Strategic Communication and Policies of Türkiye

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ABSTRACT *Since the establishment of the Republic, Türkiye has systematically conducted communication activities to proclaim its own theses to the national and international public. Until recently, those efforts were organized by different institutions and in the context of different regulations. Türkiye's evolving development and foreign policy agenda over the past 20 years have compelled it to undertake more ambitious endeavors in the area of communication and public diplomacy. As a result of this requirement, the Directorate of Communications was established on July 24, 2018. This study provides a broad overview of the evolution of the Turkish strategic communication viewpoint and conducts an in-depth analysis of the development of the Türkiye communication model and current strategic communication initiatives undertaken by the Directorate of Communications.*

Introduction

Türkiye has become an important actor with its rising role both in its region and at the global level in the last two decades. The country's democratic transformation initiatives, economic development, expansion of its foreign policy, and improvements in education, health, and social policies have all produced stories that need to be told to the national and international public. In response to this need, Türkiye is creating a new communication strategy and model that reflects its own values.

This commentary aims to illustrate the transformation and institutionalization process of Türkiye's strategic communication activities and its new communication model. Starting with a broad discussion of the concept of strategic communication, it examines the transformation of Türkiye's strategic communication perspective from the past to the present. The institutions responsible for designing strategic communication, their areas of responsibility, the goals of strategic communication, and its tools and methods over time are discussed. Finally, the Directorate of Communication, which represents the institutionalization of strategic communication in Türkiye, is evaluated under three topics (humanitarian diplomacy, strategies of combatting terrorism, and disinformation) that constitute the fundamental pillars of Türkiye's communication strategy. The commentary concludes by examining the values and meanings that

are produced by the proposed 'Türkiye Communication Model.'

The Evolution of Strategic Communication

Strategic communication has long been used as an equivalent to the concept of public diplomacy. The first conceptualization of the term public diplomacy was coined by Edmund Gullion in 1965, although public diplomacy practices date back even earlier.[1] Throughout history, countries have followed policies to create a positive image and develop good relations with other countries.

According to Christopher Paul, strategic communication is a novel concept that has started to be discussed in the U.S. since the beginning of the 2000s.[2] Paul elaborates on the concept of strategic communication as "coordinated actions, messages, images, and other forms of signaling or engagement intended to inform, influence, or persuade selected audiences in support of national objectives."[3] Zaharna's definition of the term also points to a communication initiative designed and implemented to achieve a predetermined goal.[4] Accordingly, every communication process may not be based on a strategic target, so the most important feature that distinguishes strategic communication from other communication types is that it is carried out in line with a target, but in line with a strategic target. From this perspective, public diplomacy can be defined as the strategic communication of states

or non-state actors in the international political arena.

When the *International Journal of Strategic Communication* began its publication in 2007, strategic communication has begun to rise as an autonomous research area. In the first issue of the journal, Hallahan introduced the notion of strategic communication as "the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission."[5] In this definition, Hallahan focused on the difference between integrated communication and strategic communication, which is especially important for corporations. Organizational communication broadly analyzes the numerous processes involved in how people interact in complex organizations. But strategic communication focuses on how the organization presents and promotes itself through the deliberate actions of its leaders, employees, and communicators. Strategic communication's primary goal is to purposefully impact the target audience.

According to Paul, there are four core elements of strategic communication: informing, influencing, and persuading are important; effectively informing, influencing, and persuading requires clear objectives; coordination and deconfliction are necessary to avoid information fratricide; and actions communicate.[6]

Considering the emergence of the concept of strategic communication and its relationship with other concepts, it is seen that its boundaries are still unclear and that it is in exchange

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with other disciplines. How states define strategic communication in this period is directly related to their perception of the threat they face and the strategies they develop. As countries move from an era of minor conflicts to a new geopolitical landscape dominated by major powers, the conversation about defining strategic communications will persist.[7]

As Nothhafta, Werderb, Verčičc, and Zerfass argue, despite challenges in defining its fundamental principles, core perspectives, benefits, and added value, the strategic communication concept continues to thrive. However, there is a significant discrepancy between practical, academic, and institutional success on the one hand and theoretical stringency on the other.[8] Therefore, this paper is also a humble contribution to attempts to develop a new perspective on the practice and theory of strategic communication.

Strategic Communication in Türkiye

Today, strategic communication activities in Türkiye are carried out by the Directorate of Communications,

Although the areas of responsibility of the institution are in continuity with the previous institutions, with the establishment of the Directorate of Communications, Türkiye's strategic communication activities have gained an institutional character

but systematic communication activities in the country can be traced back to the last period of the Ottoman Empire. As the first example of this, the Directorate of Press (*Matbuat Müdürlüğü*) was established under the Ministry of Education (*Maârif-i Umumiye Nezareti*) in 1862. With the first Press Regulations (*Matbuat Nizamnamesi*) issued in 1864, the duties of the Directorate of Press were noted. However, during the national war, while the Directorate of Press continued to exist in İstanbul, it became necessary to go to a new structure under the umbrella of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, which was established in Ankara on April 23, 1920.

The "Law on the Organization of the General Directorate of Press and Intelligence" (*Matbuat ve İstihbarat Müdüriyet-i Umumiyesi Teşkiline Dair Kanun*), dated June 7, 1920, written by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk to ensure the success of the national war, to ensure the belief of the nation, and to explain the struggle with the unity and solidarity of the nation at home and abroad. The General Directorate of Press and Intelligence was established under the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye and at the same time directly reporting to the Chief of the Executive Board. This institution was established to monitor and examine the world press, publish newspapers within the country, ensure intellectual and psychological unity, and have reporters all over the country by preparing easily understandable publications about the problems of the country.[9] Contributing to the various needs of Anatolian newspapers, the institution incorporated *Anadolu Agency* on June 7, 1920. Bulletins following the outside world and books were published in Turkish and various foreign languages. In the mid-1930s, a total of 1,583,802 pieces of promotional and propaganda material, such as magazines, books, brochures, and photographs, were distributed. Therefore, the institution concentrated on the promotion of the Turkish revolution with visual materials within the determined framework.[10] Subordinate to the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye and the Prime Minister, the institution was named Directorate General of Press and Information with the Decree Law No. 231 dated August 8, 1984.

The Directorate General of Press and Information became an institution where Türkiye's strategic communication activities were carried out. Among the responsibilities of

the institution were activities such as informing internal and external public opinion, creating a strategy, and countering propaganda. The primary mission of the directorate was to assist in the determination of the state's policy of publicity and strategies to be applied by the government in the fields related to publicity and to ensure that the public and the relevant authorities are enlightened with timely and correct information and the enlightening and promotional information required for these activities.[11] This perspective focused on the message and the transmission of the message, as it contained more of an informative task. It adopted a one-sided information flow perspective. It is positioned closer to the perspective of public relations, as it had a duty to inform the public. However, it targeted not only domestic but also foreign public opinion. Therefore, it can be said that it had a public diplomacy vision.

The directorate was also responsible for following and evaluating propaganda activities against Türkiye and cooperating with responsible public institutions to counter propaganda. It aimed to direct Türkiye's external informational activities and cooperate with organizations such as public institutions, private sector organizations, professional organizations, and associations for this purpose. Participating in informative activities in foreign countries in line with Türkiye's interests, the directorate was contributing to information campaigns in a way to support Türkiye's foreign policy. The responsibility

areas of the institution mostly cover information campaigns, and it acts strategically because it cares about cooperation and coordination with other institutions.

With the circular published in the Official Gazette on January 30, 2010, the Prime Ministry Office of Public Diplomacy was established, and an institutionalization process continued that would determine the framework of Türkiye's public diplomacy activities. The primary purpose of this institution was to inform the international community in the right direction to prove its rightness in the face of the accusations and problems that Türkiye had been exposed to for a long time.[12] This circular also emphasized that new opportunities arise with the emergence of new information and communication technologies and that Türkiye should take advantage of these communication opportunities. The emphasis on coordination, close cooperation, and rapid decision-making processes actually demonstrated the strategic communication function of this institution. Among the main functions of the institution were to provide cooperation and coordination between public institutions and organizations and non-governmental organizations regarding the activities to be carried out in the fields of public diplomacy and strategic communication.

The establishment of the State Planning Organization in Türkiye in the 1960s and the Office of Press and Public Relations, which were previously under the Ministry of National De-

fense and the General Staff, are seen as the first organizations to act with public relations awareness in Türkiye. In this context, Sönmez and Aydeniz reveal the communication and public relations perspective of the public administration in Türkiye by analyzing the texts of the five-year development plans published by the State Planning Organization between 2001 and 2019.[13] Their analysis demonstrates that the public administration units planned to use the media as a tool in reaching out to, educating, and informing the society. In addition, these documents point to an effective communication strategy in terms of promoting an amicable image of the country in the public opinion of EU member states, informing Turkish people about the EU, and preparing them for the requirements of the accession process. The 11th Five-Year Development Plan, covering the years 2019-2023, emphasizes new communication tools and the development of a perspective that envisions interaction between the public and the people. The stipulated goals are:

> measuring and analyzing the interaction between public institutions and organizations, focusing on setting communication standards between public institutions and organizations and focusing on coordination in communication processes; developing social media policy for public institutions and organizations, preparing an Inter-Agency Coordination Document in Crisis Communication to strengthen coordination in crises; deciding on the requests, complaints and suggestions of citizens, develop-

ing new participatory mechanisms that will allow it to be communicated to the recipients, and making effective use of corporate social media accounts in publishing information have been put forward.[14]

These goals and activities are now undertaken by the Directorate of Communications.

Institutionalization of Strategic Communication: Directorate of Communications

The Presidential Directorate of Communications was established with Presidential Decree No. 14 published in the Official Gazette dated July 24, 2018, to be responsible for determining the policies regarding strategic communication and crisis management, and ensuring coordination among all public institutions and organizations in the activities to be carried out in the national and international arena in this context.[15]

Although the areas of responsibility of the institution are in continuity with the previous institutions, with the establishment of the Directorate of Communications, Türkiye's strategic communication activities have gained an institutional character. The term 'strategic communication' was first used in the founding text of the Directorate of Communications. The institution plays a central and powerful role in the coordination of communication activities. The Directorate of Communications, which can interact with other institutions and

civil actors to develop its communication strategy, creates the strategy based on this and acts as the center that coordinates the institutions during the implementation phase. Thus, with the foundation of the Directorate of Communication, a unity of discourse is established between different institutions and units of the state, and effective communication and coordination are established between institutions. While ensuring inter-institutional coordination in line with strategic objectives, the Directorate of Communications also highlights the discourse that emphasizes the 'unity of state and people' that has become widespread in Türkiye in the last two decades. Director of Communications Fahrettin Altun emphasizes that the state is integrating with the people in Türkiye, efficiency has become a priority in the administrative mechanisms, the demands and needs of the people are met quickly, the stability has become permanent, and a management approach has been implemented in which the multi-headedness and inconsistency in the administration are eliminated.[16] An example of this is the CİMER application. Altun emphasizes that the CİMER system, to which they attach great importance in the context of 'strengthening the state-people relationship,' works effectively. Every application, request, suggestion, or complaint made through the system is forwarded to the relevant institutions to be finalized effectively and quickly. CİMER has become an important element of participatory democracy by keeping the communication bridge between

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the citizen and the state constantly open.[17]

The Directorate of Communications organizes workshops and conferences to create Türkiye's National Strategic Communication Policy Document, and the document is expected to be announced in 2023, the centennial of the founding of the Republic of Türkiye. However, beyond that, the Directorate of Communications publishes various strategy texts, revealing Türkiye's stance, goals, and objectives on different issues. These publications include Türkiye's vision for Africa, Türkiye's contribution to stability and multidimensional diplomacy, Türkiye's new approach to international cooperation, Türkiye's vision for humanitarian diplomacy, a regional cooperation vision, Türkiye's green development vision, and Türkiye's Eastern Mediterranean strategy. These publications can be seen as policy vision texts that will contribute to the understanding of Türkiye's ac-

tions and policies. By explaining the philosophy behind Türkiye's policies, these publications aim for the desired perception of the policies by the international community.

The Directorate of Communications played an important role in the realization of Türkiye's communication strategy, especially during critical times. The Directorate of Communications has played an effective role in accurately conveying information about the cross-border military operations launched by Türkiye to stop the actions of terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq to the whole world, feeding international public opinion with transparent and regular information, and fighting against anti-Türkiye propaganda and disinformation activities in this process. In particular, combating disinformation activities has become one of the most intense areas of activity for the institution because, according to published reports, Türkiye is one of the countries where the most disinformation occurs in the world. The Center for Combating Disinformation, which was established under the Presidency on this subject, worked as a fact-checking mechanism by publishing regular reports and informing the public. In addition to these activities, the Directorate of Communications focuses its strategic communication activities on certain themes. These topics also mean that they are priority issues in terms of Türkiye's strategic goals.

Humanitarian Diplomacy Strategy

Türkiye's policy of sending aid to needy communities can be described as a centuries-old tradition that started not only today but also from the Ottoman Empire and even earlier.

However, when we look at the century we are in, it is seen that humanity has to cope with many different and various crises. Terrorism, ethnic strife, climate change, migration, and pandemics are just a few examples. Türkiye's neighboring geography and areas of influence have mostly been countries facing various humanitarian crises. For this reason, Türkiye's humanitarian diplomacy constitutes an important pillar of its communication strategy.

Humanitarian diplomacy is basically defined as "persuading decision-makers and opinion leaders to act, at all times, in the interests of vulnerable people, and with full respect for fundamental humanitarian principles."[18] In today's world, there are conflicts and crises when traditional diplomacy has failed or where no governments or organizations are ready or willing to devote the time and resources necessary to find a political solution. In such situations, humanitarian diplomacy makes an important contribution to the country or community in need of assistance. Türkiye's humanitarian aid diplomacy enables it to reach millions of people in tens of countries around the world.

Humanitarian aid and related activities are elements of humanitarian diplomacy. However, another important issue is the meanings that humanitarian activities produce in target communities as part of the communication strategy. A helping hand without expecting anything in return produces the meanings of gen-

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erosity, benevolence, self-sacrifice, and friendship for the community in need. These values produced by the actions play an important role in the overall narrative of Türkiye's communication strategy. The humanitarian aid delivered without any preconditions, especially to countries that are tired of colonial activities and forced to endure the consequences of global economic inequalities, brings about a deepening of the relations between Türkiye and these countries, both in the social, political, and economic dimensions.

If the humanitarian aid made by the Red Crescent is excluded, Türkiye started to consider foreign aid for the first time in 1970. These activities, which started as technical cooperation, continued in parallel with the developments in the world. With the decision of the Council of Ministers taken in 1985, Türkiye decided to provide technical assistance through the State Planning Organization, and for this purpose, the Turkish

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Cooperation Agency Directorate was established.[19] Later on, TİKA was established in 1992 to develop strong cooperation with Türkiye's natural geography, which is closely connected with historical and cultural ties, especially with the Turkish Republics.

TİKA, which was established under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Statutory Decree No. 480, was attached to the Prime Ministry with the 1999 Presidential decree.[20] It has been operating under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism since 2018. The main task of TİKA is to develop relations in economic, commercial, technical, social, cultural, and educational fields with the countries and communities that are aiming to cooperate based on projects and activities that will contribute to mutual development and to develop cooperation programs and programs in line with the development goals and needs of the countries and communities in question. TİKA aims to prepare the projects, make the necessary arrangements and follow-ups, and coordinate their implementation. At the same time, it provides coordination of humanitarian aid and technical support to foreign countries.[21]

It is known that Türkiye has increased the amount of foreign aid 30 times in the last ten years and is setting an example in the field of humanitarian diplomacy. Türkiye, which was the country that increased the amount of official development aid it gave the most in 2011 and 2012 compared to the previous year, broke the record by increasing the amount of aid it provided in 2012 by 98 percent.[22]

Türkiye works to provide humanitarian relief through both bilateral and international channels, including the World Food Program (WFP) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). With the growth of this kind of cooperation, humanitarian help has also taken on a global scope. As a result, on July 1, 2014, Türkiye joined the OCHA Donor Support Group (ODSG), a framework for collaboration between the nations that have contributed the most to OCHA and strives to influence the humanitarian policies that OCHA pursues. By dedicating 0.86 percent of its gross national income (GNI) to humanitarian aid in 2021, Türkiye has continued to hold the title of the most generous country in the world, according to the Global Humanitarian Aid Report. Türkiye ranks second to the U.S. in terms of nations providing the most humanitarian aid in 2021, with $5,587 billion in humanitarian aid. These figures were $8,036 billion and 0.98 percent of its GNI in 2020.[23]

As a matter of fact, the technical support and foreign aid provided by the projects contribute to the establishment of friendly and good relations between Türkiye and the countries addressing these services. For example, Türkiye's development assistance has helped Somalia, whose institutional capacity is inadequate, and aid of all kinds is required, in its post-conflict reconstruction process by covering nearly all essential areas such as education, health, infrastructure, security, and agriculture. In this regard, Somalia has greatly benefited from Türkiye's official development support for sub-Saharan African nations. Türkiye's policy of engagement in Somalia has reintegrated Somalia into the international community, delivered humanitarian aid, improved its infrastructure, provided support for political reconciliation, and helped improve the security sector by providing training and assistance to Somali security forces.[24] The humanitarian assistance of Türkiye in Somalia has greatly aided in the emergence of a "Turkish brand."[25] Türkiye carried out all these humanitarian aid efforts with the participation of state and non-state actors, which shows the strategic coordination efforts of humanitarian diplomacy.

The Strategy of Combatting Terrorism

Türkiye has been fighting PKK terrorism for nearly 40 years, and the fight against terrorist organizations such as ISIS and FETÖ has been added to this in the last 10 years. Türkiye has frequently stated that it does not receive enough support, especially from Western countries, in its fight against terrorism. The separatist terrorist organization PKK, which carried out attacks that killed thousands of people, including civilians in Türkiye, is protected and supported by many countries in Europe as well as the U.S.[26] Similarly, Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETÖ)'s leader Fetullah Gülen, who attempted a military coup in Türkiye in 2016, continues to live in the U.S. state of Pennsylvania and is not extradited despite Türkiye's demands.[27] Türkiye also has problems with the extradition of FETÖ members who fled to European countries. Türkiye's inability to receive support from Western countries in the fight against terrorism is considered a communication issue for many different reasons. Western media mostly present these terrorist organizations as opposition organizations in Türkiye and describe their actions as democratic and just activities.[28] Western media and Western politicians have an important role in creating the wrong perception of these terrorist organizations in Western public opinion.

Considering these problems, it is noteworthy that Türkiye gives a separate place to the anti-terrorism strategy within the scope of its strategic communication activities. Türkiye has tried to convey its theses to the international public for many years, but it could not achieve the desired effect. However, in recent years, it has adopted a more active strategy in the field of counter-terrorism. In recent years, the Turkish Military Forces have increased their operations against terrorist groups in Syria

and Iraq in line with the recent policy of combating terrorism on the ground. Several operations targeting the group's senior officials have been successfully carried out in the area as part of Türkiye's counter-terrorism strategy. The primary factors that contribute to the success of this strategy are close communication and a cooperative effort between the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MİT) and the Turkish Armed Forces, as well as the operational capabilities on the ground.

While military operations continue on the ground, Türkiye emphasizes in all its diplomatic contacts that it fully supports the efforts to combat terrorism at the global level and expects other countries to respond to its security concerns. Türkiye is trying to prove this stable stance against terrorism both discursively and with its actions. For example, the aim of the cross-border operations in Iraq and Syria was announced as neutralizing the PKK and ISIS terrorist organizations, saving the people of the region from their oppression, and ensuring the security of the borders.[29] The fact that these operations are now carried out with the use of armed UAVs developed by Türkiye's national technology, that they are more transparent, and that the national and international publics are informed in detail about the whole process has made it possible to reach the international public more effectively. The images taken by the UAV, the fight against disinformation in the media during the military operations, the prepared media contents, and the information

campaigns show that the fight against terrorism is carried out with a new communication strategy.

Last but not least, the Directorate of Communications helped make the voices of the 'Mothers of Diyarbakır' heard by the international public. These mothers, who hold HDP responsible for the kidnappings of their children to the mountains, started a sit-in on September 3, 2019 in front of the HDP offices in Diyarbakır.[30] The Directorate of Communications organized activities to make the voices of these mothers heard both at home and abroad. Informative campaigns are being carried out to highlight the fact that the terrorist organization PKK exploits Kurdish children by kidnapping them from their families at a young age and forcing them to join guerilla fights at the risk of their lives. All in all, the Directorate of Communications prepares media content to showcase these different dimensions of the fight against terrorism and presents them to the audience.

The Strategy of Combatting Disinformation

Disinformation is defined as false, inaccurate, or misleading information that is deliberately designed, presented, and circulated with the aim of harming the public or gaining profit.[31] Disinformation aims to manipulate individuals. It attacks individuals' ability to make free and conscious decisions by breaking their relationship with reality. The unique nature of social media platforms encourages the spread of misinfor-

mation. Algorithms highlight and promote the content that receives more interaction, causing false information to reach wider audiences. Users who determine their own news sources and news feeds mostly avoid confirming the information they encounter. Disinformation is one of the important problems of the digital age, and Türkiye is one of the countries exposed to disinformation campaigns the most.[32]

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan once stated that "in the face of rising digital fascism and false news fury, the developed democracies of the world are vigilant. Disinformation has become a global security problem by going beyond being a national security issue."[33] On August 5, 2022, Director of Communications Fahrettin Altun declared that they had established a detached unit, the Center for Combatting Disinformation, within the Directorate of Communication against the systematic disinformation campaigns targeting Türkiye. The center's responsibilities include tracking psychological operations, propaganda, internal and external disinformation campaigns against Türkiye, and combating disinformation. The center also periodically publishes disinformation bulletins to inform the public about fake news.

Among the efforts for combatting disinformation, a new Press Law, known as the "anti-disinformation regulation," (Law no: 7418) was approved by the Turkish Grand National Assembly on October 13, 2022.

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A new crime category was added to the Turkish Criminal Code's "Crimes Against Public Peace" section that makes "publicly spreading false information to the public" illegal. Anyone who openly spreads false information concerning the nation's internal and exterior security, public order, or general well-being with the goal of inciting public dread or upsetting public calm faces a one to a three-year prison sentence.[34]

Türkiye's strategy to combat disinformation plays an important role as an integral part of its national communication strategy. This strategy, which is expected to form a defensive line around Türkiye's information ecosystem, is also important in terms of supporting the public's access to accurate information. It has critical functions such as ensuring national election security, preventing foreign interventions and operations, and

Türkiye's multidimensional diplomacy paradigm and humanitarian aid strategy have helped the country establish deep connections with other countries and their societies

maintaining social resilience in times of crisis and disaster. The fact that this struggle is carried out by a single center makes the process more transparent and auditable.

During and after the recent earthquakes that hit 11 Southeastern cities of Türkiye in February 2023, we witnessed the worst examples of online disinformation. It was shown that the disinformation contents were created systematically to promote negative narratives and serve vicious agendas.[35] During the crisis, the Center for Combatting Disinformation of the Directorate of Communication continued its informational activities by publishing its disinformation bulletin periodically, which it has been doing for a long time. This bulletin serves as a fact-checking mechanism for false news in social media, television, and newspapers. This bulletin plays an important role in disseminating correct information, especially in social media, by quickly preventing disinformation. As demonstrated in this instance, combatting disinformation is an essential defense mechanism for Türkiye in the digital era, enabling

it to resist various operations from within and outside.

Conclusion: Construction of Türkiye's Communication Model

The Head of Communications, Fahrettin Altun, announced that they are working on the idea of a 'Türkiye Communication Model' at a workshop on combating disinformation held in 2021 by stating "Since the day we were founded, we have been making efforts to build the 'Türkiye Communication Model' and we will do much more to achieve this goal in the coming period. Our main goal has been to produce a 'Turkish model in communication' and to build a 'Türkiye Communication Model' and we will continue our work within this framework."[36] President Erdoğan has repeatedly stated that he considers strategic communication an important tool to improve international cooperation and attaches special importance to this issue. In one of his speeches, Erdoğan used the following expressions:

We need a new, truth-oriented understanding of communication that prioritizes people's right to receive information. The Türkiye Communication Model is the product of our quest. The aim of this model is to both defend and in practice a communication approach that takes strength from democracy and international law within the circle of truth. As a matter of fact, we took steps to ensure the freedom of our citizens to receive accurate and im-

partial information with the regulation that came into effect in October. It has shown once again that we will not compromise on a clean and open communication approach in an equation where lies and distortions poison communication channels. This step we take with every incident we experience is appropriate and timely. We witness that it is accurate. We also consider strategic communication as an important tool that will improve international cooperation.[37]

The need for a new communication strategy for Türkiye actually emerged as a natural result of the country's historical transformation. As a result of the domestic and foreign policies it has been following since the early 2000s, Türkiye sees itself as a country that has become more democratic, solved its chronic problems, and is a strong actor with new strategic objectives in foreign politics. In the era of global uncertainties, Türkiye aims to reach predetermined strategic goals faster with strong leadership and political stability. Türkiye coordinates the efforts of governmental and non-governmental actors to achieve this goal. For example, Turkish Airlines' flights to the remotest corners of Africa are considered symbolic as Türkiye has become a leading power with an increasing influence, and this is reflected in the airline's status as the airline with the most countries flown to. Türkiye's increasing relations with African countries have been boosted by the Africa initiative, resulting in a significant increase in exports to African countries.

Türkiye has also strengthened its relations with other regions, such as Asia, through its 'New Asia Initiative,' which aims to establish a comprehensive and sustainable strategy to strengthen Türkiye's relationships with Asian countries in areas such as trade, education, and culture. As a result, Türkiye is no longer a country that only faces East or West, but one that has developed a strong multidimensional foreign policy in line with its own vision and goals.

Türkiye's entrepreneurial and humanitarian foreign policy positions it as a more consistent, principled, and solution-oriented actor in times of crisis. Türkiye has played a constructive role in reducing the devastating effects of the Russia-Ukraine war by maintaining communication channels with both countries and working hard to find a solution. Türkiye's efforts to turn these crises into multi-actor negotiation tables involving international organizations such as the UN are highly appreciated worldwide. This approach contrasts with a self-centered agenda and emphasizes Türkiye's efforts to prioritize peaceful resolution through diplomatic negotiations.

Türkiye's multidimensional diplomacy paradigm and humanitarian aid strategy have helped the country establish deep connections with other countries and their societies. The results of this can be seen, for example, in the aftermath of the earthquake disaster that struck 11 provinces in Türkiye in February 2023. Numerous countries, including search and rescue teams from over eighty states

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around the world, sent aid to Türkiye. These efforts demonstrated that Türkiye and the Turkish people hold a special place in the international community's eyes.

Positioning Türkiye as a 'stabilizing force' in its region is an important part of its communication strategy. Türkiye, situated in a geography surrounded by conflicts and in a global system where new paradigms emerge, creates value as a stabilizing and order-establishing power. The slogan frequently voiced by President Erdoğan, "The world is bigger than five," questions the systemic dimension of global inequalities and injustices that arise between the strong and the weak or between the developed and the underdeveloped, promising to transform them.

In conclusion, the characteristic features of the Türkiye Communi-

cation Model can be summarized as follows:

(i)   Strengthening state-citizen communication by overcoming ideological problems from the past.

(ii) Diversifying and strengthening tools and channels to increase citizens' participation and interaction with the government.

(iii) Resolving conflicts and discourse differences between institutions in Türkiye's strategic policies, ensuring coordination, and constructing a strategic narrative.

(iv) Implementing a new proactive communication strategy in line with Türkiye's new foreign policy objectives.

(v)   Positioning Türkiye not as an actor squeezed between East and West but as a global actor that establishes order, stabilizes and inspires, by constructing a new paradigm.

(vi) Becoming a country that benefits from the possibilities of technology and digital tools to tell its own story by creating and delivering original content with its own communication capacity.

(vii) Challenging Western-centric narratives that support global inequality and promoting alternative stories.

(viii) Ensuring that the values and meanings produced through communication support Türkiye's domestic and foreign policies.

As a final remark, the Türkiye Communication Model is not a top-down

structured strategy but rather a bottom-up structuring that has been built upon Türkiye's own experiences from its history, evaluated through feedback from the public, and developed through the gradual transformation of institutions and the system. ●

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