setting protesters' tents on fire, using tear gas, pepper spray, and pressurized water surfaced on the Internet. The movement quickly spread, and over 60 cities across Turkey hosted protests in solidarity against various AKP government actions, including the violation of democratic rights, media censorship, police brutality, and the overall authoritarianism of Erdogan.⁷⁴

Increasing restrictions on freedom of speech and censorship in Turkey have put Recep Erdogan and the AKP's credibility on the line both nationally and internationally. Journalists risk incarceration if they criticize AKP politicians or policies. **Social media restrictions have also occasionally been put into effect since 2013.** Every six months, Twitter releases a transparency report to show which national governments have requested the most takedowns of posts. In the first six months of 2015, Turkish authorities represented 72% of all requests, followed by Russia at 7%. Governments are authorized to request the takedown of posts that “violate personal rights or other local laws.”⁷⁵ **Although Twitter and other social media sites are not technically banned, the Turkish government still continues to censor a great deal of content** (that is, counter-narratives).

Another central domestic issue which Erdogan must address on the national and international stage is the **“Kurdish question.”** The Kurdish people face extreme prejudice; Kurdish intellectuals and advocates are easily suspected and charged with supporting terrorism. The Kurdish language, and thus the Kurds' entire narrative, is treated as essentially illegitimate. Even reporting on the Kurdish issue can lead to imprisonment.⁷⁶ Turkey also struggles with other cultural prejudices, with Turkish nationalism and xenophobia continuing to create a precarious environment for minorities and minority religions, particularly for Greek and Jewish communities.⁷⁷

The Kurds make up a large minority in Turkey (about 25%), concentrated primarily in the south, and are the largest ethnic community in the Middle East seeking self-determination. The Kurdish Worker's Party (PKK), labeled a terrorist group by the U.S. and the EU, began its insurgency for an autonomous Kurdistan in 1984. Flare-ups of violence between Turkey and the PKK have gone on for decades and have so far cost 40,000, mostly innocent, lives.⁷⁸ During the Arab Spring, Turkey deflected domestic issues by concentrating on negotiations surrounding a Kurdish Peace Process. Although a dialogue has opened up, the Turkish government and the Kurds still struggle to find compromise.⁷⁹ However, tensions flared

up again in August 2015, when the Turkish government launched airstrikes against Kurdish militants in southern Turkey, causing concern in the U.S. about Ankara's ability to negotiate peacefully with the Kurds.⁸⁰

The deadliest terror attack in Turkey's history happened quite recently in Turkey's capital, Ankara, on October 10, 2015, with two suicide bombings at a peace rally in the center of the capital.⁸¹ In order for Turkey to successfully join the EU, it must maintain peaceful relations with the minority group, and grant it sufficient rights. **If Erdogan's recently autocratic tendencies continue and injustices are not addressed, the nation's political stability and success of the current master narrative will be in jeopardy. Furthermore, with an increasingly youthful and liberal demographic which supports the Kurdish cause, the AKP is under pressure from below to guarantee the Kurdish people's human rights.**

Human rights issues are detrimental to the credibility of Turkey's public diplomacy. An October 2012 report by the Committee to Protect Journalists stated that Turkey now has "the disreputable distinction of being the world's worst jailer of the press." The government's repeated censorship of writers, journalists, and political activists has had an adverse affect on the AKP Party's popularity, as demonstrated by the June 2015 parliamentary election results. Despite winning 40% of the vote, it was the AKP Party's worst election performance ever. The much more liberal pro-Kurdish HDP Party, whose young, charismatic leaders promote gender equality and human rights narratives, won 13% of the vote and 80 MPs.⁸² It seemed as if **Erdogan and the AKP may find themselves on increasingly shaky ground if they continue to silence dissent.**

As the June 7, 2015 general election produced a hung parliament, a second general election was held in Turkey on November 1, 2015. This time, and to some quite surprisingly, Erdogan did much better, with the AKP Party winning 49.4% of the vote and its main opposition, the CHP, winning 25.4%. President Erdogan hailed the result early on the following morning, stating: "The national will

manifested itself on 1 November in favour of stability.” It would thus appear that “stability” is of greater importance to Turkey’s population than human rights and media freedom.

As noted by the BBC:⁸³ “While Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called on the world to respect the result of Sunday’s election, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) went further and denounced the entire process as ‘unfair.’” Fair or not, a new government has been formed—in a polarized, not stable—Turkey, as shown in the Turkish media’s mixed reactions. The question inevitably arises, then, of how much longer (inter)national concern for human rights can and will provide counterbalance.

Conclusions

Turkey’s transition into an emerging power over the last few decades has been a defining factor in shaping its public diplomacy strategy and master narrative. Turkey has thus diverse strategic motives behind its public diplomacy initiatives; promoting its emerging power status. Public diplomacy is driven by a desire to be perceived in accordance with a narrative (that of an emerging power) that they have helped construct through their public diplomacy initiatives.

Emerging powers particularly benefit from steering their international image, as this helps drive positive perceptions of the nation’s emergence. Emerging nations seek to dispel perceptions of their, perhaps, former weakness, backwardness, or stagnant growth. Emphasizing a growing economy, for example, will attract further foreign investment and drum up interest in travel or products from the nation. While claims must be supported with truth and statistics, public diplomacy informs and influences perception.

Foreign policy goals are a key driver of Turkish public diplomacy narratives. Admission to the European Union has been a long-standing objective for Turkey; furthering cultural, political, and economic ties within Europe emphasizes Turkey’s emergence

and its position as a key player in the region. In the Middle East, the country has played a stabilizing, peacemaking role, both as a political mediator and as a major donor of aid and assistance. Turkey has also reinforced its political and economic leadership through a number of multilateral organizations, particularly within the Middle East and Eurasian regions.

From a historical and geographic approach, Turkey's emerging power in the region is reminiscent of the Ottoman Empire, which reigned from the 16th to 18th centuries. Cultural nostalgia for former greatness can remain ingrained in civilizations for centuries, and the AKP Party's economic and political successes have been reminders of the flourishing, powerful empire the country Turkey once helmed. This neo-Ottoman narrative is evident in Turkey's particular focus on cultural public diplomacy initiatives: the Ottoman Empire emphasized creativity and thought, education and the arts were critical to society, and authors, artists and architects from this era are a source of national pride. Therefore, the promotion of education and cultural exchange, establishment of Turkish institutes, and language programs can all be seen as extensions of the Turkish people's pride in their culture. It is also an effective way to maintain ties to Turkish diaspora around the world.

Governmental and non-governmental actors both play critical roles in forming Turkey's public diplomacy and formulating its master narratives. While both act largely independently of one another, it is promising to see that there are increasing examples of public-private partnerships and coordination through Turkey's Office of Public Diplomacy. Still, government interference in civil society activities and oppression of counter-narratives remains a problem. Developing further constructive dialogues and partnerships with their own civil society is a necessary domestic public diplomacy condition.

Along with adverse domestic consequences, governments around the world have taken note of Turkey's human rights issues which are damaging its public diplomacy credibility. Freedom House and other prominent human rights organizations wrote a

letter to President Obama in January 2013, asking the President to express his concerns about Turkey's record of censorship, writing, "These developments have had a detrimental effect not only upon Turkish people, but also hinder Turkey's contribution as an emerging power in the vision of the world."⁸⁴ **The Turkish government must realize that if it wishes to continue the emergence of its power in the 21st century, counter-narratives must not be suppressed but engaged with; they are a logical and crucial part of contemporary integrative public diplomacy.**

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