

Soft Power, Nation Branding and Civil Aviation Nexus: Turkish Airlines Case

Policy makers around the world are increasingly concerned with the challenge of cultivating and capitalizing on soft power and positive image of their country; and soft power approach gained a tremendous amount of attraction in Turkish foreign policy. Along with this attraction, Turkish (public) institutions provided momentum on Turkey's quest of soft power; as a result, Turkey's one of the most important brand in the World, Turkish Airlines has become a tool for Turkish soft power. In this paper, its aimed to shed light soft power, nation branding and civil aviation relations in the case study of Turkish Airlines.

Introduction to Soft Power

According to the movements of transformation and change occurred following to the Cold War era, new practices have been formed in the discipline of international relations in line with attempts of states to re-orient themselves within the system. In this regard, an instance of the subject practices is the Soft Power concept coined by Joseph S. Nye in 1990 in his book titled "Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power". This concept is defined as the ability of a state to appeal and attract instead of coercing others to realize its foreign policy goals. Following the paradigm shift that Turkish Foreign Policy has experienced, Soft Power instruments have begun to be used in an increasing manner. In its broadest sense, soft power is the attainment of foreign policy goals of a state without any direct or indirect, material and nonmaterial intervention in another state, yet through its attraction effect on other states [Akilli, 2016: 41]. For Nye, the epitome of 'Soft Power' capability is made of a state's culture, political ideals and attraction of its policies; and policies that state follows have the ability to increase or decrease soft power of that state through influence it leaves on public opinion. In line with this argument, Nye puts forward "Winning the peace is harder than winning a war, and soft power is essential to winning the peace. Yet the way we went to war in Iraq proved to be as costly for our soft power as it was a stunning victory for our hard power" [Nye, 2004: 5].

According to Nye, power is "the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcomes one wants." Nye outlines the use of power as follows: "...there are several ways to affect the behaviour of others. You can coerce them with threats; you can induce them with payments; or you can attract and co-opt them to want what you want" [Nye, 2004: 5]. For Türk Dil Kurumu (Turkish Language Institution), power is "the ability to make an influence or to stand against an influence with regard to physics, thinking, or morals". Another definition of the power is; "the capacity to influence others and shape their preferences within the boundaries of possibilities." [Oguzlu, 2007: 82].

Nye makes the Hard Power and Soft Power distinction on the basis of carrot and stick metaphor; hence according to Nye, Hard Power might depend on either persuasion (carrot) or threat (stick). Whereas in Soft Power, there is no room for persuasion or threat; in that if other states are attracted towards a state based on its culture, welfare level and opportunities, then what that state wants will become what

others want as well. In this regard, instead of playing the card of mere military force threat or economic sanctions, setting the agenda in world politics and inducing other states become actions of utmost importance” [Nye, 2004: 14-15].

In this sense, Nye underlines that ‘influence’ and soft power are not the same concepts. Influence may come through the compelling force of threat and payments. Soft power, however, is the ability to induce, and this necessitates consent instead of constraint; which means to create consent in lieu of constraint over the target state forms the basis of soft power. In this regard, while Nye defines soft power as the attractive force in behavioural terms, in terms of resources, it is the sum of values that creates attraction” [Nye, 2004: 15].

On the other hand, Nye also underlines that there is a link between Soft Power and Hard Power. Thus, Nye underlines that both of these powers are the two pillars of ability to get the desired outcomes one wants thought influencing the behaviours of others; the difference between them lies both in its form and in concreteness of resources that are employed. Nye asserts that the power of command (that is, to alter what others do) depends on coercion and persuasion; the power of inducement (that is, to shape what others want) depends on the attraction and culture of that state or its ability to use agenda of political preferences in accordance with its goals” [Nye, 2004: 16-17].

According to Nye, “the distinction between hard and soft power is one of degree, both in the nature of the behavior and in the tangibility of the resource” [Parmar-Cox, 2010]. Unlike the hard power, soft power explains fields of influence and attraction beyond military and economic indicators, it refers to a country’s social human capital. This is the reason why it is different from country to country [Akıllı-Donelli, 2016: 162-163]. Soft power is an autonomous form of power, which has its rules, features and characteristics, and “does not depend on hard power” [Nye, 1990: 10]. According to Nye, soft power could be better seen as a strategy for a country to gain its objectives without coercion or payments, but with attraction founded on culture, political values, and legitimate and moral foreign policy. Moreover, it helps to shape international institutions and policy agenda. To Nye soft power explains the “attractiveness of a country’s culture, political notions and policies”, the power of attraction, as opposed to the power derived from military force and economic sanctions. In sum, soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others, without the use of force, coercion or violence. That is co-opt people rather than coerce them [Akıllı-Donelli, 2016: 162-163].

An Input and An Outcome: From Soft Power to Nation Branding

Another concept that is fed by Soft Power is Nation Branding, which can be described as the increase of positive recognizability of a country in the world through constructing attitudes and emotions towards that nation. But before explaining the nexus between soft power and nation branding, it is essential to explain the nation branding concept in detail. There are multiple definitions of branding but the term ‘brand’ is originally defined by American Marketing Association as ‘a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors’ [Kotler et al, 2002: 249-261].

Nation Branding can be described as the increase of positive recognizability of a country in the world through constructing attitudes and emotions towards that nation. Nation branding is an important concept in today's world. As a consequence of globalisation, all countries must compete with each other for the attention, respect and trust of investors, tourists, consumers, donors, immigrants, the media, and the governments of other nations: so, a powerful and positive nation brand provides a crucial competitive advantage. It is essential for countries to understand how they are seen by publics around the world; how their achievements and failures, their assets and their liabilities, their people and their products are reflected in their brand image. The nation brand is the sum of people's perceptions of a country across six areas of national competence: tourism, exports, people, governance, culture and heritage and investment and immigration [Anholt, 2016].

Branding is not just an image or not distinguish a product from others. It creates a meaningful while with physical, nonphysical, psychological or sociological aspects [Kapferer, 1997]. In general, as a notion of branding is essential for a large spectrum of economy, finance, marketing and trading but it has been fast becoming a key instrument in social science in terms of International Relations and Politics. The term which has been studying nearly for fifteen years is combined with nation and focuses on society, public diplomacy, tourism and trade in International Relations studies.

According to Anholt, the meaning of nation branding refers to establish the harmonious relation with its new trends and innovations to improve of its reputation [Anholt, 2007a]. Szondi draws our attention to clear categories of nation branding observe in economic, commercial, and political disposition of a country to publicize itself both domestic and abroad. Nation branding supports countries to increase their prestige and provides many advantages in the sense of its citizens and canalizes them to stand national and global competitiveness [Szondi, 2007: 8-20]. *“The aim is to create a clear, simple, differentiating idea built around emotional qualities which can be symbolized both verbally and visually and understood by diverse audiences in a variety of situations. To work effectively, nation branding must embrace political, cultural, business and sport activities”* [Szondi, 2007: 8-20]. Nation branding has been classified on the basis of the literature into product based, national based and cultural based [Fan, 2006: 5-14]. Yet, in general, the terms of Nation Branding are divided into four main titles: Public diplomacy, place branding, country of origin and national identity in the context of nation branding. Recently, not only researchers have shown an increased interest in nation branding but also some countries such as, USA, UK, many European countries, some Asian countries like China, Russia have been focusing on branding strategies as a practically. In addition to this some countries like Turkey, UAE, Eurasian countries have started to focus on this subject for a variety of reasons. They probably be influenced by the countries which completed branding strategies successfully. For instance, while Turkey prominent with soft power and identical images, UAE focuses on its oil resources and desert tourism.

Place Branding

Place branding studies have been developing for the purpose of budget friendly traveling sections around the world, easily accessible, rapid and safe social

communication network, ever increasing shopping and travelling passion, competition between employers to have the best qualified workers from immigrants, bring to international investors' attention [Hanna, 2008: 61-75].

Branding is essential for a wide range of marketing strategies but as for place branding, just marketing strategies could not be adequate to promote a place. In addition to this, Dinnie identifies place branding as the global competition requirement in terms of national and international marketing levels [Dinnie, 2004: 105-110]. Moreover, the last decades, countries have been focusing on the place branding both marketing and national level due to the reasons, which are tourism, investment, work force, etc., explained above.

Different from those, Anholt makes sense of the differences between place branding and marketing on countries, cities or any places which could attract the attention of people. He highlights that marketing communications push people to spend much money needlessly, this is nothing other than [Anholt, 2008]. In this regard, Anholt explains these differences with a study which was carried out between 2005 and 2007. According to the results there is no common ground between nation brand and nation branding in the context of promoting. Some counties which spend much more money to represent their counties or some agencies which promotes the hotels, commercial organizations or places were fail to increase the awareness of people. On the other hand, others did not use any advertising but the date range, their reputation started to clearly go up. Overall, these cases support the view that brand value is not change or even start to descend to spent extreme money but nation branding provides that a county do not have to spent money, instead, it is more relevant to the policies and the use of diplomacy of the country. A notable example of Turkey's place branding strategies is that the Ministry of Culture and Tourism has produced many promotion films and made many public service announcements to attract the people's attention for many years.

Country of Origin with Regards to Nation Branding:

The aim of the country of origin is to represent the sales, marketing, international trade to use a country's image so the name of country and nation, graphic or logo which is redolent of the nation and country is used by governmental and non-governmental organisations, companies and etc. [Fan: 5-14]. As a notion of country of origin has been studying extensively. On the other hand, although this notion is directly relevant to the concept of nation branding, it is interesting to note that there is not adequate study which associate with these terms in the literature [Fan: 8].

Country of origins within the context of nation branding is that there is no product or service comes in to prominence to present itself because the aim is to demonstrate the national features, images, economic, political and social variety to the society [Fan: 8]. Creating a clear perception on a nation could become a reference for people, even recognisability of its products and services are influenced by this way as well. To put it simply, the more country's image is getting stronger the more its products and services are becoming preferable [Papadopoulos, 2004: 36-49]. If the country has a weak reputation and an unreliable image, both service sector and commercial sector may avoid from publishing their origin clearly due to not affect badly [Papadopoulos, 2004: 36-49]. For instance, a person who is looking

for a vacuum cleaner and there are only two choices to buy. There are no differences between prices and the feature. One is produced in Switzerland and the other one is produced in China. The person most probably chooses the Switzerland production due to the good reputation of this country in terms of the technological innovation. If the country image is looked from another point, Papadopoulos maintains that a brand name might influence the country of origin from a different angle and they may have an advantage or a disadvantage [Papadopoulos, 2004: 36-49]. For instance, people could visualise America in some way or other, when they watch a “Hollywood” film or eat hamburger at “Mc Donald’s”. In brief, the image of the nations is not a new concept in soft power but approximately for fifteen years nation branding has brought a new breath the promote countries with new methods and perspectives in terms of soft power [Teslik, 2007].

Public Diplomacy in the Context of Nation Branding

Recently, governments have been increasingly interested in soft power to explain themselves to the international public opinion and their counterparts in way of feelings not propaganda [Pilon, 2005: 124-131]. So, at this point, Fan claims that nation branding may help the government to improve their well-intentioned relations with both other governments and societies [Fan, 2008: 147-158]. Accordingly, a successful nation branding strategy provide the governments to capture the hearts and minds of the foreign societies around the world[Fan, 2008: 12].

As Nye motioned above, a country’s attitudes and reputations have a place in soft power for instance, the speech level of the governments, the culture of the nations, the appearing of the country from the outside, technological and scientific developments, economics of the countries and etc. create the roots of soft power. So, in the terms of soft power, Van Ham mentions that the aim of ‘Nation Branding’ has also the same purposes with soft power in the same context like the importance of credibility and reputation of the country [Van Ham, 2008: 126-149].

The USA has been taken in consideration of its branding value especially in way of diplomacy almost for twenty years. Within this period the country has conspire with governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations and academia to develop its diplomatic extent under the name of “Brand America”. Kyung Mi gives a good example is that the New York Philharmonic Orchestra performed a performance in the centre of communist North Korea in 2008, in this way, the US established diplomatic relations with North Korea via musical diplomacy and created selective “America” perceptions on societies’ mind [Fan, 2008: 12-13]. In brief, the image of the nations is not a new concept in soft power but approximately for fifteen years nation branding has brought a new breath the promote countries with new methods and perspectives in terms of soft power [Teslik, 2007].

Soft Power, Nation Branding and Civil Aviation

Civil Aviation is also one of the pioneer brands that a country has. As mentioned above such brands can provide and enhance the positive image of a country in the international system. Thus, beyond the flight points and different flight destinations, civil aviation or/and airlines is related to the soft power and public diplomacy concepts. The responsibility of national airlines to promote the name, prestige and foreign policy of their nations fits well to the conceptualization

of soft power. Fulfilling a political goal to promote the foreign policy achievements definitely makes a national airline a soft power tool. As the airline company's ranking increases among the airlines all over the world, it has positive repercussions not only in the area of politics but also in the area of commerce. For instance, if a national airline can achieve making its city of origin an aviation hub, it adds up to the tourism and business potential of that city and country. The more people use the airports in a country to transfer to other international flights, the more the geographical location of the country will be perceived as central. Perhaps, the availability of high-quality airline connections to a country is an asset to enhance that country's political and economic potential worldwide. National airlines that help their states achieve certain goals in the area of culture, commerce and foreign policy can be regarded as tools of soft power. In that sense, the theoretical debates on soft power contribute to our understanding of national airlines and their relationship with politics [Selçuk, 2012: 9-10]. Right now, Turkish Airlines flies to 122 different countries in 307 different destinations. As a Star Alliance member, Turkish Airlines is one of the top brands that Turkey have in order to increase its positive image towards to World.

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