

Chinara Gabil Safarova¹

*Ganja State University
Azerbaijan State Agricultural University (Azerbaijan)*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52340/sou.2023.21.09>

The „Soft Power“ Factor in Türkiye's Georgian Policy

Abstract. The Turkish state was one of the first countries to recognize Georgia's independence in 1991. Since then, political, socio-economic, and cultural cooperation between the two countries has developed.

As it is known, since the ninetieth of the 20th century, the Republic of Türkiye has been one of the countries that most actively uses the elements of "soft power" in world politics in general, especially in Caucasian politics. The Republic of Türkiye uses relations in the humanitarian and cultural fields as a "soft power" factor in Georgian politics.

Keywords: cultural, scientific, humanitarian, healthcare, TİKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, Yunus Emre Foundation and the Presidency of Religious Affairs).

ჩინარა გაბილ საფაროვა²

*განჯის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი, აზერბაიჯანის სახელმწიფო
სასოფლო-სამეურნეო უნივერსიტეტი (აზერბაიჯანი)*

„რბილი ძალის“ ფაქტორი თურქულ-ქართულ პოლიტიკაში

თურქეთის სახელმწიფო იყო ერთ-ერთი პირველი ქვეყანა, რომელმაც აღიარა საქართველოს დამოუკიდებლობა 1991 წელს. ამ პერიოდიდან მოყოლებული ორ ქვეყანას შორის, როგორც პოლიტიკური, ასევე სოციალ-ეინომიკური და კულტურული თანამშრომლობა განვითარდა.

¹ **Chinara Gabil Safarova**, Phd of student Ganja State University, Head teacher of Azerbaijan State Agricultural University. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2480-0056>

² **ჩინარა გაბილ საფაროვა**, განჯის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტის დოქტორანტი, აზერბაიჯანის სახელმწიფო სასოფლო-სამეურნეო უნივერსიტეტი (აზერბაიჯანი).

როგორც ცნობილია, XX საუკუნის 90-იანი წლებიდან მოყოლებული, თურქეთის რესპუბლიკა ერთ-ერთია იმ ქვეყნებიდან, რომელიც ყველაზე აქტიურად იყენებს „რბილი ძალის“ ელემენტებს მსოფლიო პოლიტიკაში, განსაკუთრებით კი კავკასიასთან მიმართებაში. საქართველოსთან მიმართებაში თურქეთის რესპუბლიკა იყენებს „რბილ ძალას“ ჰუმანიტარულ და კულტურულ სფეროებში.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: კულტურული, სამეცნიერო, ჰუმანიტარული, ჯანდაცვა, TİKA (თურქეთის თანამშრომლობისა და კოორდინაციის სააგენტო).

Introduction. In 1991, Türkiye was one of the first countries to recognize Georgia's independence. In 1992, the „Friendship and Cooperation Agreement“ was signed and a visa-free regime was introduced, offering the opportunity to cross the border with identification.

The development of political and economic relations between Türkiye and Georgia has had a positive effect on the development of relations in the scientific, technical and humanitarian fields. Türkiye uses relations in the humanitarian and cultural fields as a „soft power“ factor in Georgian politics. The first cooperation agreement in the fields of education, science, culture and sports was signed between the government of the Republic of Türkiye and the government of the Republic of Georgia on July 20, 1992 (Dışişleri Bakanlığı Tarihçesi. 1992: 396). The agreement provided for the regulation of relations in the fields of culture, science, education and sports based on the traditional historical and cultural relations between the two countries. In this framework, it was envisaged that the governments would support the conclusion of cooperation protocols between the higher education institutions of the two countries, exchange of scientific projects and programs, training of specialists, promotion of joint scientific research. Georgia and Türkiye intended to support the conduct of joint historical, archival and archaeological research in order to better recognize their historical and cultural values, within the framework of the opportunities given to foreigners by their national legislations. In addition, cooperation in the fields of primary, secondary and technical education was reflected in the document. Supporting the development of relations in the fields of theater, music, opera, ballet and other arts was defined as one of the priority directions (Dışişleri Bakanlığı Tarihçesi. 1992: 396-397). Radio and television were of great importance for strengthening interactions. The document also contained articles on the promotion of cooperation between radio and television organizations and the support of program exchange in this context. Each party to the agreement will allow the establishment of cultural centers of the other country, provided that they comply with the laws and regulations of this country and operate within this framework, and they will take measures to facilitate the activities of the centers. The agreement was signed for five years.

Türkiye's great influence in Georgia; It shows that Ankara can and does work with non-Muslim countries and uses „soft power“ perfectly. „Soft power“ is often

presented as an alternative or supplement to more rigid instruments of power, such as military and economic power. However, although we can say that soft power is independent of military capabilities, it is not easy to separate it from economic leverage. Comparing soft power capabilities to a country's economic assets can show how the first element of influence builds on the second. Moreover, it reveals how the dynamics of cultural attraction are also closely intertwined with economic benefits. Currently, Türkiye is one of the „trendsetters” in the field of „soft power”. Turkish cultural and humanitarian organizations such as the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA), Yunus Emre Foundation and the Presidency of Religious Affairs operate intensively in Georgia. Since 1994, TIKA has started to implement large-scale projects related to Turkish-Georgian economic cooperation in the fields of tourism, culture, education, health, humanitarian aid and school education (Yumuşak gücün” çelik tutuşu, 2021). Among these, the construction of 100 houses in Saquasheti of the Qori district for the immigrants who had to leave the share of the Tsxinvali region that remained under the supervision of the Ossetian separatists after the 2008 provincial war, creation of three polyclinics, repaired and equipped with state-of-the-art medical devices, in the territories of the Adjarian Magnificent Republic, it is especially necessary to note that three industrial centers in Tbilisi, Batumi and Bolnisi were repaired and given over to exploitation. In addition, there are artesian wells, irrigation canals that will increase the productivity of farming lands, urban schools converted into modern educational institutions and The work of providing drinking water to people deprived of clean drinking water has been implemented by TIKA, and education, brotherhood and mining activities have been supported. This served to strengthen Turkey's reputation among the people of Georgia (TİKA dünyası, 2012).

Separately, it is worth noting that the TIKA agency implemented the “Turcology” project – special departments dedicated to Turkish studies were created within the framework of Georgian universities. Yunus Emre Foundation has its own center in Tbilisi and constantly organizes various cultural events, Turkish culture days, implements scientific projects and organizes training courses on research on Turks. Great importance is given to Turkology as a branch of science in Georgia. In the Turkology department, which is located in almost every state university, scientific studies are carried out on all kinds of relations between Turks and Georgians, especially the Turkish language. In this context, monographs, books and articles have also been published. In addition, Georgian Turkologists are examining the sources written in Ottoman Turkish in the Tbilisi State Archive from a linguistic perspective. The Turkish Language Book of the 18th century preserved in the archive, the Georgian translation of the Quran written in the Georgian alphabet, the grammatical structure of Turkish, Turkish-Georgian language relations, and Turkish-Georgian idioms are examined (Arslan, 2018).

Turkish words in Georgian are the subject of study of Georgian Turcologists. Some state universities in Turkey also have departments on Georgian language. The first one was Georgian Language and Literature in Kars in 2006, affiliated with Kafkas University - Faculty of Arts and Sciences; the second in Ardahan, in 2012, Georgian

Language and Literature, affiliated with Ardahan University - Ardahan Faculty of Humanities and Letters; the third one was in Rize, in 2012, Georgian Language and Literature, affiliated with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University - Faculty of Arts and Sciences; The fourth one was in Düzce, in 2013, Georgian Language and Literature departments of Düzce University - Faculty of Arts and Sciences have been opened (Bostashvili, 2020: 69).

Hundreds of thousands of Turkish-speaking and Muslim groups living in this country have a special place in the humanitarian policy of Türkiye in Georgia. At the same time, Türkiye has shown a special attitude to people of Georgian nationality living within its borders. It is an indicator of this kind of influence that Turkish flags are flown along with the Georgian flag on many holidays and significant days of the Muslim and Turkish peoples celebrated in Georgia. Nowruz holiday celebrated in Marneuli district where Azerbaijani Turks live and the waving of flags of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Türkiye together in that area can be considered one of the most obvious indicators of Turkish-Georgian humanitarian and cultural relations. There are numerous historical and cultural monuments that are an example of Christianity on the territory of Türkiye, and examples of Muslim-Turkish culture on the territory of Georgia. Tbilisi Yunus Emre Turkish Culture Center (YETKM) played an important role in the realization of Türkiye's "soft power" policy in Georgia. In Central Georgia, activities were carried out with the aim of introducing the Turkish culture and language to the Georgian people. In February 2012, Turkish language courses were organized in this center, which started operating in the building of Tbilisi State University.

It seems that Georgian-Turkish cultural relations go back a long way and are built on strong foundations. With the migration of Turks to the West, Georgians and Turks began to come into more frequent contact. The Turkish-Georgian border neighbourhood, which emerged with the Turkification of Anatolia, has continued for centuries. The deep traces of Turkish culture in Georgian social life from the historical process to the present are very obvious. Especially today, it is necessary to mention a strong Georgian cultural influence in the Eastern Black Sea region of Turkey. It should be noted that although Georgians living in the Eastern Black Sea region have accepted Islam, they continue to maintain their own customs and traditions as a part of their lives. The Presidency of Religious Affairs carries out the restoration and construction of mosques, selects students to study theology courses in Türkiye and spreads Islam among Georgia's Christian population.

It is seen that the AKP gave importance to soft power in its foreign policy in the first ten years, and their implementation produced positive results for the country. In the world order where democracy and mutual cooperation develop, it has become important to have influence over other countries by using soft power. At this point, what is important for a country using soft power is to be attractive and to have an influence on other states without resorting to any coercive elements. Although soft power is not a quick and easy method to apply, if it can have the expected impact on other countries, it is likely that the power will be long-term and permanent (Çağlar, Ermihan, Görür., 2020).

Although Türkiye is in a difficult geographical region and is involved in a geopolitically complex equation, it attaches importance to its soft power and the dimension of generating consent in the international community. Türkiye has created a new balance between its soft and hard powers. In this balance, coordinating the steps to be taken in both fields in a mutually supportive manner will be the main determinant of Türkiye's international effectiveness.

Result. The recent increase in Türkiye's interest in every field in Georgia has led to closer relations between the two neighboring peoples and to further strengthen their ties with Türkiye. Türkiye has actively used various elements of soft power in Georgian politics. It creates very favorable conditions for further strengthening of relations between these countries in the future. When we look at the soft power practices in Türkiye's foreign policy, we can say that more pragmatic and ideological approaches have been adopted recently, especially through certain institutions. Additionally, we can argue that a foreign policy implemented in this way further destabilizes Türkiye's international relations in the long run and brings them to the point of deterioration.

References:

- Arslan (2018) Mustafa Arslan, “Dil-Kültür Etkileşimi Açısından Türk-Gürcü İlişkileri”, Türk Uluslararası Dil, Edebiyat ve Halkbilimi Araştırmaları Dergisi, N:12, 2018; Dışişleri Bakanlığı Tarihçesi (1992) T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı Arşivi. -Ankara, -1994. № 54667. v. 396;
- Bostashvili (2020) Giorgi, Bostashvili. Gürcü Tarih Kitaplarında Türk İmajı / T.C. İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler / Yüksek Lisans Tezi.-İstanbul,-2020,-s.69;
- Çağlar, Ermihan, Görür (2020) Gözde Çağlar, Erman Ermihan, Senem Görür. Türkiye'nin Dış Politikadaki Yumuşak Güç Kapasitesini Yeniden Değerlendirmek / [Elektronik kaynak] / -17 Haziran, 2020. URL: <https://www.iku.edu.tr/gpot/-young-minds-gozde-caglar-erman-ermihan-senem-gorur-turkiyenin-dis-politikadaki-yumusak-guc>
- TİKA dünyası (2012) TİKA dünyası // T.C.Başbakanlık.Sayı 1,-2012,Haziran. s. 34-40. Yumuşak gücün” çelik tutuşu (2021) “Yumuşak gücün” çelik tutuşu: Gürcistan’daki Türkiye:[Elektronik kaynak]/ -2021, 28 Nisan. URL: <https://kafkassam.com/yumusak-gucun-celik-tutusu-gurcistandaki-turkiye.html>