

Research Notes

TURKISH EDUCATION POLICIES IN THE CONTEXT OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR: RETURN TO HARD POWER AND DEGRADATION OF RUSSIAN SOFT POWER?

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Abstract

We can suppose that particularly since the Cold War (1947-1991), education policy is an effective tool of soft power to promote national interests of a state in the international area. However, nowadays, many state tends to use hard power (military force) rather than soft power (sociocultural practices) even in the period of Post-Cold War. Despite the fall of bipolar system, Russia returns to hard power and Russian soft power is degrading in the international area. That is why, the research note pays a special attention to the Turkish education policies in the context of Russia-Ukraine War (since February 2022).

Keywords: Education policy, Soft power, Hard power, Russia-Ukraine war, Turkey

RUSYA-UKRAYNA SAVAŞI BAĞLAMINDA TÜRK EĞİTİM POLİTİKALARI: SERT GÜCE DÖNÜŞ VE YUMUŞAK GÜCÜN YİTİRİLMESİ?

Özet

Özellikle Soğuk Savaş'tan bu yana (1947-1991) eğitim politikalarının, devletin ulusal çıkarları için uluslararası düzlemde kullandığı etkili bir yumuşak güç aracı olduğu varsayılabilir. Ancak günümüzde, Soğuk Savaş sonrası bu dönemde dahi birçok devlet yumuşak güç (toplumsal-kültürel uygulamalar) yerine sert güç (askeri güç) kullanma eğilimindedir. İki-kutuplu sistem bitmiş olmasına rağmen Rusya sert güç kullanımına geri dönmüş, uluslararası düzlemde de yumuşak gücünü yitirmeye başlamıştır. Söz konusu araştırma notu, Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı bağlamında (Şubat 2022 itibari ile) Türk eğitim politikalarına bu anlamda dikkat çekecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eğitim politikası, Yumuşak güç, Sert güç, Rusya-Ukrayna savaşı, Türkiye

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1. It should be emphasized that there is an inevitable relationship between education policy and soft power, differing from state to state (Eren, 2020): Education policy is an effective tool of soft power to promote national interests in the international area (Nye, 2004). In other words, it comes to be one of the most effective soft power tools as an integral part of cultural diplomacy (Amirbek and Ydyrys, 2014). In this respect, cultural diplomacy must be understood as a source of soft power (Lord, 2005).
2. As for the power called “soft power”, contrary to the power called “hard power”, it is the ability to influence the behavior of other nations and to achieve the desired results through attraction, without pressure or coercion (Nye, 1990). At this stage, the education policy as result of soft power, helps the exposure of national education to outside, through agenda setting, attraction, co-opt rather than force, coercion or inducement (Amirbek and Ydyrys, 2014).
3. Although soft power was not defined yet, it was used alongside hard power (called “smart power”) in the Cold War between USA and Russia. The end of Cold War; the superiority of USA was linked directly to its soft power: In the bipolar world, cultural diplomacy became thus a kind of propaganda used against each other: (1) Culture “in places where is attractive to others”; (2) political value “when it lives up to them at home and abroad” and (3) foreign policy “when it is seen as legitimate, having moral authority” (Nye, 2005).
4. However, nowadays, many state tends to use hard power (military force) rather than soft power (sociocultural practices) even in this period of Post-Cold War. This is the actual case of Russia that despite the fall of bipolar system in the past, returns to hard power and cause a degradation of its soft power in the international area: The Russian invasion of Ukraine due to its hard power imperialism since February 2022, also destroyed its soft power politics: So how to support national interests in the international area?
5. Supposing education policy as soft power, the present research note pays a special attention to the Turkish education policies in the context of Russia-Ukraine War (since February 2022). It is necessary to note new regulations of the Council of Higher Education in Turkey, measures against the Russian hard power imperialism: Due to this pressure/coercion in Ukraine, the Council announced

- firstly that the Turkish students who study there will immediately be evacuated under the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Council of Higher Education, 2022a).
6. New regulations of the Council of Higher Education are about the Turkish students who had to abandon their education and to return to their country because of the Russia-Ukraine War. Even though the spring semester of the 2021-2022 academic year has started in Turkey, these students are considered as “special student” and are transferred to a Turkish higher education program, by considering their demands and their preferences (Council of Higher Education, 2022b). The transfer opportunity is also given recently to the foreign students who study in higher education institutions in Ukraine (Council of Higher Education, 2022c).
 7. It should be finally noted that all new education policies practices (including all transfers, institutions, curriculums, language of instruction, scholarships, seminars etc.) are determinate in accordance with international relations of a state (Nye, 2004). In this way, the diffusion of national language and national culture abroad is in the scope of education policy (Chaubet, 2004) and cultural diplomacy -as soft power- (Pells, 1997). Thus, it is clear that the Council of Higher Education regulated its education policies for the benefit of Turkish/Ukrainian students in the context of the Russian-Ukraine War. Well, what will be about the sanctions in the application of education policy towards Russian soft power in Turkey?
 8. The Russian language is a tool of soft power with high potential ever since the Cold War, bearing traces of its spread to outside (diffusion of the Russian language/culture abroad mainly through Russian classics). This language is an integral part of, for example, Turkish education policies in which Russian soft power is hidden by sociocultural teaching practices. In the Post-War period (end of 2022 or 2023?), will a de-russification take place within the framework of new education policies practices in Turkey? Will education institutions continue to integrate the Russian language teaching in their curriculums etc.?
 9. In the context of the Turkish higher education institutions, there are 13 universities offering Russian Language and Literature Department (YÖK Atlas 2022; Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen, Akdeniz, Anadolu, Ankara, Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli, Ardahan,

Atatürk, Erciyes, İstanbul, Kafkas, Karadeniz Teknik, Selçuk and Yeditepe) and only one Ukrainian Language and Literature Department (YÖK Atlas 2022; İstanbul). What will be the future of these departments? In the Post-War period, will the Russian Language and Culture be partially or completely removed from the Turkish education institutions and curriculums?

- 10.** Well, will the Russian soft power degraded progressively from Turkish education policies? In this perspective, we could confirm that there is a relationship between education policy and power. We could propose an important research focus to be developed in research paper, such as: “Degradation of Russian Soft Power in the context of Turkish Education Policies” (Eren, forthcoming). Will the quota of Russian Language and Literature Departments be reduced in Turkey? Or will Turkish students still prefer this department in the Post-War period? Will these students transfer to other departments? Degradation of Russian Soft Power in Turkey?

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