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### **EFFECT OF TURKISH PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ACTIVITIES ON RELATIONS BETWEEN TURKEY AND GEORGIA**

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#### **Abstract**

The aim of this article is to analyze the impact power of Turkish public diplomacy performed towards Georgia to empower the relation between both countries. Within the scope of this article, after public diplomacy term was discussed in many aspects, some of the important activities of the actors of Turkish public diplomacy have also been mentioned. When these activities are examined, it has been observed that non-governmental organizations failed to show the desired level of asset compared to government agencies in Georgia. Besides, when Turkish public diplomacy activities are examined as a whole, it has been remarked that these activities play an effective role to gain the sympathy of the Georgian. However, it has been concluded that the impacts of these activities on Turkey- Georgia relations are limited especially due to the Russian influence on relations with each of these two countries.

**Keywords:** Turkish Public Diplomacy, Georgia, Russia, Interstate Relations

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#### **1. Introduction**

Public diplomacy is one of the important concepts outstanding in the 21th century when the ability to influence foreign public has a vital importance. In recent year it is observed that some countries have speeded up their public diplomacy activities towards other countries and their citizens. States aim to relate their national ideals to foreign public opinion and to get their support. Another achievement that states hope to achieve by public diplomacy activities is endearing their cultures to other nations.

It has been noticed that Turkey that wants to enhance its importance in its region and in international arena has paid attention to its public diplomacy day by day especially since 2002 for the similar purposes. After experiencing fundamental changes in that year, Turkey has accelerated its public diplomacy activities towards it far and near regions. One of the countries that Turkey perform public diplomacy is Georgia which is one the Eurasian countries. Georgia whose sovereignty, territorial integrity and multi-ethnic structure have been supported by Turkey since its inception is among the Eurasian countries that public diplomacy activities focused on.

Turkey tries to have presence in public diplomacy in Georgia by means of both governmental institutions and organizations and non- governmental organizations. In this study, after public diplomacy has mentioned in general terms, public diplomacy activities carried out towards Georgia has been discussed and the influence of these activities on the relationship has examined. In this context, the official web sites, media organs and annual reports belonging to official intuitions and agencies and non-governmental organizations are examined and also

recent developments and major works describing the concept of soft power that is an important component of public diplomacy are used in the study.

## **2. The Concept of Public Diplomacy**

The rise of non-governmental organization along with globalization, activities of supra-states institutions, governance mechanism of multinational companies have affected the diplomacy and have been affected by the diplomacy. These actors also affected the way of diplomatic communication. While the diplomatic relations format were within the limits of two way communication until 18th century, from 19th and especially 20th century, it turned into multilateral communication through developing international organizations. With this transition to multilateral communication, traditional diplomacy has lost its sense of importance and public opinion has gained importance (Gonlubol, 1993).

Post- Cold War changes occurring in the global system and the progressions experienced in communication formats have led to the abandonment of traditional methods by changing the shape of the execution of diplomacy. With the effect of non-traditional methods on diplomacy, diplomatic activities have gained acceleration and thus the concept of public diplomacy has emerged (Tiedeman, 2004).

As a concept, public diplomacy was used firstly in 1965 by Edmund Gullion who is the head of Edward Murrow Centre which is connected to Tuft University. According to Gullion, unlike traditional diplomacy public diplomacy covers other aspects of international relations (The Fletcher School Tufts University, n.d.). Flow of information and idea, interactions of interests groups with each other and influencing public opinion in other states (Shinar et al., 2009) can be given as example to these aspects.

As a result of decentralization and reaching the size of the circulation of information, public diplomacy is a concept that finds a place to itself in interstate relations beyond the propaganda activities. This new concept established in the literature has different definitions made by people from various jobs.

Public diplomacy professor Nicolas J. Cull (2009, p.12) defined the public diplomacy as initiatives of international actors to manage the international environment through foreign people.

Hans N. Tuch (1990, p.3), author of diplomacy, defining the concept as a communication process of a government that aims to convey its nation's ideas, ideals, institutions, culture, national goals and current policy to foreign public, dealt with the concept in a wider framework.

Another public diplomacy author Gyorgy Szondi (2008, p.13) emphasised the communication focus of public diplomacy by defining it as "communication with foreign public" and "international governmental communications".

In the 21th Century public diplomacy become one of the indispensable elements of foreign policy with its increasing importance of effecting publics and agenda. 21th century world has become a "global village" with Marshall McLuhan's statement as a result of globalization of trade and communications and rapidly developing technology has resulted in many positive and negative results. With the transnational of terror and terrorist network, governments have tended to make more effective works about security. It has also been realized that in order to make the insecure world more secure one we should leave the hard power and activate the soft power. In this way the importance and necessity of public diplomacy as a foreign policy instrument has been underlined (Ersoy-Ozturk, n.d.).

Public diplomacy devoted to many aspects of traditional diplomacy has been seen as one of the main instruments of soft power of countries as important as their hard power like political and economic. Public diplomacy that accept new environment as data occurred as a result of configuration of world with communication and information revolution, also claims that the concept of public opinion along with the states in the international arena would be an important actor, traditional diplomacy method has lost its adequacy and political environment includes non-governmental organizations and the masses with bureaucracy (Aydogan and Aydin, 2011).

### **3. The Source and Target Group of Public Diplomacy**

When public diplomacy and soft power relations considered, the mention of the source of soft power is considered necessary for the interpretation of public diplomacy resources. It can be said that there are three sources of soft power (Nye, 2004):

- Culture
- Political Values
- Foreign Policy

Based on these sources, public diplomacy sources can be sorted as the culture, political values, foreign policy, educational status, economy, media and promotion activities of a country. The success of public diplomacy activities depends on the country's cultural attraction, adaptation of the political values with policy, having high ethical foreign policy, advanced economic activity, the quality of educational standards, promoting activities that deliver the right information and being able to have referred the world public opinion to the positive image of the country (Aydoğan and Aydın, 2011).

Choice of target audience is also important in order to conduct successful public diplomacy activities. We may say that for the target audience of public diplomacy many definitions have been developed. Some of them are: Foreign nations, People of other states, foreign audiences, communities, foreign citizens, general public, overseas individuals, the masses and organizations (Fitzpatrick, 2009). When the target audience identification is made based on these definitions, "Foreign nations" may be seen as prominent term. What meant by foreign people are the ones who have the ability to mobilize decision makers and affect them rather than ordinary people (Efegil, n.d.). This group has an active role in public diplomacy activities.

It has known that the country's own citizens also have an effective role in public diplomacy with foreign citizens. Even Szondi (2008) has been described country's citizens as internal target audience and during public diplomacy process he gave an active role to this target audience. Like the external target audience consisting of foreign people, this internal target audience, which also plays an active role, should also have the ability to mobilize and affect the decision-makers. Because decision-makers must target with people who shows interest in foreign policy abroad, capable of affecting the broad masses, well-educated and persuasive.

From this definition about target audience, it is clearly understood that the audience differentiated according to the countries counterparts and each country needs to determine an appropriate, logical and effective strategy. The realization of this situation depends on the quality of studies and the effectiveness of the defined strategies.

### **4. Public Diplomacy Instruments**

According to Tiedeman (2005), public diplomacy uses a number of mass media and interpersonal communication instruments in order to affect its target audience. It is known that many of these means of communication derive from areas such as public relation, marketing and advertising. Examples for the instrument derived from these areas are traditional media, new media, advertisements, international organizations, using celebrities and national brands (Sancar, 2012). Usage of these instruments in right place is important in terms of ensuring the efficiency in public diplomacy. Wang (2006) emphasizes the effectiveness and need for the usage of these instruments in different ways and times.

It is possible to classify the media leading public diplomacy instruments as traditional and new media. While what we meant by traditional media is instruments consist of newspaper, radio, television, cinema and publication (such as books, magazines etc.), new media is communication instruments in which interaction takes place at high speed such as social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter etc.) When international organizations concerned, many

examples come to mind. Some of them are Olympic Games, Formula 1 Racing, Ice Hockey Championship, Wimbledon Tennis Championship, Eurovision, FIFA U-20 World Cup, mutual culture year activities, and film festivals.

National brands are also one of the effective public diplomacy instruments that achieve to connect the foreign public opinion to itself with its image and symbols and enhance the awareness of the country. When Coca-Cola, Nike, Marlboro, Burger King, Starbucks, Yahoo and Google said, USA comes to mind; when Mercedes, Nivea and Adidas said, Germany comes to mind; when THY, İpekyol, Mavi Jeans and Damat said, Turkey comes to mind; when Toyota, Sony, Panasonic and Canon said, Japan comes to mind and this clearly shows that these brands enhance the awareness of their countries (Leonard *et al.* 2002).

## **5. Turkish Public Diplomacy towards Georgia**

On the public diplomacy activities that Turkey carries on both internal and external (foreign) public, both the official institutions and the non-governmental organizations undertake some important roles. Examples for the official institutions and organizations working in this field are Coordinatorship of Public Diplomacy (KDK), Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yunus Emre Institute (YEE), Turkey Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), General Directorate of Press and Information (BYEGM), Anatolia Agency (AA) and The Turks Abroad and Relative Community Presidency. Apart from the official institutions being mentioned, non-governmental organizations whose number has increased by the democratization process and the other non-governmental organizations are also performing activities to enhance the soft power of Turkey. Business world, thoughts and charities, research centers and foundations are the pioneers of these activities.

When state actors who perform public diplomacy activities in Turkey is discussed, TİKA located in a prominent position among these mentioned actors has carried out various activities in many countries for its vision. Although public diplomacy is not specially mentioned in the these activities that carried out, having some goals like developing cooperation, providing development support and humanitarian aid, provide TİKA an important role in Turkey's public diplomacy (Akcadag, 2010).

When the published annual reports of TİKA onwards 2005 is examined, in Georgia lots of projects increasing day by day in the fields of education, health, culture, transportation, communication, production, restoration, water and water hygiene are outstanding. Due to the breadth of the scope of mentioned activities, only a part of the work considered important will be discussed in this study. Some of the work carried out by TİKA in different fields between 2005-2015 are as follows the sections below (TİKA, 2005-2013).

### **5.1. Education**

Pressing the Turkish- Georgian idioms dictionary and the work called "Gazavatname" supporting the participation of Georgia to the Institute of Linguistics Conference, repairing of Batumi Language Centre and the renovation of Yılmazlı Middle School, supporting the seminars of Tbilisi Social Sciences School and the second Ordinary Congress of the Association of Caucasus Universities, granting of scholarships to Georgian students who study at university in Turkey etc.

### **5.2. Health**

Renovation of the Kepenekci village hospital supporting the equipments of Cancer Prevention Centre, giving the internship training in Ankara to 14 doctors and 3 nurses within the scope of capacity building in health sector, circumcising of 1000 children in Ajaria, reconditioning of Ajaria, Hulo, Keda, Çakvı policlinics and supplying the medical and office equipment to these policlinics etc.

### **5.3. Culture**

Supporting the participation of Georgia to April 23 National Sovereignty and Children's Day activities, pressing the book of Haldun Taner, which is translated in Georgian, supporting the Call and Response contest in the village of Marneuli in Georgia, providing the attendance of Georgia to the International Mount Ararat Myth Festival, supporting the activities under the Project of Ramadan etc.

### **5.4. Communication and Transportation**

Providing equipments to the Marnuei Airport, giving financial support the journal called "Georgian Messenger", building a bridge in Mollaoğlu Village, supporting the TV program named "Kafdağı'ndan Ezgiler", supporting various media organizations etc.

### **5.5. Production Sectors**

Conducting operations under the Project of fighting against the forest pests in Autonomous Republic of Ajaria Georgia, giving support to the development of beekeeping in mountainous Ajaria and Macahela valley, making feasibility studies in order to improve poultry, struggling with white American butterfly and chestnut cancer in Autonomous Republic of Ajaria, etc.

### **5.6. Water and Water Hygiene**

Opening water wells in Georgia, providing potable water to Georgian public under the Project of Potable Water Supply, rehabilitation of water tanks located in various parts of Georgia, building concrete water channels for the flow of wastewater in certain parts of Georgia, etc. Another official institution that takes care of carrying out public diplomacy activities especially in the last 10 years is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that is more interested in political dimension of established relationship with other countries.

When the activities that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs carry out in Georgia within the scope of public diplomacy are considered, cultural and publicity activities carried out as priority, government scholarships given to students, carried out cultural exchange programs and coordinated Turkish courses attract the attention. Some examples of the practice of public diplomacy will be discussed in this context are as follows;

With the contributions of the Ministry, opening of the photo exhibitions named "Rural Architecture in Eastern Black Sea" between 20 June -7 July, 2006 in Tbilisi, with the cooperation of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and the Municipality of Tbilisi arrangement of "Istanbul Culture Days" in Tbilisi between 19 and 23 September in 2006 (Turkish MFA, 2006) on the occasion of 84. Anniversary of the Republic, arrangement of the photo exhibition called "Turkish Photographers Library" in Ajaria Fine Art Museum from 27 October to 7 November in 2007, the solo performance of piano artist Buket Kartal in 21 May 2007 in Tbilisi State Conservatory within the frame of a program supported by the Tbilisi Consulate General of the Republic of Turkey (MFA, 2007), the organization of free Turkish courses by Batumi Consulate General of the Republic of Turkey (Turkish Consulate General in Batumi, 2012) and the presenting of the works of painter Kemal Çelik from Artvin to the appreciation of art lovers in 3-6 February 2016 in Batumi Ajaria Art Museum (Turkish Consulate General in Batumi, 2016), forming a "Black Sea Scholarship Program" including the Georgia within the scope of abroad scholarships program shaped in a new framework in 2012 under the name of "Turkey Scholarship". Again within the scope of "Turkey Scholarships" program, allocating research, success and support scholarships to Georgian students in undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels provided. Students who come to Turkey with the projects conducted by the European Union (Erasmus etc.), on learning Turkish etc. have also been supported (MFA, 2016a).

As understood by these activities, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey not only pays attention to political sphere in Georgia but also pay attention to enhance the effectiveness of applications in social and cultural fields.

Yunus Emre Institute which aims to promote Turkey's cultural heritage and Turkish language and culture, to develop friendship with other countries and to increase the cultural exchanges, is one of the official institutions carrying out public diplomacy towards Georgia (Sancar, 2012). Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centre founded in 31 May 2012 (Yunus Emre Institute, 2012) aims to expand the Turkish Language, culture and art from the moment of its establishment and also intends to facilitate the applicability of the ongoing public diplomacy towards Georgian and to strengthen the basis of Turkey-Georgia relations by the activities carried out. When we look at the activities of the YEE, remarkable ones may be summarized as follows (Yunus Emre Institute, n.d.).

Releasing of the movie "Selvi Boylum Al Yazmalım" at Tbilisi YETKM, the signing of Turcology protocols with Tbilisi State University, Performing a Turkish Day program themed "Love and Affection" and a marbling show at Batumi Şota Rustaveli University, meeting the "Hacivat and Karagöz Shadow Play" with the audience within the scope of Mikheil Tumanishvili Art festival, commemoration ceremony for the anniversary of Rumi's death in Georgia, as a part of "Turkish Summer School" program, sending Georgian students to Turkey, exhibition of traditional Turkish costumes and performance of the whirling dervish of Istanbul Historical Music Community within the frame of "Turkish Culture Days" in Tbilisi, opening of Turkish library at Tbilisi as a part of "100 Turkey Library project", meeting the movie of "Kocan Kadar Konuş" with audiences in Tbilisi, arranging of an interview with famous Turkish actor Murat Yıldırım at the 100. Anniversary of Turkish cinema in Georgia, making April 23 celebrations and performing of Caucasian Jazz Festival in Tbilisi, organization of training seminars for foreigners to learn Turkish in Batumi, supporting the trainees who were trained in traditional Turkish crafts courses in Georgia to open exhibitions etc.

Another institution undertook the task to explain the values that Turkey possesses correctly is TRT. According to this task, TRT carries an introductory broadcasting policy for Turkey towards foreigners by means of international television and radio channels. TRT AVAZ is one of the examples of these channels. Eurasian region is one of the area is followed by the first and multi-lingual TV channel TRT AVAZ.

When we look at the TV programmers that interests Georgia and published by TRT AVAZ channel, "Kafkas Rüzgarı" program which aims to enhance the neighbor relations between Turkey and Georgia is outstanding. While this program reveals the stance of Caucasian people to protect the art, it also aims to share their love, longings and happiness (TRT AVAZ, 2014).

It can be said that "Voice of Turkey" radio promoting Turkey abroad and reflecting the views of Turkey in a verity of internal and external issues is also conducting (TRT, 2014) public diplomacy activities in TRT. "Voice of Turkey" radio that broadcasts in 41 languages (Türkiye'nin Sesi Radyosu, n.d.) everyday tries to reach Georgian people with Georgian broadcasting and to contribute positively to Turkey.

By means of "Türkçevizyon" (International Turkish Music Festival) which was first held in 23-27 June and is a brand of TRT, it is in demand of creating a positive perception toward Turkey from the participating countries (including Georgia). To the 5. International Turkish Music Festival, the latter of which was held in 10-13 September 2014 and allowing to create positive perception, Sopho Khalvishi from Georgia participated with her song "Renklerim" (Türkçevizyon, 2014). The aims of these festivals are as follows:

"As well as the correct use of Turkish, promoting and extending the use of it, preparation of the suitable ground for the works to promote Turkey, Creating an atmosphere for joint projects by bringing together Turkish youth and other musicians from various countries, Strengthening the historical and cultural ties, fusion of the artists and spacing of the door to the next events, etc." (TRT, 2011, p.208).

BYEGM which has a very effective position to promote Turkey among the other official institutions has a mission to supply timely and accurate information to decision- making process, to create strategies to media development and to promote Turkey by watching the international media closely (BYEGM, n.d.).

Turkey Media Training Program (TÜMEP) may be given as an example for the activities that BYEGM carries out for public diplomacy towards Georgia. The program aims to improve professional knowledge and experience of young members of the media who come from Balkans, Middle East, Central Asia, Africa and Caucasias (include Georgia) and also aims to provide these participants to create communication channels between Turkey and these countries. TÜMEP aims to contribute to the professional development of young communicators by combining theory and practice and also provides opportunities to foreign media members to acquaint with Turkey (BYEGM, 2014).

Although they are very narrow when compared with official institutions, non-governmental organizations also carry out various activities at public diplomacy studies. Georgian Industrial Businessmen Association (GÜRSİAD), Georgian and Turkish Businessmen Association (GÜRTİAD), Georgia Friendship Association, Ajaria - Turk Businessmen Association, Turkey's Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (MÜSİAD), Batumi Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (BATSİAD), Human Rights and Freedoms (İHH) Humanitarian Aid Foundation, Earth Doctors, The Red Crescent in Turkey are some of the civil society organizations carrying activities in Georgia.

When the activities of these organizations presence in Georgia are examined, they significantly focus on developing economic relations and delivering humanitarian aid to Georgian people. In this case, we may say that the non-governmental organizations contribute to the spirit and the intent of public policy indirectly.

Finally, if we discuss the contributions of series and movies, which are considered to be one of the effective instruments of public diplomacy and are used effectively by many countries, on Turkey's soft power special on Georgia, it seems that Turkish series are followed with great interest by Georgian people. Here are some examples for the serials that is being published in Georgia: "Muhteşem Yüzyıl", "Aşk ve Ceza", "Paramparça", "Karagül", "Medcezir", "İffet", "Dila Hanım" etc. (Eyuboglu, 2015; Radikal, 2011). Also Turkish movies shown in Georgia have a share in the increase of Turkey's recognition. Such productions as "Zerre", "Sev Beni", "Kış Uykusu", "Kusursuzlar" and the first Georgian translated movie "Kocan Kadar Konuş" are some of the movies presented to the art lovers in Georgia (Yunus Emre Institute, n.d.).

## **6. Influence of Public Diplomacy on Strengthening the Relations between Turkey and Georgia**

According to the constitution that was adopted in August 24, 1995 in Georgia, with the referendum held in 1991 and with the independence law accepted in April 9, 1991, Georgia is an independent, united and indivisible state. Georgia whose democratic form is republic consists of 9 regions, 9 cities and two Autonomous Republic called Abkhazia Autonomous Republic and Ajaria Autonomous Republic (Turkish MFA, 2016b).

From 1991, it declared its independence; Georgia that has become the focus of interest of the West is the key country of security policy of Russia towards Caucasus in terms of military strategies. Another factor that makes this country so important for Russia is that Georgia has the most important ports of the Black Sea and it has the distinction of being the only transit country locates in an alternative location to Russia for Europe's energy needs. Passing of the roads and railways stretching from Russia to South Caucasus through the geographical location of Georgia is among the factors that increase the importance of this country in eyes of Russia (Bozkurt, 2008).

Today Russia whose military presence is continuing in Georgia is in a struggle of protecting its military bases and preventing the move of the region from its axis due to the mentioned reasons. Georgia is trying to get closer to NATO, European Union and United States which it sees as the stabilizing force that can save itself from the dominance of Russia. Because Georgia is aware of that it locates in an alternative location in the transition of oil and gas

pipelines and it is the key country of transportation corridors provided from land and sea from the West to the Central Asia. Thus, Georgia is also aware that it is also extremely valuable for the West world especially to the USA (Ozbay, 2014). Of course the USA which desires to settle in the Caucasus has supported the Georgian's rapprochement efforts (Yenigun and Bolat, 2010). However, this situation raises the result that two superpower countries Russia and the USA play chess in almost all areas in Georgia. So that, which side outweighs in the struggle between the USA and Russia, political statement and policy in Georgia is largely shaped by the direction of that outweighed government's request.

Despite the power struggle being played on it and the policy threatens the territorial integrity of Georgia by Russia; Georgia continues to develop relations with Western Countries. At this point Georgia sees Turkey that has warm relations with the EU and the USA and is the neighboring NATO members as an important bridge to reach its goal. Another reason for Georgia makes Turkey important are the aids held by Turkey to ensure the stability of its neighbor and establish democracy. Perhaps the most important aid of Turkey carried out under NATO is the military support for the military training of Georgian military officers (Yilmaz, 2011; Basar, 2015). Besides, it can also be said that Georgia sees commercial relations with Turkey as a lifeline to overcome the economic crises it has from the moment it gained its independence.

Turkey also attaches importance to Georgia to empower its geopolitical, geo-economic and military geostrategic position in Eurasia. Turkey needs Georgia to become the transit point on energy and rail transport and also to reach Central Asia and to tighten its relations with Central Asian Turkish Republic. Moreover Turkey that wants to reduce energy dependence on Russia by producing new lines has to deal with Georgia as a neighbor (Topal, 2015).

With the effect of being two neighboring countries that need each other in strategic field, they care to establish warm relations with each other and to cooperate in many areas. One of the concrete examples of cooperation in the field is Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline project which is a considerable step in the energy corridor (Girgin, 2009). BTC which enables a great confidence in the role it plays in the East-West energy corridor was officially put into operation in 2006. Baku- Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline carrying the gas produced in the field of Shah Deniz to Turkey was built between the years of 2005-2007 and it has been operating since the middle of July in 2007. Regional cooperation projects include these two countries like Baku- Tbilisi-Kars Railway which is expected to be completed in 2016 are successfully continuing (Turkish MFA, 2016c).

Turkey and Georgia located in strategic cooperation projects in the energy field also have economic relations developing day by day in the field of foreign trade economic relations. This development gained significant acceleration in 2000s especially after the 2004 "Rose Revolution". The trade volume between the two countries was 506 million dollars in 2004, has become 1,332 million dollars in 2015 (Turkish Ministry of Economy, 2016).

Buoyant economic relations that have gained acceleration in recent years between two countries are evident in the intense interest of Turkish companies to Georgia. Today investments by Turkish companies in Georgia are concentrated in the fields of contracting services, transportation, telecommunication, manufacturing, mining and banking sectors. For example, Batumi Airport located in Batumi, the most important tourism centre, has been operated by TAV Airport since 2007. Batumi Airport, being the first in the region, bears the distinction of being the first airport shared by these two countries. This cooperation which has a great importance on the development of the region and also on the maintaining the ties between Georgia and Turkey has been extremely effective.

It can also be said that Georgia, which is one of the trading partners of Turkey particularly in energy, also has close relationship in the political field. Continued political relations between two countries from 1991 have had a dimensional state with the adaptation of a pro-western policy by Georgia especially after the "Rose Revolution" (SETA, 2009, p.5).

The wills of two countries undoubtedly play a very important role to develop positive relationships with each other. However; due to the conflict between the Western world and Russia in the South Caucasus what these two countries can do is limited. In such an environment, satisfaction of the Western world led by the United States to the rapprochement



between Turkey and Georgia can be considered as a critical factor winning acceleration to relations. As they see Turkey as a bridge to achieve their goals in the South Caucasus and in the Central Asia, the United States and the European Union support the increasing cooperation between Turkey and Georgia. Especially the strategic importance they have about energy corridor makes it easier to rapprochement between the two countries comprising the West's favor.

Of course there are some countries that are seriously disturbed by the rapprochement of Turkey and Georgia. Especially Russia is uncomfortable with the US' ally Turkey's role of model country and the effort of increase its influence in the Soviet Union region which it sees as its backyard. At this point, strategic partnership increased by the energy pipelines between Turkey and Georgia has met by the strong opposition of Russia. Russia has mentioned in each platform that it is not satisfied with this relationship because it weakens its monopoly on the transfer of Russia Caspian oil and gas to the Western world. In addition Russia that is opposed to the role of mediator of Turkey in Georgia within the framework of politics in the territorial integrity issues exhibits an attitude that fuelled internal conflicts in the country (Ozbay, 2014, 2011).

Despite the negative attitude of Russia, on one hand while Turkey is pursuing policies supporting the territorial integrity of Georgia, on the other hand it pays attention to develop economic, strategic and political cooperation. In parallel with the close cooperation between the two countries built over time, it is seen that Turkey has taken steps towards the goal of creating soft power on Georgia. Especially, since 2002 when radical changes in foreign policy began to be experienced, it is pointed out that Turkey has concentrated on the public diplomacy activities towards Georgia with the purpose of Turkey's goal.

When we look at the impact of public diplomacy activities of Turkey on the political relations with Georgia, it is understood that these activities are still far from serving political purposes desired by Turkey. In some issues Turkey has not obtained results in accordance with its demands thus this supports that view.

The first of these issues is related to the Muslim community given autonomy with 1921 Treaty of Kars in the Adjara region. In 2004, Mihail Saakaşvili added a cross on the flag of Adjara which he put a partial end to its autonomy and started to held a rapid Christianization campaign towards the Muslims in the region. Georgia maintains these politics carried on Adjara region despite Turkey (Ozbay, 2014). Another issue that Turkey cares but Georgia doesn't take into consideration its neighbour is the efforts of Meskhetian Turks to return their homeland.

Although Saakaşvili promised to give full support for the return of Meskhetian Turks to return their homeland in his visit to Turkey in 2004, there has not been any significant improvement in the last period. Not recognizing the national minority rights of Azerbaijanis (including Terekeme and Karapapaks) living in Georgia is a disturbing issue for Turkey. However, in this matter it is not possible to say that they take the Turkey's requests into consideration (Ozbay, 2014).

In the light of these assessments , when we considered that Russia is an important factor and the present military and economic power of the United States in the South Caucasus is taken into consideration, it can be understood that the relations that Turkey will establish within the framework of independence policy with Georgia is limited. From this point, it is understood that there are challenging obstacles in front of Turkey to achieve political gain by means of public diplomacy towards Georgia.

However it is clear that Turkey gives great importance to maintaining the public diplomacy toward Georgia within the framework of long-term policies. Because Turkey, getting stronger in military and economic terms day by day, is aware of that public diplomacy activities will be an effective instrument in near future. Moreover, it should not be overlooked that these activities contribute to the image of Turkey in the eyes of the people of Georgia positively and are conducive to the rapprochement of two countries people.

## **7. Conclusion**

Georgia is a South Caucasus country that attracts the attention of the USA, EU, NATO and Turkey as it is located in an alternative route to Russia in energy corridor. Being located at the key point of transportation of sea and land from West to the Caucasus and the Central Asia increases this attraction of Georgia. Especially the United States pays attention to be in close cooperation with Georgia in almost every field especially military and political fields.

Georgia strives to develop close relations with Turkey and Western world in order to reduce the pressure on Russia and to strengthen in the field of economy and military. Besides it is known that Russia feels really discomfort from the rapprochement and collaboration of Georgia and Western countries because Russia sees ex- Soviet Geography as its backyard and also does not want to lose its monopoly in the field of energy. This situation leads Russia to put forward policies to keep away the countries outside itself from the region. One of the policies of Russia for this purpose is trying to control the country by using the Georgia's ethnic issues.

In such a conjecture, Turkey and Georgia has gained attention as two countries that try to develop close relations. Of course, in this rapprochement the need of both countries to each other strategically plays an important role. Turkey attaches great importance to Georgia especially in order to reduce its dependence on Russia in the field of energy. Moreover Turkey sees Georgia as a valuable neighbor to tighten its relations with Central Asian Turkish Republics and to become a transit point for railway transportation As for Georgia, it is possible to say that it cares about Turkey for such reasons that Turkey is serving as a bridge between the West and Georgia and contributing the economy of Georgia. Therefore, both countries are following policies that can improve cooperation in the field of foreign trade, energy and political relations.

Turkey and Georgia have been involved in two strategic projects especially in the field of energy. These projects are Baku- Tbilisi- Ceyhan Pipe Line (BTC) and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum Natural Gas Pipe Line. The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project expected to be completed in 2016 is another example for the close relations between these two countries. In addition, Georgia and Turkey have made great strides to develop cooperation in the field of bilateral trade and politics.

At this point, it is clearly understood that Turkey and Georgia are really eager to maintain and improve this cooperation formed in lots of fields. Especially Turkey is searching the ways of making this cooperation permanent with Georgia which has a strategic importance for Turkey. In accordance with this purpose it is seen that Turkey focuses on the policies that will help to gain the sympathy of Georgian people and to increase its prestige on this country. Therefore, it is possible to evaluate the public diplomacies that Turkey has conducted towards Georgia recently within the framework of these policies. It is clearly seen that especially official institutions take active role in the public diplomacy activities that focuses generally on education, health, art, culture, development support, tourism and humanitarian aid. Despite being more passive than the government institutions, non-governmental organizations have also conducted public diplomacy activities.

To what extent these activities contribute to soft power that Turkey wants to have on this country is up to debate. Especially when it is evaluated in the aspects of its reflections on political relations, it can easily be concluded that these public diplomacy activities towards Georgia are still far from serving the desired purpose of Turkey. Georgia's some actions involving Turkey and its attitude that does not take its neighbor into consideration supports this idea. Not fulfilling its commitment regarding the returns of Meskhetian Turks to their homeland and its attitude towards Muslim population in Adjara can be given as examples to the policies that Georgia maintains despite Turkey.

Despite some obstacles to achieve soft power on Georgia and especially in spite of Russia, Turkey continues to maintain its public diplomacy activities towards Georgia. In near future, it is possible to predict that these activities will provide significant gains in political field's with accompany of economic and military power. These activities that have a short history are already providing positive contributions to Turkey's image on the eyes of Georgians. This shows that if public diplomacy activities continue to increase, Turkey will obtain prestige on Georgia with the support of Georgian people. However Turkey has to realize that it should use non-

governmental organizations and people of Georgian origin in Turkey more effectively to reach its goal easily.

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