



## ULUSLARARASI ÖĞRENCİLER, ULUS MARKALAMA VE İYİ ÜLKE İNDEKSİ: TÜRKİYE ÖRNEĞİ<sup>1</sup>

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### Öz

Günümüzde uluslararası eğitim ve uluslararası öğrenciler, ülkelerin sahip oldukları diplomasi anlayışının tamamlayıcısı olma niteliği taşımaktadırlar. Öyle ki, devletler kendi olumlu imajlarını misafir ettikleri uluslararası öğrenciler üzerinden dünyaya ihraç etmektedirler. Devletlerin yumuşak güç politikalarının bir tezahürü olan ulus markalama konseptinin de söz konusu olumlu imajın inşasında önemli bir rolü bulunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda uluslararası sistem içerisinde ülkelerin olumlu imajlarının ölçümü için kullanılan ölçeklerden biri olan ve Simon Anholt tarafından geliştirilen “İyi Ülke İndeksi” bu çalışmanın temelini oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmada Türkiye’nin uluslararası öğrenciler tecrübesi ve bu bağlamda ihraç edilen olumlu imajın “İyi Ülke İndeksi” içerisindeki yansımaları incelenmiştir. İndeksin uluslararası öğrenciler ile ilgili kategori sonuçlarında Türkiye’nin 2016 ve 2017 yıllarında durağan şekilde 55. sırada olmasına rağmen genel ortalamada yükselen bir eğilime (56’dan 38’e) sahip olduğu görülmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İyi Ülke İndeksi, Uluslararası Öğrenciler, Ulus Markalama, Yumuşak Güç.

### INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS, NATION BRANDING AND THE GOOD COUNTRY INDEX: TURKEY EXAMPLE

#### Abstract

Today, international education and international students are complementary to the diplomatic understanding of states, in that they export their positive images to the world through the international students that they host. The concept of nation branding, which is a manifestation of states' soft power politics, also plays an important role in this positive image construction. In this context, the "Good Country Index" developed by Simon Anholt, one of the scales used to measure the positive images of countries within the international system, is the basis of this study. In this study, it is aimed to monitor Turkey's position in the Good Country Index considering the country's positive image and international student experience. According to the Index's results under the related category of international students, Turkey has a stable position in 2016 and 2017 results but has an increasing trend at overall ratings.

**Keywords:** The Good Country Index, International Students, Nation Branding, Soft Power.

#### 1. Introduction

The dissolution of the USSR produced many different outcomes that engulfed and transformed the post-Soviet territories. The iron fist of globalization has enhanced this transformation up to the global level. Through this transformation process, the classical

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meaning of diplomacy and the interaction between foreign publics have also changed. Before the globalized and multipolar world order, diplomacy was just a job done by diplomats. After the mentioned transformation, and thanks to the development of Internet/communication technologies, now every citizen, especially those who have direct cultural interaction, such as academicians and (international) students, can be a diplomatic executor. Therefore, international education is a suitable ground and an important opportunity for exporting the positive image of a country. States can seize this opportunity by improving their positive recognition by scholarships, exchange programs and summer schools.

Today, many states use soft power tools, such as nation branding, in order to strengthen their *good country* image. Nation branding is a concept fed through soft power which was coined by Joseph Nye. It can be defined as boosting a nation's global recognition by constructing positive attitudes and emotions towards that nation. Many different countries around the world export to the international public their positive image through international students they host. As a user of soft power tools in diplomacy, Turkey has also paid utmost attention to international students. So as to construct and export a positive and strong nation brand via international students, Turkey funded the Great Student Project, Turkey Scholarships and Mevlana Exchange program.

As a global scale measure for these positive image *exports*, Simon Anholt developed an index named the *Good Country Index*. The index measures countries by considering their contribution to the common good of humanity. Having a powerful and positive nation brand provides a crucial competitive advantage among other states. In this index, Anholt divides countries in seven different rank categories with regard to their contributions to the world. Those rankings include 'science & technology', 'culture', 'international peace & security', 'world order', 'planet & climate', 'prosperity & equality' and 'health & wellbeing'. According to the latest index, which published in 2017 as the version 1.2., Turkey's place is the 38<sup>th</sup> in overall rankings among other 163 countries. Considering the international student experience, which is the main issue of this study, labelled under the "Science & Technology" rank, Turkey's ranking, thanks to Turkey Scholarships and formerly, The Great Student Project and Mevlana Exchange Program, is the 55<sup>th</sup> among the other 163 countries in the index. In this study, it is aimed to explain Turkey's international student experience through soft power and nation branding, as well as to review Turkey's position at the Good Country Index.

## 2. Re-defining International ‘Relations’: The Concept of Soft Power

‘International Relations’ turned into a discipline that has its own chair in universities towards the end the World War I. Notwithstanding that, the discipline of International Relations has a history equal in longevity to that of mankind. If considered in this regard, ruptures in the history of mankind certainly have had redirecting influences on the discipline of International Relations. One such instance is the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which rendered necessary a new disintegration and adjustment within the discipline of International Relations. Hence, the bipolar world order that lasted for forty-five years left its place to a multipolar world order, causing change in classical security understandings, and making it necessary to revise discourses for alliances of states that operate within the system. To sum up, the discipline of International Relations has undergone a process of re-definition in line with new concepts.

It was under these circumstances that the concept of Soft Power has entered the discipline of International Relations in 1990 by Joseph S. Nye in his book titled “Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power (Nye, 1990)”. In his book, Nye developed the term soft power for the first time and defined it as ‘the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments (Nye, 2005: 5).’ As can be seen in Table 1 below, the core of hard power is made of pressure or coercion in order to persuade through command; soft power, on the other hand, is based on attracting and agenda-setting through common values and culture policies in order to induce. Thus, while resources of soft power are tied to the ‘induce’ end of the spectrum of behavior, resources of hard power is tied to ‘command behaviors’.

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. 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 that “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, 2005: 5).”

According to Nye, power is “the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the outcomes one wants”. Nye outlines the use of power as follows: “...there are several ways to affect the behavior 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 power (Nye, 2005: 11).” For the Turkish Language Institution, power is “the ability to make an influence or to stand

against an influence with regard to physics, thinking, or morals”. Tarık Oğuzlu defines power as “the capacity to influence others and shape their preferences within the boundaries of possibilities (Oğuzlu, 2007: 82).”

Nye makes a distinction between Hard Power and Soft Power on the basis of carrot and stick metaphor. Hence, according to Nye, Hard Power might depend on either persuasion (carrot) or threat (stick). Whereas there is no room for persuasion or threat in Soft Power, 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, 2005: 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 behavioral terms, in terms of resources, it is the sum of values that creates attraction (Nye, 2005: 15).

On the other hand, Nye also underlines that there is a link between Soft Power and Hard Power. He underlines that both of these powers are the two pillars of ability to get the desired outcomes one wants through influencing the behaviors 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, 2005: 16-17).

Nye notes that the resources that the concept of soft power is formed through generally results from values of an institution or a country, practices and policies within itself, and the way through which relations with others are conducted. Thus, Nye gives the ‘American Dream’ example, and notes that the power that the USA retains actually inspires dreams and desires of others through Hollywood, and due to this very same reason, many students from other countries come to the US in order to further their education (Nye, 2005: 17). Hence, as can be understood in the concept of soft power, Nye produces a ‘dream’ which would appeal and make others envious. The components of this production are culture, social values and norms, technology, liberty, economic welfare and respect for human rights.

Nye acknowledges that the use of soft power elements is more difficult than the use of

hard power instruments, and attaining the goals through soft power takes longer time than through hard power. Notwithstanding that, Nye underlines that results emanating from the use of soft power are far more long-lasting when compared to those from the use of hard power (Nye, 1990: 100-101). According to Nye, soft power of a state rests on three different resources: (1) culture of the state, (2) political values of the country, and (3) its foreign policy. Nye describes culture of a state as the totality of values and practices that have meaning for a society and emphasizes that there are many ways to demonstrate culture. Nye divides the means of demonstrating culture into two: high culture, such as literature, arts, as well as education that appeals to the elites in a state, and popular culture which is concerned with entertainment. Thus, Nye notes that when the culture of a country demonstrates universal values and its policies are regarded legitimate by others, then the possibility of reaching its desired outcomes appears. Nye underlines that countries with narrow values and shallow and parochial cultures are rather unlikely to reach this goal (Nye, 2005: 20). In this regard, the state of Turkish Republic, with history and deep global imperial culture it inherited from the Ottoman Empire, has both a significant level of capacity and capability to produce soft power.

South Korean political scientist Geun Lee, on the other hand, makes a methodological differentiation between soft power strategies and introduces them as (Lee, 2009: 212-213) (1) creating or manipulating countries' own images, in order to extend their security environments: those states whose images in world public opinion have been damaged as a result of some incidents follow more peaceful policies in order to remedy their reputations. Lee gives the examples of Japan and Germany as the two architects of the World War II. (2) Receiving support from other states through damaging images of other states: an example to this can be the US calling some Middle Eastern countries as "rogue" states in order to legitimate its own interventions within the region, and calling Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as the "Axis of Evil" states. (3) Network-effect strategy: the basis of this strategy is making common some standards, types of behavior and common reference styles. The aim of this strategy to create an outer environment that aggrandizes states, international organizations or companies that have certain values. Globalizing the English language, spreading liberal democracy notions can be given as examples. (4) Accelerating situational change: This strategy is possible to realize only when the target state is in a crisis situation; Turkey's support for democracy and superiority of human rights during the Arab Spring movements can be shown as an instance. (5) Using ideational resources such as celebrities and heroes: Globally recognized artists and/or those people who are seen as heroes in the eyes of the public can play roles in cooperation with their native states, in accordance with values they

represent. Instances of this strategy are Tarkan's becoming peace envoy of the state of Turkish Republic, and Angelina Jolie's visits to Africa.

To sum up, Soft Power projects an understanding based on attraction and sympathy instead of coercion, and consent instead of pressure. A state and/or country wins its power through elevating its soft power resources such as legitimacy, diplomacy, economy, culture and identity in the eyes of other states. What matters in soft power is not coercion, but the ability of one getting the other party to want what it wants.

### **3. An Input and an Outcome: From Soft Power to Nation Branding**

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 (Philip and Gertner, 2002: 249-261)'. Nation branding can be described as increasing the 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 globalization, 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 (Anholt, 2016):

Branding is not just an image or not distinguishing 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 quickly becoming a key instrument in social science in terms of International Relations and Politics. The term which has been studied 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 establishing the harmonious relation with its new trends and innovations to improve of its reputation (Anholt, 2007). Szondi draws our attention to clear categories of nation branding observed in economic,

commercial, and political disposition of a country to publicize itself both at home and abroad (Szondi, 2007:8-20). 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 (Lee, 2009). “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 (Jaffe and Nebenzahl, 2006).” Nonetheless, nation branding has been classified on the basis of the literature into product based, national based and cultural based (Fan, 2006: 5-14). On the manner of international education, it uses every classification under the nation branding that shines on soft power concept.

#### **4. International Education as a Branch of Soft Power**

International education has always been a non-formal way to introduce a culture to foreign audiences. Through this non-formal and effective introduction, a country’s positive image could be exported abroad with volunteered ambassadors; in other words, with ‘international’ students. International education provides students with having knowledge of foreign regions and cultures, having familiarity with global issues, having ability to communicate in multiple languages, and dispositions towards respect and concern for other cultures and peoples (Badhwar, 2013: 5).

UNESCO understands international education as “a process, resulting from international understanding, cooperation and peace” (Morentin, 2004: 5). Since nations learn to understand one another, international cooperation is established as a consequence of it. UNESCO also underlines that international cooperation is definitely a result of education, but it is also a sense of a future, as must be articulated by the States, with the aim of avoiding wars (Morentin, 2004: 6-10); hence, it also states trust.

During the Cold War years, in the early 1970s, there were approximately 800.000 students abroad. Undoubtedly, the dissolution of the USSR and the fall of the ‘iron curtain’ let young people to travel more easily across the world, which was once divided into two by bloc politics of the NATO and Warsaw. According to the Project Atlas, numbers of international students increased to 4.6 Million at 2017 and its predicted to reach 8 Million at 2020.

According to Project Atlas 2017 report, in the 2016-2017 academic year, there were approximately over 1 million international students having education in the USA; 650.000 international students in the UK; 400.000 international students in China; 310.000 international students in France; and 110.000 international students in Turkey (Project Atlas,

2017). Furthermore, NAFSA proclaims that every international student approximately contributes 30.000 USD annually to economy (NAFSA, 2016).

## **5. Turkey's 'International Students' Experience**

### **5.1. The great student project**

After the dissolution of the USSR, as many states in the international system, Turkey had to rephrase her foreign policy and create new foreign policy destinations in order to adept the new World order, which is not bipolar anymore. The state of Turkish Republic shunned from pursuing close ties with the Turkic Republics in the years following its establishment until the end of the Cold War. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Turkey became interested in this region and started to take radical steps in different areas in order to strengthen its bilateral ties with the Turkic Republics. At that time, Turkey's foreign policy makers developed many instruments, late president Turgut Özal suggested to create a Turkic Union with newly independent Turkic States in the South Caucasus and Central Asia region. In order to initiate that union, Turkey had to take strong steps such as founding an agency of foreign (development) aid (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency-TIKA), international education (the Great Student Project), bilateral trade agreements and more. The decision makers of Turkey hoped to have closer ties with those younger countries through these steps. Especially Mr. Özal estimated to create and enhance a Turkic world cooperation that might arouse as an alternative regional integration instead of Europe (Akilli, 2016: 73-74). Furthermore, thanks to Turkey's historical, linguistic, religious and cultural kinship with the region, Turkey would play a crucial role for the important actors who intended to step up into the Central Asia region (Akilli, 2016: 74). Therefore, Turkey pursued to strengthen the role and capacity in Central Asia; for doing so, TIKA was founded and the Great Student Project started in the 1992-1993 academic year (Purtaş, 2013: 8).

As mentioned above, international education which can be considered as a branch of Soft Power was used as a tool for interaction, particularly in newly independent Turkic States (Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), those stayed behind the "Iron Curtain" for decades. In order to use international education as a tool and construct such interaction with those states, Turkey started "the Great Student Project" in the 1992-1993 education year. The Great Student Project was initiated in order to establish a bridge of brotherhood and ensure cultural unity by teaching Turkish and the Turkish culture. In starting year of 1992-1993, there were a total number of 10.000 students (3.000 for secondary education and 7.000 for higher education) from five different states (Azerbaijan,



Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) (Kavak, 2001: 96).

Purposes of the Great Student Project are (Kavak, 2001: 96):

- To create a Turkey friendly generation and in order to create a permanent brotherhood/friendship understanding in the Turkic world,
- To meet the need of qualified personnel in the newly independent states (Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan),
- To teach Turkish language and culture,
- To empower bilateral relations in the Turkic world and enrich partnership between those states (Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan).

Through “the Great Student Project”, nearly 40.000 students from those states have had education in Turkey. Essentially thought as an education policy, this project played a key role in the development of the cultural relations between Turkey and those states (Özoğlu et al, 2012: 58-59).

## **5.2. Turkey scholarships**

However, the Great Student project was concentrated on a limited geography. Turkey Scholarships were founded in 2011. With the Turkey Scholarships, in 2016, 122.000 applications from 172 different countries were made and 16.000 students are still receiving education in Turkey as fully funded by Turkish Government. The programs provided through Turkey Scholarships include Undergraduate Scholarship Programs, Turkic Speaking Countries Scholarship Program, Balkans Scholarship Program, Black Sea Scholarship Program, Harran Scholarship Program, Türkiye Africa Scholarship Program, Bosphorus Scholarship Program, Graduate Scholarship Programs, Ali Kuşçu Science and Technology Scholarship, İbni Haldun Social Sciences Scholarship; Short Term Scholarships: Turkish Language Program for Public Officials and Academicians, Research Scholarships, Success Scholarship Program (YTB, 2018).

## **5.3. Mevlana exchange program**

Mevlana Exchange Program, which was launched in 2011, aimed to provide exchange between Turkish Universities and those of other countries’ (apart from Erasmus+ KA103 Program countries since the 2013-2014 academic year) in the manner of student and academic staff. Through Mevlana Exchange Program, it is also aimed to make Turkey as a center of attraction in higher education area, as well as increasing the academic capacity of Turkish higher education institutions and to contributing the globalization process of the higher education. According to the Turkish Higher Education Council’s report about Mevlana Exchange Program, it is expected to receive 595 students and 309 academic staff per year (YÖK, 13).

## 6. The Good Country Index and Turkey

Nation branding, which is an important concept in today's world, can be described as the increase of positive recognizability of a country in the world through constructing attitudes and emotions towards that nation. As a consequence of globalization, 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. Since 2015, Simon Anholt, who is one of the pioneer academicians of the Nation Branding literature, annually publishes an index called "the Good Country". Anholt measures countries in the Good Country Index by considering their contribution to the common good of humanity. Hence, Anholt uses a wide range of data from the U.N. and other international organizations, he had given each country a balance-sheet to show at a glance whether it's a net creditor to mankind, a burden on the planet, or something in between. Anholt emphasizes that by doing so, he is not making any moral judgments about countries. Instead, what he calls by a 'Good Country' is something much simpler: it's "a country that contributes to the greater good of humanity". A country that serves the interests of its own people, but without harming - and preferably by advancing - the interests of people in other countries, too.

Besides, Anholt implies that the Good Country Index does not measure what countries do at home only; instead the Index aims to start a global discussion about how countries can balance their duty to their own citizens with their responsibility to the wider world, because this is essential for the future of humanity and the welfare of the world. In addition, he underlines that today, humanity has to face challenges without borders like climate change, economic crisis, terrorism, drug trafficking, slavery, pandemics, poverty and inequality, population growth, food and water shortages, energy, species loss, human rights, migration; therefore, those global problems can only be dealt with international efforts. Therefore, the Good Country Index does not measure countries by 'how' they do the contribution, but 'how much' they contribute to those efforts. In this index, Anholt divides countries into seven different rank categories regarding their contributions to the world. Those rankings are 'science & technology', 'culture', 'international peace & security', 'world order', 'planet & climate', 'prosperity & equality' and 'health & wellbeing'. Countries receive scores on each indicator as a fractional rank relative to all countries for which data is available (after most data is corrected for GDP, i.e. the economic size of the country).

At the very first version of the Good Country Index, which is the version 1.0 and was published in 2015, Turkey's overall rating was the 79<sup>th</sup> and the "Science & Technology" rank

(related to international students) was the 51<sup>th</sup> (Anholt, 2015). In 2016, the 1.1 version of the index was published, and at that index, Turkey's overall rating was the 56<sup>th</sup> and the "Science & Technology" rank was the 55<sup>th</sup> (Anholt, 2016). According to the latest index, which was published in 2017 as the version 1.2., Turkey's place is 38<sup>th</sup> in overall rankings and the "Science & Technology" rank was 55<sup>th</sup> (Anholt, 2017). So, it can be seen from those results of the Good Country Index that Turkey has a positive increasing trend at overall since the version 1.0 and a stable position at "Science & Technology" rank since the version 1.1 and 1.2. Nonetheless, there is an explanation needed at this point; under this ranking, there are other elements except from international students such as Journal Exports, International Publications, Nobel Prizes and Patents. So, considering the increase of international student numbers in Turkey (approximately 88.000 in 2015 and 110.000 in 2017), this stable position under the "Science & Technology" is not all about the situation of the international students in Turkey.

Nevertheless, some steps should have taken to improve the current situation for international students in Turkish Universities, for instance; increasing the capacity of Turkish language teaching centers (TÖMER); apart from general International Relations or Erasmus Offices, there should be dedicated offices established that only focuses on international students; number of courses in foreign languages (e.g. in English) at curriculums should be increased; academic consulting services for international students should be formed (Kesten et al, 2010, 80).

## 7. Conclusion

Changing nature of international conjuncture produced new approaches for states in foreign policy. As mentioned many times in the study, end of Cold War and most importantly removal of the *Iron Curtain*, let common people to visit and travel more freely around the World. As an outcome of this freedom, international education gained a new pace; from post-Soviet regions to re-united (Germany in particularly) Europe, young people started to pursue their higher education in abroad.

Also, as mentioned at introduction section today, many states use soft power tools, such as nation branding, in order to strengthen their good country image. Higher education institutions are also part of the nation branding process and most importantly some University around the World actually a *brand* for the nation. Beside from that having a powerful brand can provide the exportation of the country's positive image towards to World. Implied as before, hosting international students and providing them a safe and fruitful higher education life would ultimately enable host country's positive image to be exported by those

international students. Nonetheless, as NAFSA proclaims, every international student approximately contributes the host country's economy 30.000 USD per year. So, in this sense; being a host country for international students is a win-win situation; both having contribution to economy and having positive image served freely.

As a user of soft power tools in diplomacy, Turkey has also paid utmost attention to international students. So as to construct and export a positive and strong nation brand via international students, Turkey funded the Great Student Project, Turkey Scholarships and Mevlana Exchange program.

After the dissolution of the USSR, Turkey developed new policies towards to Central Asia and the Caucasus region in order to sparkle and enhance cooperation in these regions. As one of those policies, starting from 1992-1993, "the Great Student Project" has been carried out by the Directorate General for Higher and Foreign Education of (Turkish) National Education Ministry. The main purpose of this project was to form strong cultural (and eventually political) ties with Central Asian and Caucasian countries by funding graduate students. After 10 years and with almost 40,000 students, "the Great Student Project" was replaced by the "Turkey Scholarships" in 2012. This new type of scholarship has been used by the Turks Abroad and Related Communities Presidency (YTB) to organize and finance international education in Turkey. Also, in 2011, Mevlana Exchange Program was launched to provide student and academic staff exchange between the Turkish higher education institutions and other higher education institutions around the world.

Since the 1950s, more than 80,000 international students have graduated from Turkish universities. Considering Turkey's efforts on funding international students from those regions, it is clear that Soft Power has been a major foreign policy tool for Turkey since the end of Cold War era. Through this understanding, Turkey's positive image could be reconstructed and exported abroad thanks to the nation branding concept that fed by international students in Turkey. Even though the international student culture in Turkey gained momentum with Turkic countries via "the Great Student Project", today (with Turkey Scholarships and Mevlana Exchange Program) Turkey is a safe haven for almost 138.000 (in 2018) international students from 172 different countries. This positive picture also can be seen by the overall rankings of the Good Country Index, in which Turkey's position is 38<sup>th</sup>. However, contrary to this increasing trend through years in the index, Turkey has a stable position at "Science & Technology" in last two years (2016-Ver.1.1 and 2017-Ver.1.2) which is related to international students. Through international students, Turkey's positive image and nation brand is delivered around the world; and Turkey can be a center of attraction in higher education in the incoming years.

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