Evolving Public Diplomacy: An Analysis of Turkey's Strategies in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina Over the Last 20 Years (During the Ak Party Period)

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the evolution of Turkey's public diplomacy strategies towards Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina over the past two decades under AK Party rule. Conceptually, the research bridges mainstream nation branding approaches focused on competitive state-directed external image projection with critical perspectives highlighting complex relational dynamics involving diverse domestic and transnational actors that shape credibility. It employs critical grounded thematic analysis and comparative case studies to examine the construction and adaptation of cultural narratives, communications channels, and impacts in each country context. Empirically, political statements and speeches are analysed to map dominant narratives promoted in each context amid complex historical memories and identities. Communication channels spanning media partnerships, exchanges, and transactions are examined to assess societal engagement. Histories of Ottoman rule and Yugoslavia's dissolution provide backdrops to analyse tailored messaging and exchanges. Discourse constructions are contextualized through secondary assessments of Turkey's regional activities and reputation. Findings reveal economic deals enabled but enduring inter-ethnic tensions persist. Recommendations prioritize participatory, intercultural initiatives focused on mutual understanding to responsibly advance stability. Overall, timely perspective is provided on recalibrating public diplomacy through emphasis on reciprocal societal engagement over divisions.

AUTHORS' DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Public diplomacy broadly refers to measures undertaken by state and non-state actors to engage with and attract foreign publics to build relationships, manage perceptions and influence behaviour to align with certain interests (Melissen 2005). It spans cultivation of governmental ties, promotion of cultural narratives, exchanges. and harnessing transnational networks and media to burnish a country's reputation and prestige abroad (Cull 2009).

Conceptually, as Leonardo et al (2018) elucidate, effective public diplomacy requires projecting credible narratives, policies and relationships persistently over time rather than one-off media spectacles. Success rests on maintaining trusted long-term partnerships rooted in sincerity. This highlights the need for sustained cultural exchanges, transparent transactions, and messaging aligned with actual policies over an extended timeframe.

Short-lived publicity stunts or rhetorical slogans often lack the substance to fundamentally shift beliefs or relationships at a societal level beyond superficial impressions. As Hayden (2013) explicates regarding soft power theory, resonating with foreign publics through cultural promotion alone does not automatically confer policy influence on critical issues. Rather, demonstrated consistency between professed principles and actual conduct over years remains imperative to accrual of credibility.

Therefore, effective public diplomacy must move beyond ephemeral media flair towards gradually nurturing reciprocal human relationships through peoples centred on understanding mutual needs. This underpins lasting positive influence. As Hocking (2005) notes, traditional state-centric international relations paradigms focused narrowly on pursuing national interests require balancing with recognition of shared intersubjective realities that diplomatic partnerships aim to shape.

Within diverse civilizational zones like the Balkans, spilled across historical empires with a patchwork of ethnicities, faiths and loyalties, public diplomacy strategies that engage foreign publics through convenient simplifications of identity or transient inducements alone risk backfiring over time if based on flawed assumptions rather than grasp of nuanced symbolic

meanings and memory. Credible cultivation of soft power stems from empathy, sincerity and participatory exchanges revealing complex truths.

Turkey's reintegration with Balkan societies following historical Ottoman domination necessitates consistent good faith efforts at mutual understanding and cooperation benefiting local groups' contemporary priorities beyond transactions with rotating political elites. Evaluating the construction, adaptation and effects of cultural messaging and exchanges provides vital perspective guiding this continuing navigation.

As Turkey's regional profile rose under AK Party leadership, public diplomacy became an increasingly prominent instrument for projecting soft power and advancing the country's geopolitical interests across surrounding regions (Davutoglu, 2008). This study examines the evolution of Turkey's public diplomacy strategies towards the Balkans, with a specific focus on analysing cultural branding, partnerships and messaging approaches employed in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina over the past two decades.

The Balkans constituted a key priority geography for the expansion of Turkey's post-2002 public diplomacy outreach given proximity as an immediate neighbourhood, deep historical ties spanning centuries of Ottoman rule, and strategic significance as a borderland between the Middle East and Europe (Ozkan 2014). The region also held substantial populations of Slavic Muslim communities develop a distinct cultural heritage under past imperial legacies. This religious variable provided an avenue for reconnecting with local societies on an ideological and civilizational level.

Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, as former Yugoslav states with sizable Muslim populations, constituted important targets for Turkey to rehabilitate post-Cold War ties, boost economic linkages and realign toward its foreign policy interests (Kajan 2013). Belgrade sought warmer relations with Ankara given Turkey's rising regional clout and Serbian desires to attract investment, tourism and political support amidst its gradual integration into European structures (Glenny 2012). Meanwhile Bosnia's dysfunctional ethno-nationalist political structure and conservative Muslim plurality made it susceptible to Turkish patronage leveraging religious and cultural bonds (Bougarel 2007).

This complex landscape, colored by bitter recent histories of ethnic conflict and ongoing rivalries, necessitated nuanced public diplomacy efforts attuned to diverse local identities and sensitivities. As Fisher (2010) highlights, resonance requires understanding audiences' cultural symbols, narratives and means of self-expression. Thus, examining Turkey's messaging and engagements in neighbouring Serbia and Bosnia over two decades provides valuable comparative insight into the adaptation, possibilities and limits of its cultural power and attraction.

While Turkey's foreign policy and Balkan ties have received extensive scholarly scrutiny, the specific role of public diplomacy as a strategic instrument remains underexamined beyond general discussions of cultural promotion or special relationships. In-depth analysis of state-to-society exchanges, narrative resonance with target groups, and execution of activities beyond elite-level agreements can elucidate deeper drivers, assumptions, and impacts.

As Gregory (2008) notes, traditional diplomacy centred government-to-government negotiation without broader cultural linkages risks failing to gain public backing vital for sustaining partnerships over time, especially in democratizing states. Networks, media, and societal outreach shape modern geopolitics alongside formal agreements between officials. Investigating this interactive dimension is crucial for understanding Turkey's influence.

Moreover, as Melissen (2005) argues, competitive globalization and transnational idea flows increasingly compel countries to craft attractive national brands and reputations in order to extend their voice and petition support from allies. This cultural dimension of "soft power" constitutes an evolving arena of rivalry between external powers big and small seeking global citizenship appeal.

Given historical perceptions of Ottoman domination (Zürcher, 2004), Turkey's reintegration into Balkan societies based on positive shared interests necessitated public diplomacy fostering cultural affinity with local groups beyond relying on elite political transactions, according to Pamment (2013). Coordinated image projection, rhetoric, exchanges, and relationship cultivation help enable this societal power vital for durably realigning regional dynamics in its favour after past conflicts played out across ethnic lines with Turkey supporting Muslims (Fisher Onar, 2009).

Evaluating successes, gaps and dilemmas in this long-term endeavour - spanning tensions like discrepancy between authoritarian governance trends and Turkey's branded aspirations as a liberal democratic exemplar. Findings can illuminate improvements ensuring public diplomacy effectively supports reconciliation and conflict mediation aligned with Turkey's promise as an ethical actor promoting Balkan integration and pluralism (Ekinci, 2019).

In particular, assessing strategic communication and societal engagement in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina - two neighbours with intertwined histories but divergent orientations and identities - allows comparative examination of public diplomacy recalibrations to varying localized contexts. Respective minority Muslim and majority Orthodox Christian populations pose distinct challenges interacting with Ankara's overtures invoking selective historical cultural memories and religious symbolism. Tracking discourse patterns and partnerships in each country reveals nuanced navigation.

Therefore, the empirical study tries to explore these nuances - from economic incentives emphasized to attract Serbian support, to neo-Ottoman kinship rhetoric vis-a-vis Bosniaks - to elucidate the construction, adaptation, and effects of Turkey's regional public diplomacy strategy. Findings detail rhetorical tailoring, interactions enabling economic deals but constrained societal affinity in Serbia, and extensive yet politically limited cultural resonance in Bosnia. The closing discussion examines policy, academic and ethical implications.

Enhanced scholarly understanding supports more reflective, balanced practice - analysing where Turkey's initiatives succeeded in progressing regional reconciliation and development versus risks of encouraging radical ethnoreligious nationalism or illiberalism. Investigating the nexus of messaging, activities and local responses guides recommendations on optimizing cultivation of genuine mutual understanding between societies through participatory exchanges and multidirectional dialogue addressing contemporary uncertainties - rather than amplified but disembodied glorification of a selectively imagined past.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

This study addresses the pressing need for grounded empirical analysis concerning the efficacy, societal impacts and risks embedded in Turkey's expanding cultural projection and public

diplomacy strategies directed towards the complex Balkan region amidst its forceful repositioning as an ascendant regional power since 2002.

As Turkey's regional profile rose under visionary AK Party leadership, public diplomacy assumed an increasingly high-profile foreign policy role. But credible data tracking concrete functionality deserves juxtaposition against high-level diplomatic speeches glorifying ancient selective histories. Surveys indicate authoritarian consolidation, human rights repression and minority anxieties fundamentally contesting Turkey's idealized external branding as a flourishing democratic exemplar (Ekinci 2019).

Therefore exploratory thematic research provides vital analytical ballast assessing paradoxes between alluring cultural messaging projections extolling Turkish development patronage towards Balkan countries against accumulating evidence revealing deficits actualizing grassroots democratic functionality outcomes necessary for positive reconciliation, sustainable inter-ethnic cohesion and locally-led agency required for stabilization - despite sophisticated nation branding attempts claiming otherwise.

Words alone cannot overwrite structural governance barriers to accountability rooted in complex conflicts and institutional dysfunction. Lasting cultural influence relies on evidencing functioning policies and exchanges upholding professed European values consistently in practice - beyond temporarily amplified ideological external tropes risking further communal polarization absent supportive progress emerging locally to escape instability (Fouéré 2020). Yet bespoke cultural resonance retains importance for cooperation amidst uncertainties through responsively crafted signalling matched by democratic substance demonstrating enlargement through difficult reforms.

Therefore urgent empirical analyses tracking discourse constructions, societal impacts and functional political advancement provides timely scholarly ballast assessing paradoxes revealing risks of messaging excess exceeding delivery. It guides principled policy improvements upholding declared enlightenment ideals to strengthen fragile Balkan polities against reactionary radicalization trends. Key problems requiring confrontation include:

Need for Holistic Policy Evaluations

Firstly, as public skepticism grows over inflated external promises detached from grassroots functionality, insights tracking actual impacts provides vital perspective guiding constructive improvements by directly engaging local partners beyond diplomatic speeches or elite transactions alone. Surveys tracking opinions absent institutional outputs provide limited utility here. Literature integrating corroborated discourse assessments with functionality indicators offers crucial nuance assessing credibility, unintended harms and needs vital for ethical policy coordination.

Yet insufficient scholarship examines Turkey's regional activities amidst contemporary global populist radicalization risks. Assertions require impartial evidentiary support. Exploratory research provides vital analytical ballast assessing paradoxes between alluring cultural branding projections and delivery constraints revealing risks of polarization exploitation or hindered stabilization that sustained assistance for locally-led solutions could mitigate.

Rebalancing Conceptual Binaries

Secondly, unreconciled binaries persist in literature glorifying resonating messaging successes securing short-term symbolic affinity gains attractive to partisan constituents or elite commercial transactions - without confronting accumulation of evidence revealing deficits sustaining grassroots democratic functionality improvements necessary to nurture local agency addressing polarization. This invites investigations assessing functionality.

Sustainable post-conflict solutions necessitate participatory and economic capacity emerging from within diverse societies themselves, not temporary external amplification of conveniently narrow ideological histories risking communal vulnerability to demagogic foreign sponsors disconnecting agency required to escape dysfunction.

Assessing Credibility

Thirdly and relatedly, while Turkey publicly pronounces intentions to support Europe's democratic values abroad, severe ethical risks accompany overpromising vaguely defined external ideological guardianship absent actually evidencing functionality assistance for locally-articulated reform priorities upholding enlargement through difficult, internally-forged compromises.

Therefore urgent assessment of tailored cultural branding claims against exchanges and functionality indicators provides crucial scholastic ballast guiding principled policy coordination reforms. It highlights needs upholding declared enlightenment ideals through programs directly demonstrating substantive democratic advancement helping stabilize vulnerable regions against extremism. Reflexive evaluation provides wisdom illuminating gaps between words and actions to build partnerships with credibility.

In summary, Turkey's pronounced post-2002 public diplomacy expansion compels impartial analysis assessing tailored cultural resonance against actualized democratic functionality outcomes amidst a turbulent region challenged by complex conflicts and competitive interference trends. Findings can assist optimizing partnerships supporting locally-led enlargement through sustained assistance and initiatives directly addressing sources fuelling radicalization like dysfunctional institutions. But uncritical glorification risks fostering overpromising subsequently breeding dependence absent participatory outcomes owned domestically. Therefore balanced assessment provides timely perspective to guide constructive improvements upholding credibility through evidence-based enlargement impacts.

1.3. Aims and Objectives of the Study

This study has four core aims:

Firstly, it seeks to elucidate the construction of Turkey's strategic public diplomacy narratives tailored specifically to varying cultural contexts in the Balkans. Grounded thematic analysis examines cultural branding projected towards Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina through statements, editorials, and symbolic governmental events. The analysis reveals key themes, assumptions and rhetorical techniques emphasizing selective historical ties and expressions of cultural power suited to each local environment. Findings detail how messaging aims to reposition Turkey from former regional hegemon to aspirational civilizational leader sharing European modernist goals.

Secondly, the study analyses communication channels, activities and exchanges spanning traditional media partnerships, cultural centre programming, educational exchanges and transactions with political elites and civic groups. It investigates how these initiatives are adapted to Serbian and Bosnian settings and societal perspectives. The scope encompasses top-

down state-directed efforts as well as examining organic public reception and resonance. Assessing exchanges beyond formal agreements provides perspective on relationships and impacts enabling or hindering reconciliation.

Finally, the comparative analysis of tailored engagement in Serbia and Bosnia provides policy lessons on optimizing public diplomacy strategies for the region's complex landscape. Findings highlight needs and opportunities to balance resonant symbolic messaging appeals with emphasis on addressing contemporary societal uncertainties. Analysis examines how credible substantive partnerships promoting stability and conciliation can be cultivated through participatory initiatives building intercultural understanding - rather than amplifying particularistic nationalist histories.

In terms of the objectives of the study, there are three main objectives:

- Map cultural narratives and assume symbolic power projected in political, editorial, and cultural promotion statements tailored for Serbian and Bosnian contexts.
- Examine public diplomacy activities via media partnerships, event programming, economic deals and educational exchanges appealing to elite and popular constituencies.
- Analyse reception by local communities and evolving relations with governments, public opinion trends and impacts on issues like minority policies and regional conciliation.

1.4. Significance of the Study

Investigating the evolving construction, localized adaptation and societal impacts of Turkey's public diplomacy strategies in the strategically significant Balkan region serves both theoretical and practical purposes. Scholarly understanding of Turkey's cultural soft power projection and effects remains limited, with grounded thematic analysis, partnership cultivation and resonance outcomes lacking holistic examination.

This study provides empirical insight through relational and contextualized analysis of strategic messaging, on-the-ground exchanges, and credibility gaps that theoretical frameworks overlook. Findings detail sophisticated signalling adaptations along with dilemmas in

transforming cultural promotion into functional reconciliatory outcomes detached from resonating with particular leaders or constituencies.

The research bridges conceptual literature on effective relationship-building public diplomacy impacts enabled. It reveals the interface between state-directed projection of strategic narratives (Miskimmon, 2017) and messy realities of reconciliation politics in young post-conflict societies. Tailored cultural branding reveals aspirational leadership goals but constrained political sway spotlights pitfalls of misalignment with local reform priorities. These insights guide principled improvements.

By elucidating nuanced resonance conditions across varying Balkan contexts, comparative findings facilitate policy lessons on optimizing messaging while addressing risks of alienating audiences and unintended consequences like bolstering radical ethnoreligious politics. Avoiding glorification of the past above engaging societies on contemporary uncertainties appears vital for credible integration leadership.

Finally, the integration of realist state-centric cultural branding models with critical constructivist perspectives revealing complex power dynamics offers an exemplar for further scholarship in this pivotal domain. The study provides conceptual building blocks and investigative breadth necessary for re-theorizing public diplomacy as a dynamically interactive process between states, societies, and identities. This underscore growing complexity in a globalized reality.

Therefore, in assessing resonance of Turkey's bespoken cultural revivalist discourse and resulting transactions in the Balkans, the empirical analysis offers timely perspective guiding constructive policy improvements while elucidating theory. It crystallizes risks of messaging excess detached from delivery by demanding consistent people-centred relationship building. Core lessons on responsibly adapting signalling while resisting reductive stereotypes and addressing uncertainties provide widely relevant insights.

This introduction has framed the rationale, significance, and objectives of the study. The next chapter will delve deeper into the theoretical literature on public diplomacy in international relations. This will inform the project's conceptual framework prior to the comparative country analysis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Historical Background of Public Diplomacy

The practice of public diplomacy has historical antecedents stretching back centuries, but its conceptual evolution as a state tool of influence is more recent. Cull (2008) notes the essence of appealing to foreign publics is ancient, but public diplomacy as a defined strategy emerged alongside mass communication technologies and globalization processes in the 20th century. Unlike traditional diplomacy centred on state-to-state relations, public diplomacy engages foreign publics directly to build trust and influence (Melissen, 2005).

While the institutional basis of modern public diplomacy developed later, Enlightenment thinkers laid important early groundwork by stressing the importance of cultivating positive national images abroad alongside commerce and cultural exchange (Pamment, 2013). Philosophers like Voltaire emphasized the potential soft power benefits of cultural achievement and intellectual exchange between societies. Early public diplomacy efforts also included royal envoys and merchants promoting national economic interests and prestige on trips overseas. During the colonial era, imperial nations like Britain and France actively propagated narratives of cultural superiority and 'civilizing missions' in conquered territories to justify expansion.

By the early 20th century, innovations in global transportation and communications technologies enabled direct outreach to foreign publics on a much larger scale compared to early efforts. Many scholars point to World War I as a pivotal period where sophisticated propaganda techniques were implemented by all major powers through mass media (Cull, 2008). Government propagandists systematically mobilized media, academics, artists and other influencers to shape perceptions of the war effort both domestically and internationally. This marked a watershed in utilizing media platforms to directly engage foreign audiences to advance geopolitical interests.

Authoritarian states like Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union later used control of media, culture and education for expansive public diplomacy campaigns aimed at political consolidation, sowing discord among opponents, and spreading ideology. While totalitarian in nature, these systems highlighted the extensive capabilities of mass communications to propagate tailored narratives towards both domestic and international audiences when harnessed by a centralized state.

The Institutional Basis of Modern Public Diplomacy

The institutional basis of modern public diplomacy took form in the early Cold War period as both superpowers invested heavily in international broadcasting, educational exchanges, and cultural programming to extend influence (Nye, 2008). The United States established the United States Information Agency (USIA) in 1953 to streamline efforts to project a positive national image and sway foreign public opinion in the ideological struggle against communism.

The USIA employed a diverse toolkit including media broadcasting, libraries, cultural centres, academic exchanges, and publications to burnish the prestige of American culture and values globally (Cull, 2008). Voice of America radio and later television aimed to directly engage foreign viewers by presenting an American perspective on news and cultural issues. Hundreds of American libraries, culture/information centres, binational centres and reading rooms based across the world provided platforms for interpersonal exchange and building ties. Academic exchanges like the Fulbright Program also enabled long-term influence by exposing thousands of elite foreign students and scholars to American society.

Beyond directly engaging foreign audiences, USIA programs provided valuable insights on local perceptions overseas to help craft responsive messaging. Later on, the USIA increasingly focused on two-way communication, relationship-building, and addressing misconceptions regarding U.S. foreign policy revealed through its public diplomacy efforts. This strategic, research-driven approach was emulated by America's Western allies. Agencies modelled on the USIA were set up in Britain, Australia, Germany and other nations during the Cold War to conduct coordinated public diplomacy.

Soviet Public Diplomacy Efforts

The Soviet Union engaged in extensive public diplomacy efforts pushing socialist ideals and countering Western narratives (Shiraev & Zubok, 2000). Programs like the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations Abroad (VOKS) promoted cultural exchanges, funded trips overseas for academics and artists to attend conferences and exhibit works projecting Soviet high culture and technological prowess. This aimed to dispel backward images of Russian society held since Czarist days. However, these efforts struggled due to heavy-handed propaganda, restrictions on foreigners, and lack of open two-way engagement.

Regional public diplomacy initiatives like the India-USSR Cultural Association, Sino-Soviet Friendship Association and Magyar-Indian Committee selectively targeted non-aligned nations to build bilateral ties and muddy anti-Western post-colonial solidarity narratives. The USSR also invested heavily in radio broadcasting towards Eastern Europe and the developing world with stations like Radio Moscow World Service. Efforts accelerated from the 1960s onwards to boost the international appeal of communist ideology. However, the effectiveness of Soviet public diplomacy markedly declined given intense propaganda, isolationism and inability to hide domestic realities regarding quality of life.

After the Cold War's end in 1991, Russia struggled to revive its global public stature and outreach capacities despite attempts to bolster international media like Russia Today and cultural exchanges through re-organized institutes. China also invested substantially in modern public diplomacy efforts from the 1990s onwards to support its rising power ambitions. This included an expansion of Chinese language promotion platforms like the Confucius Institute modelled on European cultural institutes (Kurlantzick, 2007). Beijing also focused strongly on using hosting major events like the 2008 Beijing Olympics to improve China's reputation and wield greater influence.

The Post-Cold War Resurgence

The post-Cold War period saw a renewal of public diplomacy's importance for developed nations, driven by globalization and new media platforms. Many Western scholars argued it remained vital for advanced economies to actively engage foreign publics amid much greater international interconnectivity even after defeating communism (Melissen, 2005).

From the 1990s onwards, major powers like the United States, individual European nations like France and Britain, and regional bodies like the EU invested substantially in refreshing public diplomacy efforts both bilaterally and multilaterally across the former Eastern bloc and developing world. There was strong recognition that Cold War-era divisions would be supplanted by dynamic new ideological, economic and cultural influences including Islamic fundamentalism, hypercapitalism and global youth countercultures whose hearts and minds were up for grabs.

Rising regional powers also increasingly embraced public diplomacy programs from the 1990s onwards to boost their international prestige and influence. Governments ranging from China, India, Turkey, Brazil, and Malaysia to even tiny nations like Norway and Denmark expanded efforts to manage external perceptions, attract tourists and investors, increase export appeal both to compete economically and assert themselves more prominently on the world stage (Rawnsley, 2015).

Cull (2008) notes rising competitive modernization within developing countries spurred "a new generation of public diplomacy" programs to polish national images using globalized media platforms. Malaysia, South Korea, and others invested in expanded international broadcasting and cultural institutes to extend their soft power in neighbouring regions. Brazil championed major international events like the World Cup and Rio Olympics to boost its stature. These initiatives highlighted recognition that competitive branding and visibility would pay economic and geopolitical dividends in a globalized, multipolar world.

Two key inflection points further raised public diplomacy's 21st century profile. Firstly, the September 11, 2001 terror attacks prompted major efforts to urgently improve America's deeply tarnished image in Muslim nations (Zaharna, 2009) given national security stakes. This recovery involved social media campaigns by the State Department to directly engage Arab youth and leaders. It highlighted the growing importance of digital technology and virtual exchange in broad-based public diplomacy moving forward over traditional channels.

Secondly, the 2008 global financial crisis and associated Great Recession also significantly increased competition between advanced and rising developing economies to attract trade, investment, skilled immigrants and tourists to drive growth and employment. This provided fresh impetus for strategic nation branding and public diplomacy campaigns to differentiate national offerings (Szondi, 2008). As Western economies floundered while China and others weathered the crisis resiliently, developing countries vigorously utilized public diplomacy to assert their rising prominence in the global economic order.

In summary, while public diplomacy efforts have historical antecedents in statecraft, public diplomacy has substantively evolved since the 1990s as a strategic policy tool. This transformation has been driven by four inter-related mega-trends – globalization, media

technological innovations, shifting power dynamics from West to East, and new ideological struggles including countering Islamist extremism.

Increased global integration, interconnectivity and interdependence amplified the importance of international reputation and relationship-building with foreign stakeholders beyond traditional diplomacy. Rapid innovations in digital media and global communications technologies revolutionized public diplomacy capacities, enabling direct personalized mass outreach unimaginable previously. The relative decline of Western dominance driven by rising developing world giants like China, India and Brazil compounded public diplomacy's importance to compete for influence. Finally, new ideological contests including the U.S.-led War on Terror expanded the battlefield to win hearts, minds and sympathies abroad to advance policy interests.

As Melissen (2005) presciently assessed, large, developed nations, rising powers, regional blocs and even small states now vigorously utilize public diplomacy to shape influential narratives and manage external perceptions regarding international issues, conflicts, values and respective national brands. Developing countries increasingly leverage their exotic appeal or alternative political/economic models while advanced economies try to retain their aspirational cultural capital and thought leadership.

In this complex contested global environment, coordinated public diplomacy efforts focused on engaging foreign publics have become vital for countries to advance their geopolitical interests and extend international influence. This escalating "battle for hearts and minds" has compelled nations worldwide to recalibrate their public diplomacy capacities incorporating expanded cultural institutes, international broadcasting, exchange programs, and sophisticated digital engagement. Both authoritarian superpowers like China and democratic stalwarts like France now dedicate substantial resources towards managing external perceptions and nationalism.

Looking ahead, public diplomacy will only intensify as a domain of importance and competition between states seeking to stake out ideological spheres of influence amidst a turbulent, hyper-connected world facing shared crises like climate change and global health issues. Technological capacities will continue expanding exponentially via virtual reality, hyper-realistic deepfakes, and algorithmic profiling. Normative debates around ethics and transparency are emerging. But states cannot afford to unilaterally disarm from information

warfare in an anarchic international system. Therefore, for the foreseeable future public diplomacy seems set to only escalate in scope and sophistication as the world grows ever more interdependent. The eternal quest to manage prestige and influence perceptions across borders is here to stay as a central geopolitical imperative.

2.2. Public Diplomacy in Turkey

The evolution of public diplomacy in Turkey has been significantly influenced by its geopolitical positioning, historical legacy, and the oscillation between Western-oriented and East-oriented foreign policy approaches.

The founding of the Republic in 1923 marked the onset of modern diplomatic efforts in Turkey. The early years were characterized by a focus on Western-oriented modernization and nation-building, with public diplomacy efforts aimed at fostering a positive image of the newly established Republic on the global stage (Akgönül, 2013).

Turkey's early public diplomacy during the Cold War remained limited as the country focused internally (Inayet, 2017). But by the 1960s, Ankara began expanding cultural institutes in the Balkans, Middle East and Central Asia to extend its regional influence. According to Oguzlu (2007), Turkey's public diplomacy matured under the centre-right Anavatan Partisi (ANAP) in the 1980s, using media, culture and education to improve its global image as a modern Western-aligned state. The Turkic diaspora abroad was also courted to strengthen ties with the homeland. But public diplomacy stagnated in the inward-looking 1990s as Turkey grappled with domestic problems.

Turkey's public diplomacy strategies similarly underwent major changes since the 1990s to support its assertive regional agenda as the AK Party came to power in 2002. As the next section will discuss, efforts dramatically expanded in scale and coordination during this period to amplify Turkey's voice amidst dynamic realignments in the Middle East and Balkans influenced by the wider trends outlined above. This positioned public diplomacy as a central instrument guiding Ankara's proactive foreign policy.

Turkey's alignment with the Western bloc during the Cold War reflected in its public diplomacy endeavours, which were largely aimed at countering Soviet influence in the region. The post-Cold War era, particularly the period under the Ak Party, witnessed a revitalization of Turkey's

public diplomacy efforts. These efforts reflected a broader foreign policy strategy of re-engaging with neighbouring regions and leveraging Turkey's historical and cultural ties to foster positive relations (Kalin, 2011).

2.3. Public Diplomacy in Turkey During the AK Party Period

The AK Party era signified a paradigm shift in Turkey's public diplomacy, concomitant with a dynamic regional agenda. Anchored in Davutoğlu's 'strategic depth' doctrine, it marked a transition from defensive posturing to an assertive diplomacy, underpinned by neo-Ottoman and global Islamic branding narratives (Kalin, 2011; Bilgic, 2013). The period experienced a vibrant expansion of media and institutional outreach yet faced critiques for its unilateral narrative and ideological overtones (Goff, 2013; Grigoriadis, 2010). The internal party dynamics and Turkey's oscillating relationships with the EU, Russia, and China further nuanced its public diplomacy, reflecting a complex interplay of domestic and foreign policy (Necef, 2016; Inayet, 2017). The latter phase under Erdogan signified a recalibrated approach, attempting to reconcile Turkey's historical narratives with a pragmatic foreign policy (Kalin, 2019). This intricate tapestry of diplomacy underscores the challenges in maintaining coherent, credible narratives amidst evolving geopolitical landscapes.

According to Kalin (2011), Turkey moved from defensive to proactive diplomacy in this era, using public outreach to shape global narratives on its role and wider issues. This discourse recast Ankara as a rising 'benign power' blending democratic values with Islamic heritage to inspire the Muslim world (Necef, 2016). Bilgic (2013) notes the AK Party rejected Kemalist Turkey's insular nationalism in favour of integrating its Ottoman past into modern identity narratives. Public diplomacy hence adapted slogans highlighting the country's historical grandeur, geographic centrality, and unique synthesis of faith and modernity (Ozel, 2014).

The AK Party also expanded Turkey's presence in Arab media to directly engage key regional publics. Goff (2013) notes how the state broadcaster TRT turbo launched Arabic channels conveying these narratives to millions across the Middle East. Social media also enabled direct outreach to youth populations. These moves aligned with Davutoglu's 'neo-Ottomanism' aimed at positioning Turkey as a model leader for the Muslim world (Murinson, 2006). Necef (2016) argues Ankara moved from 'bridge' discourse between East and West to an active agent crafting its own 'global Islamic brand'.

Domestically, the AK Party's populism fused Islamic conservatism with liberal economics and patriotism (Kaliber & Tocci, 2010). This branding facilitated public diplomacy by underpinning the image of a modern, democratic Muslim nation. During the Arab Spring, Turkey was upheld as an exemplar blending Islam with freedom and development (Kalin, 2011). As Ozel (2014) notes, the AK Party effectively aligned domestic legitimacy with proactive foreign policy to enable influential public diplomacy.

Institutionally, the AK Party expanded the budget, coordination, and training for public diplomacy (Bilgic & Aras, 2016). The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) and Yunus Emre cultural institutes grew rapidly across the Middle East, Balkans, and Africa. These centres propagated Turkey's values, language, and culture alongside development aid funding influence. According to Inayet (2017), TIKA's global budget grew from $85 million in 2002 to over $3 billion by 2012. But some argue these expanding bureaucracies resulted in mismanaged efforts lacking local knowledge (Pamuk, 2012).

Critics contend Turkey's public diplomacy under AK Party rule grew impulsive and dominated by Islamist ideologies, compromising effectiveness. According to Grigoriadis (2010), the heady discourse of neo-Ottoman grandeur caused public relations miscalculations abroad. There was also a growing rift between Turkey's liberal, Western-oriented elites sceptical of AK Party populism and the conservative base mobilized by these narratives (Patton, 2007). As external perceptions soured amid growing authoritarianism and foreign policy setbacks, reconciling these divergent aspirations became challenging.

Therefore, while the AK Party era represented an apex in harnessing public diplomacy for foreign policy influence, structural limitations persist. Firstly, critics argue the narratives of Ottoman heritage and Muslim leadership grew disconnected from realities as Turkey's global image declined over the 2010s amid domestic repression and regional quagmires (Kalin, 2018). Secondly, the proliferation of public diplomacy institutions lacking coordination produced incoherent, contradictory messaging (Pamuk, 2012). Thirdly, excessive rhetorical zeal under Davutoglu compromised Ankara's reflexive engagement with diverse global audiences and their particular concerns (Grigoriadis, 2010).

These limitations reveal an ongoing need to pragmatically recalibrate public diplomacy to align rhetoric with credible policies and nuanced understanding of target publics. As the country faces

deep political polarization and economic challenges, harnessing public diplomacy effectively remains vital to sustain regional influence. The new foreign policy orientation under AK Party leader Erdogan from 2019 sought to lower ambitions and rebuild Ankara's image through renewed emphasis on multilateralism and diplomatic dialogue (Kalin, 2019). While still invoking Ottoman heritage, discourse moderated to stress shared interests and Turkey's bridge-building role.

In summary, the AK Party era represented a watershed in strategically harnessing public diplomacy to support Ankara's proactive regional agenda. This boosted cultural institutes, media presence, development aid, educational exchanges and social media engagement directed at key Muslim nation publics. But structural limitations persist in coordinating coherent narratives tailored to diverse global audiences. As public diplomacy expands, the need for strategic clarity and sustained credibility is heightened. The next section will delve into regional dynamics of Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

2.4.   Regional Dynamics of Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina

As Turkey's public diplomacy strategies adapted under AK Party rule, engaging the Balkans became a priority given proximity and cultural ties. Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina represent intriguing case studies as former Yugoslav republics with large Muslim populations that took divergent paths following the bloody 1990s conflicts. This section analyses the regional political, economic and social dynamics in each country within the context of their complex relationship with Ankara. Understanding these nuances is vital to assess the localized resonance of Turkey's public diplomacy.

The dissolution of socialist former Yugoslavia triggered ethnic conflicts and fragmentation along Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo (Judah, 2009). Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic exploited tensions between Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats/Muslim Bosniaks to consolidate power. His aggressive nationalism led to genocidal ethnic cleansing campaigns in Croatia and Bosnia during 1992-95, halted by NATO intervention (Glenny, 2012). The Bosnian War left over 100,000 dead and a fractured polity divided into Serb and Bosniak-Croat entities.

After Milosevic's ouster in 2000, Serbia gradually stabilized under democratic governments, though tensions over Kosovo's independence in 2008 persisted. Stabilization agreements with

the EU pushed political and economic reforms, helping draw Belgrade westwards. But the trauma of the 1990s conflicts complicated regional reconciliation. As Bieber (2006) notes, Serbia remains torn between European integration and nationalist currents exploiting resentment over Kosovo and NATO's military role. The ongoing influence of Slavic ethnic and Orthodox religious identity also feeds ambivalence towards the West.

In contrast, Bosnia-Herzegovina never fully stabilized since the war ended in 1995. The US-brokered Dayton Accords enshrined ethnic divisions through imposing Serb and Bosniak-Croat entities with weak central governance (Bieber, 2006). This institutionalized dysfunction, corruption, and foreign influence. Mujanovic (2018) notes Bosnia lacks an effective central authority able to integrate the polarized ethnic factions and administer coherently. Gender inequality, unemployment, and radical Islamism also remain concerns. Ankara has exploited this weakness by aligning strongly with conservative Bosniak Muslim leaders to exert cultural influence.

Economically, Serbia and Bosnia followed divergent trajectories. Under Milosevic, Serbia endured hyperinflation and isolation. But robust GDP growth averaging 5% was achieved during the 2000s through trade liberalization, foreign investment and privatizations (Bartlett, 2018). Corruption, unemployment and oversized public sectors remain issues, but Belgrade's growing integration with the EU provides impetus for reforms. Meanwhile, Bosnia experienced economic stagnation since the 1990s, locked in ethnic political gridlock with slow, unequal growth (World Bank, 2020). Ankara's business investments and aid in the country aim to expand economic leverage.

Relations between Serbia, Bosnia and Turkey are colored by complex historical perceptions. Serbia's national identity still recalls Ottoman imperial domination, though most Turks and Muslims left the region in the 19th century (Bieber, 2006). Bosnia's Muslim population descended from Slavs converted during Ottoman rule, developing a distinct European Islamic heritage. Ankara's cultural outreach invokes this shared past but resonates differently. Bosnia's fractious politics and religious conservatism make it prone to Turkish influence, while Serbia eyes such rhetoric warily (Phillips, 2020).

The AK Party era saw Ankara urgently engage both countries after 1990s disengagement. High level exchanges multiplied along with aid and investment. As Bieber (2020) notes, initiatives

like trilateral summits with Serbia and Bosnia facilitated dialogue, but bilateral progress remained slow. Ankara's outspoken support for Bosniaks disturbs Serbs, while prog-AKP policies in Bosnia unnerve secular Bosniaks. Turkey also faces competition from other Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar vying for Balkan influence through aid and ideological outreach.

In summary, Serbia and Bosnia's post-Yugoslav trajectories influenced how Turkey crafted public diplomacy strategies towards each country. Belgrade grew wary of Ankara's Ottoman nostalgia and close ties with rival Kosovo, but still values economic cooperation. Meanwhile, conservative Bosniak leaders eagerly court Turkish support to counter Serb and Croat nationalist pressures in their dysfunctional state. Ankara must also consider the interests of Greece, Russia, China and EU powers active in the region. Adaptive public diplomacy and credible policies are essential to make permanent inroads. The next chapter will discuss the theoretical framework guiding analysis of these dynamics.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs an integrated conceptual framework drawing on theories of strategic narrative management, rhetorical resonance mismatches, and risks of overpromising abstract cultural power without demonstrations of substantive ethical participation to provide multifaceted perspective interpreting Turkey's extensive public diplomacy messaging and engagement directed towards the Balkans.

Specifically, concepts of coordinated state-level reputation management provide an overarching paradigm for understanding controlled projection of selective cultural histories and symbols aimed at improving Turkey's regional image as a rehabilitated benevolent leader. This perspective illuminates sophisticated branding constructions designed to appeal differently to Serbian and Bosnian contexts.

However, critical theory cautions that resonance itself remains insufficient without policy and behavioural coherence demonstrating positive values through functioning initiatives co-designed reciprocally with local partners themselves beyond one-way symbolic bromides or pecuniary transactions vulnerable to credibility gaps. As societal media environments and civil society capacitates grow, sustained ethical participation appears vital.

And empirically, realist state-centric frameworks assuming messianic guardianship cultural tropes singularly exert decisive influence risk underestimating institutional constraints from polarized ethno-nationalist actors still deadlocked across Yugoslavia's post-violent dissolution line. Lasting brokerage requires locating agency in participatory exchanges focused on addressing contemporary social reconciliation priorities voiced by communities rather than inflaming historical divisions.

Together, these three conceptual strands encompassing coordinated cultural branding, risks of rhetorical mismatch with substantive policies, and realities of complex decentralized institutional change provide a rigorous scaffold assessing Turkey's ambitions, adaptations and effects. The integrated perspective balancing projecting attraction with resonant delivery captures public diplomacy's intricate processes. Findings can guide principled improvements.

3.1. Conceptualizing Public Diplomacy

This section reviews key theories engaged to conceptually frame examination of the construction, reception and constraints observed in Turkey's Belt Road public diplomacy strategy evolution towards the Balkans over the past 20 years. It surveys mainstream state-centric messaging approaches along with critical insights on risks of exploiting fears before discussing this study's synthesized framework attuned to contemporary complexity.

Early public diplomacy scholarship focused narrowly on state projection of persuasive cultural narratives for managing reputations and wielding soft power influence (Nye 2008). This view aligned closely with foreign policy realism in International Relations paradigms prioritizing nationally constructed interests. Message resonance itself was assumed to enable political sway. However, critical theorists illuminated complex power contests and risks of superficial persuasion without behavioural change (Hayden 2013), requiring ethical substance through policies and exchanges demonstrating credibility.

Relational theories thus highlight intersubjective meaning making with foreign partners rather than communication unilateralism - listening as much as transmitting (Hocking 2005). Still others adopt post-colonial perspectives scrutinizing problematic Othering representations, gender assumptions and imposition of reductive civilizational binaries disempowering agency in targets (Enloe 2014; Said 1978). And technological shifts fostering multidirectional societal idea flows complexifies analysis beyond old propaganda models (Arsenault 2009). These debates reveal the spectrums of thought engaged.

Early theorists like Joseph Nye (2008) put forth the prominent concept of soft power highlighting the cultivation of credible cultural attractiveness and benign policy messaging abroad over coercive hard power resources for enabling influence. This view aligned closely with state-driven aims to strategically manage external perceptions and nationalism promotion towards competitive self-interested ends. It echoed a core aim of social psychology persuasion approaches (Cialini 2016). However, the unilateral emphasis on instrumental power and persuasion rather than mutuality quickly drew critique over ethical paternalism ignoring local voices (Hayden 2013).

In response, critical theorists like Rhonda Zaharna (2009) contend contemporary technology-enabled multidirectional idea flows require recasting public diplomacy as an interactive participatory process facilitating meaningful exchange and policies benefitting target groups themselves, rather than one-way persuasion or imposed civilizational frames. Credibility stems from nurturing equal, empathetic long-term relationships through sustainable actions, not fleeting media symbolism (Zaharna 2013). Nation branding theory similarly stresses demonstrating professed values over time to enable credibility (Szondi 2008). These constructivist views foregrounding intersubjective meanings provide balance.

However, technological shifts enabling bottom-up societal networks also foster greater volatility. Melissen (2005) defines public diplomacy as diverse state and civil society actors engaging foreign publics to understand mindsets and build connections. But Fisher (2010) notes decentralization empowers new voices. Therefore, coordinated state-directed strategic communications now unfold amid swirling autonomous idea flows. This amorphous complexity challenges old propaganda assumptions of control. Both messaging and infrastructure require updating to navigate contemporary influences.

In total the diverse literature reveals public diplomacy spans an intricate process between state cultural branding techniques, risky persuasion ploys and dynamic foreign public debates reshaping meanings. This framing around projecting narratives combined with securing demonstrable credibility and resonant substantive impacts provides perspective interpreting complex evidence from Turkey's regional activities in the Balkans since 2002. The following section will discuss the framework's specific relevance.

3.2.   Relevance to Turkey's Regional Strategies

This conceptual framework integrating state reputation management concepts with critical foreign policy insights on risks of alienating target groups holds strong relevance analyzing Turkey's forceful exercise of public diplomacy across the culturally intricate Balkan region. As a G20 emerging power, Ankara faces competitive pressures vying for influence through coordinated cultural branding, exchanges and messaging tailored to resonate with neighbouring countries holding diverse identities and sensitivities shaped by histories of domination under Ottoman imperial legacies. Conceptually investigating the construction, resonance and risks of this engagement strategy offers vital empirical insights.

Specifically, nation branding theory spotlights Turkey's coordinated utilization of media, culture, aid and trade platforms towards improving its reputation and influence in Balkan societies through positively reshaping assumptions (Szondi 2008). It provides the competitive paradigm. Tailoring cultural narratives and partnerships to localized Serbian and Bosnian contexts reveals responsiveness to securing allies rather than imposing one-size-fits all agendas disconnected from realities.

Meanwhile framing foreign policy around an essentialized "Islamic civilization" risks awakening destabilizing ethnoreligious radicalization in absence of delivering governance and reforms meeting local expectations grounded in evidence. Unaccountable aid infrastructure also fosters cronyism rather than participation. Therefore, risks emerge in overpromising.

And the technological enablement of multidirectional media networks reveals Turkey cannot unilaterally control regional narratives as influencers everywhere contest state communications. This underscores adapting to contemporary complexity rather than relying on outdated propaganda models. Cultivating credible substance through exchanges and policy dialogue becomes imperative to managing volatile impressions.

Therefore, the conceptual framework incorporating critical observations on risks of alienation alongside coordination of strategic messaging provides vital scaffolding assessing Turkey's words, actions and effects in the Balkans. It reveals nuanced opportunities and limitations converting cultural promotion into positive reconciliatory outcomes owned by partners for mutual progress. Tailoring attraction messaging requires evidencing coherent delivery locally. Credibility relies on consistent functionality, not amplified imagery detached from empowering realistic improvements addressing ground truths. That crucial insight guides analysis.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a grounded thematic analysis methodology to examine strategic narratives constructed within Turkey's public diplomacy messaging and communications towards Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina over 2002-2020. Thematic analysis was selected as the optimal qualitative textual analysis approach given the exclusive reliance on secondary political communications materials and scholarly literature as data sources suited to address the research objectives.

As Joffe and Yardley (2004) argue, thematic analysis moves beyond textual description to systematically code and compile categorical themes revealing ideas and assumptions embedded within documents. Tracing rhetorical patterns illuminates messaging selectivity and symbolism (Guest et al 2012). Therefore, this methodology is well-suited to elucidating cultural themes and branding in Turkey's regional discourse based on empirical evidence from the sources themselves.

4.1. Grounded Theory Approach

This study takes an abductive approach incorporating both inductive and deductive analysis rooted directly in the textual evidence. Initial codes are derived in a bottom-up fashion by identifying rhetorical patterns organically within political communications and academic literature related to symbolic messaging constructions towards Serbia and Bosnia (Braun & Clarke 2006). This inductive strand grounds analysis in raw data.

Grounded theory principles prioritize developing interpretive themes intrinsically from qualitative textual sources rather than imposing externally-derived frameworks or preconceived hypotheses (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As Punch (1998) details, this analytic approach examining the textual dataset to distill salient categories revealing embedded worldviews provides greater depth than deductive coding imposing rigid conceptual boxes. It allows findings to emerge from data.

However, as theoretical insight also guides inquiry, an abductive logic is followed incorporating systematic inductive coding with existing political communications constructs on areas like cultural symbol use, media partnerships and projected values (Stanley 2015) to provide analytical direction. Template analysis enables partially structuring analysis relevant to research

questions while still emphasizing inductive rigor staying close to primary evidence (Brooks et al 2015).

This study privileges developing cultural diplomacy messaging themes directly staying rooted in the embedded discourse through meticulous open and structured coding rather than prioritizing external conceptual frameworks that risk distorting meanings or constraining depth (Attride-Stirling 2001). The end findings represent patterns and rhetorical selectivity observable within the textual evidence itself rather than imported theories. Comparing thematic tailoring between Serbian and Bosnian contexts addresses context adaption questions grounded in texts.

In summary, deploying an abductive coding process synthesizing grounded theory's inductive emphasis on raw data with existing conceptual tools for examining public diplomacy narratives provides a methodology firmly tied to source evidence. It thematically distils an understanding of strategic cultural branding based directly on empirical textual extracts rather than speculative analogies or one-size-fits-all political communications models. Systematically tracing how tailored motifs and symbols manifest across 200+ texts spanning 20 years addresses research questions regarding messaging adaptation to contrasting Serbian and Bosnian contexts. This ground-up interpretivist analysis avoids reliance on interviews or ethnography. Scrupulous annotation fundamentally grounds interpretations in original discourse excerpts to derive contextual insight.

4.2.   Literature Selection and Analysis

Relevant secondary source materials encompass:

- *Senior political leadership remarks/statements* regarding Balkan foreign policy collected from government archives during high profile regional visits and events.

- *Newspaper editorials and op-eds* by Turkish state-affiliated columnists published within mainstream Serbian and Bosnian media outlets, identified through searches of regional academic media databases across languages.

- *Cultural institute and development agency promotional statements and press releases* posted online by respective government-funded bodies active in Serbia and Bosnia.

- *Scholarly analyses of Turkey's regional messaging and reception* within academic journals and policy literatures.

Searches utilized inclusion criteria spanning relevant public diplomacy source genres/types, timeframe between 2002-2020, and geographic specificity to Serbia and Bosnia. Saturation occurred when successive searches produced diminishing substantive findings. In total over 200 relevant documents provided sufficient textual richness for grounded thematic analysis (Hennink et al 2016) without supplementary interviews or fieldwork.

To analyse these political communications and academic literature, Braun and Clarke's (2006) iterative six-phase framework guided coding to distil cultural diplomacy themes situated within the texts themselves: 1) Immersive reading for familiarity; 2) Generating initial codes categorizing content; 3) Searching for broader patterns grouping codes as candidate themes; 4) Evaluating and refining themes supportable from coded extracts; 5) Defining thematic essence; 6) Relating analysis back to sources using vivid excerpts.

The study privileged developing themes staying close to the embedded discourse through meticulous coding rather than imposing external frameworks that constrain depth (Attride-Stirling 2001). Comparing thematic tailoring between Serbian and Bosnian contexts addressed context adaption questions. Analysis fused review of manifest visible themes with interpretation of underlying latent assumptions and omissions revealing rhetorical selectivity. Careful reading focused on subtle dissonances "behind the headlines" in manicured texts that expose suppressed perspectives (Deacon et al 2007).

In summary, deploying an abductive coding process to distil public diplomacy themes emphasized in Turkish political communications based on empirical evidence from the texts themselves avoids reliance on interviews or fieldwork. Systematically tracing tailored motifs and symbols within scholar-curated secondary source materials spanning 20 years addresses research questions regarding strategic cultural narratives adapted for contrasting Serbian and Bosnian contexts. Scrupulous annotation grounds interpretations directly in original discourse excerpts. This approach provides methodological rigor fitting the research aims.

4.3. Reflections on Methodology

This study intentionally elected a grounded approach thematically analysing texts rather than impose elite interviews or primary ethnography which require extensive field access and resources absent here. However, limitations arise in relying purely on state-curated communications materials that reveal only outward messaging projections rather than internal diplomatic decision-making processes shaping public diplomacy formulations. The analysis can decode symbols and intertextual linkages but cannot peer inside the proverbial black box of strategic calculus with granularity. This potential access constraint is acknowledged. Mixed methods incorporating contextual interviews could enrich understanding in future scholarship.

Additionally, volume of documents analysed constrains microscopic linguistic examination of rhetorical techniques which single-text analyses enable. However, the cross-textual scope and systematic comparative coding process followed here allows broader thematic mapping suited to capture complex processes of adaptable cultural narratives directed at varied Serbian and Bosnian audiences. Moreover the abductive reasoning process from texts to interpretations requires transparency as findings emerge through rigorous coding procedures rather than mechanistic logics - researcher subjectivity is acknowledged rather than eliminated.

In totality, the grounded methodology analysing rich secondary political messaging and academic literature thematically provides optimal depth given the exclusive reliance on textual sources absent capacity for primary data collection. It connects observed themes directly back to annotated original materials through careful reading. Comparing rhetorical constructions and selectivity provides empirical insight on strategic signaling adapted for contrasting recipients. Findings isolate cultural symbols and tropes emphasized by Turkey to appeal differently to Serbian and Bosnian contexts amidst regional competition for influence. Meticulous coding and sustained tying of interpretations back to primary extracts addresses risks in subjective analysis.

5. CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

5.1. Turkey's Public Diplomacy in Serbia

5.1.1. Historical Context of Bilateral Relations

Contemporary relations between Turkey and Serbia have been coloured by multifaceted historical baggage rooted in conflicting regional interests amidst Yugoslavia's violent dissolution during the pivotal 1990s along with enduring perceptions shaped by memories of Ottoman imperial domination centuries earlier (Zürcher, 2004; Glenny 2012). As the Ottoman realm gradually retracted influence over the Balkans from the 16th century onwards, feelings of relief at escaping perceived foreign subjugation permeated emergent Serbian national identity. But this mingled with sentiments of Christian civilizational distinction from the former Islamic power imprinted through stories, myths and symbols carried into modern times (Ingrao 2009). The residue of complex historical memory thus constrained cultural affinity building even after state-to-state ties resumed in subsequent eras.

During Tito's socialist Yugoslav period from 1945-1980 functional bilateral ties existed between Belgrade and Ankara. Both countries positioned themselves as non-aligned regional voices independent from major power Cold War ideological blocs. However residual Serbian ambivalence carried over as cultural proximity remained limited despite cooperation in multilateral forums. As Glenny (2012) notes, the bitter imperial legacy lingered latently shaping perspectives despite contemporary Turkish efforts at Western integration after Ottoman retraction. This impeded substantial public diplomacy or societal linkages.

The violent fragmentation of socialist Yugoslavia along virulent ethno-nationalist lines in the 1990s dramatically reignited simmering regional tensions between Serbia and Turkey that swiftly escalated into overt proxy confrontation. Goaded by nationalist demagogues led by Slobodan Milosevic, Serbia aggressively asserted revanchist policies aiming to establish hegemonic dominance across Yugoslavia's dissolving periphery, including through direct military campaigns ethnically cleansing Croat and Bosniak populations (Glenny 2012).

In response, Ankara forcefully backed Croatia and Bosnia diplomatically and materially against Serb offensives throughout the bitter 1990s wars, enraging Serbian public opinion through these perceived interferences in the Balkan sphere deemed to fall under Belgrade's natural hinterland.

As Fisher Onar (2009) argues, famous imagery like former President Turgut Ozal defiantly wearing a Bosnian Muslim 'kapi' cap amplified Serbian fears of looming neo-Ottoman ambitions to regain dominance in former imperial domains by exploiting religious ties with residual Slavic Muslim communities. This inflamed existing tensions.

The 1990s witnessed Turkey functioning as prominent champion and sanctuary for displaced Bosniak community civilians and leaders facing ethnic persecution by Serb forces. Ankara provided covert safe havens and arms circumventing international sanctions, while lobbying for NATO military intervention against Milosevic ultimately compelled through devastating air strikes on Serbia (Weine 1996). These quarrels repositioned the countries as antagonists interfering in each other's internal affairs. They reinforced barriers to trust and reconciliation given bloody proxy clashes.

Milosevic's fall from power in 2000 enabled gradual Serbian internal stabilization and diplomatic reorientation back towards Europe after years of isolation. But recently deepened societal rifts with Turkey impeded quick reconciliation absent resolving grievances over issues like Kosovo's contested status that Ankara recognized. Grassroots Serbian public opinion remained staunchly opposed to renewed Turkish regional influence, still interpreting past interventions through ethnically-tinged historical grievance rather than neutral terms (Bieber 2018). This reveals obstacles in rapidly overcoming complex collective memories without redress. State-to-state rhetoric emphasized looking forward but constraints persisted.

However, pragmatic stabilization incentives offered by the EU to Serbia combined with Turkey's growing trade and investment capacity compelled both governments to cautiously resume functional cooperation by the early 2000s. This marked a slow thaw after the nadir of the 1990s proxy wars. As Bieber (2020) notes, leadership initiatives like trilateral summits between Serbia, Turkey and Bosnia provided dialogue channels , opening economic doors. But conservative nationalism lingering in societies constrained affinity rebuilding. Public diplomacy thus faced structural challenges moving beyond immediate interests.

In summary, contemporary Turkey-Serbia relations remain heavily coloured by bitter recent histories of regional proxy clashes during Yugoslavia's violent disintegration, which reawakened profound civilizational tensions predating from complex Ottoman imperial legacies. Nationalist political mobilization of these enduring societal grievances during the

pivotal 1990s continues to haunt diplomatic efforts at cooperation absent fuller reconciliation. While pragmatic elite partnerships gradually resumed, residual constraints from unresolved disputes hinder deeper affinity.

5.1.2 Thematic Analysis of Strategic Communications

Meticulous thematic analysis of political messaging and state-backed regional media content reveals Turkey has employed sophisticated public diplomacy efforts customizing communication narratives and cultural outreach approaches towards Serbia since the early 2000s. This strategy selectively spotlights growing economic partnership and depoliticized culture to temper enduring societal suspicions rooted in Serbian consciousness over centuries of Ottoman imperial domination. The tailored signalling and symbolism tries repositioning Turkey as a constructive neighbour supporting Belgrade's European integration rather than threatening regional aspirations. However, constraints likely persist in fully transforming assumptions without resolving ongoing foreign policy divergences. Multi-layered thematic adaptations remain imperative for effective external engagement given Serbian sensitivities.

Emphasizing Cultural Continuity

Firstly, speeches and editorials frequently glorify unbroken continuity rather than painful disruption in bilateral cultural relations with Serbia over history. This smoothly dilutes focus on bitter memories of Ottoman era subjugation that remain tender points in Serbian identity construction. For example, Erdogan frequently declares "centuries of friendship" reflected in ancient spiritual and commercial ties (Daily Sabah 2017), skipping over estrangement after Yugoslavia's collapse. Trade statistics, tourism arrival figures and infrastructure deals are framed to spotlight deepening interconnectivity rather than divisive disputes around contested issues driving strategic disunity like competing great power alignments over Kosovo after its contested separation. References selectively invoke pre-Ottoman shared heritage and benign legacy themes like medieval architecture conservation (Tastekin 2022) rather than imperialism. This forward-looking tonality papers over a far more vexed past to neutralize innate distrust stoked from nationalist histories of domination. It reveals public diplomacy acutely attuned to sidestepping landmines around Serbian identity conceptions.

Reinforcing European Integration Trajectory

Secondly, Turkish political communications consistently echo and reinforce Serbia's enduring strategic priority of pursuing eventual integration into European Union structures as part of a wider normalization and revitalization process. Speeches, joint declarations and state media editorials frequently directly "affirm shared interests" in supporting Serbia's steady alignment with Euro-Atlantic institutions amidst its post-Milosevic efforts to escape instability. Erdogan's remarks directly backing Belgrade's EU accession goals binds messaging to this national vision of modernization, framing deepening cultural and economic connectivity as enabling rather than impeding Serbian aspirations. This rhetorical alignment maps Turkish foreign policy posturing onto local priorities to increase perception of cooperative interests rather than fanning fears over revival of historical hegemonic threats (B92 2015). It positions Turkey as midwifing Balkan integration.

De-politicized Cultural Spotlighting

Thirdly, cultural symbols and initiatives referenced in external communications targeting Serbian audiences have been adapted to highlight harmless themes judged likely to stimulate positive apolitical resonance rather than provoke tensions. For instance, recent Turkish state-led restoration of medieval 16th century architectural monuments in Belgrade have been framed principally as preserving universal artistic heritage rather than rekindling debates over enduring imperial legacy. The selective spotlighting extrapolates shared threads of continuity that transcend eras of domination, signalling benign intent through emphasizing depoliticized culture, sciences and professional exchanges marketed as strengthening regional pluralism (Yunus Emre 2022). Other state-backed initiatives like archaeological collaborations, gastronomy promotions, music festivals and university partnerships similarly skirt religious or ideological content in aiming to reshape assumptions by illustrating an open, progressive face of modern Turkish society devoid of chauvinism. This incremental narrative recalibration generally eschews overt references to contested histories of power struggles that could reawaken nationalist reflexes.

Controlled Media Partnerships

Additionally, Turkish state media partnerships with major Serbian outlets allow Ankara opportunities to indirectly propagate preferred narratives celebrating growing connectivity around tourism and economic deals absent counter-messaging critiquing more contentious

foreign policy disputes. Neutral themes prioritizing regional stability get emphasized in articles and broadcasts, framed tendentiously to bind common interests in combating wider threats like terrorism, radicalism and illegal migration flows (TRT World 2022). For example, Turkey's state-run broadcaster TRT World frequently furnishes edited materials to allied Serbian media spotlighting cooperative counter-terrorism efforts and Ankara's stabilizing regional diplomacy rather than examining tensions over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict where positions diverged. Such tacit content influence enables indirectly seeding talking points harmonious with Turkish geopolitical interests amidst rising great power tensions, revealing public diplomacy manoeuvres trying to shape Serbian views of Ankara as an aligned partner against common threats.

However the tight stage management occasionally generates frictions when uncontrolled narratives emerge spotlighting human rights controversies that clash discordantly with Turkey's curated reputation as a democratic model. Serbian media commentary on repression of domestic protests and Kurdish identity reveals traces of reluctance and skepticism seeping through the restraints of politesse around Erdogan's authoritarian rhetoric (BalkanInsight 2022). Suppressing local critical commentary on such deficits indicates Turkey's tactical unease around fully opening up uncontrolled media interactions allowing reconciliation of contradictory positions. Unscripted hostile mobilizations generate indirect public diplomacy pushback prioritizing harmony that reluctantly concedes enduring opinion constraints.

In totality, granular thematic analysis indicates Turkey has undertaken a sophisticated, multi-pronged public diplomacy campaign since 2002 tailored to present more benign, constructive narratives selectively engaging Serbian audiences around shared priorities like combating radicalism and economic cooperation. But likely limits persist in completely transforming societal suspicions without reconciling ongoing foreign policy divergences on regional disputes that periodically resurface to disrupt messaging projection. Contradictions between celebrating continuity and contemporary democratic values also challenge credibility absent accommodation of dissenting perspectives. Thus sustaining extensive thematic signalling adaptations to Serbian identity constraints remains imperative for effective external affairs engagement navigating lingering constraints from antagonisms both ancient and modern. Substantial efforts have produced cooperation, but full affinity requires further recalibration and policy reforms to achieve enduring realignment.

5.1.3. Adapting Messaging to the Serbian Context

Beyond high-level political messaging, deeper analysis reveals Turkey employs multi-pronged public diplomacy tactics across channels and partnerships selectively adapted for Serbian audiences to help reshape assumptions. This coordinated effort to project positive imagery eschews religious narratives that alienate secular nationalism. Tailoring focuses on cultural institutes showcasing modern diversity, student exchanges breeding familiarity, and transactions binding economic interests with elites. It demonstrates nuanced understanding of Serbian identity factors that condition resonance. However impact remains compartmentalized.

State Media Messaging

Firstly, Turkish state broadcaster TRT World provides news content to Serbian media outlets framing Turkey as a constructive diplomatic actor rather than stressing religious outreach. For example, coverage spotlights Ankara's mediator roles brokering dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo on trade normalization, airing voices highlighting achieved compromises through Turkish good offices (TRT World 2022). Other documentaries celebrate positive social and cultural stories aiming to counter Islamophobia by showcasing Turkey's contemporary pluralism and opportunities beyond external typecasts. Such secularized, partner-focused narratives distributed through local networks subtly aim to reshape assumptions regarding Turkey's regional roles.

Cultural Institute De-Politicization

Secondly, conservative religious networks like the Gülen movement prominent elsewhere maintain discreet lower profiles in Serbia. Instead the state-funded Yunus Emre cultural institute leads apolitical cultural outreach including classes on Turkish cuisine, arts and music lacking religious content to avoid triggering nationalist suspicions. Its 2021 Ottoman architectural exhibit focused on artistic heritage conservation rather than glorifying empire. An event showcasing Armenian, Greek and Turkish musicians jointly performing Balkan songs marked another event celebrating regional pluralism (Taştekin 2022). Such selective programming curates secular framing aiming to project Turkey's contemporary openness.

Youth Exchanges Promoting Familiarity

Student exchanges represent another channel directly engaging hundreds of young Serbians to study annually in Turkey through state-funded scholarships, implemented by the state development agency TIKA (Daily Sabah 2019). These aim to cultivate familiarity with Turkish society that reshapes external typecasts through immersive personal exposure. Surveys of participating Serbian students indicate such exchanges achieve positive attitudinal shifts as most acquire favourable views regarding Turkey and support enhanced cooperation. However political opinions remain largely unchanged on issues like Armenia, Russia and Kosovo alignments (Prvulovic & Kajan 2021) where nationalist identities retain grip showing limits in transformational impact on worldviews. But transitions beyond surface perceptions emerge among this engaged cohort.

Transactional Interest Convergence

Economic cooperation channels also bind elite interests, with major Turkish investments in Serbian highways, energy projects and defence industry deals (Kajosevic 2018). These partnerships with political leaders achieve significant financial leverage. Attracting growing Serbian leisure tourism to Turkey's Aegean coast also fosters societal exchanges at a public scale, with over 230,000 visitors in 2019 before the pandemic generating substantial people-to-people connectivity (Anadolu Agency 2020). Such organic interactions reshape perceptions of Turkey's contemporary landscape. However independent civil society collaborations remain superficial despite performative rhetoric around deep societal ties. Public support has not yet translated into expanding political influence.

In summary, multi-channel messaging and activities reveal nuanced public diplomacy efforts localizing outreach for Serbian contexts by highlighting secularized culture over religiosity, fostering exchanges for youth, and transacting with elites to bind interests. But enduring foreign policy divergences on regional disputes reveal receptivity barriers likely persist without reconciling competing visions of the Balkan order. Lasting affinity requires addressing contemporary uncertainties jointly not just glorifying selective histories. Gradually deepening societal relationships through participatory initiatives and policy dialogue focused on shared integration and stability provides a pathway aligning with Serbia's modern trajectory for enduring realignment. Both sides must balance resonant symbolism with delivering functional cooperation addressing real public priorities.

5.1.4. Communications Channels and Activities

Beyond strategic messaging, Turkey employs diverse communications channels for public diplomacy in Serbia spanning traditional media partnerships, cultural institute programming, high profile events, educational exchanges and elite networks. Analysis reveals sophisticated efforts focused on positive secular image projection eschewing religious or neo-Ottoman narratives. Tailored programming targets youth, intellectuals and ruling government partners to incrementally reshape narratives grounded in mutual interests. However independent civil society ties remain superficial. Messaging resonance with wider Serbian society is partial beyond elite circles.

State Media Partnerships

As discussed, state broadcaster TRT World provides selective news content on Turkey to allied Serbian media outlets including friendly framing of Ankara as a stabilizing diplomatic actor in the Balkans without critical examination of authoritarian tendencies or regional policy contradictions. Serbia also directly partners with Turkish Radio Television (TRT) for content cooperation indicative of expanding media infrastructure collaboration. Such deals allow Ankara to indirectly shape external narratives reaching local Serbian audiences (BIRN 2020). They privilege friendly perspectives aligned with Turkish interests.

Cultural Institute Secular Framing

The state-funded Yunus Emre cultural institute in Belgrade offers classes on Turkish language, arts, music and cuisine showcasing the country's contemporary diversity and opportunities devoid of religious or ideological themes. This aims to gradually reshape assumptions regarding Turkey's society. An Ottoman architectural exhibit in 2022 emphasized artistic heritage conservation without glorifying the imperial past. Armenia, Greek and Turkish musicians jointly performed a Balkan music concert marking another secular cultured event celebrating regional pluralism (Tastekin 2022). Such depoliticized programming tries framing Turkey as an open, progressive actor.

Youth Exchanges

Student exchanges represent a crucial channel directly engaging hundreds of young Serbians annually to study in Turkey through state-funded scholarships. These aim to foster familiarity with Turkish society to overcome external typecasts. Surveys indicate such immersion breeds personal affinity with many Serbian students gaining favourable views of Turkey and supporting enhanced cooperation, although political opinions remain largely unchanged (Prvulovic & Kajan 2021). Lasting attitudinal shifts emerge among this engaged, elite cohort likely to comprise future leaders even if constrained transformation on issues like Russia, Armenia and Kosovo policy stances.

Transactional Interest Convergence

Economic cooperation channels also tightly bind elite political and financial interests. Major Turkish corporations have funded over $2 billion in Serbian highways, energy infrastructure and defence industry deals brokered by leadership allies (Kajosevic 2018). These transactions achieve significant financial leverage and institutional access. Attracting growing Serbian leisure tourism to Turkey's Aegean coast also fosters substantial public exchanges. However, collaborations with independent civil society groups remain relatively superficial despite cheerful rhetoric around deepening societal ties at lower levels. Public support has not yet translated into expanding political influence detached from leadership transactions.

In summary, multifaceted communications efforts reveal sophisticated public diplomacy calibration localizing narratives, exchanges and partnerships for Serbian contexts to sidestep historical sensitivities, foster elite transactions around shared stability interests, and promote secular cultural framing to new generations. But constraints persist on societal penetration given regional tensions. Lasting affinity requires reconciling competing Balkan order visions through pluralistic initiatives between educators, technologists, social entrepreneurs and activists focused on functioning reconciliation. Cooperation should deliver integration and prosperity.

5.1.5. Reception and Impact in Serbia

D Despite sustained Turkish diplomatic outreach and specifically tailored public diplomacy efforts towards Serbia over the past two decades to reshape perspectives, analysis reveals

residual societal constraints on cultural resonance rooted in negative historical memories, rivalry in regional interests, and unease regarding the religious dimension of Turkey's strategic agenda. However, incremental impact is observable regarding transactional elite partnerships, economic deals benefiting both countries, and gradual opinion shifts among Serbian youth more amenable to intercultural exchange.

Examining public opinion surveys, media debates and scholarly assessments reveals a split reception landscape. Cold realities showcase limits on rapid transformation, but trade-offs have enabled partial cooperation gains. Lasting realignment requires reconciling tensions around disputed territories and minorities. Credibility also relies on demonstrating consistent policies upholding declared European values beyond grand symbolic gestures. Adaptations to date represent progress but true affinity remains a longer-term aspiration contingent on resolving competing visions.

Enduring General Public Wariness

Serbian public opinion polls over the 2010s-2020s consistently demonstrate low levels of broad societal trust towards Turkey compared to regional neighbours, with only around 20-30% of citizens backing Turkey's strategic ties or EU membership bid (Balkan Barometer 2020). This indicates general wariness persists despite Turkey's narrative of brotherly friendship, grounded in fears of Turkish regional domination. Discourse regarding neo-Ottoman religious agendas also catalyzes skepticism. Russia garners higher Serbian affinity due to perceived spiritual bonds. Mythologized historical solidarity against the Ottomans retains mobilizing potency.

Surveys identify conservatives, nationalists and older generations as harbouring deeper anti-Turkish grievances rooted in conflictual histories and fear of Muslim demographic encroachment (Pew 2019). The 2019 Pew Values Study found only 13% of Serbians support strengthening societal linkages with Turkey compared to over 50% favouring increased ties with Russia. This ideological constraint reflects endogenous identity conceptions.

However, generational variance emerges on perspectives towards Turkey's role and intentions. Surveys of younger urban Serbians reveal more receptivity towards incremental cultural exchange and economic partnership absent historical baggage carried by older citizens remembering the Milosevic era conflicts and NATO bombing. These youth also consume more

neutral Serbian media and Western social media spotlighting Turkey's dynamism compared to older nationalist consumers (Dzihic 2021). Exposure breeds gradual openness.

Transactional Leadership Partnerships

By contrast, at the leadership level, cooperation with Vucic's governing Serbian Progressive Party has significantly strengthened since 2016 based on converging political and economic interests between both governments. This marks a notable turnaround from the nadir of the 1990s. Major infrastructure, defence technology transfer and energy agreements have been signed between Serbian and Turkish government ministries and corporations exceeding $2 billion in value (Kajosevic 2018). Serbia also discusses joining Turkish fighter jet production despite rival options. And Turkey became the top source of imports and foreign tourist arrivals for Serbia by 2019 (Anadolu Agency 2020), showcasing deepening connectivity.

While partly driven by pragmatic calculations rather than cultural affinity, these transactions have tangibly advanced contemporary bilateral partnership between the states transcending past hostility at the highest levels. This in turn facilitates trickle-down cooperation in other areas. They reflect Turkey's growing regional leverage and effectiveness of public diplomacy in dispelling enough Serbian hesitations over past tensions to enable extensive deal-making at scale around joint stability imperatives. The sponsored flow of Serbian tourists and students to Turkey also expands grassroots ties.

Reputational Impact

In terms of specific reputation impact, analysis shows Turkey has achieved growing public traction regarding Serbia's tourism industry. Turkish cities surged to become the top holiday destination for ordinary Serbian travellers during 2019, with over 230,000 visitors that year before the pandemic. This growth reveals substantial voluntary societal interest absent government directives (Anadolu Agency 2020). Such organic interactions reshape perceptions of Turkey's contemporary offerings. The state-backed Turkish Airlines also became the leading foreign carrier serving Serbia. These shifts prove Turks can appeal to Slavic neighbours beyond politics.

Cultural institute programming and university exchanges also progressively transform assumptions held by educated, cosmopolitan Serbian elites. Surveys indicate 75% of participating students gain favourable attitudes regarding Turkey and nearly all support maintained or strengthened cooperation in tourism, academia, medicine and clean energy (Prvulovic & Kajan 2021). Projecting social diversity and modernity through apolitical professional fields cultivates gradual affinity.

Therefore the receptive landscape in Serbia thus remains split between general public wariness, pragmatic elite transactions, and ascending youth openness through exchanges. This showcases the density of historical memory barriers but also adaptations apprehending identity contexts and contemporary uncertainty to make selective progress. Lasting affinity relies on transparently demonstrating credible policies upholding European integration and rights at home. But sufficient societal promise emerges showing Turks and Slavs can reconcile tensions if both address complex uncertainties.

5.2. Turkey's Public Diplomacy in Bosnia-Herzegovina

5.2.1. Historical Context of Bilateral Relations

Contemporary ties between Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina have been rooted in entwined histories reflecting the complex interplay between the Ottoman Empire's enduring cultural legacy in the Balkans and more recent kinship bonds forged through Ankara's alignment with Bosniaks against Serb aggression during the pivotal 1992-95 conflict amidst Yugoslavia's violent dissolution (Bougarel 2007). These combined cultural and political affinities have granted Turkey significant influence in post-war Bosnia relative to other external actors. But public diplomacy faces challenges balancing resonance with Bosnia's polarized ethno-nationalist political sphere.

The Ottoman Empire's gradual 500-year reign over Bosnia which ended fully by the late 19th century through anti-imperial independence movements left an indelible imprint on demographic composition and national consciousness through gradual conversion of many Slavs to Islam and processes of cultural intermixing (Malcolm 1996). This helped foster an intermediary European Muslim identity neither fully Turkish nor clearly ascribable as Bosnian before the age of nationalism. But it sowed seeds for contemporary kinship discourse tied back to Ankara.

According to Ingrao (2009), the idea of shared Otttoman cultural heritage and religious bonds endured in Bosnian collective memory through the 20th century after Turkish state retraction. Local customs and sites retained this imprint. However, functional ties between Ankara and Sarajevo remained limited during Tito's secular Yugoslav period from 1945-1980 when ethnicity was subsumed under socialist federal identity. Still the residue of spiritual and linguistic bonds ensured some civilizational kinship allowing later cultural reactivation amidst rising nationalism across Yugoslav dissolution pressures after Tito's death in 1980 and authoritarian rule gave way to competitive ethno-nationalist leaders by the early 1990s who instrumentalized religious divides (Glenny 2012).

As Bosnian society violently spiralled into genocidal sectarian war between its three main ethnic factions in 1992, Ankara forcefully backed the Western-oriented Bosniak community both materially and diplomatically, setting the stage for intensive cultural reengagement. At the war's onset, Turkey vigorously lobbied international bodies to lift arms embargoes restricting Bosniak self-defence while illegally supplying weapons itself to combat Serb campaigns (Power 2013). Turkey also provided covert safe haven to prominent Bosniak leader Alija Izetbegovic during his exile opposing both Yugoslav and Ottoman rule decades prior, now cementing renewed affinity with his SDA party ruling Bosniak areas (Weine 1996).

This activated reservoirs of latent cultural closeness and co-religionist solidarity as Turkey defied institutional paralysis to proactively assist Bosniaks during their darkest hour against Serb ethnic cleansing attacks. By the 1994 nadir over 60% of Bosnian territory had fallen to Serb forces amidst systematic mass killing and displacement (Burg & Shoup 1999). Ankara's loud advocacy was crucial in enabling eventual NATO intervention halting genocide. Lasting gratitude took root across traumatized communities.

According to international relations scholar Fisher Onar (2009), Turkey's high-profile partisan alignment and supportive role during the conflict consummated its strategic affinity with the region's Muslims. But it required careful post-war recalibration to channel societal goodwill into moderating political leverage given wreckage and institutional dysfunction bequeathed by the Dayton Agreement. Ankara's ambitions now turned to framing cultural power as an instrument of reconciliation.

The tense, contested 1995 Dayton Peace Treaty had enshrined rigid ethnic federal partition between a Serb-majority autonomous Republika Srpska entity and a Bosniak-Croat Federation bloc under fragile central state structures lacking sovereignty (Bieber 2006). This constitutional stasis encouraged political obstructionism from nationalist factions against reforms required to move towards integration, while providing conduits for foreign ideological and economic penetration. Ankara perceived ideological openings to increase influence with Bosnia's conservative Muslim plurality through public diplomacy given the institutional power vacuum.

But instead of stressing solely shared Ottoman cultural heritage as a unifying force, Turkey's ruling Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) now strategically aligned with and strongly backed Bosnia's polarized Socijaldemokratska Akcija (SDA) party apparatus which had forcefully pushed for Muslim nationalist interests during the war under authoritarian leader Alija Izetbegovic. The SDA severely dominated Bosniak politics for decades until Izetbegovic's death in 2003 through restrictive control over Muslim community resources. This overt partisan sponsorship provided channels for intensive Turkish religious and cultural outreach leveraging public frustration over dysfunction. It also risked entrenching ethnic politics rather than overcoming legacies of divide (Bougarel 2013).

Moreover, analysts argued Turkey's alignment with and rhetorical support for the widely corrupt, self-interested and ineffective ethno-nationalist Bosniak political class resisted implementing painful reforms needed to achieve good governance, socioeconomic progress and independence from foreign influences - instead encouraging long-term aid dependence and external vested patronages (Jukic 2018). Ankara struggled to compel the SDA towards power sharing and moderation. Partnerships appeared increasingly detached from average citizens facing EU integration delays and unemployment over twice the regional average.

Mujanovic (2018) notes Turkey's heavy diplomatic involvement was unable to transform devastating tripartite institutional paralysis, criminalization and unaccountability after the war. But it provided Muslim cultural rallying tropes that resonated with SDA constituencies. Turkey struggled to convert warm grassroots sentiments into political sway over elites required to achieve reconciliation or independence from militant options.

In summary, the seeds for Ankara's substantial public influence penetration among Bosnia's war-scarred Muslim community lay in an interwoven tapestry of selectively glorified imperial

legacy affinity interlaced with kin state mythology around Turkey's loyalty during wartime, mixed with conservative religious alignment. This was reinforced by intensive SDA party sponsorship. But doubts persisted whether cultural power absent democratizing substance could catalyse unifying reforms to achieve stability and development progress given institutional dysfunction, foreign interference and economic challenges - or whether partisan ties now constrained viable policy options.

5.2.2. Thematic Analysis of Strategic Communications (Bosnia)

Meticulous thematic examination of speeches, editorials and cultural promotion materials reveals Turkey has employed a multidimensional public diplomacy strategy towards Bosnia-Herzegovina customized to leverage religious and imperial legacy affinities concentrated among the country's conservative Muslim plurality. Communication narratives and activities directly invoke Ottoman Islamic civilization ties and kin state protection roles alongside economic and institutional integration offers through elite partnerships. Messages glorifying selectively highlighted Ottoman era cultural mixing and developmental successes aim to resonate amidst contemporary dysfunction by framing revived Turkish guidance as empowering. However, doubts persist on whether exaggerated symbolic rhetoric distracts from delivering functional governance and independence.

Civilizational Heritage and Kinship

Firstly, speeches and state-backed editorials frequently directly invoke shared Ottoman Islamic heritage, cultural memory and enduring religious bonds as pillars linking Turkey and Bosnia's "entwined destinies" (Yeni Safak 2022). References frame Ankara as a protector for the country's vulnerable Muslim community against resurgent ultra-nationalist threats seeking renewed ethnic conflict amidst political deadlocks. These emotive kin state posturing tries rallying Bosniak constituencies frustrated over compromises with rival Serb and Croat nationalisms under fragile Dayton power-sharing arrangements they oppose (Szpala 2014). The SDA party aligned with Turkey actively promotes these polarizing tropes prioritizing collective political rights over conciliatory civic state-building.

Selective Glorification of Imperial Past

Secondly, public remarks and editorials by Turkish leaders frequently glorify the Ottoman imperial legacy in Bosnia as a guiding inspiration, framing 600 years of rule before anti-imperial independence movements as a golden age of cultural fluorescence, economic development and peaceful religious coexistence (Kurtic 2016). The selective magnification of Ottoman era tolerance and prosperity provides an aspirational mirror during a contemporary period of fragile dysfunction following the 1990s war.

This rhetoric frames revitalized Turkish patronage as a catalyst to unlock Bosnia's stalled potential for functional democracy and equality within a rejuvenated national identity rediscovering Sufism-inspired indigenous Ottoman heritage seen as linking rival ethnic groups (Bougarel 2013). However, critics argue such overly rose-tinted history risks alienating non-Muslim citizens through triumphant religious nationalism. Disorder and repression during Ottoman twilight years also receive little scrutiny, revealing politicized selectivity.

Combating Christian Extremism Trope

Linked rhetoric around defending Bosniaks against ascendant Christian radicalism regionally taps reactionary religio-political sentiments (Karcic 2016). Fears of growing Gulf-exported Salafism are tempered by frames spotlighting Turkey's brand of moderate European Islam balancing modernity with revived spirituality. Meanwhile ties with Russia and rising EU far-right groups aligning with Serb separatists elicit warnings against a "Christian extremism axis" threatening Bosnia's existence (Bodur 2022). This binary civilizational positioning marshals support from ideological constituencies but constrains conciliatory state-level civic reform initiatives.

Developmental Soft Power Leverage

Additionally, Turkey deploys developmental soft power through infrastructure contracts, diplomatic consultation initiatives and religious coordination platforms as part of wider narrative framing historically cultivated cultural custodian roles into the contemporary context (Tzimitras 2019). For example, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) which leads restoration of Ottoman-era monuments maintains the revealing slogan "We were together during the Ottoman period, we will be together again" (TIKA 2016). This hazily blends

signalling suggesting linear continuity between former imperial grandeur and modern patronage power dynamics.

Bosnia's post-war climate of high unemployment, dysfunction and stalled EU membership talks amplify public receptiveness towards promised Turkish economic partnerships and knowledge transfers as an aspirational catalyst to unlock modernization - absent alternative credible options. Major state-backed Turkish development corporations have channeled over $3 billion into new airports, highways, healthcare technologies, mosques and cultural centres (Daily Sabah 2018). However, critics counter that generated assets remain narrowly concentrated around a corrupt political class lacking accountability to citizens despite acclaimed grassroots aid (Poulton et al 2022). Grand developmental rhetoric risks fostering further elite cooptation rather than real independence.

Partisan Ideological Affinity

Additionally Turkish state media outlets extensively promote the conservative Bosniak Party of Democratic Action (SDA) which dominated fraught post-war era governance for decades under late leader Alija Izetbegovic, reflecting aligning Islamist ideologies with Turkey's ruling AKP party since 2002. Reports lavish support for the SDA while criticizing lagging EU accession progress and ongoing dysfunction in Bosnia's unwieldy ethno-federalist institutions imposed by Dayton. This frames Ankara as a pressuring external voice for protecting Muslim communities amidst paralysis (Szpala 2014). Stern civilizational binaries projected in Turkey's strategic communications towards Bosnia thus foster polarization rather than urgently needed power-sharing solutions.

In totality, thematic analysis reveals Turkey's post-2002 public diplomacy strategy towards Bosnia has emphasized cultural branding glorifying a richly interwoven Ottoman-Islamic heritage tying both nations through religious, linguistic and political bonds to position itself as a combative diplomatic guardian against resurgent Christian radicalisms. This narrative construes regional integration and development through Turkish partnerships as fulfilment of a virtuous historical arc aligning with the priorities of dominant conservative SDA elite leaders and religious revivalists. However, critics highlight the narrative's thin resonance with secular Bosniaks and non-Muslim groups. Moreover the grand developmental rhetoric extolling Turkey's renewed guardianship role risks fostering aid dependence networks lacking citizen

accountability and self-sufficiency rather than urgently addressing root causes of polarization that encourage ongoing external interference in Bosnia's affairs. Lasting stability requires top-down cultural mythmaking make space for participatory, everyday coexistence narratives from below addressing anxieties.

5.2.3. Resonance of Neo-Ottoman Rhetoric

Thematic analysis indicates Ankara's overt messaging glorifying Ottoman Islamic ties and Turkey's enduring custodian roles powerfully resonates among traumatized Bosniak communities, forging substantive societal bonds absent elsewhere in Southeast Europe. References resurrecting imperial tolerance alongside framing the 1990s wars as Christian extremist attacks directly tap profound anxieties and survival quests among Muslim populations struggling to articulate a coherent post-Yugoslav national consciousness amid dysfunction (Bieber 2006). By offering external leadership asserting historical grandeur contrasted against contemporary vulnerabilities, Turkey's narrative construct affirms supportive Muslim identity politics for communities unwilling to shed sharpened senses of ethno-religious persecution. However secular Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs hold mixed views on whether such loaded ideology risks further alienating groups needed to achieve locally-led reconciliation. While cultural affinity with Ankara appears genuine, translational impact remains debatable.

Fertile Conditions Enable Resonance

Survey data indicating over 75% public backing for strengthened political and economic ties with Turkey compared to around 50% support for the EU reveals grassroots cultural affinity exceeding transient elite patronage exchanges (Gallup 2019). Favourable views of Ankara's regional clout and assignment of rights defender roles arise from receptive historical memory cultures carrying intergenerational trauma, wherein belonging and justice quests readily graft onto neo-Ottoman olive branches (Franz 2000). This reveals psychology primed for external leadership lacking capacity for locally-rooted conciliation.

Moreover the erosion of socialist Yugoslav identity structures many Bosniaks associated with amidst their near-annihilation in the 1990s created an ideological vacuum for filling national identity anew through cultural selectivity.Turkey's grand governmental-scale signalling of unbroken spiritual bonds readily penetrates this fertile soil by appearing to offer lost historical

continuity and recognition to neglected Muslim communal experiences crying out for formal vindication. Material patronage relations become almost secondary effects of this compensatory ideological affinity consolidated.

Cultural Touchstones Amplify Receptivity

The sociological depth behind mass public acceptance of Turkey's kin tropes and civilizational framing reflects evocative triggering of common historical touchstones kept alive locally through stories, customs and architectural landmarks carrying latent cultural resonance now consciously resuscitated. For example, sites like the 16th century Ottoman bridge in Mostar draw widespread veneration as a symbolic physical testament to an enduring age-old connection that contemporary Turkish restorations have amplified to loudly juxtapose a selective, virtuous past against a traumatic 20th century interlude demanding overcoming (Majstorovic et al 2013). The continuity claim carries synaptic empathetic power through fusing symbolic heritage with active political rehabilitation partnerships.

This cultural spotlighting mobilizes constituencies through highlighting enduring markers of neglected positive achievement contrasted against more recent communal destruction that resonate on a profoundly personal, cellular level for families across generations. It provides cathartic avenis for tempering grievance through pride rooted in the built environment itself. As sacred physical spaces regain their voice through Turkish patronage and discourse framings, they focalize communal instincts for long-awaited social repair and justice through the welcomed return of a powerful guarantor of Muslim welfare.

Alignment with Dominant Bosniak Muslim Leadership

Moreover Turkish state media discourse and alignment with the conservative Party of Democratic Action (SDA) which dominated Bosniak ethno-politics for decades until the 2000s further institutionalizes and normalizes selective Ottoman-cum-Islamic revivalism amidst unresolved Dayton-era tensions and dysfunction bequeathed by the 1990s war (Bougarel 2007). Given grassroots affinity with Turkey, the SDA strategically advertises ties with Ankara to mobilize electoral constituencies and tout external partnership credentials as a counterfoil to rival Serb and Croat nationalisms still provocatively asserting themselves. SDA grandees readily echo and amplify Turkey's idealized cultural memory discourse and modern benefactor

role as ideological ballast shoring up its flagging legitimacy. This partisan sponsorship dynamic entrenches public receptivity towards Turkey's symbolic appeals by fusing them with SDA agendas.

Limitations and Risks

However reservations persist on risks of alienating progressive and non-Muslim citizens through such selective historical magnification encouraging religious chauvinism at odds with conciliatory state-building goals. Surveys indicate more ambivalence among Bosnian Croats and Serbs on aligning with Turkey's regional policy stances, while polls show a consistent 15-20% of Bosniaks themselves expressing wariness - likely representing secular liberals and leftists (Gallup 2019). Over-blowing the past also potentially excuses contemporary Turkish policy gaps regarding human rights.

Critics argue while idealized Ottomania still broadly resonates with war-scarred communities, translating cultural mythology into speeches without sufficient functionality risks fostering over-reliance on external ideological guardians detached from citizen agency. This postpones maturation. Lasting affinity requires participatory exchanges, multidirectional dialogue and policymaking addressing everyday uncertainties like unemployment and equitable services rather than just amplifying particular histories. Power-sharing pragmatism matching conciliatory rhetoric can unlock locally-led solutions so no single group fears existential vulnerability requiring foreign rescue.

In summary thematic analysis reveals Turkey has successfully cultivated substantial cultural resonance among Bosniak citizens through tailored narratives invoking selectively positive imperial histories and kin guardianship ties against external threats. But sceptic voices caution romanticized rhetoric risks fueling polarizing dependency relations that impede conciliation. Prioritizing intercultural understanding around shared developmental and integration priorities aligned with Bosnia's European future provides sustainable cultural capital if anchored in assisting credible, inclusive self-driven reforms addressing ground truths beyond glorifying the past.

5.2.4. Communications Channels and Activities

Leveraging widespread public affinity, Turkey employs diverse communications instruments across its strategic engagement with Bosnia spanning mosques, cultural centres, state media broadcasts, exchange programs and political clientelism channels that synergistically reinforce symbolic narratives glorifying revitalized Ottoman-Islamic ties. Efforts concentrate on building leverage among conservative religious civil society networks, youth sent to Turkey for education, and political elites ensuring economic assets permeate top-down while shaping social identities. However, critics argue superficial spectacles inadequately foster genuine inter-societal relationships or address polarization sources beyond temporary inducements binding beneficiaries. Lasting conciliatory change requires prioritizing sustainable participatory Initiatives not amplifying histories.

Cultural Heritage Restoration and Events

The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) features prominently through restoring over 400 Ottoman-era sites and monuments across Bosnia over 20 years functioning as politically symbolic cultural venues (Poulton et al 2022). These projects generated substantial visibility that Turkish leaders utilize for speeches invoking civilizational revival. Flagship buildings like 16th century clock towers, libraries and Turkish bathhouses in major cities project Ankara's vision reconciling the country's aspired multi-ethnic character with Ottoman architectural nostalgia (Daily Sabah 2019). High profile events at restored sites aim to reinforce cultural intimacy.

Exporting State-aligned Clerical Networks

Meanwhile the conservative Turkish state religious directorate Diyanet also funds new mosque construction and imam training educational exchanges to influence Balkan Islamic practices through intensive exposure of Bosnian devotees to Turkish state-sanctioned theology framing moderate religion as a stabilizing mechanism against radicalization risks (Tzimitras 2019). These initiatives embed Ankara's bureaucratic reach and ideological sway within Balkan Muslim institutions to balance rising Gulf networks exporting stricter spiritual ideologies. However critics argue such external penetration of local religious affairs dependent on Ankara preventing fundamentalism risks fostering long-term foreign interference rather than sustainable intercommunal conciliation addressing root identity fears (Azinović 2016).

Culture Institute Programming and Exchanges

Yunus Emre Institutes in Sarajevo, Bihac and Mostar also offer classes on language, cuisine, music, architecture and history highlighting selectively positive cultural commonalities. However, some analysts argue the curriculum excessively glorifies Ottoman era themes without critical analysis or incorporating non-Muslim historical experiences during past rule. They contend it risks encouraging religious nationalism more than offering holistic sensitivity into shared regional heritage (Dzankic 2019). Nonetheless Turkish cooking and calligraphy prove widely popular.

Transactional Elite Partnerships

Cooptation of elite interest groups also entrenches Turkey's positioning. Ankara funds scholarships for thousands of Bosnian bureaucrats and current/future leaders to undertake university or technical study in Turkey, resulting in influential alumni through government ministries shaping policies favouring Turkish corporations (Jukic 2018). Turkish construction, energy and defence companies economically penetrate state institutions and assets through these clientelist channels, often with corruption suspicions rather than open tendering (European Stability Initiative 2018). Military cooperation pacts further institutionalize Ankara's security roles. But wider public accountability regarding sustainable impacts from largesse remains limited. Grassroots exchanges lag behind elite circulation.

In summary the multifaceted communications activities reveal substantial, strategically coordinated Turkish public diplomacy engagement with Bosnia over 20 years amounting to a form of customized nation branding glorifying selectively positive Ottoman heritage. But transactionalism risks fostering dependent local elites and religious networks prioritizing external usefulness over citizen interests. Sustainable conciliation requires participatory exchanges, policy dialogue incorporating critical perspectives, and initiatives owned by Bosnian civil society addressing polarization more than amplifying particular histories. Sincere cooperation matching conciliatory rhetoric can unlock locally-led developmental solutions so no single group fears vulnerability requiring foreign rescue.

5.2.5. Reception and Impact in Bosnia-Herzegovina

G Given the strong cultural resonance of neo-Ottoman narratives and religious linkage bonds cultivated assiduously over 20 years, thematic analysis indicates Turkey has firmly entrenched substantial pro-Turkish grassroots sentiment enabling influence penetration within Bosnia relative to other external powers. Surveys consistently show over 70% public backing for strengthened political and economic ties with Ankara compared to around 50% support for the dysfunctional EU across ethnic groups (Pew 2019). This reveals Turkey's messaging and investments have accrued high credibility as a voice defending Bosnia's stability and driving economic development amidst institutional deadlock.

However, enduring scepticism remains within more liberal, secular and non-Muslim citizens over Turkey's ambitions and reliance on volatile ethno-religious nationalist partners like the SDA. Moreover its Belt Road regional infrastructure deals face allegations of corruption disconnected from public accountability. While generating rider gratitude and elite channels of influence, translating cultural goodwill into enduring multidimensional policy sway remains complicated by institutional dysfunction and multiplying foreign interferers. Impacts appear split between symbolic affinity and constraints on delivering concrete reconciliation or independence.

Grassroots Trust and Loyalty

Positively assessing Turkey's reputation impact, major investments since the mid 1990s in religious networks, education exchanges, infrastructure deals and political voice backing for the SDA have entrenched substantial pro-Turkish grassroots sentiment enabling influence unmatched by other external allies. Surveys indicate around half of Bosnian Muslims report feeling an intrinsic emotional affinity or personal indebtedness towards Turkey due to perceptions of loyalty against abandonment during the 1990s nadir (Sonar Future 2022). This solidarity exceeds transient diplomatic agreements observed elsewhere. The depth reveals mutual cultural trauma fused with a bygone imperial familiarity now creatively resurrected to structure renewed fraternity.

Additionally, surveys assessing attitudes on ideal political values and voices reveal Bosniak conservative opinion strongly favours further democratization guided by Ankara's blend of asserted Islamist heritage, majoritarian governance and neoliberal economics as an aspirational institutional model over European secular options by a 57% to 27% margin (Pew 2019). This

ideological proximity is contrasted favourably against growing EU disillusionment. It provides Turkey multiplying leverage as a muscular Muslim voice on international issues like Palestine increasingly at odds with the reticent EU.

Economic Footholds and Institutional Access

Commercial public diplomacy efforts have also successfully converted societal goodwill into gradually expanding economic footholds and institutional leverage. Major Turkish corporations have invested over $3 billion since 1995 in telecoms, mining, airports, housing and highway mega-projects (Daily Sabah 2018). Defence production partnerships and arms transfers have also intensified (Hasanbegovic 2022). These elite clientelist deals bind state-level decision makers in energy, construction and security sectors to Turkish interests through corruption-prone lobbying. Progress depends on placating Ankara.

Additionally, the supply of bureaucrats, diplomats and technicians trained through Turkish scholarships has preprocessed human capital pipelines towards favouring Ankara's corporate priorities. This lobbying from within shapes deals behind the scenes in favour of Turkish public contractors like TIKA. Outcomes satisfying Istanbul elites occur despite limited public scrutiny over value for money due to media cooptation. Turkey has engineered lasting influence channels cunningly through cultivating cultural gratitude.

5.3.   Comparative Analysis

This section compares Turkey's discursive strategies and public diplomacy outcomes in Serbia versus Bosnia-Herzegovina based on the preceding analysis. It examines nuanced adaptations in cultural narratives and activities tailored to each context along with variance in resonance. The comparison elucidates patterns in Turkey's regional engagement strategies and effects.

5.3.1. Thematic Messaging Differences Between the Serbian and Bosnian Contexts

Comparative analysis reveals significant divergence in the cultural narratives, rhetorical techniques and symbolic repertoires emphasized within Turkey's strategic public diplomacy engagement with Serbia versus Bosnia-Herzegovina. This messaging variance aligns with localized political and social differences between the two countries. Contextual tailoring aims to maximize resonance.

In Serbia, thematic coding of texts shows rhetoric avoids overt mention of religious ties or contentious civilizational history. Depoliticized themes around tourism, infrastructure cooperation and European integration aspirations predominate instead (Pavelic 2018). Limited messaging tries subtly rehabilitating assumptions by celebrating selective heritage and growing economic partnership. This reflects Serbia's contemporary EU alignment priority under dominant political factions.

In contrast, Turkish communications targeting Bosnia directly invoke common Muslim identity, shared Ottoman Islamic heritage and a selective history of Turkish protection roles against Christian encroachments (Yeni Safak 2022). Speeches and editorials venerate revived cultural glory "in our hearts" under Turkey's guidance against nationalist radicalism that could repeat the 1990s conflict. Emotive familial metaphors like "little brothers" portray Bosnia as a dependent charge requiring guardianship through specially cultivated spiritual bonds exceeding mundane cooperation. This sentiment leverages kin state cultural intimacy concentrated in Bosnia amidst unresolved institutional trauma.

The tailored communication approach reveals sophisticated public diplomacy efforts to appeal differently to varied identities by foregrounding depoliticized secular framing with Serbia while emphasizing faith-based civilizational continuity in Bosnia. Messaging aligns with positioning Ankara as a realigning development catalyst and conciliator of regional disputes suiting mutual EU integration in Serbia. But neo-Ottoman affective affinity better resonates amidst Bosnia's polarization (Fouéré 2020). Discourse adapts to distinctive receptivity conditions rather than imposing one-size-fits all slogans.

Specifically, Serbia-directed strategic communications employ narrowed secular framing spanning:

- Shared geographical bonds

- Infrastructure connectivity

- Selective artistic heritage conservation

- Tourism and trade exchange

- European integration aspirations support

Whereas Turkey's narrative engagement with Bosnia invokes a civilizational paradigm encompassing:

- Islamic heritage and kin tropes

- Symbolic architectural restorations

- Countering Christian radical threats

- Anti-nationalist spiritual guidance

- Besieged Muslim community patronage

This bifurcation between secular partnership discourse tailored for Belgrade and emotive religious civilization discourse directed at Bosnia reveals sophisticated public diplomacy efforts attuned to varied identity contexts colored by different historical traumas. Messaging aimed at overcoming Serbian distrust requires cooperation around aligned interests like regional stability. Meanwhile neo-Ottoman intimacy better levers Bosniak desires for recognized cultural grandeur amidst vulnerability. Both frame Turkey as a caring steward - but Serbian political constraints require selective secular emphasis while raw identity anxieties in Bosnia invite religio-cultural mobilization by emphasizing symbolic threats.

However, while these calibrated approaches achieve variable success improving relations and cooperation incrementally, doubts remain whether surface cultural resonance sustains real policy influence absent substantive governance functionality and reform ownership emanating from within target countries themselves. Critics argue rhetorical exacerbations risk fostering dependent relationships or radicalization rather than conciliation. Ankara struggles to compel fundamental constitutional changes required for Bosnia's reconciliation or Serbia's normalization with former Yugoslav territories like Kosovo. Public affinity has eased barriers but not transformed institutional political incentives or agency from below.

Therefore astute messaging adaptations have enabled selective progress but power limitations persist. Lasting transformative impacts emerging from both societies related to democratization

and pluralism relies on sustained civil society exchanges and participatory policy initiatives addressing uncertainty beyond glorifying particular histories. Words must be matched by functioning cooperation.

5.3.2. Relative Reception and Resonance in Each Country

Comparing Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina illuminates asymmetric outcomes in the resonance of Turkey's tailored strategic narratives and cultural outreach efforts. Data indicates far higher public affinity and support towards Turkey in Bosnia compared to Serbia, reflecting divergent grassroots reception (Pew 2019). This highlights the density of historical memory barriers but also calibrating messaging to identity contexts. However, transactional leadership partnerships have strengthened in both countries revealing trade-offs between symbolic affinity and functional cooperation (Kajosevic 2018). Outcomes diverge between fervent loyalty and cautious realpolitik.

Public Sentiment Variances

Multiple survey sources indicate far higher rates of general societal affinity towards Turkey in Bosnia-Herzegovina compared to Serbia, reflective of favourable mass reception. Around 75-80% of Bosnians back strengthened political and economic partnership with Ankara compared to only 50-60% of Serbians (Gallup 2019). This reveals Turkey's cultural promotion investments have accrued far greater credibility enabling grassroots influence unmatched elsewhere in Southeast Europe. The 2019 Pew Global Attitudes Survey found 38% of Bosnians view Turkey favourably versus 22% of Serbians (Pew 2019). This affinity divergence reflects contrasting responses to strategic narratives and positioning.

The receptivity variance stems heavily from identity factors rooted in conflicting historical memories. Ottoman legacy and religious revivalism more deeply resonates among traumatized Bosniaks as a survival pathway while most Serbs harbour grievances over this contested imperial past (Mylonas 2012). Lasting suspicion thus constrains societal soft power penetration in Serbia. But in Bosnia, shared Muslim heritage concentrated through survival imperatives in the 1990s war provides far more cultural glue absent elsewhere to mobilize publics through neo-Ottoman intimacy.

This helps explain asymmetric elite partnerships arising between Ankara and the respective ruling coalitions in each country. In Bosnia, Turkish leaders fostered extensive ideological alignment with the conservative Bosniak Party of Democratic Action (SDA) which dominated Muslim politics for decades under authoritarian leader Alija Izetbegovic until 2006 (Jukic 2016). The SDA eagerly advertised Turkey's benefactor developmental patronage and anti-nationalist credentials to supporters as a strategic foil against rival Serb and Croat nationalisms. Public affinity converted into partisan consolidation.

In contrast, relations with Aleksander Vucic's Serbian Progressive Party focused more on pragmatic infrastructure investment and risk mitigation regarding regional disputes like Kosovo and Republika Srpska. While Serbia lacks fervent public backing observed in Bosnia, gradual business cooperation has produced economic wins for Ankara including major highway construction contracts financed by Turkish banks and companies (Kajosevic 2018). Outcomes diverged between fervent symbolic affinity and cautious transactional diplomacy.

Constraints on Transforming Relationships

Moreover, the limits of cultural messaging detached from substance are exposed in both countries. Despite inflated Turkey discourse celebrating illuminated regional leadership, Bosnia remains mired in crippling institutional dysfunction and ethnic polarization. Ankara struggles to compel difficult political compromises on decentralization and corruption required to stabilize governance. Public gratitude has not overcome elite zero-sum motivations nor translated into meaningful democratization (Fouéré 2020).

Similarly, the receptive landscape in Serbia remains split between general societal reluctance, pragmatic elite transactions around infrastructure deals, and ascending youth openness to Turkey. This reveals the density of historical memory barriers but also nuanced signalling apprehending contemporary uncertainties. Lasting public affinity requires Turkish policy coherence aligning external branding with internal democratic dynamics beyond recent authoritarian and religiously-aligned tendencies (Ekinci 2019). Words should match deeds.

In summary, asymmetric analysis reveals variable Turkish public diplomacy success cultivating a loyal Bosniak constituency through neo-Ottoman intimacy but slower progress overcoming Serbian suspicions. However transactional partnerships in both contexts expose limitations

translating cultural branding into functional political solutions without sustained grassroots exchanges addressing polarization. Creative messaging has resonated but proximate guidance must deliver stability. Power stems from consistency meeting realistic localized needs rather than exacerbating particular histories.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1. Interpretation of Findings

T This section critically examines the study's core thematic analysis findings regarding Turkey's strategic cultural narratives, exchanges and impacts in the Balkans through relevant public diplomacy scholarship. It unpacks observed messaging selectivity, constraints transforming relationships beyond ephemeral transactions, and risks exacerbating polarization by overlooking participatory priorities articulated locally rather than addressing contemporary uncertainties. Findings reveal risks glorifying symbolic histories to mobilize ethnic loyalties instead of enabling pluralistic democratic solutions owned by target societies themselves. Recalibrating grounded partnerships beyond magnified external guardianship mythmaking appears vital for sustainable influence through ethical cooperation.

Nation Branding and Historical Manipulation

The overarching nation branding paradigm provided an initial model understanding Turkey's concerted image management attempts through public diplomacy tailored for the region (Szondi 2008). As Aronczyk (2013) explains, nation branding represents a transactional process using advertising techniques and circular messaging repetition to cultivate perceptions aiding state power. Thematic analysis confirmed Turkey's carefully adapted cultural promotion efforts utilizing Ottoman and religious symbolism, economic inducements via infrastructure deals (Kajosevic 2018), and selective historical spotlights designed to attract Bosniak loyalty while superficially soothing Serbian distrust through cooperation. Sophisticated narrative management reveals bargaining tactics transferring material resources to bind partisan allies into dependence arrangements buttressing Ankara's political voice regionally, not purely benign cultural exchange (Andrejevic 2011).

But critical theorists argue cultural projection risks simplifying assumptions and imposing convenient regimes of memory rather than addressing complex participate ory policy concerns articulated locally (Said 1978; Rana 2011). As evidenced in both countries, exaggerated political rhetoric invoking Ottoman-Islamic glory failed catalyzing post-war conciliatory reform or ethnic compromise in Bosnia while awakening further suspicion in Serbia over long-term goals. Public diplomacy requires reconciling symbolic messaging with credible substantive actions demonstrating commitment through ethical participation addressing

existing uncertainties voiced by local communities themselves beyond foreign amplification of convenient histories catering to elite special interests (Fisher 2010). Rhetoric should match function.

Moreover, while Ankara projected bespoke cultural branding narratives towards each country, its high-profile claims to be wielding well-intentioned soft power benefiting democratization and stability were contradicted by persistent polarization constraints transforming Bosnia's frozen institutional dysfunction or achieving transitional justice frameworks enabling Serbian normalization with Kosovo essential for lasting regional reconciliation. Despite strong Bosniak societal backing cultivated, symbolic religious affinity failed compelling deadlocked local actors towards necessary governance reforms given competitive foreign patronage alternatives. This reveals limits in converting loyalty into ethical policy outcomes through external kinship mythmaking alone absent locating agency and leadership from below. Sustained mutual exchanges focused on addressing polarization drivers appear necessary beyond temporarily amplified truncated histories catering primarily towards vested elite beneficiaries.

As Atkinson (2010) observes, cultural diplomacy appealing to sentiment risks catalyzing societal vulnerability to demagogic manipulation or radicalization in absence of reasonable policy delivery addressing quotidian social expectations reasonably grounded in evidence. Without clear benefits evidencing regionally-focused initiatives alleviating endemic corruption, unemployment, and access inequality felt by citizens themselves, glorified external guardianship posturing through Islamist polemics encouraging reactionary isolation from urgently needed stabilization compromises unlikely gain traction. Public diplomacy instead requires supporting grassroots participation nurturing locally-led conciliatory processes to unlock agency, not foster indefinite foreign custodianship.

Adapting Strategic Narratives to Local Contexts

However, granular thematic examination verified deliberate sophisticated Turkish efforts adapting communications branding and rhetorical techniques for contrasting Serbian and Bosnian settings marked by differing receptivity conditions around identity constructions, revealing contextual sensitivity absent blanket approaches. In Serbia the narrative frame dialed down overt religious appeals offending secular nationalism while spotlighting depoliticized culture and connectivity. But in polarized Bosnia's insecure environment, neo-Ottoman Islamic

civilizational tropes aimed at consolidating paranoid conservative Muslim opinion through warning of gathering external threats requiring protective loyalty to Ankara's renewed benefactor role to prevent another Srebrenica (Yalinkilicli 2022). Both contexts elicited distinctively tailored cultural framings shaped for situational political resonance.

But as Hayden (2013) cautions building on Appadurai (1996), even resonance absent material policy actions risks credibility gaps and blowback by exploiting fears. Critics argue romanticizing selectively positive Ottoman multicultural tolerance today jars against extensive domestic Turkish democratic backsliding including politicized judicial targeting of Kurdish activists and surging women murders amidst rhetorical anti-Western diversionary populism hardly consistent with professed external pluralism (Ekinci 2019). They contend effective credible external advocacy relies on nurturing participatory accountability and minority rights at home. Reflexive balancing between external branding and internal consistency remains vital for principled leadership avoiding charges of hypocrisy or neo-colonial hidden agendas that could undermine cultural power projections into the region. Pretty words should reflect ethical deeds.

Rhetoric-Functionality Divide

Furthermore, triangulated comparative analysis revealed frequent gaps separating Turkey's elevated political rhetoric extolling an almost paternalistic notional leadership role guaranteed through history as cultural guardian and catalyst with more concerning ground-level realities regarding functionality limitations converting this loyal affinity into participatory civic outcomes owned by ordinary Bosnians and Serbians for mutual benefit. While ostentatious state-backed ceremonies, selective monument restoration spectacles (Dzihic 2022) and partisan media relationships have expanded Ankara's visibility and influence among receptive populations psychologically primed to welcome renewed Turkish stewardship amidst uncertainty (Deacon 2007), grassroots institution-building, localized educational exchanges, youth interactivity, civil society partnerships and critical media cultivation enabling dissent - crucial requisites for sustainable conflict transformation and reconciliation - remain starved and underdeveloped (Fouéré 2020).

Cultural projection risks exploiting vulnerable identities without providing concrete participatory developmental progress addressing sources fuelling cyclical Balkan instability

(Mujanovic 2018). As Fisher (2010) notes, sustainable diplomacy requires long-term society-to-society exchanges fostering genuine understanding of diverse localized uncertainties to build relationships with credibility over time. Staged media events, amplified histories and elite business deals remain insufficient. Lasting conciliatory solutions require inclusive sustained participatory policy dialogues and collaborations equitably owned by affected communities themselves, not magnified symbolic guardianship from abroad governed through geostrategic elite clientelism and foreign direct investment breeding corruption and dependence. Turkey's regional outreach requires balancing controlled messaging with bottom-up exchanges enabling Balkan civil societies themselves to achieve compromise solutions right-sized for local reconciliation capacities absent overbearing external interests.

In Bosnia, critics argue Turkey's rhetorical developmental promises risk fostering assistential aid addiction cycles benefitting crony strongmen over citizenry while doing little to catalyze deadlock-breaking constitutional reforms or combat surging Gulf-sponsored radical Salafism, with Russia and China offering obstructionist Serb/Croat factions lucrative infrastructure partnerships explicitly exploiting polarization by design for hegemonic goals rather than stabilization (Franz 2000). While public gratitude suggests receptive conditions, critics contend this risks fostering cross-purpose policy incoherence between Western-oriented Bosniaks cooperating with Turkey, EU and US based on urgent reform imperatives, and separatist Serbs/Croats backed by Moscow and Beijing rejecting further compromise aiming to collapse rather than strengthen common institutions - contradictions Ankara seems unprepared to compellingly mediate given preference for favouring one partisan side over conciliation realpolitik (Fouéré 2020). Deeper mutual socialization and exchanges focused on nurturing sustainable locally-led mediation processes addressing polarization appear necessary beyond temporary glorification of convenient historical myths catering to elite special interests over citizen priorities.

Therefore while sophisticated rhetorical crafting and economic footholds represent evident Turkish public diplomacy achievements since 2002 expanding selective regional influence, profound doubts remain whether current elite-centric partnerships myopically transacting around symbolic cultural branding detached from democratizing, participatory policy impacts addressing contemporary social fissure drivers provides optimal efficacy for genuine conflict transformation and pluralism. Lasting reconciliation requires inclusive participation and civil

society exchanges addressing instability sources (Atkinson 2010), not amplified external guardianship arrangements risking communal dependency undermining self-sufficiency.

Implications for Theory and Practice

This study offered critical empirical perspective bridging mainstream political communications scholarship focused on persuasive cultural narrative framing and projection with deeper investigation of risks in overstating branding's ability to singularly reshape foreign relationships absent ethical, participatory substance demonstrating positive democratic values through functioning initiatives owned by target communities themselves, not just fleeting slogans and transactions catering to elite short-term interests while breeding public overreliance. Analyses revealed sophisticated use of tailored messaging resonant with identities, but exposed problems converting loyalty into accountable outcomes.

While nation branding concepts provide an initial model understanding controlled image projection impulses, deeper risks emerge in overpromising influence through convenient rhetorical flourishes and reductive historical frames detached from political delivery addressing local expectations or forging genuine intersocietal partnerships enabling self-owned solutions. Neo-Ottoman affective tropes temporarily rallied Bosniaks but failed achieving stability absent institutions compelling compromise or unlocking economic progress. Serbia rejects religious ideological agendas as civilizational threats, compelling more secular economic cooperation limiting affinity. Both cases reveal rhetorical overreach without function risks fostering communal polarization exploitation rather than ethical development.

Therefore a vital opportunity exists for Turkey's maturing public diplomacy apparatus to creatively recalibrate towards supporting bottom-up participatory initiatives nurturing intercultural exchanges focused on mutual understanding of complex contemporary challenges around integration, inequality and identity that Western Balkan societies themselves articulate from below rather than importing or imposing external frameworks detached from granular obstacles recognized regionally (Kostic 2017). The region's progress relies on inclusive civic negotiation and relationship building transcending narrow partisan attachments or sectarian demagogues. Ankara should provide sustained backstopping through careful diplomacy and credible partnerships aligned with stabilization supportively empowering local EU accession and compromise efforts rather than encouraging reactionary nationalist forces through religious

or ideological interference from afar. That public diplomacy realignment centering sustained society-level partnership building and exchanges focused on addressing common uncertainties faced on the ground provides the optimal path upholding Turkey's principled leadership brand regionally while unlocking a virtuous circle progressively elevating the region.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1. Summary of Findings

This concluding chapter provides an integrated narrative synthesis of the study's central empirical findings regarding the construction, tailored adaptation to localized contexts, selected impacts and risks within Turkey's substantial strategic communications and public diplomacy efforts directed towards Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina under AK Party leadership over the past two pivotal decades.

Meticulous thematic analysis of political speeches, state-backed regional editorials and organizational materials revealed deliberate, sophisticated attempts to positively reshape assumptions and expand influence in both countries through carefully customized messaging and cultural initiatives invoking selective historical ties, economic interdependence and political cooperation tropes suited for receptive constituencies. Discourse emphasized shared civilizational values and developmental catalyst roles.

However, findings also expose substantial rhetorical excess detached from functional delivery of participatory conciliatory outcomes necessary for sustainable conflict transformation amid enduring post-war social fissures. Despite artful adaptation of neo-Ottoman intimacy narratives towards Bosnia and secularized partnership tonality in Serbia producing variable gains, constraints persist in catalyzing structural reconciliation absent empowering society-level exchanges addressing polarization. Grand patron tropes require grounding through localized participatory initiatives owned by communities themselves rather than externally imposed direction setting or amplified convenient histories catering primarily elite special interests.

In Serbia, calibrated depoliticized messaging emphasized continuing regional bonds, creative cooperation around technology and tourism, while supporting Belgrade's European integration aspirations - aligned with localized priorities. This combined with educational exchanges and economic deals has gradually improved strained ties. But distrust remains strong at societal levels regarding fears of Turkish religious agendas. Minority religious rights suppression at home also undercuts credibility as a liberal exemplar abroad. Lasting affinity requires reconciling contradictory policies towards Armenia, the EU and hardline Turkish nationalism undermining conciliatory branding. Rhetoric should match cooperative actions demonstrating consistent ethical integration support.

Meanwhile in Bosnia, tailored discourse strongly resonated among conservative Muslim communities through Ottoman-Islamic revivalism and kin tropes promising a renewed protective alliance against ethnic radicalism. Surveys indicated expansive grassroots affinity absent elsewhere. But critics contend rhetorical exaggeration provides cover for an increasingly corrupt, detached elite resisting democratization and prolonging destabilizing foreign interference. Turkey has demonstrably failed to compel unifying constitutional changes required to empower inclusive central institutions. Public gratitude far exceeds systemic policy impacts or agency transformation.

Therefore a vital opportunity exists recalibrating existing partnerships through transparency, participation and creativity focusing on addressing locally articulated integration priorities and social reconciliation obstacles voiced by young people, educators and social activists rather than inflating reductive historical myths catering to elite special interests. Lasting regional stability and development requires inclusive civic negotiation transcending narrow ethno-political divides. Ankara should provide sustained support for difficult compromises through constructive assistance and credibility alignment with EU accession processes upholding democratic standards. That public diplomacy realignment centering society-level exchanges designed collaboratively to alleviate key uncertainties could unlock virtuous mobility uplifting the region.

Conceptually, the study revealed limitations of external cultural branding projections absent coherent policies demonstrating substantive improvement of living conditions, rights and participatory opportunities valued by ordinary Balkan publics themselves. While resonant discursive constructions rallied constituencies, overpromising regional guardian tropes bred dependence arrangements substituting local agency. Structural reconciliation requires situating pragmatic diplomacy and exchanges addressing polarization priorities articulated locally instead of inflamed ethnic histories detached from reformist outcomes. Lasting cultural power relies on evidencing principled positive impact through functioning assistance and two-way interactions focused beyond glorification of a selectively imagined past. Contemporary social challenges demand urgently updated approaches.

Theoretically integrating mainstream concepts of strategic narrative management as an initial framework while drawing critical insights revealing risks of exploiting fears or ossifying conflicts provides balanced perspective. Findings detail tailored messaging resonance successes

but also endemic credibility gaps undermining lasting influence absent participatory exchanges addressing uncertainties to sustainably empower institutions and relationships. Public diplomacy thus emerges as an intricate projection-reception process requiring carefully adapted signalling combined with policy delivery demonstrating substantive improvement of regional integration, stability and development outcomes valued locally. Communication construction proving sensitivity requires anticipation of effects. Words should match constructive deeds through sustained, inclusive initiatives designed supportively with partners from below rather than subscriptions to amplified imagined histories of external guardianship.

Practically, the Western Balkans' complex landscape marked by young post-conflict states simultaneously struggling with reconciliation obstacles and competitive influences from multiple external actors complicates public diplomacy efforts requiring coordinated narrative strategies adapted for contrasting locale identities combined with assistance delivery mechanisms enabling self-directed solutions. Findings suggest participatory exchanges focused on collaborative technological and economic initiatives owned by regional partners themselves hold greater promise than exaggerated external guardian mythology or transactional contracts detached from public accountability addressing indigenous priorities needed for democratization. An opportunity exists supporting grassroots stabilization networks.

This concluding synthesis chapter provided integrated analysis of the study's central findings regarding the potency but also risks and paradoxes observed in Turkey's expanding public diplomacy projections across the Balkans over the past 20 years. Tailored cultural branding succeeded substantially in resonating with target publics but failed catalyzing structural political solutions to frozen conflicts absent participatory exchanges empowering regional actors themselves to forge compromise. The path ahead necessitates sustaining symbolic affinity through assistance supporting society-level mediations addressing contemporary social reconciliation challenges voiced locally rather than anachronistically inflamed ethnic histories offering fleeting solidarity detached from democratic functionality. That public diplomacy realignment could strengthen Turkey's principled leadership brand through ethical regional impacts.

7.2. Recommendations for Future Research

TWhile this study yielded multifaceted empirical insights on strategic messaging construction, tailoring adaptations, constraints and risks within Turkey's forceful public diplomacy projections towards Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina since 2002, further scholarly inquiry through various qualitative, interpretivist lenses could substantially extend and elucidate knowledge on the cultural power cultivation dynamics, learning processes and causal mechanisms shaping Ankara's evolving regional influence amidst complex competitive surroundings. Specifically, additional research grounded in strategic communications and academic literature sources while engaging regional scholar perspectives offers promising opportunities refining understanding of nuanced signalling processes, participatory diplomacy enhancements and comparative benchmarking studies guiding optimizable policy improvements.

Elucidating Official Strategic Calculations and Decision-Making

Firstly, the grounded thematic examination of texts for prevalent rhetorical constructions in this study relied extensively on analyzing state-mediated public discourse and communications materials like speeches, regional editorials and organizational documents. However, gaining direct insider perspectives from Turkish diplomatic strategists and government practitioners involved in formulating and adapting cultural branding narratives and public messaging initiatives could provide vital experiential understanding of precisely how policy assumptions, goals and tactical calculations shape public diplomacy decision-making towards the Balkans.

While the current analysis deduced logic models and interests explaining aspects of narrative management selectivity, in-depth qualitative interview research accessing candid reflections from Turkish public diplomacy directors, cultural attaches, development agency project designers and state media editors involved with Balkan regional communications would enable gathering granular detail on evolutions in strategic thinking, planning processes, contextual adaption rationales and perspectives on efficacy gaps which existing discourse are unable to fully convey. Their insider accounts could reveal crucial experiential insights explaining public diplomacy policy adaptations and effects amplifying document-based knowledge.

Local Community Perspectives on Resonance and Sustainability

Secondly, the study drew extensively on academic literature and surveys gauging wider Serbian and Bosnian public opinion trends regarding Turkish favourability and soft power perceptions to interpret messaging resonance and attitudinal impact. However, richness could be added through field research methodologies like in-depth focus groups, oral history projects and narrative interviews exploring local community perspectives from summer camp youth exchange participants, cultural institute attendees, mosque redevelopment site residents and other direct recipients of Turkey's cultural outreach. How do their voices illuminate, contest or verify textual discourse analysis? Capturing lived experiences and grounded reflections on programming utility, relevance and influence impact would strengthen bottom-up local understanding. Additionally, ethnographic observations could uncover organic cultural symbology dynamics. Exploring ongoing attachments and meaning making processes over time rather than episodic opinion snapshots improves insight on sustainable diplomatic relationship building.

Regional and Institutional Comparisons Expanding Horizon

Thirdly, widening the geographic comparative lens towards examining Turkish strategic cultural narratives and public diplomacy impacts on Muslim minority and majority populations within wider Balkan countries like Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo illuminated by this study's paired Serbia-Bosnia cases offers potential to uncover broader patterns and policy transfers. How does messaging and programmatic approach alignment vary between contexts? Does greater pan-Balkan calibrating adaptability explain certain divergent outcomes observable in the present research?Does coherence increase through wider synthesis? Moreover, synchronically comparing Turkish public diplomacy apparatus structures and effectiveness against regional soft power rivals like Russia, China and several EU states also actively expanding regional cultural projection could provide vital best practices perspective through benchmarking metrics. Where have certain countries achieved caching that eludes others and why? Triangulating activities between actors provides sharper relief illuminating relative strengths, weaknesses and policy optimizations.

Longitudinal Tracking to Discern Gradual Evolutions

Fourthly, adopting temporal longitudinal methodology lens tracking changes over years in Turkey's strategic narratives, tactical partnerships and civil society outreach across the Balkans

since the early 2000s could illuminate gradual incremental adaptations answering whether substantive late-stage course corrections have materialized reactively and selectively in response to accumulated credibility gaps, resonance problems with constituencies and changing political circumstances both within Turkey and externally in target countries. As Bogdanovic (2021) notes, interactions between outgoing and incoming leaders and their policies reveal learning; continuity amidst exogenous shocks reflects resilience absent one-off ruptures. Therefore, tracing discourse and partnership transformations or constraints over two decades could indicate institutional flexibility, critical thinking and strategy responsiveness - or rigid path dependencies blind to complex adaptive challenges predictably arising within the turbulent, multifaceted Balkan context.

Textual discourse analysis examining time-stamped materials combined with periodic benchmarking interviews eliciting experiences from Turkish diplomatic practitioners could determine thematic policy learning trajectories (Hall 1993). It assesses whether initial reductive constructs of regional cultural power give way to more intersubjective, localized interpretations acknowledging inherent two-way relationship building complexity exceeding paternalistic stereotypes. Tracing the maturation process holds lessons for responsively approaching public diplomacy globally amid dynamic 21st century uncertainties requiring sustained tailored consultation and coordination rather than assumed immutable state-centric messaging omnipotence detached from recipient voices.

Concluding Thoughts

In total, ample pathways exist for Turkish, regional, and external scholars to substantiveLly build upon this study's set of empirical findings evaluating Turkey's extensive yet enigmatic public diplomacy cultivation efforts directed towards the consequential Balkans frontier over the past two pivotal decades. While tangible material and rhetorical investments have demonstrably expanded selective elite networks and supporter mobilization leveraging Ottoman-Islamic cultural intimacy bonds concentrated in Bosnia, profound field research remains vital assessing participatory exchanges needed to convert symbolic affinities into sustainable locally-led reconciliation functionality improving regional pluralism and integration. There is wisdom to be gleaned differentiating resonant discourse from delivered outcomes. Appreciating enduring narrative constraints but also openings for cooperation calls for holistic intertextual study contextualizing state communications amidst dynamic interplay

of actors. Public diplomacy emerges as intricate choreography allying image projection combined with policymaking demonstrating positive grassroots impacts. That synthesized understanding summoning deeper scholarship illuminating the messy reality beneath surface pronouncements still beckons. This project offers initial analysis of multifaceted signaling processes, paradoxes and risks which opens space for considerable further exploration of key themes towards greater significance.

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