

The Role of Geocultural Power in the Post-Cold War International System: A Qualitative Analysis on Turkey

Dr. Siddik Arslan

Deputy Secretary General of the Erzurum Metropolitan Municipality

Email: siddikarslan@hotmail.com

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Abstract

In the post-Cold War international system, state power capacities are determined not only by military and economic elements but also by cultural depth and identity-based ties. This research examines the determinacy of geocultural power in the international system through the case of Turkey using qualitative methodology. The central problematic concerns how Turkey's historical and cultural heritage transforms into foreign policy capacity and shapes its strategic position in the international system. Structured within the framework of social constructivism's concepts of identity, norms, and collective memory, the research employs document analysis and discourse analysis methods. Findings reveal that Turkey's geocultural power manifests in four fundamental dimensions: the six-century legacy of the Ottoman Empire creates historical ties across geography spanning from the Balkans to the Middle East, its position as a founding element of Islamic civilization establishes normative connections with two billion Muslims, thousand-year migration processes originating from Central Asia form ethnic and linguistic affinities with Turkic republics, and cultural diplomacy is systematically conducted through institutions such as Yunus Emre Institute. The original contribution of the research is the expansion of Turkey's geocultural depth to encompass historical connections extending to the American continent through the Bering Strait, the legacy of Western Huns in Europe, and Turkic-Muslim communities within the Russian Federation. The hypothesis is confirmed at approximately seventy-seven percent, demonstrating that geocultural power strengthens Turkey's regional role but is constrained by economic and structural conditions. The study proves that geocultural power operates through mechanisms of identity construction, norm diffusion, and collective memory production, offers theoretical contributions to international relations literature, and provides concrete recommendations to policymakers.

Keywords: Geocultural Power, Post-Cold War Era, Turkish Foreign Policy, Social Constructivism, Identity Politics

Introduction

In the discipline of international relations, the concept of power is one of the fundamental elements explaining state behavior. While traditional approaches define power through

military and economic capacity, cultural influence, identity, and value systems have become central to power analyses in the post-Cold War period (Wu, 2024; Dummer Scheel et al., 2024; Heibach & Taş, 2024: 311-321; Grincheva, 2024: 172-185). Nye's (2004) conceptualization of soft power has brought to the forefront states' capacity to influence without coercion; Wendt's (1999) constructivist approach has demonstrated that identity and culture interact with material interests in the international system. This theoretical transformation necessitates the systematic examination of how states transform their historical heritage and cultural depth into strategic resources.

Geocultural power expresses states' capacity to convert their historical accumulation, identity-based affinities, and shared value systems into strategic advantage by emphasizing the interaction between geography and culture (Konrad & Amilhat Szary, 2022; Tsygankov, 2023; Bachmann et al., 2025: 1-10; Baba, 2024: 169-182). Huntington's (1993: 23-44, 1996) clash of civilizations thesis has argued that cultural boundaries, along with political and economic interests, have become determinant in the post-Cold War period. Turkey possesses a distinctive geocultural power domain due to its six-century political and cultural legacy of the Ottoman Empire, historical ties it has established with the Islamic world, ethnic and linguistic affinities it shares with Central Asian Turkic republics, and cultural presence in the Balkans and Caucasus geography. Davutoğlu's (2001) conceptualization of strategic depth emphasizes that Turkey's historical and cultural depth, as much as its geographical position, is determinant in foreign policy.

The scope of Turkey's geocultural power is not limited to its immediate vicinity. Historical communities in Ottoman geography (Balkans, Caucasus, Middle East), Islamic countries, societies with minority Muslim populations, Western societies where diasporas of Islamic countries are present, Muslim communities in European geography in the context of European Union negotiations, Muslim and Turkic peoples within the borders of the Russian Federation constitute the concrete geographical reflections of this power. In historical processes, the dominance established by Western Huns in Europe, migrations of Turkic communities to the American continent through the Bering Strait, and the cultural traces of these migrations on Native American communities expand the temporal and spatial dimensions of Turkey's geocultural depth (Arkılıç, 2022; Arkılıç & Şenay, 2024; Darke, 2022; Yemelianova, 2025).

In the existing literature, Turkey's foreign policy is mostly addressed through geopolitical and geoeconomic frameworks, while the geocultural dimension is either disregarded or evaluated superficially (Oran, 2001; Kirişçi, 2009). However, the policies Turkey has pursued in Central Asia, the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East in the post-Cold War period demonstrate that cultural proximity and historical ties possess strategic importance (Balci, 2013; Aydın, 2004). Turkey's position within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the ties it has established with diaspora communities, and the central role of identity debates in European Union negotiations reveal that geocultural power is transformed into concrete foreign policy outputs (Oğuzlu, 2007).

The central problematic of this study is as follows: What role does Turkey's geocultural power play in the post-Cold War international system, and through what mechanisms is this power transformed into foreign policy capacity? The research hypothesis is formulated as follows:

Turkey's Ottoman legacy, ties it has established with the Islamic world, and cultural proximity it shares with the Turkic world have created a distinctive geocultural power domain in the international system in the post-Cold War period, and this power has played a determinant role in Turkey's positioning as a regional and global actor. The research aims to test this hypothesis through qualitative method and to analyze Turkey's foreign policy discourses, historical processes, and cultural relationship networks in depth.

In seeking an answer to the research question, the study first theoretically positions the concept of geocultural power, then maps Turkey's historical heritage and cultural ties, and finally analyzes how these elements have been transformed into strategic tools in the post-Cold War period. The expected contributions of this research are concretized in the following dimensions: First, the expansion of the theoretical framework of the concept of geocultural power in the discipline of international relations and the systematic application of structuralist and constructivist theories to Turkey's foreign policy analysis (Wendt, 1999; Nye, 2004). Second, understanding Turkey's distinctive position in international relations through its cultural dimensions and empirically revealing its geocultural depth extending from Ottoman geography to the American continent. Third, serving as an example for comparative research for states with similar geographical and historical characteristics and providing concrete data to foreign policymakers on the strategic use of geocultural power. The study offers theoretical and empirical contributions not only to understanding Turkey's foreign policy but also to comprehending the general functioning of geocultural power in the international system.

Literature Review

In the post-Cold War period, the discipline of international relations has begun to place cultural, identity-based, and normative elements at the center of explaining state power capacities, moving beyond military and economic parameters (Browning, 2023; Adoui, 2024). While traditional realist approaches define power through material resources (Mearsheimer, 2001; Waltz, 1979), in the post-Cold War era, globalization, the communication revolution, and the rise of identity politics have necessitated the reevaluation of culture as a strategic resource. While Nye's (2004, 2011) soft power conceptualization emphasizes states' capacity to exert influence through attraction rather than coercion, Wendt's (1999) constructivist approach demonstrates that identity and culture interact with material interests in the international system. This theoretical transformation necessitates the systematic examination of how states transform their historical heritages and cultural depths into strategic resources.

The concept of geocultural power expresses states' capacity to transform their historical accumulations, identity-based affinities, and shared value systems into strategic advantage by emphasizing the interaction between geography and culture (Konrad & Amilhat Szary, 2022; Tsygankov, 2023; Bachmann et al., 2025: 1-10; Baba, 2024: 169-182). While classical geopolitical approaches focus on the material characteristics of space (Mackinder, 1904; Spykman, 1944), the geocultural perspective centers on the ways geography is given meaning, the politicization of cultural boundaries, and the transformation of identity affiliations into foreign policy instruments (Agnew, 2003; Ó Tuathail, 1996). While Huntington's (1993, 1996) clash of civilizations thesis emphasized the importance of geocultural dynamics by proposing that cultural differences became the fundamental source of international conflicts in the post-

Cold War period, this thesis's essentialist and reductionist approach to cultural identities has been criticized (Said, 1978; Roy, 2004). Today, geocultural power analyses address in a multi-layered manner how culture is used as both a source of conflict and cooperation, how epistemic frameworks are produced, and through which mechanisms normative legitimacy is constructed.

In the Turkish context, the geocultural power literature demonstrates that the country possesses a multi-dimensional sphere of influence through the historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire, the normative ties it establishes with the Islamic world, and the ethnic-linguistic affinities it shares with Turkic republics. While Davutoğlu (2001) argues with the concept of strategic depth that Turkey's historical and cultural depth, alongside its geographical location, is determinant in foreign policy, Kirişci (2009) and Oran (2013) have revealed that Turkey's identity-based foreign policy orientations strengthened in the post-Cold War period. Balcı (2013) has shown that cultural affinity is used as a strategic instrument in Turkey's Central Asian policy, while Aydın (2004) has demonstrated that cultural-historical ties in the Middle East shape Turkey's regional actorness. While Oğuzlu (2007) emphasizes the centrality of identity debates in Turkey's European Union negotiations, Keyman and Gümüşçü (2014) have analyzed the relationships between identity, democracy, and foreign policy in the Turkish case.

However, significant gaps exist in the existing literature regarding the scope and depth of Turkey's geocultural power. First, Turkey's geocultural power domain is mostly addressed in a limited manner with its immediate geography (Middle East, Balkans, Central Asia), and the broader diasporic extensions of the Ottoman geography, Muslim communities in Europe, Turkic and Muslim peoples within the borders of the Russian Federation, and even the cultural traces of the Western Huns in Europe in historical processes and the cultural heritage of Turkic communities that migrated to the American continent through the Bering Strait are not systematically addressed in sufficient detail (Arkılıç & Şenay, 2024). Second, systematic models have not been developed regarding how geocultural power can be measured, with which indicators it can be evaluated, and through what types of mechanisms it transforms into foreign policy outputs (Wu, 2024). Third, empirical studies on the effectiveness of Turkey's cultural diplomacy instruments (Yunus Emre Institute, TİKA, Diyanet, Maarif Foundation, TRT World) are limited, and the global-scale impact of these institutions has not been sufficiently evaluated (Snow & Cull, 2020; Ekşi, 2016; Ekşi ve Dinç, 2021).

The soft power literature, which forms the theoretical foundations of geocultural power, has centered on states' capacities to exert influence through cultural attractiveness, normative values, and institutional legitimacy. Nye's (2004, 2011) soft power conceptualization has shown how cultural contents, value systems, and political institutions create an attractive force different from military coercion and economic incentives. However, the concept of soft power has been criticized with the assumption that cultural influence is only a positive and normative process. While Mattern (2005) argues that cultural power can acquire coercive characteristics in some cases, Hayden (2012) has questioned the hegemonic intentions behind cultural diplomacy. Gramsci's (1971) concept of cultural hegemony reveals that power is maintained through the production of consent, showing that geocultural power is related not only to attractiveness but also to epistemic control and normative hegemony. In this

context, Turkey's geocultural strategies can be read as an effort to create an alternative knowledge regime and normative framework against the Western-centric epistemic order.

Identity and constructivism theories are critically important in understanding the functioning of geocultural power in the international system. Wendt's (1999) constructivist approach argues that states' identities precede their material interests and that even the anarchic structure of the international system is a product of social construction processes. This perspective shows that Turkey's geocultural power is not merely an instrumental foreign policy choice but also part of the search for ontological security. While Mitzen (2006) demonstrates with the concept of ontological security that states strategically use cultural narratives to preserve identity continuity, Rumelili (2015) has analyzed how identity uncertainties are managed in Turkey's relations with Europe. Campbell (1998) argues that identity construction is related to the creation of the "other"; in this context, Turkey's geocultural discourses contain a bidirectional identity construction strategy toward both the West and the Islamic world.

The literature on cultural diplomacy and cultural industries is important in understanding the practical instruments and mechanisms of geocultural power. Melissen (2005) and Cull (2009) have shown that cultural diplomacy, unlike traditional public diplomacy, is built on long-term relationship building, mutual understanding, and cultural exchange. Turkey's institutionalization of cultural diplomacy instruments over the past twenty years constitutes a concrete example of the strategic use of geocultural power. The Yunus Emre Institute's global-scale teaching of Turkish language and Turkish culture, TİKA's cultural representation through development aid, Diyanet's religious diplomacy activities, and the Maarif Foundation's educational networks reflect the diversity of Turkey's geocultural instrument set (Ekşi, 2016; Ekşi ve Dinç, 2021). However, systematic empirical studies on the effectiveness, global visibility, and strategic coordination of these institutions are insufficient (Mandaville, 2023).

Media and popular culture constitute one of the most visible areas of contemporary manifestations of geocultural power. The popularity created by Turkish television series across a broad geography spanning from Latin America to the Middle East, from the Balkans to Central Asia, is a concrete indicator of the expansion of the cultural sphere of influence. While Kraidy and Al-Ghazzi (2013) examined the cultural impact of Turkish series in the Arab world, Yanardağoğlu and Karam (2013) have shown how these series strengthen Turkey's soft power (Berg, 2023). However, significant gaps exist in the literature regarding to what extent the cultural visibility created by television series transforms into diplomatic influence, through which mechanisms it reflects on foreign policy outputs, and on what types of conditions its sustainability depends (Poell et al., 2021). In the digital age, social media platforms, digital content flows, and the concept of algorithmic cultural hegemony constitute new dimensions of geocultural power analyses (Darke, 2022).

The historical dimension of Turkey's geocultural power is based on the six-century political and cultural legacy of the Ottoman Empire. While İnalçık (2011) and Ortaylı (2006) show how the Ottoman's multicultural and multi-religious structure prepared the ground for today's Turkey's geocultural capacity, Karpas (2002) has analyzed the cultural transformations of Ottoman modernization. The Ottoman geography has left a broad cultural sphere of influence

extending from the Balkans to the Middle East, from the Caucasus to North Africa, and this legacy today forms the foundation of Turkey's diasporic relations, historical responsibility discourses, and cultural affinity claims. However, in the literature, the Ottoman legacy is mostly addressed in a limited manner with the immediate geography, and the cultural traces of the Ottoman's long-term presence in Europe (especially in regions such as Hungary, Romania, Ukraine) are not sufficiently evaluated (Ivkovska et al., 2025).

Turkey's geocultural ties established with the Islamic world are shaped through religious identity, shared historical experiences, and normative solidarity. While Mandaville (2007, 2020) examines the transformations of global political Islam, Roy (2004) has analyzed Islam's role in globalization processes. Turkey's position within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, its stance on the Palestinian issue, the policies it followed during the Arab Spring process, and its humanitarian diplomacy initiatives in Africa reflect the normative and religious dimensions of geocultural power (Özkan, 2014). However, the tensions created by Turkey's emphasis on Islamic identity in its relations with secular structures, the reflection of internal political polarization on foreign policy, and discourse-practice inconsistencies constitute the limitations of geocultural power (Esen ve Gümüşçü, 2016; Özbudun, 2013).

Turkey's geocultural ties established with the Turkic world are shaped through language, history, and ethnic commonalities. With the independence of Central Asian Turkic republics in the post-Cold War period, Turkey has attempted to create a sphere of influence in this geography through cultural diplomacy, educational collaborations, and media broadcasts. However, Russia's hegemonic presence in the region and China's increasing economic influence have limited Turkey's geocultural capacity in Central Asia (Robins, 2003). Similarly, Muslim communities in the Balkans and post-Ottoman cultural heritage constitute an important reference point in Turkey's regional relations. Turkey's cultural presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Albania, and North Macedonia is materialized through historical mosques, foundations, educational institutions, and media (Galeeva, 2024).

In Turkey's relations with the European Union, geocultural dynamics are at the center of identity debates. While Müftüler-Baç (2008) and Öniş & Yılmaz (2009) show how identity uncertainties are managed in Turkey's EU process, Eralp and Evin (2010) have analyzed Europeanization processes. Turkey's claim to both Western and Islamic identity shows that geocultural power is a bidirectional and sometimes contradictory instrument. While Kaya (2012, 2019) examines how the Turkish diaspora in Europe affects Turkey's geocultural capacity, he has evaluated the ties that Muslim communities in Europe establish with Turkey. Muslim and Turkic-origin communities within the borders of the Russian Federation constitute a yet insufficiently explored dimension of Turkey's geocultural power domain. Turkic and Muslim peoples in Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, the Caucasus, and the Central Volga regions have historical, linguistic, and cultural ties with Turkey (Tottoli, 2022). However, Turkey's geocultural influence in these geographies remains in the shadow of Russia's sovereignty sensitivities and geopolitical tensions (Tezcür, 2022).

The migration of Turkic communities to the American continent in historical processes and the cultural traces of these migrations expand the temporal and spatial dimensions of Turkey's geocultural depth. The cultural influences of Turkic communities that migrated to America thousands of years ago through the Bering Strait on Native American communities,

Aztecs, and other indigenous peoples are supported by anthropological and archaeological findings (Harl, 2023). Similarly, the dominance established by the Western Huns in Europe and the cultural traces of this period constitute the European dimension of Turkey's historical geocultural depth (Raff, 2022). However, these historical connections are rarely addressed in contemporary geocultural power analyses, and the full scope of Turkey's geocultural capacity is not sufficiently evaluated (Cesari et al., 2025).

In conclusion, while the geocultural power literature shows the increasing importance of cultural, identity-based, and normative elements in the post-Cold War international system, it contains significant gaps specific to Turkey. These gaps are concentrated in three fundamental areas: First, the real geographical and historical scope of Turkey's geocultural power domain has not been systematically mapped; second, through which mechanisms geocultural power transforms into foreign policy outputs has not been sufficiently demonstrated empirically; third, the effectiveness of Turkey's cultural diplomacy instruments has not been systematically evaluated. This study aims to fill these gaps through qualitative analysis method, to reveal in a multi-layered manner Turkey's geocultural power's historical depth extending from the Ottoman geography to the American continent, the contemporary ties it establishes with the Islamic world and Turkic republics, and the role of this power in the post-Cold War international system.

Theoretical Framework

Analyzing the role of geocultural power in the post-Cold War international system requires understanding the strategic value of states' cultural depth, historical accumulation, and identity-based ties beyond their material resources (Nye, 2004; Wendt, 1999). This study draws upon three fundamental theoretical frameworks to explain Turkey's geocultural position: Nye's Soft Power Theory, Wendt's Constructivist Theory, and Identity Theory. The integrated use of these three theories reveals at the conceptual level the functionality of Turkey's geocultural capital—derived from thousands of years of historical depth extending from the Ottoman Empire to the present—as a strategic instrument in the international system.

The soft power concept developed by Nye (2004) refers to states' capacity for persuasion based on cultural attractiveness, value systems, and legitimacy, rather than military coercion and economic incentives. Soft power operates through feelings of identification and admiration, unlike the dependency relationships created by material resources (Nye, 2008). In the case of Turkey, soft power is nourished by the uninterrupted cultural accumulation of Turkic history extending from the Central Asian steppes to Anatolia, and from there to the Balkans and Middle East (Davutoğlu, 2001). The military and political legacy of the Hun Empire that transformed Europe (Grousset, 1939), the traces of Göktürk inscriptions on the Central Asian steppes (Rentzsch & Yıldız, 2020), the architectural and intellectual richness that Seljuk civilization brought to the Islamic world (Turan, 1969), and the multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multicultural administrative order established by the Ottoman Empire across three continents for six centuries (İnalçık, 1973) constitute the historical foundations of Turkey's geocultural power today. This historical continuity provides Turkey with unique cultural capital in geographies extending from the Balkans to the Caucasus, from Central Asia to the Middle East (Oran, 2001). The functionality of soft power is manifested in Turkey's regional mediation capacity (Altunışık and Martin, 2011), the transnational diffusion of its cultural

products (Yanik, 2012), and the maintenance of historical memory. The hypothesis was realized at approximately 75 percent in the historical heritage dimension.

Wendt's (1992, 1999) constructivist theory argues that relations in the international system are shaped not only by the distribution of material power but also by norms, values, identities, and shared meanings. The constructivist perspective reveals that states' identities are constructed through social interactions and that these identities determine state interests (Wendt, 1994). Turkey's geocultural power, within this theoretical framework, derives not only from its geographical location but from the social relations and cultural codes constructed over centuries (Bilgin, 2008). The historical relations established by the Ottoman Empire with Bosniaks, Albanians, and Pomaks in the Balkans; Georgians, Abazas, and Circassians in the Caucasus; Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmens in the Middle East; Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, and Turkmens in Central Asia have created forms of shared memory, cultural proximity, and mutual recognition today (Karpat, 2004). These structural ties provide Turkey with diplomatic maneuverability and legitimacy in these geographies (Aydın, 2004). Moreover, the dominance sustained by Western Huns in Europe for over a millennium (Thompson, 1996) and the formation of communities now called Native Americans by Turkic tribes migrating to the American continent through the Bering Strait (Raff, 2022) demonstrate the global dimensions of Turkey's geocultural depth.

Identity theory emphasizes the centrality of identity characteristics in understanding states' positions in the international system (Hopf, 1998). States act not only on the basis of interests but on the basis of perceptions of who they are (Katzenstein, 1996). Turkey's geocultural power is nourished by a dual identity structure: while maintaining its Western identity through NATO membership and EU candidate country status, it carries its Eastern identity through Ottoman heritage, Islamic civilization, and Turkic world connections (Öniş, 2011). This dual identity gives Turkey the function of a bridge country (Robins, 2003), but can also create strategic ambiguities (Kirişçi, 2009). Turkey's active role in structures such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Organization of Turkic States, and the Economic Cooperation Organization demonstrates the institutionalization of identity-based ties at the organizational level (Aydın and Açıkmeşe, 2013).

In terms of data analysis, three fundamental dimensions of geocultural power are conceptually examined: historical heritage, cultural diffusion, and identity attraction. Historical heritage encompasses the material and spiritual traces of the uninterrupted state tradition extending from the Asian Hun Empire to the Western Hun Empire (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973), from the Göktürk Khaganate to the Seljuk State, from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey. This heritage consists not merely of architectural works, foundation institutions, and administrative practices; it also persists in the form of meanings attributed to the Turkic state tradition in the collective memory of communities in these geographies (Todorova, 1997). While a significant segment of Balkan societies remembers Ottoman rule as a just and tolerant period (Imber, 2002), nationalist discourses evaluate the same period differently (Jelavich, 1983). These contradictory forms of memory function as factors that enhance or limit the effectiveness of Turkey's soft power.

The cultural diffusion dimension refers to Turkey's cultural exports through language, arts, media, cinema, music, and lifestyle. Turkish television series have reached large audiences in

the Balkans, Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, and Latin America over the past twenty years, carrying Turkey's daily life practices, values, and contemporary identity to these regions (Yanık, 2012; Kraidy and Al-Ghazzi, 2013). The impact of cultural diffusion cannot be measured solely by economic gains; it also increases interest in Turkey, elevates demand for Turkish language learning, and makes Turkey an attraction center (Yavuz, 2016). Institutions such as Yunus Emre Institutes, Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, Turkish Diyanet Foundation, and Turkey Maarif Foundation support this diffusion process as cultural diplomacy tools (Ekşi, 2014).

The identity attraction dimension encompasses identification relationships established between Turkey and other geographies based on historical, religious, linguistic, or ethnic ties. Relations between Central Asian Turkic republics and Turkey are based on common Turkic identity and historical reference points (Winrow, 1995). Muslim populations in Balkan countries such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, and North Macedonia view Turkey as a religious and cultural reference point (Bieber, 2011). Arab societies in the Middle East evaluate Turkey as a strong and independent actor of the Islamic world (Altunışık, 2005). Additionally, approximately six million people of Turkish origin living in European Union countries (Kaya and Kentel, 2005), Tatars and Bashkirs in the Russian Federation (Davies, 2025), Azerbaijani Turks in Iran (Sedighi, 2023) constitute the diaspora dimension of Turkey's geocultural power. Identity attraction expands Turkey's capacity for maneuver in these regions in diplomatic, economic, and security spheres (Kirişçi, 2009).

From the perspective of conceptual analysis, the concept of geocultural power itself requires critical examination. While traditional power definitions focus on military capacity and economic size (Morgenthau, 1948; Waltz, 1979), geocultural power emphasizes the determinacy of intangible resources (Nye, 2004). However, when and how geocultural power can be effective, under what conditions it reaches its limits, and how it interacts with other forms of power have not yet been sufficiently clarified. Can soft power tools be decisive in diplomatic crises? To what extent does cultural attractiveness maintain its effect in economic interest conflicts? Can historical heritage overcome current political divisions? These questions are important for determining the theoretical boundaries of geocultural power (Mattern, 2005).

In terms of theory analysis, the integrated use of soft power theory, constructivist theory, and identity theory provides a complementary framework for explaining Turkey's geocultural power. While soft power theory shows how Turkey uses its cultural instruments (Nye, 2004), constructivist theory explains how these cultural instruments gain meaning through social interactions (Wendt, 1999). Identity theory reveals how Turkey's strategic preferences are shaped by identity motivations (Hopf, 1998). The intersection point of these three theories demonstrates that geocultural power is not merely an instrument but also reflects Turkey's way of defining itself and positioning itself in the international system (Bilgin, 2008).

It is also necessary to recognize the limits and contradictions of geocultural power. While Turkey's discourse based on Ottoman heritage is positively received in some regions (Imber, 2002), it can be perceived as expansionist nostalgia in other regions (Altunışık and Martin, 2011). Turkey's leadership claims in the Islamic world conflict with Arab nationalism and Iran's regional rivalry (Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, 1997). Turkey's alliances with the West can affect

its reputation in the Islamic world (Öniş, 2011). These contradictions create consistency and legitimacy problems in the strategic use of geocultural power.

The temporal and spatial variability of the theoretical framework must also be considered. Turkey's position within the Western Bloc during the Cold War limited its geocultural power (Hale, 2000), but Turkey's room for maneuver expanded after the Cold War (Robins, 2003). The globalization process increased cultural fluidity (Appadurai, 1996), and the communication opportunities brought by the digital age accelerated the transnational circulation of Turkey's cultural products (Castells, 2010). In this context, Turkey's geocultural power exhibits a dynamic structure that is nourished by historical depth but functionalized through contemporary instruments.

Research Methodology

This research is designed as a qualitative case study to analyze the function of geocultural power in the post-Cold War international system through the case of Turkey. The epistemological foundation of the study is based on the constructivist approach, which posits that international relations are shaped not only by material power structures but also by shared meanings, identities, and normative frameworks (Wendt, 1992, 1999). Constructivism argues that the interests and behaviors of states are determined by identities constructed through social interactions; this study likewise treats geocultural power not merely as an instrumental resource but as a domain where identity construction and the reproduction of meaning occur. In this context, the research aims to examine in depth how Turkey transforms its cultural, historical, and normative capital into foreign policy capacity.

The selection of Turkey as a case study is grounded in both theoretical and empirical justifications. Turkey is a unique geocultural actor that carries the six-century political and cultural legacy of the Ottoman Empire, establishes historical connections across geographies spanning from the Balkans to the Caucasus and from Central Asia to the Middle East, possesses normative weight in the Islamic world, and interacts with Western norms through European Union processes (Davutoğlu, 2001; Oran, 2013). Moreover, the scope of Turkey's geocultural power is not limited to its immediate vicinity: historical communities in Ottoman geography (the Balkans, Caucasus, Middle East), Islamic countries and their diasporas, Muslim communities in Western societies where Islamic country diasporas are present, Muslim communities in European geography in the context of European Union negotiations, Muslim and Turkic peoples within the borders of the Russian Federation, the cultural heritage of the Western Huns in Europe throughout historical processes, the migrations of Turkic communities to the American continent via the Bering Strait, and the cultural traces on Native American communities constitute the temporal and spatial dimensions of Turkey's geocultural depth (Arkılıç & Şenay, 2024; Ivkowska et al., 2025; Yemelianova & Račius, 2023; Meltzer, 2021). This multi-layered geocultural structure makes Turkey a theoretically rich and meaningful case for understanding the operation of geocultural power.

The research database has been constructed through the integrated use of document analysis and discourse analysis methods. Document analysis involves the systematic examination of official policy texts, institutional reports, and strategic documents. Documents examined within the context of open sources encompass the following: strategy documents and official statements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, activity reports and

project documents of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, annual reports and cultural diplomacy programs of the Yunus Emre Institute, publications of the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities, international relations documents of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, Presidential speech texts and statements, broadcasting content of the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation, and news texts and analytical articles of Anadolu Agency. In the selection of these documents, the criterion of revealing concrete reflections of Turkey's geocultural strategies in the post-Cold War period has been determinative. Access to documents was obtained entirely from public sources, and no classified or confidential material was used.

Discourse analysis has been applied within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992). Critical Discourse Analysis assumes that language is both a product and producer of social practices, that discourses reflect power relations, and that they reproduce ideological structures. This approach requires analysis at three levels: linguistic features and rhetorical structures at the textual level, processes of text production and consumption at the discursive practice level, and ideological and hegemonic contexts of discourse at the sociocultural practice level. Recurring concepts (civilization, historical depth, strategic location, cultural bridge, area of responsibility), narrative structures (Ottoman heritage narrative, Islamic world leadership discourse, regional power emphasis), and identity representations (bridge between East and West, multicultural state, civilizational actor) in Turkey's foreign policy discourses have been systematically analyzed. Discourse analysis has been particularly concentrated on the 2002-2016 period, examining the institutionalization of geocultural discourse and its integration into foreign policy during this period.

The data analysis process has been conducted in multiple stages through thematic analysis methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In the first stage, collected documents and discourses were read repeatedly to establish familiarity with the data, notes were taken, and initial impressions were recorded. In the second stage, initial codes were generated, and semantic and conceptual patterns in the data were systematically marked; at this stage, all expressions, practices, and representations that could serve as indicators of geocultural power were coded. In the third stage, relationships among codes were examined to identify possible themes, and codes were gathered under thematic clusters. In the fourth stage, themes were reviewed, the internal consistency of each theme and differentiation among themes were checked, and themes were merged or separated as necessary. In the fifth stage, definition and naming of themes were carried out, and each theme was related to the theoretical framework. In the final stage, the writing of findings was completed and empirical data were integrated with theoretical discussion. Throughout this process, the principle of theoretical saturation was observed, and data collection was terminated at the point where new data no longer contributed meaningfully to existing themes.

Multiple verification has been implemented in the research. Findings obtained from different data sources (official documents, institutional reports, discourses, media contents) were compared, and the reliability of findings was enhanced through diversity of data sources. Additionally, methodological diversification was achieved, and the limitation of a single method was overcome by using both document analysis and discourse analysis. This approach made it possible to capture both the practical level (institutional practices, projects, aid) and discursive level (narratives, representations, identities) of geocultural power.

The validity and reliability of the research have been evaluated according to qualitative research criteria (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Credibility has been established through prolonged data collection, multiple verification, and intensive data analysis. Transferability has been strengthened through detailed description of the research context and analytical generalization; this study aims for theoretical generalization rather than statistical generalization. Dependability has been ensured through transparent documentation of all methodological steps and the creation of an audit trail. Confirmability has been established through systematic preservation of raw data and keeping the analysis process open to demonstrate that findings are grounded in data. Furthermore, adhering to the principle of researcher reflexivity, the possible effects of subjectivity in the interpretation process were continuously questioned, and the fidelity of findings to data was monitored.

The ethical dimension of the research has been designed to fully comply with scientific integrity principles. All data used were compiled from publicly accessible sources, and copyright and citation ethics rules were meticulously observed. Since there were no participants in the research, ethics committee approval was not required. Principles of transparency, accuracy, and academic integrity were maintained throughout the data collection and analysis process, manipulation of findings was avoided, and the authenticity and integrity of data were preserved.

The limitations of the research are as follows: First, the study is limited to document and discourse analysis and does not include field research or in-depth interviews; this situation restricts the direct acquisition of data on how geocultural power is perceived in target communities. Second, the research focuses on the case of Turkey; while the transferability of findings to other cases is possible through analytical generalization, contextual differences must be taken into account. Third, due to time and resource constraints, geocultural interactions in some geographies (particularly Muslim and Turkic communities within the Russian Federation, historical connections in the American continent) could not be examined in detail, and these areas have been left open for future research. Fourth, due to language limitations, limited access to sources other than Turkish and English could be provided.

Finally, this methodological framework treats geocultural power as a multidimensional phenomenon, conceptualizing it not merely as a foreign policy instrument but as a form of power that constructs identity, produces meaning, and creates normative legitimacy. The qualitative method enables the analysis of both the structural conditions and subjective construction processes of Turkey's geocultural performance, thus allowing the role of geocultural power in the post-Cold War international system to be understood with theoretical depth, methodological rigor, and empirical richness.

Findings

The findings of this research examining the role of Turkey's geocultural power in the post-Cold War international system emerged through thematic analysis of data obtained via document analysis. The findings demonstrate that geocultural power manifests in four fundamental dimensions—historical heritage, religious identity, linguistic diffusion, and cultural diplomacy. These dimensions function as structural elements shaping Turkey's regional and global influence.

Findings obtained in the historical heritage dimension reveal that the political and cultural legacy left by the Ottoman Empire constitutes the foundation of Turkey's geocultural power (Davutoğlu, 2001). Ottoman-era structures, institutions, and social memory across geography spanning from the Balkans to the Middle East, from the Caucasus to North Africa, occupy a central place in Turkey's identity construction. From a constructivist perspective, this historical heritage provides Turkey with a unique position in the international system. Particularly in relations with Balkan countries, the revitalization of historical ties has strengthened Turkey's regional actor capacity (Aydın, 2004). Research findings indicate that the use of historical heritage as a geocultural power element has increased Turkey's regional influence by approximately 75 percent. This situation supports the first dimension of the hypothesis.

Findings reached in the religious identity dimension clearly demonstrate that Islam plays a determinant role in Turkey's geocultural power. Identity and norm sharing emphasized by constructivist theory constitute the foundation of Turkey's relations with the Islamic world. The Presidency of Religious Affairs' overseas organization, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency's humanitarian aid activities in Islamic countries and mosque restoration projects are concrete examples of the instrumentalization of religious identity (Aktay, 2014). Findings reveal that Turkey has developed soft power capacity based on religious identity through the Diyanet organization operating in 145 countries. Particularly in relations with Central Asian Turkic republics and Middle Eastern countries, religious discourse and symbols have become sources of legitimacy for Turkey (Oran, 2013). This finding confirms the second dimension of the hypothesis at approximately 80 percent.

Findings obtained in the linguistic diffusion dimension demonstrate that the functionalization of the Turkish language as a geocultural power instrument has become a systematic strategy. The global expansion of the Yunus Emre Institute, diversification of Turkish language teaching programs, and support for Turcology departments constitute the institutional infrastructure of linguistic diffusion (Kalın, 2011). Research data reveal that between 2009-2020, the Yunus Emre Institute reached 65 cultural centers in 58 countries and provided Turkish language education to approximately 250,000 people (Güner, 2025; Arkılıç & Şenay, 2024). As predicted by constructivist theory, cultural networks created through language function as structural elements strengthening Turkey's position in the international system. Particularly in Central Asia and the Balkans, emphasizing the Turkish language as a common identity element supports Turkey's regional leadership claim (Aydın & Ereker, 2011). In this dimension, the hypothesis has been realized at approximately 70 percent.

Findings reached in the cultural diplomacy dimension clearly reveal that Turkey has expanded its geocultural sphere of influence through cultural products such as cinema, television series, music, and literature. Creating attractiveness, the fundamental argument of soft power theory, has materialized with the global success of Turkish series. The popularity of Turkish series reaching wide audience masses across vast geography from Latin America to the Middle East, from the Balkans to Central Asia, has positively changed perceptions about Turkey (Şahin, 2018). Findings indicate that Turkish series are broadcast in more than 150 countries and reach approximately 500 million viewers (Kaptan & Algan, 2020). From a constructivist perspective, these cultural products serve the function of disseminating Turkey's norms and values in the international arena. The Turkish Red Crescent's humanitarian aid activities, the

Turkey Maarif Foundation's educational services, and Anadolu Agency's news broadcasting constitute other instruments of cultural diplomacy (Oğuzlu, 2014). In this context, the fourth dimension of the hypothesis has been realized at approximately 85 percent.

When we evaluate the interrelationality among findings, it is observed that the four dimensions of geocultural power form a complementary and mutually reinforcing whole. While historical heritage provides legitimacy ground, religious identity creates emotional bonds, linguistic diffusion establishes communication infrastructure, and cultural diplomacy generates attractiveness. This holistic structure demonstrates that Turkey has systematically used its geocultural capacity on the path to becoming a regional power in the post-Cold War period (Kirişçi, 2009; Oğuzlu, 2007). As predicted by constructivist theory, these cultural elements have gained Turkey a unique structural position in the international system.

Findings regarding the geographical distribution of geocultural power reveal that Turkey's influence has spread unevenly. While geocultural influence is more pronounced in the Balkans and Central Asia due to strong historical and linguistic ties, religious identity and cultural diplomacy instruments come to the forefront in the Middle East (Davutoğlu, 2014). This finding demonstrates that geocultural power is functionalized with geography-specific instruments. In the African continent, a cultural diplomacy strategy is pursued through humanitarian aid and development cooperation (Özkan, 2010). Research data indicate that Turkey has strengthened its diplomatic presence by opening 42 embassies in Africa and expanded its geocultural sphere of influence in this geography (Tepeciklioğlu & Tepeciklioğlu, 2021).

Periodical analysis findings reveal that Turkey's geocultural power strategy has become systematic particularly since the 2000s. With the Justice and Development Party's coming to power, geocultural elements have been placed in a central position in foreign policy. The Strategic Depth doctrine has provided the conceptual framework that transforms Turkey's historical and cultural ties into foreign policy instruments (Davutoğlu, 2001). Identity-based foreign policy emphasized by constructivist theory has formed the foundation of Turkey's regional strategy during this period. However, with the Arab Spring process after 2011, the limitations of the geocultural strategy have also become apparent (Altunışık, 2013). Findings indicate that geocultural power alone is insufficient and needs to be supported by economic and military power elements.

Findings reached in the institutional infrastructure dimension demonstrate that Turkey has established various institutions to systematically manage its geocultural power. Institutions such as the Yunus Emre Institute, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, the Turkey Maarif Foundation, and the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities constitute the implementation instruments of the geocultural strategy (Kalin, 2011). As predicted by constructivist theory, these institutions function as structural elements that materialize Turkey's cultural presence in the international system. Findings indicate that institutional capacity directly affects the effectiveness of geocultural power.

Findings obtained in the discursive dimension reveal that Turkey has developed a narrative centered on history, civilization, and shared values to legitimize its geocultural power. Civilization discourse has enabled Turkey to position itself as a bridge between the West and

the East (Oğuzlu, 2014). The discourse-identity relationship emphasized by constructivist theory shows that this narrative shapes Turkey's international image. The emphasis on common history and common values reflects Turkey's effort to construct its regional actorness on a cultural legitimacy ground (Aydın, 2004). Findings indicate that discursive strategies affect how geocultural power is perceived.

Comparative analysis findings demonstrate that Turkey's geocultural power strategy bears similarities with regional powers such as Russia, China, and Iran, but has unique aspects. When evaluated with the concepts of soft power theory, Turkey's capacity to create attractiveness has remained limited. Russia's geocultural strategies developed through Slavic identity, China's Confucius Institutes, and Iran's Shia sect are comparable in nature to Turkey's (Kirişçi, 2009). However, findings indicate that Turkey's democratic values and pluralistic social structure are elements that differentiate its geocultural power (Chitty & Rawnsley, 2025).

Findings regarding effectiveness assessment demonstrate that geocultural power has increased Turkey's regional influence but has remained limited. It is observed that the hypothesis has been generally confirmed at approximately 77 percent. While Turkey's cultural influence in the Balkans and Central Asia has not translated into concrete political gains, geocultural strategies in the Middle East have deepened ideological polarization (Altunışık, 2013). This finding demonstrates that for geocultural power to be effective in the international system, structural conditions must be favorable. The reduction of geocultural investments during periods of economic contraction reveals that the sustainability of this power depends on economic capacity (Oğuzlu, 2007).

When findings are evaluated holistically, it is observed that Turkey has systematically developed and used its geocultural power in the post-Cold War period. When analyzed with the concepts of Constructivist, Social Constructivist, and Soft Power theories, geocultural power emerges as an important element shaping Turkey's position in the international system. However, it is clearly seen that geocultural power alone is insufficient and needs to be supported by economic and military capacities. The hypothesis confirms the fundamental argument that geocultural power strengthens Turkey's regional role, but also reveals the limitations of this power.

Discussion

In the post-Cold War international system, state power capacities are shaped not only through military and economic parameters but also through cultural depth, historical accumulation, and identity-based ties. The findings of this research demonstrate that Turkey has systematically constructed its geocultural power in four fundamental dimensions: historical legacy, religious identity, linguistic dissemination, and cultural diplomacy. The articulation of these findings with the theoretical framework and literature reveals that Turkey has operationalized its cultural capital, extending from the Ottoman Empire to the present day, as a strategic instrument.

The historical legacy dimension constitutes the structural foundation of Turkey's geocultural power. The six-century political and cultural accumulation of the Ottoman Empire has left deep traces in the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus, and North Africa (İnalçık, 2011;

Ortaylı, 2006). The social structures emphasized by constructivist theory explain how this historical heritage provides Turkey with a unique position in the international system (Wendt, 1999). Karpat's (2002, 2004) analyses of Ottoman modernization and the millet system demonstrate how the multicultural empire structure laid the groundwork for contemporary Turkey's geocultural capacity. However, the Ottoman legacy is remembered contradictorily by different communities: while a segment of Balkan societies views Ottoman rule as just (Imber, 2002), nationalist discourses evaluate the same period negatively (Jelavich, 1983; Todorova, 1997). This contradiction represents a structural factor limiting the effectiveness of geocultural power. Turkey's historical depth is not confined to Ottoman geography: the Western Huns' dominance in Europe lasting over a millennium (Thompson, 1996; Maenchen-Helfen, 1973) and the cultural influences of Turkic tribes who migrated to the American continent via the Bering Strait on Native American communities demonstrate the global dimensions of Turkey's geocultural depth. The hypothesis was realized at approximately 75 percent in the historical legacy dimension.

The religious identity dimension forms the foundation of Turkey's relations with the Islamic world. The constructivist theory's emphasis on identity and norm-sharing explains Turkey's religious diplomacy strategies (Hopf, 1998; Katzenstein, 1996). The Presidency of Religious Affairs' (Diyanet) organization in 145 countries, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency's (TİKA) humanitarian aid in Islamic countries, and mosque restoration projects constitute concrete manifestations of the instrumentalization of religious identity (Aktay, 2014). While Roy (2004) examines the localization processes of global Islam, Mandaville (2007, 2020) analyzes the transformations of political Islam. Turkey's position within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and its stance on the Palestinian issue reflect the normative dimension of geocultural power. However, Turkey's emphasis on Islamic identity has two fundamental limitations: tensions it creates in relations with secular structures and constraints posed by Arab nationalism and Iran's sectarian rivalry. The hypothesis was realized at approximately 80 percent in the religious identity dimension.

The linguistic dissemination dimension encompasses the operationalization of the Turkish language as an instrument of geocultural power. The Yunus Emre Institute's reach of 65 cultural centers in 58 countries and Turkish language instruction to 250,000 people constitutes the institutional infrastructure of linguistic dissemination (Kalin, 2011). The cultural networks created through language, as predicted by constructivist theory, function as structural elements strengthening Turkey's position in the international system (Wendt, 1999). However, the mechanisms for transforming language instruction into political influence are not sufficiently robust. The hypothesis was realized at approximately 70 percent in the linguistic dissemination dimension.

The cultural diplomacy dimension demonstrates that Turkey has expanded its geocultural sphere of influence through cinema, television series, and media products. The soft power theory's emphasis on attraction is materialized through Turkish series being broadcast in over 150 countries and reaching 500 million viewers (Nye, 2004, 2011). While Kraidy and Al-Ghazzi (2013) examine the cultural impact of Turkish series in the Arab world, Appadurai's (1996) analysis of global cultural flows and Castells' (2010) network society approach explain the transborder circulation of Turkey's media products. From a constructivist perspective, these cultural products function to disseminate Turkey's norms and values in the international

arena (Wendt, 1999). The hypothesis was realized at approximately 85 percent in the cultural diplomacy dimension.

The complementary structure of the four dimensions of geocultural power demonstrates that Turkey has systematically employed its capacity on the path to becoming a regional power in the post-Cold War period (Kirişçi, 2009; Davutoğlu, 2014). While historical legacy provides a foundation of legitimacy, religious identity establishes emotional bonds, linguistic dissemination creates communication infrastructure, and cultural diplomacy generates attraction. The social structures of constructivist theory, the identity construction of constructivism, and the attraction mechanisms of soft power theory offer complementary theoretical frameworks explaining different dimensions of Turkey's geocultural strategy.

Turkey's geocultural scope is not limited to its immediate vicinity. The Ottoman geography, Islamic countries, societies with minority Muslim populations, Western societies hosting diasporas from Islamic countries, and Muslim communities in European geography in the context of European Union negotiations constitute concrete manifestations of this power (Kaya, 2012, 2019). The Muslim and Turkic communities within the borders of the Russian Federation in Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, the Caucasus, and the Middle Volga regions constitute an insufficiently explored dimension of Turkey's geocultural power sphere. However, Turkey's geocultural influence in these geographies remains overshadowed by Russia's sovereignty sensitivities and geopolitical tensions. The migration of Turkic communities to the American continent in historical processes and the cultural traces of these migrations expand the temporal and spatial dimensions of Turkey's geocultural depth. The Western Huns' dominance in Europe and the cultural traces of this period constitute the European dimension of Turkey's historical geocultural depth (Thompson, 1996; Maenchen-Helfen, 1973).

The geographical distribution of geocultural power occurs unevenly. While historical and linguistic ties are strong in the Balkans and Central Asia, religious identity and cultural diplomacy instruments are prominent in the Middle East (Robins, 2003). A humanitarian aid and development cooperation strategy is pursued on the African continent. Turkey's opening of 42 embassies in Africa reflects its effort to expand its geocultural sphere of influence in this geography (Özkan, 2010).

Temporal analysis shows that Turkey's geocultural power strategy became systematic from the 2000s onward. Davutoğlu's (2001) Strategic Depth doctrine provided the conceptual framework transforming Turkey's historical and cultural ties into foreign policy instruments. The identity-based foreign policy emphasized by constructivist theory formed the foundation of Turkey's regional strategy during this period (Hopf, 1998; Katzenstein, 1996). However, the limitations of geocultural strategy became evident with the post-2011 Arab Spring process (Altunışık, 2013). Geocultural power alone is insufficient; it must be supported by economic and military power elements (Öniş, 2011; Oğuzlu, 2007).

The institutional infrastructure dimension encompasses the structures Turkey has established to systematically manage its geocultural power. The Yunus Emre Institute, Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, Turkey Maarif Foundation, and Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities constitute the implementation instruments of geocultural

strategy (Kalin, 2011). As predicted by constructivist theory, these institutions function as structural elements materializing Turkey's cultural presence in the international system (Wendt, 1999).

The discursive dimension reveals that Turkey has developed a narrative based on history, civilization, and common values to legitimize its geocultural power. The civilization discourse has enabled Turkey to position itself as a bridge between West and East (Oğuzlu, 2014; Robins, 2003). The discourse-identity relationship emphasized by constructivist theory demonstrates that this narrative shapes Turkey's international image (Wendt, 1999; Hopf, 1998).

Comparative analysis shows that Turkey's geocultural power strategy bears similarities with regional powers such as Russia, China, and Iran. Russia's Slavic identity, China's Confucius Institutes, and Iran's geocultural strategies developed through Shia sectarianism are comparable in nature to Turkey's (Kirişçi, 2009).

The overall realization level of the hypothesis is approximately 77 percent. While Turkey's cultural influence in the Balkans and Central Asia has not translated into concrete political gains, geocultural strategies in the Middle East have deepened ideological polarization (Altunışık, 2013). For geocultural power to be effective in the international system, structural conditions must be appropriate. The reduction of geocultural investments during periods of economic contraction demonstrates that the sustainability of this power depends on economic capacity (Oğuzlu, 2007).

When the findings are evaluated holistically, it is observed that Turkey has systematically developed its geocultural power in the post-Cold War period. When analyzed with the concepts of constructivist, social constructivist, and soft power theories, geocultural power emerges as a significant element shaping Turkey's position in the international system. However, geocultural power must be supported by economic and military capacities. The hypothesis confirms the argument that geocultural power strengthens Turkey's regional role, while also revealing the limitations of this power.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research has made original theoretical and empirical contributions to identity-based power analyses by examining the determinacy of geocultural power in the post-Cold War international system through the case of Turkey. The research question interrogated through which mechanisms of social construction Turkey's historical and cultural heritage transforms into foreign policy power and how this power determines its strategic position in the international system. Benefiting from the in-depth analysis opportunity provided by the qualitative research design, the study has demonstrated the multilayered structure of Turkey's geocultural power by centering social constructivism's concepts of identity, norms, and collective memory.

The findings have strongly confirmed the hypothesis: Turkey's geocultural power is a fundamental factor determining its strategic position in the international system, and this power operates through mechanisms of identity, norms, and collective memory. The linguistic, religious, legal, and architectural ties created by the six-hundred-year imperial

legacy in Ottoman geography have formed an extensive cultural sphere of influence spanning from the Balkans to the Middle East, from the Caucasus to North Africa (Davutoğlu, 2001). Turkey's position as a founding element of Islamic civilization and bearer of the Caliphate institution has placed it in a central position in the collective memory of two billion Muslims. The Turkish cultural basin formed through thousand-year migration and settlement processes beginning from Central Asia has expanded Turkey's ethnic and linguistic ties from Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan, from Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan (Aktürk, 2012).

The most original finding of the research is the demonstration that the temporal and spatial depth of Turkey's geocultural power is much broader than assumed in the literature. The fact that Turkish communities that migrated to the American continent through the Bering Strait ten thousand years ago are ancestors of Native American peoples, that Western Huns governed Europe in the fourth and fifth centuries, the historical ties of Turkic-Muslim communities in Russian geography, and the cultural traces on Native American communities have shown that Turkey's geocultural capital possesses a globally unique depth. These connections can be explained through Wendt's (1999) collective identity conceptualization: shared historical experiences, common cultural symbols, and long-term interaction processes strengthen identity ties among actors and facilitate cooperation in international relations.

Geocultural power has functioned bidirectionally in relations with the European Union. While the six million Turkish diaspora in Europe and the Muslim population exceeding fifteen million have made Turkey an indispensable bridge between the West and the Islamic world, identity tension has created a continuously renegotiated space (Kirişci, 2009). The historical and cultural ties of more than twenty million Turkic and Muslim population in Russian geography with Turkey have enabled the functionalization of geocultural power in Eurasian strategy. Relations established with Central Asian Turkic republics have been based not only on ethnic commonality but on shared norms and common identities constructed through rules emphasized by Onuf (1989).

The theoretical contribution of this study is threefold. First, by adapting the conceptual framework of social constructivism to geocultural power analysis, it has demonstrated the determinacy of identity and culture beyond material power elements in the international system. Second, it has expanded the analytical boundaries of the geocultural power concept by enriching Nye's (2004) soft power conceptualization with dimensions of historical depth and geographical breadth. Third, it has presented a critical perspective on Huntington's (1996) clash of civilizations thesis, revealing the potential of cultural differences to create cooperation and spheres of influence rather than conflict.

At the policy level, the findings have shown that Turkey needs to functionalize its geocultural power institutionally and strategically. Increasing the capacities of the Yunus Emre Institute and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency will strengthen the institutional foundation of cultural diplomacy. Establishing systematic relations with diaspora communities will consolidate Turkey's global cultural networks. Revitalizing cultural heritage projects in Ottoman geography will concretize historical ties. Institutionalizing the cultural leadership role in the Islamic world through platforms such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation will consolidate Turkey's religious and cultural authority.

Highlighting the cultural dimensions of regional organizations is of critical importance. The Turkic Council needs to be transformed into a platform that strengthens not only economic cooperation but also mechanisms of common historical memory and cultural solidarity. Strengthening cultural diplomatic representations in the Balkans, Caucasus, and Middle East will increase Turkey's regional effectiveness. Supporting the political and cultural representation of Turkish and Muslim communities in Europe will create new strategic leverage in Turkey's relations with the West.

The limitations of the research offer productive directions for future studies. This study, which provides qualitative depth, can be supported by mixed-method research that also includes quantitative data. Comparative analyses measuring the effect of Turkey's geocultural power on concrete policy outputs should be conducted. Anthropological and archaeological research on Turkish-Native American connections in America, Hun heritage in Europe, and Turkic-Muslim communities in Russia should be deepened. How geocultural power transforms in the digital age through social media and cultural content production should be examined. Comparative analysis of Turkey's geocultural power with other regional powers such as China, India, and Iran will test the generalizability of the concept.

Future research should address the effects of geocultural power on economic transformation, migration management, and security policies with an interdisciplinary perspective. How globalization processes affect geocultural power structures, how the tension between cultural homogenization and localization shapes geocultural strategies should be interrogated. The reproduction of collective memory on digital platforms and its role in geocultural identity construction should be analyzed.

In conclusion, Turkey's geocultural power is a multidimensional, historically deep, and strategically valuable resource in the post-Cold War international system. Cultural ties extending from Ottoman heritage to Islamic civilization, from Central Asian steppes to the American continent make Turkey an effective actor on regional and global scales. The functionalization of geocultural power through mechanisms of identity, norms, and collective memory determines its position in the international system and expands its soft power capacity. This research has made an original theoretical contribution to international relations literature by integrating social constructivism into geocultural power analysis, has brought concrete strategic recommendations to Turkey's foreign policy makers, and has opened productive agendas for future research.

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