

CHARACTERISTICS AND MEANS OF IMPLEMENTING THE "SOFT POWER" POLICY OF TURKEY IN THE "TURKISH WORLD"

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Annotation:

The article presents the political phenomenon of "soft power" in the Central Asian region of Turkey, its importance, features, political interests in the region, and the activities of TIKA and TURKSOY organizations, which are considered means of implementation, and draws conclusions about the importance of these works.

Key words: Turkey, Central Asia, TIKA, TURKSOY, mutual relations, foreign policy, integration.

"Standing power is soft power. Today, Turkey is one of the countries that can use soft power most effectively in the world." Former Turkish Foreign Minister Mavlud Cavusoglu said this phrase at a meeting with students at Istanbul University. In fact, Turkey's foreign policy aimed at expanding its influence and leadership in the muslim world on a global scale is distinguished not only by its participation in a number of international armed conflicts, but also by the use of soft power methods[1].

After the collapse of the bipolar system, the extraordinary importance of soft power in international relations of the 21st century has significantly increased. Already, soft power has a number of advantages over hard power. In particular, soft power can make the target party willingly agree to an agreement, have a long-term and effective impact, spend less money than military means, solve various conflicts with intellectual means, and most importantly, external contributes greatly to the formation of a positive attraction of the state in the political arena. It is known that the modern idea of "soft" power originated in the theoretical works of Joseph S. Nye, who coined the term "soft power" in the late 1980s. Since then, this term has become popular in political science circles. The author of this term proposed "soft" power as an alternative to hard coercive power as a means of achieving political goals in international relations through culture, language, religion and other factors. "Soft power", which has become one of the main means of influence of states on each other, is a tool of diplomacy to attract other states to its side, not by force, but by force, allows to achieve the set goals with the help of various economic, cultural and humanitarian influence[2].

Turkey's soft power potential is largely due to its history, culture and geography. It is the historical heritage, cultural ties with neighboring countries that have led to a high level of interaction with them. Before the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the Ottoman Empire, which spanned three continents, was the center of religious power in the muslim world for more than half a century. Most of the ethnic groups living in Eurasia, such as Turks, Kurds, Bosnians, Albanians, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Armenians, Greeks, have a common



Western European Journal of Historical Events and Social Science

Volume 2, Issue 5, May, 2024

<https://westerneuropeanstudies.com/index.php/4>

ISSN (E): 2942-1926

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historical heritage within the Ottoman Empire. Due to the combination of these factors, Turkey's soft power influence spreads from the Balkans to the Middle East and Central Asia[3].

Central Asia is the geographically and geopolitically most important region, a link connecting three civilizations - Russian, Chinese and Islamic. In the context of the formation of a multipolar world, secure communication with the three most important "Eurasian chessboard areas" passing through the region is extremely important for Turkey. In addition, the region is extremely rich in energy resources, which naturally attracts the attention of many global political actors, as well as Turkey, which is striving for regional leadership.

The starting point of the activity of Turkey's "soft" power in the countries of Central Asia is definitely assessed first of all with the disintegration of the USSR, which led to the creation of an ideological gap in the former socialist world system and the establishment of five Turkish republics in the region and the emergence of new states bordering Turkey in the Caucasus. Accordingly, the Republic of Turkey, as a leading country that can offer its sought-after ideological content and the most convenient form of state management in the establishment of interstate relations, not only realized the importance of the historical moment, but was also able to use the opportunity effectively and establish itself as a regional leader in the Turkic-speaking part of the post-Soviet region. Nowadays, we can see several factors in Turkey's development of new interests in this space:

First, Turkey began to be seen as a strong economic partner for the relatively new and weak economies of Central Asia and the Caucasus;

Secondly, Turkey is presented as a secular state that preserves Islamic values for Sunni Muslim-majority countries, unlike other players in the region, such as Iran. As a result, the above-mentioned factors caused the regional states to increase their interest in Turkey and not in other countries[4].

In the opinion of Bulent Sener, a scientific advisor of the University of the 21st Century in Turkey, the main sources of "soft power" are the mass media, universities, non-governmental organizations, as well as trade, culture, personal relations, travel and public sports. The Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA) was established in 1992 under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, which is considered one of the main instruments of soft power of the Republic of Turkey, in order to create pan-Turkic unity among the countries of the region and to increase the influence of the race in the political consciousness of the political elite and the population of their countries. The main goal of the organization is to coordinate efforts aimed at uniting Turkic states under Turkish leadership through both bilateral and multilateral cooperation in social, economic and cultural spheres, where the use of "soft power" tools is most effective. The most clearly expressed phrase that motivated the establishment of the agency can be translated as follows: "Turkey viewed the Central Asian countries as different states of one nation." This attitude corresponds to the views of Z.Gokalp, who tends to consider different Turkic peoples as components of a single Turkic nation[5]. TİKA was designed to become an integral part of Turkey's foreign policy and soft power. Since then, many projects have been implemented in the fields of education, agriculture, industry and finance. TİKA's main focus is on educational and social projects in Central Asia, such as building schools, universities, libraries, and providing scholarships for students and government employees to study in Turkey. Over time, this organization expanded its activities in almost all regions of the region. In the policies carried out by TİKA in Turkic countries and regions, the main place is given to the ethnic-cultural identity of the Turkic people[6]. TİKA implements many projects



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in the social and cultural spheres: building medical and cultural centers, schools, hospitals, supporting public services in order to increase their efficiency. Active work is being carried out on the creation and implementation of educational programs and the educational process in general. It is a common practice to send researchers to the Turkish republics and invite experts from abroad - all this help to strengthen the pan-Turkic sentiment in the ethnically related areas and, as a result, strengthens the position of the Republic of Turkey[7].

It is appropriate to point out the international organization TURKSOY, which was founded by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan in 1993 at the initiative of Turkey, as another leading tool that plays an active role in the implementation of Turkey's soft power. It works to protect the culture, art, language, and historical heritage of the Turkic people, introduce these values, convey these and other concepts to future generations, and at the same time increase their impact on the world. It is worth noting that the name of the Organization can be seen as one of the co-organizers of various events held mainly on Turkish topics. According to Z. Gokalp's concept of integration, it is impossible to achieve Turkish unity and restore a single Turkish nation without a common language, literature and culture. The purpose of TURKSOY is to strengthen brotherhood and friendship between the Turkic people, spread the common Turkish culture and preserve it for future generations. Although the organization presents itself as an international organization that organizes artists' meetings, opera festivals, literary evenings and other forums, they are also an international platform for the exchange of experience between Turkic world culture and scholars. The most notable activity of the organization in promoting the concept of "Turkish world" is the project "Cultural capital of the Turkish world". It instills into the public consciousness information about the existence of the "Turkish world" and the existence of this world "capital", while creating a certain illusion of international political subjectivity (the existence of borders and capital)[8].

The Hizmet movement schools were founded by the famous author and religious scholar Muhammad Fethullah Gülen, active in the fields of education, interfaith dialogue, humanitarian aid, media, finance and health. Gulen-affiliated schools are located all over the world and have operated in Central Asia and the Turkic-speaking regions of the Russian Federation. Essentially, these were boarding schools whose purpose was to educate a politically and economically modern "golden generation" faithful to the traditions of Islamic Turkey. Turkish lyceums are considered to be the main tool of Hizmet movement and these schools are an alternative to education in madrasas and have achieved great success in a short period of time. The educational direction of these schools has spread to more than 160 countries, including the countries of Central Asia. According to various estimates, until 2016, there were about 300 such lyceums and more than 1,000 schools around the world. Many Turkish schools have been operating in countries with a large number of Turkic nationalities, including Uzbekistan. However, the Uzbek government suspected that the Hizmet movement was undermining the secular foundations of statehood and closed all Gulen schools in the country in 1999. In Turkmenistan, Turkish lyceums were seen as a threat to national sovereignty, and in 2011 they turned them into state-sponsored social and educational institutions. The positive influence of Turkey among the population of Central Asian countries has been strengthened thanks to the wide network of Gülen's educational institutions, established in many ways in the republics. Over several decades, Turkish lyceums have become one of the best and most prestigious educational institutions, especially in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The move was banned in Turkey after a failed coup attempt in 2016[9].



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In conclusion, we can emphasize that Turkey's soft power aims to strengthen its ties by developing cooperation instead of regional competition. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent independence of the Central Asian republics prompted Turkish foreign policymakers to develop new foreign policy principles and priorities. These are characterized by increasing relations with a new geography that uses soft power through economic and cultural ties, and Central Asia has created a favorable ground for Turkish politicians to use this new soft power foreign policy tools. Today, between Turkey and the countries of the region, mainly economic, trade and energy there are strong networks and connections in the spheres, and culture and education are soft power tools used in Turkey's relations with Central Asian countries. Official institutions such as TİKA, TURKSOY and various educational institutions are active in the region and contribute to the strengthening of cultural ties between Turkey and its Turkish neighbors.

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