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# Examining the Role of Education in Public Diplomacy

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**ABSTRACT:** Power is perceived as an important aspect of society today and is used in various ways. In some cases, such power is used in a form of a threat, stimuli, rewards, and inducement. Power in the world of politics is perceived as a means to influence others' behavior either positively or negatively. Efforts are made to minimize tensions, opposing opinions, conflicts through public diplomacy – this creates tolerance and international relations. Public diplomacy plays an important role in engaging and maintaining the country-to-country relationship, establishing a dialogue, and allowing negotiation to take place in a constructive manner. This study seeks to examine the role of education in public diplomacy. It considers the aims of the state, the fundamental values in the process of public diplomacy. the international student mobility as well as the exchange programs. It takes note of the importance of diplomacy, cooperation, cultural factors, and economic interdependence as the basis for establishing an effective international relation. The study acknowledges the challenges and the measures put in place to ensure that communication takes place and public diplomacy is at the center of every foreign relation.

**KEY WORDS:** Diplomacy, Education, Power, International Mobility, Technology, Programs

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## Introduction

THE END OF THE COLD WAR IN THE 1990S CAUSED A DRASTIC CHANGE in the balance of power in the world. Such changes brought different dimensions to the concept of power in terms of social, cultural, economic and political aspects in the global sense. In parallel with this transformation, different states started to develop new strategies to increase their power. With the change of hegemony and conjuncture in the context of international relations since the 1990s, various methods and concepts such as human rights, universal norms and standards, constitutional rights, accountability, rule of law, and democracy have gained importance. For this reason, global powers and actors have

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focused their efforts to create public opinion by indirectly penetrating and influencing the feelings and thoughts of the masses (Nye, 2008).

In this period, globalization, the spread of communication technologies, rapid production and dissemination of information caused changes in the field of diplomacy. With the effect of globalization, individual states started to give importance to international activities among countries. In view of globalization, countries around the world have started to carry out joint studies and cooperation activities in the fields of science, education, culture and arts respectfully.

The Republic of Turkey's foreign policy has progressed periodically from different perspectives. Because these developments occurring in the international arena also observed changes in Turkey's foreign policy. These changes observed since the 2000s have accelerated with the beginning of the AK Party Government period. Turkey implemented a new foreign policy strategy the geography where tie with culture and history, religious affiliation or national/cultural proximity. Therefore, focused on establishing close relationships with the communities in different places began to conduct a foreign policy.

With the beginning of 2000, The AK Party government in Turkey has entered a new era. In this period, soft power strategies and international policies started. Diplomacy, cooperation, culture, factors such as economic interdependence with this approach has been particularly effective in shaping their policies towards Turkey's historical and geographical region in which there are historical ties.

During the Cold War Turkey's broken relations with the Turkik republics. It planned to be re-established with the dissolution of the Union. After a long time, it pursued a foreign policy focused on reinforcing the relations that were re-established with these countries. One of these policies is student exchange programs. These studies, which are more people-oriented, make a significant contribution to the perception that the implementing countries want to create in the long term.

The applications of student exchange program, which is an important part of public diplomacy examined. The student exchange program that Turkey is implementing for long years discussed as a public diplomacy tool. In this context, the concept of power, the use of soft power in Turkish foreign policy and the soft power potential of Turkish higher education are evaluated.

### *Theoretical Perspective*

The emergence of new methods of anti-war and diplomatic action all over the world following the Second World War caused changes in the foreign policy objectives and instruments of the countries. At this point, the informal revolution

that has been influenced by technological developments has turned into a factor supporting the new diplomatic action in the international arena. In international politics, the concepts of public diplomacy, soft power, civil society and media have begun to take place more effectively. The importance of the new global level of individuals and the public is increasing day by day. Accordingly, the concept of diplomacy, which was previously defined as the relations of states with each other and the methods used, has changed. Knowledge, culture and communication have begun to become factors in international politics, and diplomacy has been aimed at influencing public opinion by using these elements.

## Public Diplomacy defined

The United States, France and the United Kingdom are the leading states that attach importance to public diplomacy, and they are effectively implementing it. The United States of America is trying to adopt American culture to other societies through think tanks, big brands, and media. In the past, international problems have negotiated the official representatives of the state, and the interview has resulted in a positive or negative result, and the public has not played a decisive role in the political decision-making process. Today, the value of public diplomacy, defined as the activities of non-state civil actors, an act of influencing one nation's citizens and decision makers of other countries, has been understood, and now the classical diplomacy carried out in international relations has differed, individuals and societies have become part of the decision-making process.

With the development and widespread use of mass media, the public has become instantly aware of developments in the world, and nowadays, the legitimacy, politics and diplomacy have shifted to the media that perceive and widely perceive public opinion. This is because the legitimacy of an event in which the media constitutes a sense of righteousness has come to be accepted in almost certain correct form. The public diploma is considered to be one of the dominant elements of soft power defined as "the outcome of an individual's world politics after the Cold War, admiration of its values, exemplifying it, and reaching by observing the countries that are concerned with their wealth and opportunities". The soft power, which is also defined as having the politicians to have what they want by affecting individuals and social groups, is contributing to the implementation of public diplomacy activities. (Nye, 2008: 98)

Public diplomacy is bringing a new dimension to the process of international legitimacy for states' foreign policy and laying the groundwork

for their use of soft power instead of hard power. Governments are aiming to support the public on important issues such as economic policies, energy programs, strategic investments in the international arena. Public diplomacy is at this point in the process of managing agendas and perceptions in the international arena and in favor of decision makers. The concept of democracy, human rights and freedom together with the structure of the changing international system in the post-Cold War era have been fundamental values in the process of public diplomacy.

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## Technological Development

Today, the developments in the technology world and the changes taking place in people's perceptions of politics have gained importance of the functions of public diplomacy. The public diploma aiming at influencing the public opinion, which is composed of elements such as international institutions, governments, NGOs, foreign groups, people and the media, have become an effective and indispensable strategic communication tool of foreign policy over time.

Every state in the international system seeks more say in global politics and seek various ways to influence the world public opinion. In this context, having an effective public diplomacy strengthens the state. The main aim of states in this framework is to obtain a positive image of the individual with more detailed information about the country in question. Moreover, states have to establish communication channels between their own people and foreigners and earn their sympathies. This can be in the form of natural disasters, conflicts and wars, as well as projects based on education, technology and cultural fields to support social development. At this point, especially in recent years, the popularity and impact of student exchange programs are an important tool of public diplomacy. The aim of states to create sympathy and attraction on foreign nations is an important element that facilitates foreign policy maneuvers. For this reason, public diplomacy has become a matter of state particularly in terms of attracting foreign students to the country and supporting foreign policy decisions (Bevis and Lucas, 2007).

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## Exchange Programs

In public diplomacy, exchange programs in the field of international education are the way to develop an image of a country and shape its foreign policy within a positive framework. Persistent perceptions about countries can be created by direct contact between the people of different countries. In international exchange programs in the field of education, change of perception can be

achieved through the personal contacts placed by exchange students. Countries are part of the public diplomacy activities in the field of education, where the exchange programs they are implementing are informing, shaping, and attempting to orientate other countries' public interests in the direction of their own national interests. (De Lima, 2007: 239) International student circulation has been considered as an important means of public diplomacy as it promotes mutual understanding, business unity and solidarity among countries and cultures and contributes to global peace.

Exchange programs, also referred to as exchange diplomas, aim to create cultural interactions during the study period by sending citizens abroad and accepting arrivals from abroad and establishing an international level of perception. The changes are an ideal tool for public diplomacy's two-way communication approach. According to Nye, cultural exchange influences the elite, in this case, even one or two important relationships can be a great political influence (Nye, 2004). Aleksandr Yakolev, for example, was highly influenced by his work with the Political Scientist David Truman at the University of Colombia in 1958. As a result, Yakovlev became the head of an important institution, and influenced a member of the Politburo and the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev on liberalism. The Soviet student Oleg Kalugin, who is a senior officer in the KGB, looked back in 1997 and said, "The exchange programs were Trojan Horse for the Soviet Union. It played a big role in the collapse of the Soviet system. It has continued to infect more and more people over the years." (Nye, 2004)

## International student Mobility

With the incentive and support of the countries, the increasing international student mobility shows the importance given to this topic. In addition to economic development, personal development, socialization and professional gain, the strategic importance of foreign student mobility, which is of great importance in cultural interaction, knowledge production, sharing and transfer of knowledge is increasing in the context of public diplomacy. Today, many developed countries use international higher education as an important instrument of public diplomacy. According to OECD data, in recent years there have been significant increases in the number of foreign students at the global level, and most foreign students go to OECD countries to study. International student exchange programs as part of public diplomacy activities are understood as communication processes, not a thought propaganda. Scholarships are carried out by government-sponsored organizations such as the British Council, DAAD and Alliance France.

In Turkey in the year 1992, to further develop the relations between Turkey Relatives Community, the Great Student Project was launched under the name of the Turkish Republic initially with 5 countries (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), later including the 57 states or communities where a significant student exchange program formed. The aim of the program implemented by the Ministry of National Education is; to help meet the needs of trained manpower of the Turkish Community, to cultivate a friendly young generation within the Turkish world with a permanent brotherhood and build a bridge of friendship, to introduce the Turkish culture and Turkish situated countries in the World, and to form an umbrella with the relations of these countries (Özkan, 2013). Objectives of Turkey's large student projects are seen as clearly designed to be used as a public diplomacy tool given

According to Nye, there are three dimensions of public diplomacy; daily informants, strategic communications and the third dimension consisting of scholarships, exchange programs, internships, long-term relationships with people who can play an important role in the future of their countries over the years (Nye, 2004). Mutual student exchange programs are an important process in establishing long-term relationships, as the lifestyle and way of thinking of an individual country is most easily understood and accepted among young people. In this century, when knowledge and communication do not define boundaries, cultural interaction has been positively contributing to the preservation of hundreds of genuine old ties that have returned to their countries, and it is often seen that governments have not embraced atmospheric contrasts in their foreign policies. In the long-term student exchange program in this context it is likely to be returned as a gain in Turkey. Having covered more than 150 countries, student exchange programs in the community provides the opportunity to get to know Turkey and the Turkish people. Cultural erosion, especially in the Central Asian countries during the Soviet era, has become a well understood and important indicator for the policies developed for the region.

The student programs implemented within the scope of the public diploma foresees a two-way international student mobility. While the political, historical, cultural and social accumulations of the country are being conveyed to students from different countries through scholarship practices, it is equally contributed to sending the country's citizens to different countries within the scope of the program and introducing country values in those geographical areas. Many countries that successfully implement public diplomacy in the world are applying student exchange programs in two ways. Turkish Scholarships started new applications that our country still foresees as the one-way student mobility. In this context, it is shortcoming that international student mobility programs financed by our country are not pursued with a comprehensive strategy under a program.

Promotion, informing and brand building are the most important factors in terms of public diploma work. The promotion of Turkey's student exchange program is also important in applying more extensive and effective public diplomacy awareness of our country in terms of the work it will contribute positively to the realization of the program's success and in terms of promotion. Turkish Scholarships will be able to gain more of a branding element of soft power.

As a result, public diplomacy, one of the most important means of influencing and directing the international community today, is one of the most effective means of defending the interests of a country, providing legitimacy and creating public opinion. In the globalized world of communication, it is natural for every country to try to make the best use of this vehicle. Turkey: who cannot express themselves well, has misunderstandings and prejudices should not ignore this new field of diplomacy; soft power should utilize the resources they have.

International student work contributes greatly in informing different societies at the point of recognition and appreciation of the accumulation and values of the countries abroad. For this reason, in the field of public diplomacy, various activities are being carried out with the participation of public institutions and organizations as well as private sector and non-governmental organizations.

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## Final remarks

There is clear need therefore for each country to embrace conventional diplomacy through different means. Most powerful nations use diplomacy to accomplish foreign trade, influence policies, resolve conflict, maintain social security in order to create a better world. Undoubtedly some conflicts remain unresolved resulting into grudges, hostility, disagreements and more often lead to war. Public diplomacy is vitally important and, in most cases, it is used as tool to develop and evaluate international relations. Now and in the future, the key challenge for countries is to ensure that the role of education in public diplomacy is maintained. Many countries that have implemented public diplomacy have extended their activities. This has resulted into the increase of international student mobility, forming student exchange programs, creating a cultural interaction, broadening students' perspectives of the host country as well as removing visible barriers. To be successful in promoting public diplomacy and national interests, countries need to have strong and effective communication channels rather than relying on traditional form of communication.

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