

TURKISH AIRLINES AS A SOFT POWER TOOL
IN THE CONTEXT OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY

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The aim of the thesis is to demonstrate the close relationship between Turkish Airlines and Turkish foreign policy. Overall, it is found that Turkish Airlines as a national airline company has always been affected by the developments in Turkish foreign policy in history. However, since the 1980s Turkish Airlines has been openly used by Turkey as a foreign policy tool to facilitate its opening up to new countries, regions and continents. It is also suggested that despite the privatization of Turkish Airlines, the Turkish state is still very influential in the decision-making process that manifests itself in the area of foreign policy. In that sense, Turkish Airlines acts in accordance with the two main pillars of Turkey in the Middle East, which are establishing visa free travel and signing free trade agreements with the countries in the region. Furthermore, Turkish Airlines is a major tool of Turkey's opening to the African continent not only with its flights but also its contribution to humanitarian aid. In the former Soviet Union and the Balkans, Turkish Airlines contributes to Turkey's political, economic and cultural potential to develop close ties with the countries that declared their independence in the post-Cold War period. The involvement of Turkish Airlines in those regions parallel to the developments in Turkish foreign policy adds up to Turkey's attraction in the minds of foreign people. Hence, Turkish Airlines as a national airline company has become a soft power tool that promotes Turkey's image and the ability to influence the behavior of other countries to get the outcomes that it desires.

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Başlık: Türk Dış Politikası Çerçevesinde Bir Yumuşak Güç Aracı Olarak Türk Hava Yolları

Bu tezin amacı Türk Hava Yolları ve Türk dış politikası arasındaki yakın ilişkiyi göstermektir. Çalışma sonucunda görülmüştür ki tarihten bu yana ulusal havayolu olarak THY her zaman Türk dış politikasındaki gelişmelerden etkilenmektedir. Ancak, 1980'lerden itibaren THY Türkiye'nin yeni ülkelere, bölgelere ve kıtalara olan dış politika açılımlarında açıkça bir araç olarak kullanılmaktadır. Ayrıca THY özelleştirilmiş olmasına rağmen, Türkiye devleti karar verme sürecinde son derece etkili bir konumdadır. Türkiye devletinin THY üzerindeki etkisi özellikle dış politika alanında kendini göstermektedir. Bu bağlamda, Ortadoğu özelinde THY Türk dış politikasının iki ana ayağı olan bölgedeki ülkelerle karşılıklı vizelerin kaldırılması ve serbest ticaret anlaşmalarının imzalanması politikasıyla paralel hareket etmektedir. THY ayrıca Türkiye'nin önemli bir aracı olarak Afrika kıtasına olan açılımını uçuşlarına ek olarak insani yardım yoluyla da desteklemektedir. THY Soğuk Savaş sonrası Türkiye'nin Sovyetler Birliği'nden bağımsızlığını kazanan ülkelerle olan ilişkilerine ve Balkanlarda Türkiye'nin siyasi, ekonomik ve kültürel potansiyeline olumlu katkı sağlamaktadır. THY'nin bu bölgelerde Türk dış politikasına paralel bir şekilde varlığı Türkiye'nin yabancı kamuoyu düzeyindeki cazibesini artırmaktadır. Bu yüzden ulusal havayolu şirketi olarak THY Türkiye'nin imajını ve diğer ülkelerin davranışlarını kendi istekleri doğrultusunda etkileyebilme kabiliyetine olumlu katkı yapan bir yumuşak güç aracı haline gelmiştir.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On 1 September 1983, a Korean Airlines passenger aircraft in Russian airspace was shot down by the Soviet Union Air Force, killing 269 people on board. This incident is known as one of the events that escalated the tension during the Cold War. In another incident, on 11 September 2001, the United States was attacked by Islamist extremist terrorists through the use of hijacked civilian aircraft as weapons against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The events of 9/11 are regarded as a turning point that dramatically shook the conception of the international system.

These two incidents demonstrate that the relationship between politics and civil aviation always has a potential to influence the course of history and the way in which we think of the world. However, the impact of political considerations on civil aviation industry tends to be overlooked. Especially, the relationship between politics and airlines needs a detailed analysis from a macro point of view. As Anthony Sampson says, “Airlines and politics have collided with each other from the beginning. The airlines, as they changed the shape of the world, were also locked into the ambitions of nations.”¹

In that sense, this thesis aims to probe the relationship between politics and airlines from the lens of international relations and foreign policy. As a case study, I focus on the relationship between Turkish Airlines and Turkish foreign policy, taking the former as the dependent variable and the latter as the independent variable. I try to demonstrate the interaction of the two variables by presenting an overview of Turkish foreign policy with a special emphasis given to Turkish Airlines as a national flag carrier. Apart from the

¹ Anthony Sampson, *Empires of the Sky The Politics, Contests and Cartels of World Airlines* (New York: Random House, 1984), p.19.

historical relationship between the two variables, I focus on the relationship between the two in various geographies including the Middle East, Africa, former Soviet Union and the Balkans.

The primary reason why I work on this subject is the lack of a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between national airlines and foreign policy by focusing on a single airline company. Although there are some valuable works that will be discussed in the upcoming chapters that contribute to our understanding of where Turkish Airlines stands within the framework of the relationship between politics and national airlines, none of them offers a broad analysis or a theoretical framework to consider national airlines as soft power tools. In this thesis, the concept of soft power is used as a theoretical framework as it is defined by Joseph Nye to fully understand the implications of the relationship between national airlines and politics.

This thesis offers a broad analysis of the impact of the developments in Turkish foreign policy on the operations of Turkish Airlines. It is argued that Turkey's foreign policy openings to various geographies are corroborated by the involvement of Turkish Airlines with the guidance of the government. It is also argued that the fact that the members of Turkish Airlines Board of Directors are appointed by the government enables it to influence the management of the company that manifests itself in the decisions to open new flight routes and order the purchase of new aircraft. Moreover, it is suggested that Turkish Airlines as a high-quality national airline not only promotes its own brand, but also promotes Turkey's and İstanbul's name and enhances their attraction in the minds of people in foreign countries.

During the course of this study, I consulted various types of sources. As the main focus of this thesis is Turkish Airlines, the publications made by Turkish Airlines were

used as primary sources. Especially, I utilized the books *Dünden Bugüne Türk Hava Yolları 1933-1983*² and *75.Yılında Türk Hava Yolları*³ that were prepared for the 50th and 75th anniversaries of the establishment of Turkish Airlines in 1933, respectively. From those books, I was able to gather information regarding the history of Turkish Airlines and how specific developments in the realm of foreign policy are depicted from the point of view of Turkish Airlines as a corporation. Other primary sources that I utilized that are open to public are *Turkish Airlines Inc. Articles of Association*, *Turkish Airlines Annual Report 2010* and *Minutes of Ordinary General Assembly Meeting 2011*. In addition, I used *Skylife* and *The Turkish Perspective* magazines, which are published by Turkish Airlines and distributed to its passengers on board.

Furthermore, I obtained the list of flight destinations that have been opened by Turkish Airlines since 1989 from the Turkish Airlines Head Office. Despite the availability of those sources, I could not work on the *Minutes of the Meetings of Turkish Airlines Board of Directors*, which are not open to public due to confidentiality concerns. Hence, I was unable to gather sufficient information regarding the management of the company and its relationship with political considerations. Another limitation that I faced was the reluctance of Turkish Airlines officials to give an interview addressing the relationship of Turkish Airlines with politics. Indeed, one of the people that I interviewed wanted to remain anonymous. However, I was able to conduct with the former President of the Turkish Airlines Board, Candan Karlıtekin, who helped me understand the relationship between politics and Turkish Airlines from the perspective of upper-level management. In addition, I was able to conduct with the former Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Özdem Sanberk, who helped me learn more about the

² It can be translated into English as “*A History of Turkish Airlines 1933-1983*.”

³ It can be translated into English as “*Turkish Airlines on Its 75th Anniversary*.”

political vision behind the involvement of Turkish Airlines in the 1990s in the post-Soviet space. Moreover, I obtained a data on the number of Turkish Airlines flights and passengers to individual countries between 2001 and 2010 from the Prime Ministry Public Diplomacy Office. The data I obtained from there enabled me to make a comparative analysis with the official trade and tourism figures year by year.

In addition to the primary sources and interviews listed above, I benefited from secondary sources in the area of politics and airlines. In addition, I used several books and articles written on the area of Turkish foreign policy in order to relate them to the history of Turkish Airlines and its current involvement in various geographies in line with the orientation of Turkey. Other important sources that I utilized in this thesis are the newspaper coverage of the Turkish Airlines route openings and the reaction of the makers of foreign policy, Turkish Airlines officials and online sources that include the web pages of Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Turkish Presidency, international institutions, business associations and news portals. Especially in the chapter on Africa, online sources had to be consulted frequently due to the lack of sufficient academic work on Turkey's opening to Africa in general and the bilateral relations with the African countries in particular.

Apart from introduction and conclusion, this thesis consists of five chapters that deal with the relationship between Turkish Airlines and Turkish foreign policy from different vantage points. The purpose is to put Turkish Airlines into the foreign policy context and interpret its operations in the context of international relations. Hence, this thesis is an interdisciplinary study that lies at the intersection of political science and history.

The chapters are organized such that they explain the reader the main dynamics behind Turkish Airlines' involvement in the foreign policy realm and its implications for Turkey's achievements in different geographies. In addition to the chapters on the theoretical framework of soft power and the historical background, the remaining three chapters focus on separate geographies in which Turkish Airlines acts like a foreign policy tool through a number of mechanisms. These geographies are covered in separate chapters because of the need to emphasize different roles taken up by Turkish Airlines to facilitate Turkey's achievements under different political and economic circumstances. In addition to new flight route openings, Turkish Airlines has taken part in rescue operations, humanitarian relief and sponsorship agreements depending on the particularities of those geographies.

In Chapter 2, the concept of national airline is analyzed from the perspective of politics and international relations. Because of the fact that a national airline is viewed as a symbol of prestige of a nation in the world and makes its home country's foreign policy more attractive, the concept of soft power is offered as a relevant explanation. The fact that Turkish Airlines promotes Turkey's image in addition to its own brand as well as Turkey's foreign policy makes it a soft power tool. In addition to Turkish Airlines, throughout the chapter the literature on the politics of airlines is discussed. Moreover, some other national airlines are covered in relation to their standings with regard to their home countries and politics to put Turkish Airlines into a broader context in comparison with other national airlines.

In Chapter 3, the history of Turkish Airlines is narrated from the standpoint of political considerations in general and Turkish foreign policy in particular. It helps the reader understand the close relationship between political considerations and Turkish

Airlines from the early 1930s up until today. It is also remarkable to observe the continuities and discontinuities in the history of Turkish Airlines in relation to the developments in Turkish foreign policy. The privatization of Turkish Airlines and its impact on limiting government control are also critically assessed to understand the current management of the company.

In Chapter 4, the role played by Turkish Airlines as part of Turkey's foreign policy agenda in the Middle East that is based on the establishment of the free movement of people and goods is depicted. It is demonstrated that Turkish Airlines complements Turkey's policy to further engage with the region through visa-free travel agreements and boosting trade. More specifically, the policies adopted by Turkish Airlines in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Israel and the Gulf countries are scrutinized with the help of trade and tourism figures from the perspective of foreign policy.

In Chapter 5, various dimensions of Turkey's opening to Africa are examined with a special emphasis on Turkish Airlines' facilitation of the movement of people and goods on both sides. In addition to Turkey's increasing diplomatic and economic presence in the region, the significance of Turkish Airlines' flight destinations in the continent is underlined. On a regional basis, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa are dealt separately. The involvement of Turkish Airlines in those two regions is also comparatively studied. Overall, the idea that Turkish Airlines is an important wing of Turkey's opening to Africa is defended.

In Chapter 6, the response of Turkish foreign policy and Turkish Airlines to the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia is covered. The involvement of Turkish Airlines in the post-Soviet space and the Balkan region is complemented by the political and economic background that is in line with the orientation of Turkish foreign policy.

Specifically, the operations of Turkish Airlines in Russia, Ukraine, Southern Caucasus, Central Asia and Western Balkans are interpreted from the lens of Turkey's historical and contemporary standing. The role that political considerations play to ease and in some instances aggravate the involvement of Turkish Airlines in certain regions and countries are underlined.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: NATIONAL AIRLINES AND SOFT POWER

According to Joseph S. Nye, power is “the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the outcomes you want.”⁴ Specifically, Nye coined the concept of soft power in his book *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. Soft power differs from military and economic might that is traditionally seen as the only way “to get others to change their positions.”⁵ In the same book, he defines soft power as “getting others to want the outcomes that you want”⁶ through cooptation rather than coercion.⁷ A country’s cultural assets that are attractive to others such as literature, art, education and popular culture; political values that are admired, and the positive perception of its foreign policy are the main sources of soft power.⁸ Nye also underlines the importance of commerce as a way of transmitting culture through personal contacts, visits and exchanges.⁹ To be more concrete, Nye lists some specific qualifications that make Japan the strongest soft power in Asia. Those include Japan ranking first in the world in number of patents, third in international air travel, second in book and music sales, second in high-tech exports, first in development assistance and first in life expectancy.¹⁰

In order to actively use the soft power instruments to win the hearts and the minds

⁴ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), p.2.

⁵ Ibid., p.5.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., p.11.

⁹ Ibid., p.13.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.85.

of foreign publics, Nye proposes the increasing use of public diplomacy as an effective tool.¹¹ To make a country's soft power potentials better known by the target foreign publics, public diplomacy activities should be given more importance.¹² He cites many examples of public diplomacy tools that promote soft power, including Voice of America, BBC World Service and Hollywood.¹³ Thus, public diplomacy and soft power cannot be conceived as separate from each other. To shape the perceptions of the foreign publics, states engage in such deliberate activities through certain mechanisms. The receivers of public diplomacy campaigns and soft power instruments may not always be conscious of their influence on themselves and their way of thinking with regard to that specific country. Overall, soft power instruments aim to enhance the prestige and the perception of the nation through the promotion of its name, culture, values and foreign policy.

The concept of national airlines is relevant to these theoretical debates on soft power and public diplomacy. The responsibility of national airlines to promote the name, prestige and foreign policy of their nations fits well to the conceptualization of soft power. Fulfilling a political goal to promote the foreign policy achievements definitely makes a national airline a soft power tool. As the airline company's ranking increases among the airlines all over the world, it has positive repercussions not only in the area of politics but also in the area of commerce. For instance, if a national airline can achieve making its city of origin an aviation hub, it adds up to the tourism and business potential of that city and country. The more people use the airports in a country to transfer to other international flights, the more the geographical location of the country will be perceived

¹¹ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no.94 (2008), p.95.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.103.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.94-109.

as central. Perhaps, the availability of high quality airline connections to a country is an asset to enhance that country's political and economic potential worldwide. National airlines that help their states achieve certain goals in the area of culture, commerce and foreign policy can be regarded as tools of soft power. In that sense, the theoretical debates on soft power contribute to our understanding of national airlines and their relationship with politics.

Within this framework, Turkish Airlines can be regarded as a soft power tool of Turkey. Primarily, as the flag carrier airline of Turkey, Turkish Airlines promotes its name in the skies and all over the world in airports. Its advertising campaigns in foreign media and sponsorship deals with movie stars, football teams, basketball players and tournaments not only promote its own brand but also enhance Turkey's image and prestige in the eyes of foreign publics. The President of Turkish Airlines Board of Directors, Hamdi Topçu acknowledges that promoting Turkish Airlines worldwide also promotes the image of Turkey.¹⁴ The development of Turkish Airlines into a global airline network with a high number of transfer passengers also has developed İstanbul Atatürk Airport into an aviation hub at the crossroads of continents. As a consequence, İstanbul is more attractive for business people and tourists mainly due to this transportation network.

In the realm of foreign policy, Turkish Airlines supports Turkey's foreign policy openings that aim to establish diplomatic and commercial relations with countries in specific geographies. The availability of Turkish Airlines flights shortens the spatial distances between countries and facilitates the movement of business people and tourists on both sides. Increasing interdependence with the countries in the Middle East, Africa and the Eurasian mainland helps developing peaceful relations that value cooperation

¹⁴ Turkish Airlines, *Minutes of Ordinary General Assembly Meeting 2011*, Turkish Airlines Investor Relations, p.2.

over conflict.

For instance, one of the reasons why a Turkish model is debated in the Arab countries in the context of their transition to democracy is the rising attraction of Turkey in the minds of the people. More and more people in the region are exposed to Turkish culture thanks to the popularity of Turkish soap operas depicting the Turkish way of life. The attraction of those soap operas results in an increasing demand among the people of the region to visit Turkey. People's desire to encounter the Turkish experience by visiting the country is facilitated by Turkish Airlines' regular flights from İstanbul to the countries in the region. Turkish Airlines as a high quality global airline represents Turkish culture and values not only in the Middle East but also in other parts of the world. Thus, it enhances Turkey's potential to attract the others. It seems that Turkish Airlines is aware of this function and acts accordingly in various areas.

On the other hand, Turkish Airlines is not a unique case among the national airlines to be used for political purposes. There has always been a close relationship between state-owned airlines and politics. The airline industry has a high level of state involvement because of the size of the investment required and international civil aviation regime, which emphasizes state sovereignty over any other consideration. Even though the ability of states to intervene in airline companies has been in decline in the last few decades, airlines still need to coordinate their work with their governments with regard to certain issues including the route structures.¹⁵ For example, in this type of system where states hold the utmost authority, government-backed national airlines have

¹⁵ Robert L. Thornton, "Governments and Airlines," *International Organization* 25, no.3 (Summer 1971), p.549.

a major advantage over other carriers to bargain for attractive slots and airport facilities.¹⁶

State ownership of airlines is regarded as a tool of prestige, an essential requirement for nationhood, a backup for defense capability and a source of employment.¹⁷ Considering the fact that national airlines carry the flag of the nation in the skies and the airports all over the world, it is viewed as a status symbol and an indicator of national strength.¹⁸ William E. O'Connor defines this type of prestige as "the opinion which the world holds of the airline's country, the respect in which the nation is held, either in a general sense or in a specific sense as for its technological achievements."¹⁹ He also adds that the establishment of an international airline psychologically builds up the national self-confidence.²⁰

Likewise, Dawna L. Rhoades says that national airlines are perceived as public utilities which ought to serve in the interest of the public in various areas including national security, postal air delivery and commercial activity.²¹ From a different vantage point, as national airlines are regarded as one of the symbols of the state and nation it represents, most of the time their tailfins are designed according to a national flag or

¹⁶ Romina Polley, "Defense Strategies of National Carriers," *Fordham International Law Journal* 23, no.6 (1999), p.180.

¹⁷ Stephen Shaw, *Airline Marketing and Management* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp.57-58.

¹⁸ James Patrick Hanlon, *Global Airlines: Competition in a Transnational Industry* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1996), p.5.

¹⁹ William E. O'Connor, *Economic Regulation of the World's Airlines; A Political Analysis* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), p.90.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.92.

²¹ Dawna L. Rhoades, "Liberalization of International Air Transportation Markets: The Effect of Terrorism on Market Trends," *Journal of Transportation Management* (Fall 2002), p.46.

another emblem that will remind the identity of the nation in question.²² Therefore, national airlines not only carry the name and the flag of the country to promote its name and image, but also carry the symbols of their states of origin on their tailfins.

It is not wrong to claim that all of those factors influence the worldwide perception of the country of origin of a national airline. Those perceptions usually add up to the existing soft power instruments which contribute to the ability of the country to convince others without the use of force. Soft power is mainly about the ability to attract the perception of the others. On the other hand, in some instances, the failure of a national airline may harm the prestige of its nation. For instance, if a national airline goes bankrupt or is involved in a fatal accident, the prestige of the nation is affected in a negative way. Considering the fact that a fatal plane crash is immediately covered on televisions all over the world, this might generate a negative image for a country's flag carrier. Even though the frequency of fatal accidents has declined to a very low level, if the rate of accidents is above a certain point, that would downgrade the status of the nation in the eyes of the foreign publics. This undesired scenario would also negatively influence the soft power potential of that state. On a more personal basis, as the high service quality of a national airline contributes positively to the nation itself, certain bad experiences such as losing a passenger's baggage may harm the image of the airline and the nation it represents.

Apart from the matters of prestige, status and reputation, national airlines help their states promote multiple purposes in the realm of politics. The idea that the national airlines should promote the interest of their nation has gained widespread recognition

²² Crispin Thurlow and Giorgia Aiello, "National Pride, Global Capital: A Social Semiotic Analysis of Transnational Visual Branding in the Airline," *Visual Communication* 6, no.3 (2007), pp.314-315.

both in the academic literature and the public.²³ The concept of national interest is widely defined in parallel to the foreign policy orientations with some exceptions. One of the most common practices of the national airlines is to operate flights to certain locations primarily guided by political motivations. For instance, the availability of a direct flight of Aeroflot from Moscow to Havana during the Cold War is a symbolic demonstration of the wish to increase political engagement between the countries.²⁴ Perhaps, without knowing the close relations between the Soviet Union and Cuba, to give a reasonable explanation for this route would be very difficult from an economic point of view. Even though it has decreased over time, national airlines continue to operate scheduled flights to certain locations mainly due to political reasons. Many examples are given below as well as in the upcoming chapters where the relationship between national airlines and foreign policy is further elaborated by focusing on the case of Turkish Airlines.

Although state ownership of airlines is a major advantage in the area of foreign policy, it may not always yield positive results. There is also a potential danger for state-owned airlines to be over-politicized.²⁵ Too much governmental interference to force the airline company to fulfill the mission assigned to it with regard to certain political, economic and social objectives may decrease the efficiency of the functioning of the airline.²⁶ Since the Airline Deregulation Act in the United States in 1978, there has been a trend in the airline sector towards privatizing the state-owned airlines. Although national airlines retain their flag carrier status, the decline of the state's shares in national airline

²³ Shaw, p.58.

²⁴ O'Connor, p.107

²⁵ Rigas Doganis, *The Airline Business in the 21st Century* (New York : Routledge, 2001), p.189.

²⁶ Ibid., p.190.

companies translates into diminishing role of government interference to daily operations of the companies. Today, airlines are more and more guided by economic factors rather than political factors. However, that should not mislead us to a notion that politics has lost its significance for airlines. It should be expected that political considerations will remain an important element as long as the current international civil aviation regime that is based on intergovernmental bargaining survives.

Another issue in which airlines and politics should be analyzed together is terrorism. According to Peter St. John, “hijacking is both criminal in nature and international in scope, but it is also frequently a political act.”²⁷ Indeed, the chosen targets of terrorists usually represent a nation. Especially in the case of flag carrier airlines, this link is much more obvious. Hence, as a way of attacking a country on the pretext of historical and political reasons, its national airline is an often chosen target. There were terrorist attacks on several national airlines in the past decades, Turkish Airlines is among them. One of the most violent attacks against Turkish Airlines was the bombing of its counter at Paris Orly Airport in 1983 by the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA), which was motivated by historical and political grievances against the Turkish state.²⁸ The most extreme case of aviation terrorism in the entire history of civil aviation was the tragic events of September 11 attacks in 2001. In that instance, the use of civilian aircraft as a weapon against civilian targets by Islamist extremists was perceived as an attack on the United States and the American way of life.

After defining the concept of national airline and its relationship with political considerations, in this part some specific cases are covered in order to put national

²⁷ Peter St. John, “The Politics of Aviation Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 10, no.3 (1998), p.28.

²⁸ *New York Times*, 9 October 1983.

airlines in general and Turkish Airlines and its relationship with the Turkish state in particular into a global context. The purpose is to contribute to the existing literature on soft power from a different vantage point by emphasizing the role that national airlines play in the international relations as a political instrument for their country of origin. The case studies below would better illustrate how the concept of national airline is relevant to the theoretical debates on soft power. It is shown that national airlines serve different political, economic and social purposes in relation to their countries of origin.

Pan American World Airways (Pan Am)

One of the best examples of an airline in history that was used to promote the national interest is the case of Pan American World Airways. It was seen as the representative of the American interest abroad as the unofficial flag carrier.²⁹ Pan Am was founded in 1927 by Juan Trippe who depicted himself as a great American patriot and wanted to spread the influence of his country through Pan Am. He always emphasized the role of his airline to spread the democratic values which, he thinks, needed to be promoted all over the world.³⁰ According to Robert Baehr,

Abroad, Pan Am became an informal foreign ministry with Trippe as its ambassador. It was a distinction he fought for fiercely and with unparalleled success, since his ambition was always that Pan Am should be ‘the chosen instrument’ of the American government in international aviation. As early as 1929, Trippe had his advertising agency create the impression that Pan Am was a quasigovernmental company, and in fact it was, though hardly as the public perceived it to be. The interests of the State Department and the Foreign Service

²⁹ Robert Baehr, “America's Airlines: Unofficial Instruments of National Policy,” *American Studies in Scandinavia* 19 (1987), p.76.

³⁰ Sampson, pp.78-84.

on one hand and those of Pan Am on the other were usually seen to be synonymous.³¹

Specifically, Pan Am was used in South America to counter the rising Nazi influence in the local airlines of the region. For instance, the influence of the Nazis in Colombian SCADTA (Sociedad Colombo Alemana de Transporte Aéreo) was curbed after the airline merged with another airline and taken under the co-ownership of Pan Am and the government of Colombia in 1940.³² This policy, supported by the US government, provided Pan Am a profitable market in South America. In that sense, the interests of Pan Am and the US State Department converged on South American and the Canal Zone.³³ However, rather than emphasizing the economic aspect of those developments Pan Am depicted itself as “the savior and the protector of American way of life.”³⁴ This kind of discourse that prioritizes national interest over economic gain at the public level is important to illustrate the guiding principle of Pan American World Airways at that time. It can also be asserted that Pan Am built its own brand upon the pretext of promoting the national interest.

Although it was not officially a flag carrier airline, Pan Am represented the American interest not only in South America but worldwide. It was seen as the “chosen instrument” both in the eyes of its founders and the US State Department. It was chosen by the American state to promote the American interest in foreign countries. Hence, it can be regarded as a soft power tool of American foreign policy in the past. For instance,

³¹ Baehr, p.76.

³² Gabrielle Durepos et al., “Flights of Fancy: Myth, Monopoly and the Making of Pan American Airways,” *Journal of Management History* 14, no. 2 (2008), p.119.

³³ Ibid., p.124.

³⁴ Ibid., p.123.

thanks to this special status, it received increased subsidies for its overseas operations.³⁵ Additionally, throughout the Cold War, the airline had won important defense contracts.³⁶ However, these privileges had come to an end with the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978 that aimed to increase efficiency and benefit the customer through lower fares in the airline industry.³⁷ As a result of these structural changes, the once glorious Pan American World Airways went into bankrupt.

Imperial Airways

In the 1920s, there was a trend among the colonial powers to develop air links with the colonies to demonstrate the sovereignty of the empires in their distant territories.³⁸ It is even claimed that the traditional rivalry among imperial powers on acquiring territories was replaced by a competition in the civil aviation field in the 1920s and 1930s. Therefore, the flag carrier status of the airlines of the empires was deliberately used to project their power in the interwar period.³⁹ Among those imperial powers, the British Empire, which was already in decline, saw the use of air links as “a kind of refuge for imperial dreams and fantasies”.⁴⁰ In 1924, Imperial Airways, which had a main task

³⁵ Alan P. Dobson, “The Other Air Battle: The American Pursuit of Post-War Civil Aviation Rights,” *The Historical Journal* 28, no.2 (June 1985), p.430.

³⁶ Durepos et al., p.124.

³⁷ Jack Eaton, “Flying the Flag For Subsidies- Prospects for Airline Deregulation in Europe” *Intereconomics* (May/June 1996), p.148.

³⁸ K. Raguraman, “Airlines as Instruments for Nation Building and National Identity: Case Study of Malaysia and Singapore” *Journal of Transport Georgraphy* 5, no.4 (1997), p.240.

³⁹ Sean H. Seyer, “‘An Empire Policy Must Be Formed’: The Development of British Imperial Air Routes in the Interwar Period” *The Psi Psi Historian* (Spring 2008), p.44.

⁴⁰ Sampson, p.27.

of development of air routes to the Commonwealth countries, was established.⁴¹ The operations of Imperial Airways facilitated fulfilling Britain's national objectives such as postal service requirements and diplomatic presence.⁴²

Political rivalries and national security considerations strongly influenced the operational activities of Imperial Airways. For example, Imperial Airways had to compete with the Dutch KLM for the route from India to Australia. This incident is a manifestation of the imperial rivalry between the British Empire and the Dutch Empire in the area of civil aviation in a distant geography.⁴³ From a similar point of view, Italy refused to grant landing rights to the British Imperial Airways on its eastbound flights, "unless receipts on a certain run were divided equally with the weak and unprofitable Italian company."⁴⁴ In a similar fashion, due to national security concerns, Turkey prohibited all transit flights over its territory, including the flights of Imperial Airways that requested to use the Turkish airspace. Turkey's strict policy over its airspace harmed the European carriers because they were not able to fly over the shortest route to their overseas destinations.⁴⁵

According to Raguraman,

Imperial Airways had done well as Britain's "chosen instrument", carrying its flag proudly throughout its network and enhancing the identity of the British empire. In this respect, it therefore provided not only a sense of the "imagined political community" among its colonies but also a strong image of supremacy of the

⁴¹ Alison Corke, *British Airways: The Path to Profitability* (London: Pan Books, 1986), p.18

⁴² K. Hammarskjöld, "Trends in International Aviation and Governmental Policies," *Aeronautical Journal* (May 1980), p.144.

⁴³ Seyer, p.56.

⁴⁴ Christer Jönsson, "The Politics of International Aviation," *International Organization* 35, no.2 (Spring 1981), p.279.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

mother nation through the demonstration of air imperialism. At a broader level, civil aviation facilitated propaganda and cultural penetration abroad.⁴⁶

Indeed, just before the start of the Second World War, 90 per cent of Imperial Airways' route mileage belonged to the routes of the empire.⁴⁷ Whether it had succeeded or not, there was an attempt of the British Empire to use its national airline to promote its imperial goals in the interwar period. This policy had continued during the Cold War with British Overseas Airways given foreign policy objectives in the Commonwealth.⁴⁸

Air France

The case of Air France is significant to show that the privatization of national airlines is sometimes not desired because of their political, strategic and cultural value. Contrary to other sectors where state ownership continuously declined, the French state was reluctant to privatize Air France until 1993.⁴⁹ Historically, Air France has flown to former colonies which are also profitable from an economic point of view.⁵⁰ Thus, Air France has utilized France's colonial past to achieve profits up until this day. At the same time, France has utilized its national airline to achieve air connections with its former colonies that enables the continuation of France's cultural influence over them. Of course, Air France is not the only tool that facilitates this achievement. However, the role

⁴⁶ Raguraman, p.243.

⁴⁷ Gordon Pirlé, "Passenger Traffic in the 1930s on British Imperial Air Routes: Refinement and Revision," *Journal of Transport History* 25, no.1 (March 2004), p.63.

⁴⁸ Douglas Sikorski, "A Comparative Evaluation of the Government's Role in National Airlines," *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* 7, no.1 (1990), p.107.

⁴⁹ Matthew Richard Golder, "The Changing Nature of French Dirigisme: The Case Study of Air France," (Master's Thesis, Oxford University, 1997), p.6.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.23.

that has been played by Air France in the area of transportation is crucial and should not be underestimated. Similar to other national airlines, there is a strong perception that links the image and perception of Air France to the French nation. For example, one of the reasons why the French state did not turn a blind eye to the worsening financial situation of Air France in the 1990s was its meaning attached was closely related to the French nation and culture.⁵¹

Malaysia Airlines

National airlines may also take part in the nation building process depending on the context. The case of Malaysia illustrates this role of the national airlines well. The fact that transportation and communication systems are indispensable elements of the nation building process⁵² demonstrates that national airlines shorten the spatial distances within the country. Especially, for a country like Malaysia which is geographically dispersed, the availability of scheduled flights to all parts of the country contributes to the feelings of nationhood and the attainment of a political goal unifying the nation.⁵³ Indeed, the Malaysian government regarded its national carrier as an essential instrument of the nation-building process, holding the different regions together and reinforcing the centrality of the national capital city, Kuala Lumpur.⁵⁴ Thus, air links with the relatively

⁵¹ Golder, p.50.

⁵² Raguraman, p.239.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.246.

less developed East Malaysia have contributed to the nation building process in the country.⁵⁵

Parallel to that logic, even though Malaysian Airlines was virtually privatized, it continued to operate services on many unprofitable domestic routes with low-traffic or low fares.⁵⁶ A similar example is the regular flights of Olympic Airways to the Greek islands, which are far from the center although the occupancy rates are very low especially during the winter season. The Greek state regards those flights as important instruments especially for the survival of small island communities and their attachment of the Greek nation.⁵⁷

Singapore Airlines

The case of Singapore Airlines demonstrates the fact that increasing connectivity and centrality through the development of air services also serves to enhance the business potential of the city and country as a whole.⁵⁸ Especially for micro states like Singapore, this contributes to the enhancement of the state's political and economic power in the world as well. To have a high quality airline company is regarded as one of the indicators of the soft power tools of a country.⁵⁹ In that sense, Singapore Airlines, which ranks in the top category among the airlines all over the world, is an asset for Singapore, boosting

⁵⁵ Raguraman, p.246.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.247.

⁵⁷ Eaton, pp.150-151.

⁵⁸ Raguraman, p.248.

⁵⁹ Jonathan Mc Clory, *The New Persuaders: An International Ranking of Soft Power* (London: Institute for Government, 2010), p.4.

its image and soft power in the foreign policy area. Aware of this, the in-flight stewards and stewardesses are constantly reminded in their training that they are the ambassadors of Singapore.⁶⁰ This argument holds true for other small states in other parts of the world as well. For instance, another high quality national airline, Qatar Airways, contributes to the branded image of Qatar by flying airplanes with Qatar's name all over the world.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Raguraman, p.253.

⁶¹ J. E. Peterson, "Qatar and the World: Branding for a Microstate," *Middle East Journal* 60, no.4 (Autumn 2006), p.747.

CHAPTER 3

TURKISH AIRLINES AND TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY WITHIN THE HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

Similar to other national airlines, Turkish Airlines has always been influenced by the political developments concerning Turkey. One cannot fully understand the history of Turkish Airlines without taking the developments in Turkish foreign policy into account. To interpret the history of Turkish Airlines from the perspective of international relations and foreign policy contributes to our understanding of the current standing of Turkish Airlines vis-à-vis Turkish foreign policy.

In the civil aviation industry, without exception, political developments, considerations and preferences always influence the policies adopted by the managerial bodies of the airline companies. In the case of national airlines, which were discussed in the previous chapter, this influence is much more blatant. Politics, one way or another, is one of the major factors influencing the decision-making process of the state-owned airlines. Politics usually influences decisions such as opening new flight destinations and the purchase of new aircraft. Turkish Airlines as the national flag carrier of Turkey since 1933 has not been exempt from this general trend. Especially, during some specific time periods it represents a case that needs to be further elaborated where politics in general and foreign policy considerations in particular have played major roles in the formation of its strategies.

Before the privatization of Turkish Airlines, it was openly used by the Turkish state in accordance with the foreign policy considerations of the country. It could also be interpreted in the global context where state-owned flag carrier airlines are seen as the symbol of the state and a tool that can be used to promote the political, economic and

societal goals put by the state itself. However, although the majority of its shares do not belong to the Turkish state anymore, Turkish Airlines continues to act like a tool of Turkish state especially in the realm of foreign policy. With the latest (2006) wave of privatization, the Turkish state possesses 49% of the shares of Turkish Airlines.

On paper, Turkish Airlines lost its status as a public entity, since the majority of its shares are traded on the İstanbul Stock Exchange by private investors. Legally, it is treated as a private company where the state holds a minority of its shares. In practice, the Turkish state retains the golden share (49%) that enables it to strongly influence the decision-making process of Turkish Airlines. The rest of the Turkish Airlines' shares that are traded on the İstanbul Stock Market belong to investors of a strictly limited size. Those shareholders are unable and unwilling to come together to raise their voices in the management of the company.

This stems from the fact that the privatization of Turkish Airlines in 2006 was made in such a way that no other shareholder could challenge the dominance of the state in the decision-making process. According to *Turkish Airlines Inc. Articles of Association* Article 10c,

In order to be able nominate candidates for the Board of Directors by the shareholders holding Group A shares open for public, they are required to be represented at the rate of minimum 2% of the total issued share capital of the Incorporation during the Shareholders Assembly in which the members of the Board of Directors will be elected. Calculation of the aforementioned rate of 2% will be based only on the Group A shares open for public.⁶²

Although two of the seven members of the Turkish Airlines Board of Directors can be nominated by the private investors,⁶³ in practice it does not often take place due to

⁶² Turkish Airlines, *Turkish Airlines Inc. Articles of Association*, Turkish Airlines Investor Relations, Article 10c.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Article 10b.

the majority vote principle to pass a resolution. It is very rare that the small investors are able to come together in the Shareholders Assembly and get their representatives elected to the Board of Directors. Because of these factors, the members of the Turkish Airlines Board of Directors are practically appointed by the Turkish government. In addition, Turkish Airlines is no longer audited by the Prime Ministry Inspection Board since it lost its status as a public economic enterprise after the shares of the state had diminished below the 50% threshold. Hence, government influence in the management of Turkish Airlines has not disappeared but changed its format.

This chapter of the thesis aims to provide a historical background to better apprehend the developments in Turkish civil aviation with special emphasis on Turkish Airlines and foreign policy considerations. It will be a basis for the reader to better comprehend the upcoming chapters that demonstrates how the current Turkish government uses Turkish Airlines as a foreign policy tool to open up to various geographies to promote its agenda.

After the Turkish Republic was declared in 1923, the new regime adopted a transportation strategy based on the nationalization of the railways, the rebuilding of roads and monopolization of the sea transportation. In that context, air transportation was given special emphasis. Yet, air transportation required infrastructural and technological investment. The political elite including Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) and İsmet (İnönü), at that time were aware of the rising strategic importance of aviation because they had witnessed the use of air power as a military tool against themselves during the wars that caused the demise of the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁴ Indeed, the Ottoman Empire was the first state in history against which airplanes were first used as a military weapon during a war.

⁶⁴ Türk Hava Yolları, *75. Yılında Türk Hava Yolları* (İstanbul: Elma Bilgisayar ve Basım, 2009), p.46.

During the war in Tripoli in 1911-12, the Italians used airplanes for military spying, bombing the targets and making their propaganda.⁶⁵

The political elite including Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) and İsmet (İnönü) were ardent supporters of the advancement of the nascent Turkish aviation both in military and civilian areas. Thus, the Turkish Aeronautical Association was founded on 16 February 1925 as a semi-official organization as part of the Turkish political elite's modernization project. It organized lotteries and public appeals and levied on wages to raise funds for purchasing aircraft and collected 2 million TL in three months.⁶⁶ The purpose of establishing of The Turkish Aeronautical Association was

To explain to the Turkish nation, in particular the Turkish youth, how crucial a role aviation was set to play in civilian and military fields; to get volunteers to have an affinity for aviation, as well as determining the major role of protecting the skies when dealing with national defense; to provide assistance and support to military and civil aviation in the country; to establish air tourism in Turkey and ensure its continual development.⁶⁷

In like manner, on 7 September 1925, The Turkish Ministry of National Defense and German Junkers Flugzeugwerke GmbH agreed to establish a factory in Kayseri that would manufacture aircraft, engines and automobiles.⁶⁸

In the 1920s, the Turkish state adopted a rather liberal economic policy in the area of civil aviation which was in line with the general economic policies of the Republic before the 1929 Great Depression. In that context, the Turkish government granted a permit to the Italian Aero Espresso Airlines in 1926 to begin scheduled commercial

⁶⁵ Abdullah Nergiz, "Türkiye'de Sivil Havaçılığın Gelişimi ve THY," (Master's Thesis, Marmara University, 2008), p.9.

⁶⁶ Stuart Kline, *A Chronicle of Turkish Aviation* (İstanbul: Havaş, 2002), p.145.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp.145-146.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.151.

seaplane service over two routes: Büyükdere-Athens-Brindisi and Büyükdere-Athens-Rhodos.⁶⁹

In the 1930s, the Turkish state adopted rather etatist economic policy in the post-1929 environment in line with the global trends. Hence, the state itself invested in certain areas to foster economic growth. The establishment of a national airline company should be regarded in that context. On 20 May 1933, the national flag carrier airline of Turkey was established by Law No. 2186 with the name of Airlines State Management Administration (*Hava Yolları Devlet İşletmesi İdaresi*).⁷⁰ In the upcoming years, all the permits granted to foreign airlines were taken back.⁷¹

The decision to establish a national airline in Turkey was not independent from the worldwide trends in the civil aviation. On 6 February 1933, the first non-stop flight from the United Kingdom to South Africa was achieved. The same year, the Atlantic Ocean was crossed with a non-stop flight.⁷² In 1933, some other major European airlines were founded, including France's Air France and Britain's Imperial Airways.⁷³ The new Republican regime saw the establishment of a national airline as a symbol of prestige, catching up with the modernity and civilization.⁷⁴ At the beginning, the resources of Airlines State Management Administration were very limited. It had only five airplanes, 28 seats and 24 staff.⁷⁵ It should be noted that among five airplanes in the fleet, one of

⁶⁹ Kline, p.155.

⁷⁰ İdris Albayrak, *Dünden Bugüne Türk Hava Yolları 1933-1983* (İstanbul: Cem Ofset, 1983), p.12.

⁷¹ Nergiz, p.67.

⁷² Türk Hava Yolları, *75.Yılında Türk Hava Yolları*, p.60.

⁷³ Albayrak, p.12.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.60.

⁷⁵ Türk Hava Yolları, *75.Yılında Türk Hava Yolları*, p.60.

them (Tupolev ANT-9) had been given by the Soviet Union as a gift for the 10th anniversary of the Turkish Republic.⁷⁶ One might not be surprised with this gesture considering the support given by the Soviet Union to the Republican regime in Turkey during the interwar period.⁷⁷

In the 1930s, airlines were also seen as a source of military reserve with their aircrafts and pilots. Perhaps, from that perspective, initially the Airlines State Management Administration was subject to the Ministry of Defense.⁷⁸ This changed after an English aviation specialist recommended that the Airlines State Management Administration should be transferred to the Public Works Ministry. The new regulation took place on 30 May 1935, in accordance with Law No.2744.⁷⁹ Lastly, on 27 May 1939, it was decided that the Airlines State Management Administration would subject to the Ministry of Transportation in accordance with Law No.3613.⁸⁰

Turkey's aviation policy at that time was not limited to the activities of the Airlines State Management Administration. One of the symbols of Turkish aviation was Atatürk's adopted daughter, Sabiha Gökçen, whose name was later given to the second airport built in İstanbul in 2001. Sabiha Gökçen was the first female aviator of Turkey and first female combat pilot in the world. On 16 June 1938, she started a goodwill tour of the Balkan countries. In her five-day tour of the region, she was warmly welcomed in

⁷⁶ Nergiz, pp.86-87.

⁷⁷ Erel Tellal, "1923-1939 SSCB'yle İlişkiler," in *Türk Dış Politikası Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar Vol.1*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 2008), pp.315-320

⁷⁸ Türk Hava Yolları, *75.Yılında Türk Hava Yolları*, p.60.

⁷⁹ Kline, p.209.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.251.

Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Romania.⁸¹ From a foreign policy perspective, this tour represents Turkey's policy of establishing good relations with its neighbors in the Balkans as the Second World War was approaching. Indeed, Greece, Yugoslavia and Romania were the partners of Turkey in the Balkan Entente signed in 1934. Initially, Bulgaria did not participate in this alliance due to its revisionist foreign policy. Finally, on 31 July 1938, the members of Balkan Entente signed a confidence building agreement with Bulgaria.⁸² Hence, the political significance of the Balkan tour of Sabiha Gökçen should be interpreted by taking the foreign relations of Turkey in the region into account.

One of the earliest achievements of Turkey in the field of civil aviation was attending the International Civil Aviation Conference in Chicago in November 1944. Fifty-five states were invited by the United States to “make arrangements for the immediate establishment of provisional world air routes and services and to set up an interim council to collect, record and study data concerning international aviation and to make recommendations for its improvement.”⁸³ Convention on International Civil Aviation was signed by 52 States set up the permanent International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) as a means to secure international cooperation at the highest possible degree of uniformity in regulations and standards, procedures and organization regarding civil aviation matters. At the same time, the International Services Transit Agreement and the International Air Transport Agreement were signed.⁸⁴ The convention

⁸¹ Kline, p.237.

⁸² Melek Fırat, “1923-1939 Yunanistan'la İlişkiler,” in *Türk Dış Politikası Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar Vol.1*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 2008), pp.351-353.

⁸³ ICAO, “International Civil Aviation Conference,” Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <http://www.icao.int/Pages/chicago-conference.aspx>

⁸⁴ ICAO, “Foundation of the International Civil Aviation Organization,” Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <http://www.icao.int/pages/foundation-of-icao.aspx>

was ratified by the Turkish parliament on 5 June 1945.⁸⁵ As a result, Turkey achieved full sovereignty over its airspace and some rights in the areas of cargo and commerce.⁸⁶ The head of the Turkish delegation in the conference, Şükrü Koçak, stated the following: “It is Turkey's cordial wish to cooperate with the United States, which has achieved a high place amongst all the nations represented at this conference. We wish the best of success to their country's civil aviation authorities and their foresighted policies which have encouraged such participation at this important and meaningful conference.”⁸⁷

Indeed, Turkey's close relations with the United States also gave it the opportunity to purchase 30 DC-3 and 3 C-47 aircrafts in 1945 that had been used by the American Air Force and the British Royal Air Force during the Second World War only for \$20,000 to be paid over a period of ten years. The sale of these aircrafts for a small amount of money as a gesture to Turkey from an ally directly contributed to the rapid growth of Turkey's national airline. After the necessary repair and maintenance, those airplanes started to operate on new flight routes. Thanks to this purchase, there was a 100% increase in the number of passengers and cargo carried in 1946 compared to a year earlier. Moreover, the number of pilots increased from 18 to 54. There was also a 30% increase in the number of staff.⁸⁸ At the end of the year, the Airlines State Management Administration became the largest airline in the Middle East using Ankara as a hub.⁸⁹ In 1946, it was renamed State Airlines.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Albayrak, p.52.

⁸⁶ Türk Hava Yolları, *75.Yılında Türk Hava Yolları*, p.61.

⁸⁷ Kline, p.286.

⁸⁸ Albayrak, p.55.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p.57.

⁹⁰ Türk Hava Yolları, *75.Yılında Türk Hava Yolları*, p.62.

Table 1. 1938-1947 State Airlines Figures

Year	Number of Flights	Number of Passengers	Revenue (TL)
1938	269	399	15,570
1939	623	2689	42,853
1940	556	1221	23,425
1941	507	2189	41,761
1942	849	5481	162,107
1943	967	5691	256,749
1944	1822	14,249	549,749
1945	2386	18,221	637,322
1946	3105	37,308	1,181,479
1947	6704	74,867	2,714,609

Data Obtained from Stuart Kline, *A Chronicle of Turkish Aviation*

On 12 February 1947, the first international flight of State Airlines from Ankara-İstanbul to Athens took place. Interestingly, the name of the airport in Athens was Hassani Airport. Since the land that was used to build the airport had belonged to a Turkish person called Hasan Ağa, his name was given to the airport.⁹¹ The following day, the statements of State Airlines CEO Osman Nuri Baykal were covered in *Cumhuriyet* newspaper as follows: “We give international flights significance. We have linked our country with our friend and neighbor, Greece. In that sense, I am truly honored to be on this historical flight. We are planning to fly to Beirut, Cairo, Baghdad and Tehran as well.”⁹²

The first flight of State Airlines to Athens is significant to show that in those years, Greece and Turkey were developing friendly relations. Both were aiming to get aid from the United States to recover their military and economy in the aftermath of the

⁹¹ Albayrak, p.67.

⁹² *Cumhuriyet*, 13 February 1947. “Memleket dışı seferlerine de büyük önem vermekte ve bunun kısa bir zamanda tahakkukuna çalışmaktayız. Bu çalışmalarımıza, komşu ve dostumuz Yunanistanla hava yolile bağlanmak işile başlamış bulunuyoruz. Bu maksadla ilk Ankara-Atina seferini bizzat yapmaktan büyük bir zevk duyuyorum. Beyrut, Lidya, Kahire, Bağdat ve Tahran seferleri de programımızın içindedir.”

Second World War. At that time, there was no Cyprus issue that would damage bilateral relations from 1950s onwards. In that environment, perhaps, it was easier to finalize the negotiations between the Ministries of Transportation of Turkey and Greece to reach an agreement regarding air transportation. It is also worth mentioning that the Turkish-Greek Air Transportation Treaty was signed only two days after the Paris Peace Treaty that transferred the sovereignty of the Dodecanese Islands from Italy to Greece.⁹³ Considering the geographical proximity of those islands to Turkey and a potential dispute, it can be argued that once the territorial issues were settled, air transport agreement was finalized easily.

Contrary to its close relations with its neighbor Greece, Turkey had strained relationship with its other western neighbor, Bulgaria, in the late 1940s. This brought about two events that need to be mentioned. On 9 February 1948, Bulgaria fired on two fighter planes of the Turkish Aeronautical Association which had erroneously crossed the border due to weather conditions. A Turkish pilot was killed when his plane was shot down over the Bulgarian town of Sozopol. Another aircraft had to make a forced landing.⁹⁴ After the communist takeover of the government in Bulgaria the relations between Turkey and Bulgaria were not good at all. In the same year, three Bulgarian dissidents and their relatives hijacked a plane to Yeşilköy airport in İstanbul. They fled the communist regime in Sofia to seek political asylum in Turkey which was later granted by the Turkish government.⁹⁵ These two cases demonstrate that the courses of events unfolded in two different ways with two neighbors, which can be attributed to the

⁹³ Melek Fırat, “1945-1960 Yunanistan’la İlişkiler,” in *Türk Dış Politikası Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar Vol.1*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 2008), p.583.

⁹⁴ Kline, p.296.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.301.

divergence in the foreign policy between Turkey and Greece on one side and Bulgaria on the other.

On 5 February 1951, the Turkish-Israeli Air Transportation Treaty was signed. The receipt of Turkish government approval for regularly scheduled service to İstanbul had an interesting story. After the official approval, El Al wanted to start its service immediately, but at that time did not have an aircraft to use in that route. Hence, it asked the Israeli Air Force for one of the Air Force's C-47 Dakotas to be leased for civilian purposes. The originally military aircraft underwent the necessary changes to be painted with the El Al name, given a civil registration and placed in service for the first scheduled flight to İstanbul on 1 March 1951.⁹⁶ Turkey being the first country with a predominantly Muslim population to recognize Israel, it was also the first such country to sign a treaty on air transportation. The Israeli flag carrier El-Al might have seen the opportunity to start flights to Turkey, which was both Muslim and part of Western bloc in the Cold War, as a way of increasing its political legitimacy in the region and the world.

The list of airline companies operating flights to Yeşilköy Airport in İstanbul in 1953 when the international terminal was opened was the following: Pan American, BEA (British), KLM (Dutch), SWR (Switzerland), SAS (Scandinavian), Air France, LAI (Italy), TAE (Greece), JAT (Yugoslavia), El-Al (Israel), and Cyprus Airways.⁹⁷ In 1953, State Airlines started flights to Mecca and Medina for pilgrimage purposes.⁹⁸ In 1954, the Department of Civil Aviation was established within the framework of the Ministry of

⁹⁶ Kline, p.314.

⁹⁷ Nergiz, p.93.

⁹⁸ Albayrak, p.458.

Transportation in accordance with Law No.6382.⁹⁹

When the Democratic Party came to power in 1950, initially it tried to limit state intervention in the economy and support free enterprise. However, not much had been achieved especially in the area of privatization of state-owned companies. In that sense, the government adopted a policy to establish joint stock companies with the participation of private capital.¹⁰⁰ The same logic applied to the national airline. As a result, on 1 March 1956 Turkish Airlines was officially established after the Principle Agreement had been ratified by the Council of Ministers. Fifty-one percent of its shares belonged to the public sector and the remaining 49% was for the private sector.¹⁰¹ The first international success of Turkish Airlines was its membership in IATA (International Air Transport Association), which was founded in 1945.¹⁰²

On 1957, BOAC (British Overseas Airways Corporation) purchased 6.5% of shares of Turkish Airlines worth £0.5 million. It also issued a credit worth £1.5 million for Turkish Airlines to purchase British aircraft Vickers Viscount.¹⁰³ In the 1940s and 1950s, some well-established American and European airlines often took stakes in foreign airlines just starting up, as in the case of Turkish Airlines. For instance, Pan American World Airways purchased shares in a number of airlines in Africa. Similarly, British European Airways and British Overseas Airways Corporation often took shares not only in Commonwealth countries, but also in other countries.¹⁰⁴ Hence, this

⁹⁹ Kline, p.325.

¹⁰⁰ Nergiz, pp.92-93.

¹⁰¹ Kline, p.334.

¹⁰² Türk Hava Yolları, *75.Yılında Türk Hava Yolları*, p.82.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p.84.

¹⁰⁴ Hanlon, p.9.

partnership was parallel to the global trends in civil aviation. The CEO of BOAC, George Cribbet, was elected to the Turkish Airlines Board of Directors to represent the foreign capital.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps Cribbet being a member of the decision making process is one of the reasons why Turkish Airlines purchased aircraft manufactured in Britain. According to Abdullah Nergiz, Turkish Airlines had taken the political factors into consideration during an aircraft purchase even in 1957. He underlines the significance of achieving the balance between the United States and Europe when Turkish Airlines purchased aircraft produced by American producer Fairchild Friendship, after the purchase from the British Vickers Viscount.¹⁰⁶

One of the primary roles of Turkish Airlines as a national flag carrier airline until today has been to carry the Presidents and Prime Ministers of Turkey during their trips. During one of those visits, Prime Minister Menderes conducted the first Turkish state visit to the Far East when he flew to South Korea, Japan, Nationalist China (Formosa) and India on board a Turkish Airlines Vickers Viscount aircraft. Adnan Menderes and his fellows spent 62 hours in the air in total and covered 28,137 km during the 15-day Asia tour.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, Turkish Airlines at that time contributed to Turkey's political opening to the East Asia. Thus, the aircraft provided by Turkish Airlines in service of the Prime Minister Menderes served Turkey's interest in the realm of foreign policy. In another instance, on 17 February 1959, Turkish Airlines' Vickers Viscount 794 D airliner carrying Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and some other politicians on their way to sign the Zurich Agreement that would establish the independent bi-communal Republic of

¹⁰⁵ Türk Hava Yolları, *75.Yılında Türk Hava Yolları*, p.84.

¹⁰⁶ Nergiz, pp.105-106.

¹⁰⁷ Kline, p.341.

Cyprus crashed in bad weather near Gatwick Airport in London that killed 15 people. Luckily, Prime Minister Menderes and 23 others survived from this accident.¹⁰⁸ Despite this fatal accident, Turkish Airlines has continued to carry high level Turkish state officials until this day on their domestic and foreign trips.

Politics and airlines continued to influence each other in the 1960s. For instance, Turkish Airlines was forced to open a sales office in Beirut due to the political pressure of the Lebanese government on Turkey and Turkish Airlines.¹⁰⁹ In 1964, Turkish Airlines opened new flight routes to Brussels, Munich and Tel Aviv.¹¹⁰ Turkish Airlines started to carry Turkish citizens that had migrated to Germany as workers and some other European countries to reduce the labor shortage. In that sense, Turkish Airlines changed its expansion strategy in line with this demand.

In the same year, Turkish Airlines had to cancel some of its flights due to the ethnic conflict in Cyprus between the two communities.¹¹¹ To protect the Turkish Cypriots from an attempt at ethnic cleansing, Turkey launched air strikes on the island in 1964. At first, Turkey threatened a direct military intervention to guard the Turkish Cypriot community and the constitutional order on the island. However, the harsh response of the Johnson administration in the United States prevented Turkey from putting its plan into practice. All those developments led Turkish Airlines to take a decision to insure its airplanes against a potential armed conflict between Turkey and

¹⁰⁸ Kline, p.343.

¹⁰⁹ Nergiz, p.123.

¹¹⁰ Türk Hava Yolları, *75.Yılında Türk Hava Yolları*, p.92.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Greece.¹¹² Thus, foreign policy considerations of Turkey at that time immediately affected the operations of Turkish Airlines.

In the 1960s, the alliance between Turkey and the United States started to be questioned due to a number of issues including Cuban missile crisis and American position regarding the Cyprus issue. Hence, Turkey aimed to develop its relations with the countries in the Eastern Bloc, including the communist northern neighbor the Soviet Union.¹¹³

The developments in civil aviation were not exempt from this general trend. For instance, between 1965 and 1967 Turkish Airlines inaugurated scheduled flights to Belgrade,¹¹⁴ Sofia¹¹⁵ and Budapest.¹¹⁶ Moreover, a delegation was sent to the Soviet Union to consider the possible offers in the context of a project to decide the type of the aircraft to be purchased by Turkish Airlines in 1968.¹¹⁷ As Abdullah Nergiz writes, this choice was guided by political interest rather than a commercial basis.¹¹⁸ It is highly probable that civil aviation was viewed as another means to foster the cooperation between Turkey and the Soviet Union in the late 1960s. During the same process to decide the type of the aircraft to be purchased, the representative of BOAC in the Turkish Airlines Board of Directors, Gilbert Lee, lobbied for a British manufacturer to be

¹¹² Nergiz, p.139.

¹¹³ Çağrı Erhan, “1960-1980 ABD ve NATO’yla İlişkiler,” in *Türk Dış Politikası Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar Vol.1*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 2008), pp.689-690.

¹¹⁴ Albayrak, p.121.

¹¹⁵ Kline, p.355.

¹¹⁶ Albayrak, p.126.

¹¹⁷ Nergiz, p.146.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

chosen.¹¹⁹

From the late 1960s and early 1970s onwards, Turkish Airlines shifted its expansion strategy in parallel with the rising demand from the Turkish immigrant workers in Western Europe. Hence, Turkish Airlines opened new flight destinations in Western European countries with a greater emphasis on Germany where the number of Turkish workers was the highest among all other countries. In that context, Turkish Airlines opened new flight destinations in Köln (1969)¹²⁰, Düsseldorf and Stuttgart (1971)¹²¹, Hannover and Hamburg (1972)¹²², Copenhagen, Berlin and Nürnberg (1973)¹²³. The rising demand from the side of the Turkish workers was met by Turkish Airlines that aimed to be the primary airline carrying them from/to Turkey. Turkish Airlines also wanted to utilize such passenger potential in the area of faith tourism. It started a campaign to carry Turkish workers to the pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia. In that sense, in 1970, Turkish Airlines even sent a group of Muslim clergy to Germany to make propaganda to the Turkish citizens to fulfill their religious duty.¹²⁴

In the 1970s, political and economic crises around Turkey influenced Turkish Airlines from a couple of standpoints. Especially, 1973 Arab-Israeli War or the so-called Yom Kippur War, had a devastating effect on the world economy. The airline industry all over the world was deeply affected by the OPEC oil embargo and the rise of the oil prices. Turkish Airlines was not immune to this negative impact of the war. As a result, its

¹¹⁹ Nergiz, p.149.

¹²⁰ Albayrak, p.134.

¹²¹ Ibid., p.140.

¹²² Ibid., p.147.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Nergiz, p.170.

expenditures on oil increased tremendously.

One year later, the political crisis in Cyprus reached an alarming level in Turkey. The military coup supported by the junta in Greece declared that from then onwards Cyprus would be a part of Greece. For Turkey, that was the worst-case scenario. As Turkey was one of the guarantor countries of the constitutional order, it acted unilaterally in order to reinstitute *status quo ante*. However, at the end of the military operation, the island was territorially divided. Turkey's military action was not praised by the United States Congress under the influence of the Greek lobby. It imposed on Turkey an arms embargo since it had used American weapons during the military intervention.¹²⁵ During the war on Cyprus, Turkey closed its airspace and all the flights had to be cancelled.¹²⁶

The new status quo on the island gave new responsibilities to Turkish Airlines as well. One example is the establishment of Cyprus Turkish Airlines as a partnership of Turkish Cypriot Community (50%) and Turkish Airlines (50%).¹²⁷ Since Turkish Cypriots could not gain international recognition as an independent entity, Cyprus Turkish Airlines could not operate direct flights from the island. The new airline company was a liability for Turkish Airlines that was a *fait accompli* for it influenced by foreign policy considerations of Turkey. The Turkish state assigned Turkish Airlines to cooperate with the Turkish Cypriot community in order to take necessary steps to establish a "national airline" symbolizing their independence and prestige. The political crisis in Cyprus also negatively affected Turkish Airlines' flights to Greece in the upcoming year.

¹²⁵ Erhan, p.705.

¹²⁶ Kline, p.369.

¹²⁷ Nergiz, p.228.

In 1975, flights to Beirut also could not be operated due to the civil war in Lebanon.¹²⁸

These instances illustrate the unstable nature of the airline industry, which is very sensitive to political and economic developments both in an airline's own state, its region and the world.

The airline ownership map was then redrawn on more nationalist grounds, in the 1960s and 1970s. Only a few airlines held a stake in the airline of another country.¹²⁹ In that context, opposition to the shares that belonged to BOAC in Turkish Airlines started to gain support. As a result, on 17 February 1977, the 20-year old shares of BOAC were nationalized by the Ministry of Finance.¹³⁰ According to Abdullah Nergiz, the rise of anti-imperialist movements also played a role in this decision.¹³¹

In the late 1970s, Turkish Airlines was in search of new markets to expand its route map. Thus, new flight routes were opened including Baghdad, Tehran, Dhahran (1978)¹³² and Kuwait, Jeddah (1979).¹³³ These route openings coincided with Turkey's efforts to improve its relations with the countries in the Middle East. In the Middle East, Turkey wanted to assert itself as part of a foreign policy opening. Turkish Airlines contributed to this opening by connecting Turkey to the Middle East and increasing Turkey's visibility in the region. It also aimed to use Turkey's geographical position to bridge Europe and the Middle East. In the early 1980s, this trend went on. Turkish

¹²⁸ Türk Hava Yolları, *75.Yılında Türk Hava Yolları*, p.139.

¹²⁹ Hanlon, p.9.

¹³⁰ Türk Hava Yolları, *75.Yılında Türk Hava Yolları*, p.125.

¹³¹ Nergiz, p.218.

¹³² Albayrak, p.163.

¹³³ Ibid.

Airlines added Abu Dhabi (1981)¹³⁴ and Amman (1982) to its flight routes.¹³⁵ In 1982, Turkish Airlines carried almost 2.5 million passengers. This number was only 0.003% of the total number of passengers carried worldwide.¹³⁶ As this number illustrates, Turkish Airlines was still far from being a major airline company at that time.

In 1983, Turkish Airlines celebrated its 50th anniversary. In the same year, three-year military regime ended with the parliamentary elections with the participation of only three political parties approved by the military. The Motherland Party headed by Turgut Özal achieved a landslide victory in the elections. Even today, Turgut Özal is known for his vision of opening Turkey up to the world. His economic policies were based on export-led growth. In that sense, he saw Turkish Airlines as a crucial part of his vision of a Turkey which was more integrated with its neighborhood and rest of the world. Hence, the Özal era might be regarded as a turning point for Turkish Airlines. Those were also the years Turkish Airlines' expansion strategy was overtly parallel to the developments in Turkish foreign policy. Özal and the Motherland Party used Turkish Airlines as a tool to corroborate his foreign policy vision.

In 1984, Turkish Airlines' Board of Directors and organizational structure was revised by Executive Order No.233.¹³⁷ Legally, Turkish Airlines became a Public Economic Enterprise after these changes.¹³⁸ Parallel to it, the influence of Turgut Özal on Turkish Airlines started to increase. Özal had a vision for Turkey and Turkish Airlines. He wanted them to complement each other and contribute to their success. His plans for

¹³⁴ Albayrak, p.176.

¹³⁵ Ibid, p.179.

¹³⁶ Albayrak, p.233.

¹³⁷ Nergiz,, p.266.

¹³⁸ Türk Hava Yolları, *75.Yılında Türk Hava Yolları*, p.158.

Turkish Airlines included the privatization of Turkish Airlines, consideration of opening new flight destinations in the Soviet Union and Japan, increase the number of flights to the Gulf countries such as Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Qatar and considering to opening up to Algeria.¹³⁹ Those plans were in accordance with Turkey's vision of opening up to the world as well as Turkish Airlines becoming a global airline company.

In 1984, Turkish Airlines decided to purchase aircraft from the European producer Airbus for the first time. According to Abdullah Nergiz, political considerations, Turkish foreign policy of aiming to have closer relations with the European Economic Community, played a significant role in this purchase as many other aircraft purchases.¹⁴⁰ In 1986, Turkish Airlines started fly to Singapore and Mumbai.¹⁴¹ These new flight destinations coincided with the rise of East Asia in global industry and commerce. If Turkey were to increase its presence in this region, Turkish Airlines ought to operate in the East Asian free market.¹⁴² All these instances demonstrate that the orientation of Turkish foreign policy and the policies adopted by Turkish Airlines influenced each other during that time.

In 1988, Cem Kozlu was appointed CEO of Turkish Airlines. Turgut Özal himself appointed Kozlu to transform Turkish Airlines into a company that was open to competition and acting rationally in accordance with the rules of the market.¹⁴³ Özal asked Kozlu to modernize Turkish Airlines and prepare the ground for its future privatization. For Özal, Kozlu's background as a businessman was an asset for the

¹³⁹ Nergiz, pp.266-267.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p.274.

¹⁴¹ Türk Hava Yolları, *75.Yılında Türk Hava Yolları*, p.163.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p.162.

company to take the necessary steps in order to link Turkey with the countries that had a promising potential for trade and investment.¹⁴⁴ Özal believed that Turkey's strategy of opening up to the world in terms of economy and foreign policy would create demand for passenger and cargo traffic. Hence, Turkish Airlines had to be prepared to complement this strategy.¹⁴⁵

Özal requested Turkish Airlines help him realize his vision of opening up to the United States, Japan and some other overseas political and economic partners. In that way, Özal strongly encouraged Turkish Airlines to embark on his vision.¹⁴⁶ Even before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Özal told Kozlu that Turkish Airlines had to be ready to fly to Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, he emphasized the need to start flights to Tokyo to strengthen the commercial and tourism potential between Turkey and Japan despite the opposition by Turkish Airlines officials that Tokyo route would not be profitable.¹⁴⁸ Özal not only projected a vision for Turkish Airlines, but also used his political power to take slots from the Japanese government that further facilitated the start of flights to Tokyo.

Turkish Airlines also took up a role just before the inception of the Iran-Iraq war by rescuing 215 Japanese citizens from Iraq with the order of Özal.¹⁴⁹ Even though this occasion is not well known by the Turkish public, Japanese people regard it as an

¹⁴⁴ Cem Kozlu, *Bulutların Üzerine Tırmanırken THY, Bir Dönüşüm Öyküsü* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitapevi, 2009), p.13.

¹⁴⁵ Kozlu, p.94.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.95.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Radikal*, 5 February 2004.

important gesture by the Turkish government that contributed to the friendship between the two countries. Indeed, the Consulate General of Japan in İstanbul in November 2011, Katsuyoshi Hayashi, emphasized the significance of the rescue operation of Turkish Airlines in 1985, because “it created a strong emotional bond between the countries”.¹⁵⁰

Özal also had a new vision to utilize Turkey’s potential as a tourist destination in the Mediterranean to be able to compete with Greece, Italy and Spain.¹⁵¹ Especially, the number of landings at Antalya Airport should have increased in order to enhance Turkey’s share in tourism. In order to carry European tourists to Turkey, Antalya-based Sun Express Airlines was established in 1989 as a partnership between Turkish Airlines and German Lufthansa. Sun Express contributed to Turkey’s potential to attract tourists to Antalya region and increased the inflow of foreign currency.¹⁵²

The Cold War ended on 9 November 1989 after the collapse of the Berlin Wall that had divided East and West. The bipolar world order since the Second World War was gone. The world was no longer divided ideologically between the free world and the communist bloc. In that context, only 18 days after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Turkish Airlines started flights to Moscow on 27 November 1989.¹⁵³ Already developing relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union were further accelerated with this decision. In addition to its symbolic meaning, this new route facilitated Turkey’s and Turkish Airlines’ engagement with Central Asia where there was a high number of Turkish speaking people in a vast geography who had lived under the “Soviet yoke” for

¹⁵⁰ Consulate General of Japan in Istanbul, “Başkonsolsun Mesajı,” Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: < http://www.istanbul.tr.emb-japan.go.jp/consulate_t/annai/mesaj.html >

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p.47.

¹⁵² Türk Hava Yolları, *75.Yılında Türk Hava Yolları*, p.166.

¹⁵³ Kozlu, p.97.

many decades. Özal wanted Turkey to establish links with those people. Establishing an airline network would be one of the tools that would facilitate the process. If that could take place, those people would be connected to the rest of the world via Turkey (İstanbul) rather than Moscow. In March 1991, Özal conducted a trip to Moscow, Kiev, Baku and Almati. At the end of his trip, Turkish Airlines started to operate flights to Baku on 25 March 1991.¹⁵⁴ In the upcoming years, Turkish Airlines opened new flight destinations in the other newly independent Turkish speaking countries. This contributed to Turkey's role as a gateway to Central Asia in terms of politics and commerce.

In September 1990, it was decided that Turkish Airlines would be one of the Public Economic Establishments to be privatized.¹⁵⁵ Through initial public offering, 1.8% of the shares of Turkish Airlines were privatized on the İstanbul Stock Exchange on 20 December 1990.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, the privatization experience of Turkish Airlines officially started. On 27 November 1994, Turkish Airlines started to be subjected to the Directorate of Privatization Administration (*Özelleştirme İdaresi Başkanlığı*) with the recognition of its strategic principles as a national flag carrier airline.¹⁵⁷ All these legal changes helped Turkish Airlines transform its mentality into some kind of autonomy without giving up its responsibilities as the national airline of Turkey.¹⁵⁸

In that context, it opened 22 new international flight destinations between 1994 and 2001 including Chicago, Beijing, Tripoli, Barcelona and Seoul.¹⁵⁹ The vision of

¹⁵⁴ Kozlu, pp.98-99.

¹⁵⁵ Şule Çiçekçi, "Hava Taşımacılığının Özelleştirilmesi ve Türk Hava Yolları Örneği" (Master's Thesis, Marmara University, 2006), p.80.

¹⁵⁶ Nergiz, p.304.

¹⁵⁷ Türk Hava Yolları, *75.Yılında Türk Hava Yolları*, p.210.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

Turkish Airlines for the twenty-first century was the following: regional leadership on long haul flights, opening new international flight destinations, making İstanbul Atatürk Airport a hub, providing technical, educational and technological service to the airlines in the region and boosting its image abroad and join an alliance system.¹⁶⁰

11 September 2001 was the worst day civil aviation history has ever seen. Four passenger jets were hijacked and used as weapons against the United States. Two aircrafts hit the World Trade Center in New York City and one hit the Pentagon in Washington DC. A fourth aircraft crashed into a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. The attacks of 9/11 dramatically affected civil aviation industry worldwide. Turkish Airlines was also affected negatively as the demand for air transportation shrank. The number of passengers dropped dramatically. For instance, the occupancy rate of the Tokyo route, which had been 92% prior to 9/11 declined to 17%. Turkish Airlines had to close its extended line service to Osaka as the Japanese line because of its cost. It experienced major drops in its service to Italy, Spain and the United States. Overall, 9/11 cost Turkish Airlines 1 million passengers.¹⁶¹

Another concern of Turkish Airlines was to reduce its costs in order to minimize its losses in the post 9/11 period. Therefore, six Airbus 310-200 aircrafts were sold to Iran Air,¹⁶² which was unable to purchase aircraft from the United States and Europe due to political reasons.¹⁶³ The Iranians wanted to purchase the inactive aircrafts of Turkish

¹⁵⁹ Data obtained from Turkish Airlines.

¹⁶⁰ Türk Hava Yolları, *75.Yılında Türk Hava Yolları*, p.220.

¹⁶¹ Kline, p.421.

¹⁶² Kozlu, p.227.

¹⁶³ Michael Carney and Mehdi Farashahi, "Transnational Institutions in Developing Countries: The Case of Iranian Civil Aviation," *Organization Studies* 27, no.1 (2005), p.67.

Airlines since there was a safety risk for Iran Air as the age of its fleet increased. Iran Air paid 15% over the market price of the aircrafts and both sides benefited from the deal.¹⁶⁴ Turkish Airlines reduced the age of its fleet and operational costs and Iran Air purchased a European manufactured aircraft which made its fleet safer and younger on average.¹⁶⁵ During the negotiations, the Americans were consulted since this deal could have disturbed the alliance between Turkey and the United States. The Americans could have considered it as an act of breaching the embargo on Iran. However, the United States gave tacit approval to this deal to be finalized.¹⁶⁶

Contrary to the 1990s which was marked by unstable coalition governments in Turkey, in November 2002, for the first time since 1987 elections, a single party government could be formed. The Justice and Development Party (AKP), headed by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül, won the overwhelming majority in the parliament. The change in the political landscape also had an impact on Turkish Airlines. The new government appointed new board members to the company in line with its vision for Turkish Airlines. Candan Karlıtekin was appointed as the President of Turkish Airlines Board of Directors by the government. During my interview with Karlıtekin, he said that when they took office, they had a meeting with high ranking state officials including Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül and Ahmet Davutoğlu to set up a vision for Turkish Airlines in line with the foreign policy vision of the AKP government.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Kozlu, p.227.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Candan Karlıtekin, Interview by the author. Note taking. İstanbul, Turkey. 21 December 2011. İstanbul Şehir Üniversitesi. İstanbul. Turkey.

Similar to the Özal's and Motherland Party's way of treating Turkish Airlines, Erdoğan and Justice and Development Party had a vision for Turkish Airlines to complement its foreign policy goals. As Turkey opened up to various geographies including the Gulf countries, Central Asia and Far East during Özal period with the help of Turkish Airlines, the AKP has used Turkish Airlines to open up to or further integrate to geographies including the Middle East, Africa, the former Soviet Union and the Balkans. For that purpose, the flight destinations opened by Turkish Airlines coincided with the course of Turkey's foreign policy to establish political, economic and societal ties with specific regions and countries.

In the preface of a book prepared for the 75th anniversary of the establishment of Turkish Airlines, Prime Minister Erdoğan emphasized the significance of the developments in the realm of foreign policy. Specifically, he mentioned his government's policy of Turkey being an active member of international community, close relations with the neighbors, rhythmic diplomacy, foreign policy openings and boosting Turkey's image.¹⁶⁸ He viewed Turkish Airlines as a flag carrier of Turkey's road to modernization and a symbol of multilateral foreign policy serving for the purpose of a strong and prosperous Turkey.¹⁶⁹ He stressed the significance of the success of Turkish Airlines to contribute to the tourism potential of Turkey. Considering that 70% of the tourists prefer air transportation during their visits to Turkey, he emphasized the importance of Turkish Airlines for Turkey's growth and development.¹⁷⁰ In the same book, the CEO of Turkish Airlines, Temel Kotil, described Turkish Airlines as the largest brand of Turkey in the

¹⁶⁸ Türk Hava Yolları, *75.Yılında Türk Hava Yolları*, p.20.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p.21.

world as it prepares to be one of the leading players of the world airline industry as a national flag carrier.¹⁷¹ He also drew an analogy likening Turkish Airlines to the Turkish national football team that represents Turkey in the international arena.¹⁷²

During the AKP era, foreign policy considerations seem to have played some role during the aircraft purchases worth more than a billion dollar. One specific example of this is the purchase of 36 aircrafts from the European producer Airbus in 2004. In that year, Turkey was aspiring to start accession negotiations with the European Union. Perhaps this purchase was used as leverage to push France towards supporting Turkey's bid for accession negotiations. Aware of this, the Vice President of Boeing complained about this politicized aircraft purchase, implying that Turkey's bid to start accession negotiations had pushed Turkish Airlines to purchase Airbus aircraft as a political gesture.¹⁷³

During my interview with Karlitekin, who put his signature on this deal as the President of Turkish Airlines Board of Directors, he denied such claims. He insisted that it was a decision had been based on rational economic calculations rather than political motives. However, he also acknowledged that at the public level, it was projected as if political motives were the main determinant of the deal.¹⁷⁴ Indeed, during the official ceremony to sign the agreements regarding the purchase of the aircrafts from Airbus, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, French President Jacques Chirac and

¹⁷¹ Türk Hava Yolları, *75.Yılında Türk Hava Yolları*, p.29.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p.20.

¹⁷³ NTVMSNBC, 21 July 2004, "THY filosunu Airbus'la büyütecek," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at:<<http://arsiv.ntvmsnbc.com/news/279206.asp>>

¹⁷⁴ Candan Karlitekin, Interview by the author.

German Chancellor Gerard Schröder were present in order to demonstrate the political will behind this deal.

Another interesting story regarding the relationship between political considerations and aircraft purchase came to be known with the infamous Wikileaks cables. According to the Cable *Ankara 000074*, in 2010, the Minister of Transportation Binali Yıldırım told the US Ambassador James Jeffrey that price was not the only consideration in purchasing aircraft from Boeing. He requested that Turkish astronaut participate in a NASA space flight in return for buying Boeing jets.¹⁷⁵ The fact that the Turkish Minister of Transportation could bargain in the name of Turkish Airlines shows to what extent politics is involved in these deals where tens of billions of dollars are on the line. What is also remarkable is that the Ambassador of the United States acted like an agent of Boeing in order to sell aircraft to Turkish Airlines. Of course, foreign policy considerations are not the only factor to determine what type of aircraft to be bought, but it is one of the major factors not only in the case of Turkey, but also in other countries as well. Perhaps, the optimum strategy from an economic point of view is not to rely on a single producer and not to lose the bargaining advantage to reduce the price.

In 2004, 23% of Turkish Airlines shares belonged to the Directorate of Privatization Administration were successfully privatized. Thus, the share of the state declined from 98.17% to 75.17%.¹⁷⁶ In 2006, another wave of privatization occurred. This time 28.75% of the shares were privatized. At the end of this wave of privatization, state's shares decreased as low as 46.43%¹⁷⁷ which ended Turkish Airlines' status of

¹⁷⁵ *Hürriyet Daily News*, 1 March 2011.

¹⁷⁶ Çiçekçi, p.82.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.83.

public entity.¹⁷⁸ After some price stabilizing measures, the share of the Directorate of Privatization Administration rose up to 49%.¹⁷⁹ Contrary to some other privatization experiences, the management of the company was not transferred to another entity by the state. From the state's point of view, the privatization of Turkish Airlines generated an inflow of money and did not change state's control over the management of the company.¹⁸⁰

With these structural changes, Turkish Airlines is no longer audited by the Prime Ministry Inspection Board. Practically, the government is very influential in the decision-making process of Turkish Airlines.¹⁸¹ Thus, the influence of the government on Turkish Airlines did not go away, but changed its format. This enables the government to use Turkish Airlines as a tool to promote its foreign policy agenda in various geographies. The current AKP government utilizes this situation very well. Although future waves of privatizations may weaken the influence of the government in Turkish Airlines, it will be affected by the developments in the realm of foreign policy as the history of civil aviation in Turkey illustrates. As long as Turkish Airlines remains the national flag carrier of Turkey, we might expect it to act in accordance with its "responsibilities" that stem from such status.

By 2010, Turkish Airlines joined the ranks of the world's top ten airlines in terms of number of flight destinations,¹⁸² which reached a total number of 174 (42 domestic,

¹⁷⁸ Çiçekçi, p.86.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p.83.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p.87.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Turkish Airlines, *Turkish Airlines Annual Report 2010*, Turkish Airlines Investor Relations, p.1.

132 international).¹⁸³ In 2010, it carried 29.1 million passengers. It ranks among the top 20 airlines in the world in terms of the number of passengers.¹⁸⁴ Among 29.1 million passengers, there were 5.05 million international transfer passengers.¹⁸⁵ This number was 1.6 million in 2006.¹⁸⁶

As İstanbul Atatürk Airport becomes a major international transfer hub, this number will increase further. This potential not only contributes to the reputation of İstanbul as a global city, but also contributes to Turkey's image in the minds of people. Thus, Turkey becomes a gateway for people opening up to the world via air transportation. Specifically, the availability of a high number of international flight connections to İstanbul contributes to Turkey's business and tourism potential. Indeed, Turkish Airlines offers its international transit passengers a free city tour programme if their connection time in Istanbul takes over six hours and their waiting time is between 09.00 am and 18.00 pm.¹⁸⁷ It can be said that Turkish Airlines not only increases the number of international transit passengers, but also contributes to İstanbul's tourism potential. As Singapore and Dubai have developed into tourist destinations with the help of being aviation hubs,¹⁸⁸ İstanbul may utilize from its tourism potential with the help of Turkish Airlines and Atatürk Airport.

¹⁸³ Turkish Airlines, *Turkish Airlines Annual Report 2010*, Turkish Airlines Investor Relations, p.33.

¹⁸⁴ Turkish Airlines, *Turkish Airlines Annual Report 2010*, p.5.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.23.

¹⁸⁶ Çiçekçi, p.23.

¹⁸⁷ Turkish Airlines, "Touristanbul," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <<http://www.istanbulinhours.com>>

¹⁸⁸ Sascha Guilherme Lohmann et al., "From Hub to Tourist Destination- An Explorative Study of Singapore and Dubai's Aviation-based Transformation," *Journal of Air Transport Management* 15, (2009), pp.205-211.

Turkish Airlines also received Skytrax's "Best Airline Southern Europe Award" in 2010, demonstrating its success as the national airline of Turkey.¹⁸⁹ Another important activity of Turkish Airlines that should be underlined is the sponsorship investments especially in the area of sports which promote its brand as well as Turkey's name worldwide. Sponsorship deals were signed with the two of world biggest sports brands, FC Barcelona and Manchester United. In addition, Turkish Airlines gave its name to the major basketball organization Euroleague, a sponsorship which targets the European market.¹⁹⁰ Turkish Airlines also made a sponsorship agreement with NBA all-star Kobe Bryant as its "brand emissary."¹⁹¹ Armenian population in Los Angeles where Kobe Bryant plays basketball denounced this deal since Turkey does not recognize the events of 1915 as genocide.¹⁹² This incident demonstrates that the images of Turkish Airlines and Turkey in the minds of people are not separate from each other.

As the national flag carrier airline of Turkey, Turkish Airlines is influenced by history and politic depending on the context. At the same time, the success of Turkish Airlines contributes positively to the global image of Turkey. That is why it can be considered as a soft power tool of Turkey that shapes the perceptions of people with regard to the country through its national airline company. In addition to the sponsorship deals, the involvement of Turkish Airlines contributes to Turkey's trade and tourism potential that influences mutual understanding between societies, hence improving political relations. In that sense, it acts like a soft power tool as well.

¹⁸⁹ Turkish Airlines, *Turkish Airlines Annual Report 2010*, p.15.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.61.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.58.

¹⁹² CNN, 20 December 2010, "Armenians denounce Kobe Bryant deal with Turkish Airlines" Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/SPORT/12/20/turkey.kobe.bryant.deal/index.html>>

Overall, it is questionable whether this kind of relationship between the state and an airline company will be beneficial to the both. One thing that can be said is that the relationship between the Turkish state and Turkish Airlines has been operating in that direction over the course of its history. However, the future remains to be seen regarding to what extent this relationship will change with political and economic developments yet to come.

CHAPTER 4

TURKISH AIRLINES AND TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

As it was frequently mentioned in the previous chapters, there is a special relationship between politics and national airlines. It is very often that national airlines help their states achieve certain political goals on various levels. In the realm of foreign policy, national airlines can be considered as soft power tools that contribute to the achievements of their states in line with certain objectives. Within this background, this chapter deals with Turkish Airlines as a soft power tool that facilitates the achievement of two main pillars of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East: developing business ties through free trade agreements and increasing tourism potential through a liberal visa regime. In that sense, Turkey aims to foster economic interdependence at the macro level and cultural interaction at the personal level as part of its general foreign policy agenda in the region. Therefore, Turkey aims to win the hearts and the minds of the people in the Middle East to promote itself as a regional player. Hence, to better understand the main dynamics behind Turkish Airlines opening new flight routes and increasing the frequencies of existing routes in the Middle East, we need to understand the course of Turkish foreign policy activism in the region.

Turkish Airlines' aggressive expansion strategy in this market is not independent from Turkey's foreign policy engagement in the region. The sponsorship deals and the promotion of the Turkish Airlines brand seem to have positively influenced the demand for Turkey's national airline, which also enhances Turkey's receptiveness in the region. As of October 2011, Turkish Airlines was flying to 26 destinations in 13 countries in the Middle East compared to 10 destinations in 9 countries in 2005. In six years, it added four countries (Iraq, Qatar, Yemen, Oman) and 16 more cities to the list of

destinations (Table 5). More concrete examples are given in the country-specific analysis of the tandem involvement of Turkey as an emerging regional power and Turkish Airlines as one of its soft power tools.

Turkey's foreign policy activism in the Middle East is a widely discussed phenomenon. Several books and articles have been written in order to explain the dynamics behind Turkey's recently increasing engagement in one of the world's most conflict ridden geographies. Despite itself being a country located in the Middle East, Middle Eastern affairs have not always been a priority in Turkish foreign policy. International and regional conjunctures have always influenced its policies towards the Middle East. During the interwar period and the Cold War years, Turkey was unable to, and at the same time was perhaps not willing to, establish close links with especially the Arab countries in the Middle East. Although some exceptions to this overall trend exist, close relations remained at bilateral levels and did not progress due to some structural limitations, deliberate choices and preferences.

The end of the Cold War opened a new era in the making of Turkish foreign policy. The idea of expanding Turkey's economic ties with its neighbors was put into practice during this time. Turkey envisioned deepening economic ties as the driving force of Turkey's foreign policy approach towards its neighbors.¹⁹³ However, despite this new type of orientation, the 1990s were marked by a security-oriented Turkish foreign policy in the region. Another mentality change in Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East emerged between 1997 and 2002 when İsmail Cem was the foreign minister of Turkey. Turkey's deep cultural and historical links with the Arab

¹⁹³ Soli Özel, "AKP's Foreign Policy in the Context," in *What Does Turkey Think?* ed. Dimitar Bechev (London: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2011), p.72.

countries were emphasized during that period.¹⁹⁴ However, the goals of making Turkey an active player in the region coincided with an economic crisis and political instability that had curbed Turkey's influence in the Middle East.

Turkey's policy towards the Middle East during the AKP era has evolved from the above-mentioned developments. It is a common mistake to take AKP and Ahmet Davutoğlu as the starting point for Turkey's aspiration to develop close relations with the countries in its Middle Eastern neighborhood. However, it is also true that Turkey's involvement in the Middle East has never attracted such attention on either the domestic or international level before. The rising attraction of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East can be considered one of the soft power tools of Turkey the country.

Turkish foreign policy in the region aims to make borders in the Middle East meaningless through lifting visa requirements, developing commercial ties and integrating infrastructure.¹⁹⁵ Considering the figures of trade and tourism, this policy has succeeded to a certain degree. In 2001, Turkey's trade volume with the countries in the Middle East was 5.7 billion dollars. By 2010, this number had reached 35.9 billion dollars (Table 2). Moreover, the number of citizens of Middle Eastern countries visiting Turkey in 2001 was around 850,000, which reached approximately 3.5 million in 2010 (Table 3). Turkey aims to create a zone of peace and stability through free trade agreements with its Middle Eastern neighbors and lift visa requirements to facilitate the movement of people and goods. Indeed, Turkey is integrated into the Middle Eastern region more than ever in terms of economic interdependence through trade, investment

¹⁹⁴ İsmail Cem, *Ben Böyle Veda Etmeliyim: İsmail Cem Kitabı* (İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2008), pp.202-205.

¹⁹⁵ International Crisis Group, "Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints," *Europe Report*, no.203 (7 April 2010), p.i.

and tourism. Turkey's opening up to these countries in the context of this vision in its foreign policy is complemented by Turkey's use of Turkish Airlines as a soft power tool.

Table 2. Turkey's Trade with the Countries in the Middle East¹⁹⁶ (\$ millions)

Middle East	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Import	2811	2983	4030	5142	7391	9882	12,021	16,172	8556	14,932
Export	2886	3100	4876	7309	9375	10,191	13,366	22,744	17,013	20,935
Total	5696	6083	8906	12,451	16,768	20,073	25,389	38,916	25,570	35,868

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.
Data Obtained from Turkish Ministry of Economy

Table 3. Number of People Entered Turkey from Middle Eastern Countries (in thousands)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Iran	327	432	495	632	957	866	1058	1135	1383	1885
Bahrain	2	4	4	3	4	4	6	8	9	9
UAE	3	5	7	7	9	12	13	20	22	30
Iraq	16	16	25	112	108	123	180	250	285	280
Israel	311	270	321	300	394	363	511	558	312	110
Qatar	1	1	1	1	2	3	4	5	5	6
Kuwait	5	7	8	7	11	12	13	22	27	27
Lebanon	22	31	34	36	41	36	45	54	72	135
Syria	110	126	155	196	289	278	333	407	510	899
Saudi Arabia	21	26	24	25	36	39	41	56	67	85
Oman	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	6	5	5
Jordan	27	33	37	40	44	47	61	74	88	97
Yemen	1	2	2	4	3	3	4	5	6	6
Total	850	957	1115	1366	1900	1787	2272	2602	2792	3577

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.
Data Obtained from Turkish Statistical Institute

¹⁹⁶ Countries in the Middle East include Syria, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Yemen.

Table 4. Passengers Carried by Turkish Airlines in the Middle East (in thousands)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010 ¹⁹⁷	Total
Bahrain	10	11	10	10	11	11	21	44	56	58	241
Iran	54	76	78	87	91	104	132	200	314	326	1462
Iraq	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	53	62	120
Israel	194	177	183	187	210	215	291	348	331	297	2434
Jordan	39	45	43	56	63	66	93	115	151	146	818
Kuwait	19	18	19	25	29	33	38	43	53	65	341
Lebanon	23	26	23	25	28	24	47	75	143	141	555
Oman	0	0	0	0	0	8	22	21	25	33	108
Qatar	10	11	9	10	10	18	28	40	61	58	255
Saudi Arabia	56	88	95	102	115	108	112	214	250	304	1443
Syria	19	31	32	40	45	58	70	157	220	242	915
UAE	34	44	58	66	88	107	121	237	245	238	1237
Yemen	0	0	0	0	0	9	18	24	27	24	102
Total	460	528	552	610	692	763	997	1525	1931	1995	10,033

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

Data Obtained from Turkish Prime Ministry Public Diplomacy Office

Table 5. New Destinations Opened by Turkish Airlines since 2005 in the Middle East

Country	City	Date	Country	City	Date
UAE	Abu Dhabi	January 2006	Iran	Mashhad	March 2009
Yemen	Sana'a	February 2006	Iran	Shiraz	March 2011
Iran	Tabriz	February 2006	Iraq	Arbil	April 2011
Oman	Muscat	March 2006	Iraq	Basra	May 2011
Qatar	Doha	March 2006	Iraq	Najaf	July 2011
Saudi Arabia	Medina	November 2007	Iraq	Sulaymaniyah	July 2011
Syria	Aleppo	May 2008	Iraq	Mosul	October 2011
Iraq	Baghdad	October 2008	Saudi Arabia	Dammam	October 2011

Data Obtained from Turkish Airlines Press Releases

One indication of how the growth of Turkish commercial relations had a positive impact is the number of passengers carried by Turkish Airlines between 2001 and 2010. In 2001, Turkish Airlines carried around 450,000 passengers in the Middle Eastern market compared to around 2 million passengers in 2010 (Table 4). There is a positive correlation between Turkey's trade volume with the region and the number of passengers carried by Turkish Airlines. Therefore, the general trend is as follows: In the Middle East, the more Turkey increases its trade potential, the more tourists come to

¹⁹⁷ 2010 figures do not include December.

Turkey and the more people use Turkish Airlines to travel to and from Turkey. Aware of this general trend, the Turkish movie star Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ who appears in soap operas that are very popular in the Arab world, has become the new face of Turkish Airlines in the region.¹⁹⁸ The combination of the attraction of Turkish TV series and Turkish Airlines adds up to Turkey's soft power in the region.

There is a reciprocal relationship between Turkish Airlines and Turkish foreign policy that needs to be elaborated further. The CEO of Turkish Airlines, Temel Kotil, acknowledges that Turkish Airlines benefits from the liberal visa regime of Turkey.¹⁹⁹ Indeed, it has become much easier for a Middle Eastern citizen to board a Turkish Airlines flight and visit Turkey without any visa requirement. The increase in Turkish Airlines flights also benefits Turkey in terms of tourism income, foreign exchange earnings and the ability to attract and the shape the perception of the foreigners. However, it should be kept in mind that the growth of Turkish Airlines in the Middle East is a fragile one. Political developments may also affect its operations negatively. Hence, Turkish Airlines needs to be very careful not to be over-politicized that may harm its economic interest.

Turkish Airlines and Turkish Foreign Policy in Iran

Iran is the only country in Turkey's neighborhood in the Middle East to have a greater population and area than Turkey. The Turkish-Iranian border is known to be one of the most stable borders in the region's history. Until the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the Republic of Turkey had close relations with the Shah's regime. The close

¹⁹⁸ *Sabah*, 3 April 2010.

¹⁹⁹ *Radikal*, 9 January 2011.

relationship between Atatürk and Reza Shah in the interwar period and Turkey and Iran being close allies of the United States during the Cold War until the Islamic Revolution in Iran encouraged the two states to emphasize cooperation over competition in that period. However, since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the two countries have represented rival political systems. Therefore the regimes in Ankara and Tehran have abstained from pursuing close relations with each other. Mutual distrust has been one of the main factors shaping the perceptions of “the other” in Turkey and Iran. Especially in the 1990s, each side accused the other of supporting dissident movements, Kurdish separatists and Islamist.²⁰⁰ However, this started to change with the realization of a convergence in their common economic interests and their opposition to any territorial break up of Iraq that might lead to the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in the north.²⁰¹ According to Mohammed Ayoob, “Turkish and Iranian interests converge more than they diverge and there is a great realization of this fact in both Ankara and Tehran now than there was 10 years ago.”²⁰²

For Turkey, Iran is a very important market for Turkish products with a population that is comparable in size to that of Turkey. In addition, Turkey runs a large trade deficit with Iran due to its energy imports.²⁰³ Hence, developing commercial ties by increasing the volume of exports to Iran could help Turkey balance its trade deficit.

²⁰⁰ Robert Olson, “Turkey-Iran Relations, 1997 to 2000: The Kurdish and Islamist Question,” *Third World Quarterly* 21, no.5 (2000), p.889.

²⁰¹ William Hale, “Turkey and the Middle East in the New Era,” *Insight Turkey* 11, no.3 (2009), pp.153-154.

²⁰² Mohammed Ayoob, “Beyond the Domestic Wave: A Turko-Persian Future?” *Middle East Policy* 18, no.2 (Summer 2011), p.118.

²⁰³ Kemal Kirişçi, “Comparing the Neighborhood Policies of Turkey and the EU in the Mediterranean,” in *Turkey: Reluctant Mediterranean Power* (Washington DC: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2010), p.29.

There is also an existing visa-free travel agreement between the two countries that was introduced in 1964.²⁰⁴ Therefore, the free movement of people on both sides has already been achieved. What is needed is the political will to encourage and open the path for further developing business and tourism ties. In this context, Turkish Airlines through its regular flights contributes positively to the commercial and tourism potential between Turkey and Iran, a goal which is set by both countries. In addition to the existing Tehran route, Turkish Airlines has recently opened new flight destinations in Iran in order to facilitate the movement of people and goods on both sides. Since 2005, Turkish Airlines started to operate scheduled flights to Tabriz (February 2006), Mashhad (March 2009) and Shiraz (March 2011) (Table 5).

The opening of the Shiraz route was covered by *Hürriyet Daily News* in a detailed manner. According to a member of Turkish Airlines Board of Directors, “Turkish Airlines carries not only passengers but also economic and cultural ties.”²⁰⁵ One of the functions of the Shiraz route is to connect Iranian Americans living in Los Angeles, whose population is around 800,000.²⁰⁶ The investment opportunities and the economic and cultural level of the people living in Shiraz are also emphasized by the Turkish Airlines manager overseeing the destination.²⁰⁷ This single instance shows that Turkish Airlines' involvement in the Iranian market is not merely an airline company's growth. The meanings and perceptions attached to this involvement are diverse from economic to cultural exchanges are in line with the main pillars of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East.

²⁰⁴ Kemal Kirişçi, “Comparing the Neighborhood Policies of Turkey and the EU in the Mediterranean,” p.29.

²⁰⁵ *Hurriyet Daily News*, 16 March 2011.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

As of 2010, Turkey's exports to Iran reached three billion dollars. At the same time, Turkey's imports from Iran were around seven billion dollars. The total trade volume between the two countries was 10 billion dollars in 2010 with the potential to increase further (Table 6). This potential can be fulfilled as more Turkish business people travel to Iran and Iranian business people travel to Turkey. According to Mehr News,

Iranian First Vice President Mohammadreza Rahimi proposed the establishment of a joint airline by Iran and Turkey in a bid to streamline the bilateral trade. He made the proposal in a meeting of Iranian and Turkish business people in Tehran on Tuesday, predicting the annual trade between the two states would rise to \$30 billion within the next four or five years.²⁰⁸

The probability that Turkey would accept this offer is very low considering its usage of Turkish Airlines for that purpose in the region. However, this news is significant to demonstrate how much importance is given to airlines to facilitate the movement of people and goods between the two countries.

Table 6. Turkey's Trade with Iran (\$ millions)

Iran	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Import	840	921	1861	1962	3470	5627	6615	8200	3406	7645
Export	361	334	534	813	913	1067	1441	2030	2025	3044
Total	1200	1255	2394	2775	4383	6694	8057	10,229	5431	10,689

Data Obtained from Turkish Ministry of Economy

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

The tourism dimension also requires mention. Although the upward trend in the number of Iranian tourists entering Turkey cannot be attributed to the engagement of Turkish Airlines alone, its role should not be underestimated. The number of tourists entering Turkey from Iran is the highest among the Middle Eastern countries considering its geographical proximity and size of its population (Table 3).

²⁰⁸ Mehr News, 29 October 2009, "Joint Iran-Turkey Airlines Proposed," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at:<<http://www.news.az/articles/turkey/1088>>

According to a paper written by Kirişci, Tocci and Walker,

The visa-free policy has also enabled large numbers of regime opponents to flee the country and enjoy temporary protection in Turkey before settling elsewhere in the West. Turkey is one of the few countries that the Iranian middle-class can visit freely and in which they can enjoy the benefits of a liberal economy and society.²⁰⁹

Turkey offering a more liberal and open society can be considered an additional source of Turkey's soft power in the eyes of the Iranian population. Moreover, Turkish Airlines acts as a soft power tool to present itself as the modern airline company of a country that is attractive to Iranians.

Turkish Airlines and Turkish Foreign Policy in Iraq

Traditionally, Turkey's relations with Iraq have been dominated by security considerations. Economic relations have remained on a limited level. However, Turkey has always been affected by the internal developments in its neighbor Iraq. For instance, in the 1990s, Northern Iraq was a safe haven for the PKK, which is considered to be a grave security threat to the territorial integrity of Turkey. Thus, the escalation of terrorist attacks and the presence of a Kurdish population in Northern Iraq were seen in terms of security in the context of Turkey's policies towards Iraq.

The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the post-Saddam order in that country have changed the balance of power among the ethnic and religious groups in the country. The Turkish parliament's refusal to allow American troops to use Turkish soil to open a second front in 2003 perhaps reduced Turkey's say in the future of Iraq. Currently, Turkey's policy in Iraq is to preserve the territorial integrity of the country in order to

²⁰⁹ Kemal Kirişci et al., *A Neighborhood Rediscovered: Turkey's Transatlantic Value in the Middle East* (Washington DC: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2010), p.22.

prevent the emergence of an independent Kurdish state in the north.

After the cross border military operation in 2008, Turkey started to develop its relations with all parties in Iraq, but more specifically with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).²¹⁰ From 2008-2009 onwards, corresponding with the inauguration of Barack Obama as the new American president, Turkey has developed its relations with Iraq. Hence, abandoning the traditional security-only approach, the Turkish government has transformed its relations with the KRG.²¹¹ Especially, foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's visit to Arbil in October 2009, with a delegation of around 70 officials and business people including the trade minister Zafer Çağlayan, is considered to have been contribution to the normalization of Turkey's relations with the KRG.²¹² Turkey's improvement of relations with the KRG was also praised by the European Commission in Turkey's 2009 Progress Report.²¹³

In this context, Turkish Airlines restarted scheduled flights to Baghdad in October 2008 (Table 5), a route which had stopped operating for 17 years due to the First Gulf War and its aftermath.²¹⁴ According to a report published by the International Crisis Group, “As of September 2009, 500 Turkish companies had invested in Iraq, and Turkey as a country was among the top ten foreign investors.”²¹⁵ The same report says

²¹⁰ Serhat Erkmen, “Türkiye-Irak İlişkileri,” *Ortadoğu Analiz* 1, no.4 (April 2009), p.6.

²¹¹ Kemal Kirişçi, “Comparing the Neighborhood Policies of Turkey and the EU in the Mediterranean,” p.28.

²¹² Ufuk Ulutaş, “Turkish Foreign Policy in 2009: A Year of Pro-activity,” *Insight Turkey* 12, no.1 (2010), p.4.

²¹³ European Commission, *Turkey Progress Report 2009* (Brussels: European Union, 2009) p.30.

²¹⁴ Mesut Özcan, “From Distance to Engagement: Turkish Policy towards the Middle East, Iraq and Iraqi Kurds,” *Insight Turkey* 13, no.2 (2011), p.85.

²¹⁵ International Crisis Group, “Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints,” p. 10.

the following:

Turkish contractors are ubiquitous, building roads, bridges and other infrastructure projects. In northern Iraq, Turkish companies now dominate markets for consumer goods, with penetration of over 80 per cent in some. (...) Ankara supplies electricity to the region and by March 2010 had signed 48 new agreements such as trade and development protocols. Turkey has acted as a conduit for oil exports and could do the same for gas as well.²¹⁶

Table 7. Turkey's Trade with Iraq (\$ millions)²¹⁷

Iraq	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Import	0	0	84	468	459	376	645	1321	952	1355
Export	0	0	718	1821	2750	2589	2845	3917	5124	6036
Total	0	0	802	2288	3209	2965	3490	5238	6076	7391

Data Obtained from Turkish Ministry of Economy

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

These developments were unimaginable until the very recent past. Although security considerations are still the major dynamics in shaping the relations, they are not the only one. According to Tarık Oğuzlu,

Just as the Turkomans are regarded as Turkey's relatives, so should the Kurds. In this view, Turkey's interest in northern Iraq could be better served should Ankara start to behave as the big brother of Kurds living there. The more dependent the region is on Turkey, the more Ankara can warn the Kurds not to challenge Turkey's red lines.²¹⁸

Turkey's volume of bilateral trade with Iraq reached 7 billion dollars by 2010 despite the global financial crisis that affected Turkey's bilateral trade with many countries negatively. Especially, in 2010 Turkish exports were around 6 billion dollars, giving it a trade surplus with Iraq (Table 7).

The number of Iraqi tourists entering Turkey is also on the rise (Table 3).

²¹⁶ International Crisis Group, "Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints," p. 10.

²¹⁷ There is no data for 2001 and 2002.

²¹⁸ Tarık Oğuzlu, "Soft Power in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 61, no.1 (March 2007), p.92.

Turkish nationals need visas to enter Iraq (Table 8), Iraqi nationals also need visa to enter Turkey from land border but can get the visa at the airport easily if they use air transportation (Table 9). If the visa requirements are lifted reciprocally, that may increase the rate of people-to-people contact. Turkish Airlines in the future can also play the role to expand commercial relations as well as reciprocal tourism revenues. Another factor that can contribute to the people-to-people contact is the reopening in February 2010 of the Istanbul-Baghdad railway line that was built before the World War One.²¹⁹ All these actions taken by or with the encouragement of the Turkish government have had an impact on developing relations on both the government and society level.

Table 8. Visa Requirements for Turkish Citizens

Bahrain	Exempt	Lebanon	Exempt
UAE	Needs Visa	Oman	Border Visa
Iraq	Needs Visa	Syria	Exempt
Iran	Exempt	Saudi Arabia	Needs Visa
Israel	Needs Visa	Jordan	Exempt
Qatar	Needs Visa ²²⁰	Yemen	Needs Visa
Kuwait	Needs Visa		

Data Obtained from Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Table 9. Visa Requirements for Entering Turkey

Bahrain	Border Visa	Lebanon	Exempt
UAE	Border Visa	Oman	Border Visa
Iraq ²²¹	Border Visa	Syria	Exempt
Iran	Exempt	Saudi Arabia	Border Visa
Israel	Exempt	Jordan	Exempt
Qatar	Border Visa	Yemen	Needs Visa
Kuwait	Border Visa		

Data Obtained from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

²¹⁹ Kadri Kaan Renda, "Turkey's Neighborhood Policy: An Emerging Complex Interdependence," *Insight Turkey* 13, no.1 (2011), p.101.

²²⁰ Visa granted at the airport for Turkish citizens fulfilling some financial requirements.

²²¹ Border visa granted at airport but for land crossings visa is required.

Turkish Airlines has increased its presence by opening five new flight destinations in the country. Especially the opening of Arbil route has been given wide coverage in the Turkish and Iraqi media. It was initially the foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, who mentioned Turkish Airlines' plan to fly to Arbil in a bilateral meeting with the KRG leader Mesud Barzani in June 2010 as a part of a common strategy in energy, trade and transportation between the two countries.²²² Within ten months, Turkish Airlines launched its first flight to Arbil, the base of the KRG (Table 5). When the first plane landed at Arbil International Airport, which had been built by Turkish company and opened by Tayyip Erdoğan, a ceremony was held.²²³ During the ceremony, Turkey's minister of finance, Mehmet Şimşek, said the following:

In recent years, we have been developing our relations with neighboring countries based on a policy of zero-problem and through strong cooperation as well as more investments. Turkish Airlines' flights to Arbil are a physical manifestation of the existing ties between the hearts of the Turks and Iraqis. Hopefully, flights will make great contributions to trade, investment and cooperation between our peoples. We have been brothers for a thousand years. No one can destroy this brotherhood.²²⁴

The statements made by Mehmet Şimşek who made some parts of the speech in Kurdish clearly illustrate the main motives behind the opening of the Arbil route. Undersecretary of the Turkish Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources Metin Kılıcı, Turkish Airlines chairman Hamdi Topçu and a group of Turkish business people were also on the very first Turkish Airlines flight to Arbil. Turkey's desire to increase ties in energy, trade and transportation are visible in the pictures of the ceremony. The role played by Turkish Airlines in this foreign policy strategy is a crucial one.

²²² *Star*, 3 June 2010.

²²³ *Hürriyet Daily News*, 14 April 2011.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

This role is also praised by the President of Turkish-Iraqi Friendship Council, which stated that Turkish Airlines' involvement in Arbil had contributed to business people's commercial activities in Iraq.²²⁵ It also should be noted that Atlasjet Airlines, which is another airline company in Turkey, started flying to Arbil as well as Suleymaniyah before Turkish Airlines.²²⁶ Pegasus Airlines, which is a private airline company in Turkey, started to operate flights to Arbil by October 2011.²²⁷ Even though they also facilitate the movement of people between the two countries, since they do not have any kind of state ownership, it is not possible to call them foreign policy tools similar to Turkish Airlines. One thing that the involvement of all airline companies in this market demonstrates is that there is also the demand side behind the growth of airline companies in Iraq that has become possible in the context of Turkey's developing relations with Iraq.

In addition to the new Arbil route, in 2011, Turkish Airlines added Basra, Najaf, Mosul and Suleymaniyah to the list of cities to which it flies. The political meaning behind these four destinations is to express Turkey's desire to engage with all ethnic and religious groups in Iraq. For instance, Najaf is considered to be the center of Shi'a political power. The new route is expected to increase the flow of tourists and Shi'a pilgrims to the city, home to the shrine of Imam Ali, Prophet Mohammed's cousin and a

²²⁵ Turkey-Iraq Friendship Association, 4 October 2010, "Türk Hava Yolları Erbil Ofisini Ziyaret," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at:<<http://tidd.org.tr/eng/Events/17-turk-hava-yollari-erbil-ofisini-ziyaret>>

²²⁶ Global Aviator, "Turkish Airlines Launches Flight to Iraq," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at:<<http://www.globalaviator.co.za/Countries/stories/turkishairlines.htm>>

²²⁷ *Zaman*, 11 October 2011.

figure regarded by Shi'a Muslims as the first Imam.²²⁸ In addition to this cultural meaning, Turkish business people are also interested in doing business with Najaf. The Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (MÜSİAD) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Najaf Chamber of Commerce and yet another MOU with the Suleymaniyah Chamber of Commerce on the occasion of the opening of the Turkish Airlines flight route between Istanbul and Suleymaniyah.²²⁹ Opening up to Mosul and Suleymaniyah can be considered in the context of improving relations with the KRG since those cities are close to the Turkish border and governed by the KRG. Basra, which is the second largest city in Iraq, is also a major port city that has economic potential value for Turkey's trade with Iraq. Indeed, Turkish trade minister Zafer Çağlayan emphasizes the significance of Basra and Southern Iraq for Turkey to develop commercial ties.²³⁰

Overall, the momentum change in Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq has fostered Turkish Airlines as a tool in this context. It facilitates the movement of people and goods to contribute to the achievement of Turkish foreign policy. At the same time, as an airline company, it benefits from the Iraqi market and increases its share in the Middle East civil aviation market. However, it should also be noted that this growth is very much dependent on the bilateral relations. Although business people on both sides of the border objected a security-based approach,²³¹ Turkey has resolved neither the

²²⁸ Iraq Business News, "First Direct Flight from Istanbul to Najaf," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <<http://www.iraq-businessnews.com/2011/07/06/first-direct-flight-from-istanbul-to-najaf/>>

²²⁹ Independent Industrialists and Business people's Association, "MÜSİAD Continues to Support Turkish Airlines in Iraq," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <<http://www.musiad.org.tr/en/detayHaber.aspx?id=987>>

²³⁰ *Radikal*, 18 October 2011.

²³¹ Özcan, p.86.

Kurdish issue nor the PKK problem yet. A possible escalation of violence in Turkey's territories with regard to those issues bares the potential to have a negative impact on Turkey's relations with Iraq. One needs to be cautious rather than too optimistic before talking about a rosy picture yet. On the other hand, if Turkey resolves those issues, its political, economic and cultural potential in Iraq will expand so that it will also influence the strategies adopted by Turkish Airlines.

Turkish Airlines and Turkish Foreign Policy in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan

On 13 October 2009 and 23 December 2009, Turkey and Syria convened two ministerial meeting of the Turkey-Syria High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council. The two countries signed a protocol to reciprocally lift the visa requirements and reached an agreement to foster cooperation in the areas such as shipping, aviation, energy, transport, finance, tourism, education, communication, electricity, agriculture, health, industry.²³² This improvement of relations between Turkey and Syria had been unimaginable in the past. In addition to the annexation of Alexandratta (Hatay) with Turkey in 1939, which was perceived as Western imperial designs in the region and has never been accepted as legitimate by the Syrians,²³³ Turkey's sovereignty claims over the Tigris and Euphrates rivers pushed Syria to providing support to terrorist organizations such as the PKK and ASALA as well as the Turkish radical left (Dev-Sol).²³⁴

In the 1990s, Turkey came to the brink of war with Syria since the latter was harboring the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan. However, Syria stepped back after

²³² Ulutaş, p.4.

²³³ Meliha Altunışık and Özlem Tür, "From Distant Neighbors to Partners? Changing Syrian-Turkish Relations," *Security Dialogue* 37, no.2 (June 2006), p.219.

²³⁴ Altunışık and Tür, p.220.

Turkey's mobilization of troops on the Syrian border. The PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan was deported and the two countries signed the Adana Accords on 20 October 1998.²³⁵ Afterwards, the relations entered a process of gradual improvement. Both countries began to view each other not as enemies, but have realized the potential if they choose cooperation rather than confrontation. This was in line with the regionally-based foreign policy of İsmail Cem, who served as the Foreign Minister from 1997 until 2002 when AKP came to power. Altunışık and Tür explain the post-1998 rapprochement through changing global and regional systemic factors. According to them, "the crisis over Iraq led to the strengthening of common threats and interests whereas changing US policy towards Syria pushed Damascus to pursue closer ties with Turkey."²³⁶ In addition to the global and systemic factors, Turkey's overall policy aiming to improve relations with neighbors also should be given credit for the rapprochement. Indeed, Syria has been cited many times as the most successful implementation of Davutoğlu's "zero problems with neighbors" policy until very recently.

In line with this political will to develop relations, on 1 January 2007, a Free Trade Agreement between the two countries entered into force.²³⁷ Another breaking point in bilateral relations was the decision to lift the visa requirements and the establishment of a Turkey-Syria High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council, as mentioned above.²³⁸ In line with Davutoğlu's view of Turkey's borders having been

²³⁵ Altunışık and Tür, p.226.

²³⁶ Ibid., p.218.

²³⁷ Özlem Tür, "Turkish-Syrian Relations: Where are We Going?" *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, no.23 (May 2010), p.172.

²³⁸ NTVMSNBC, 16 September 2009, "Türkiye ve Suriye Artık Vize Sormayacak." Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at:<<http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25001097/>>

artificially drawn,²³⁹ the lifting of the visa requirement and free trade agreement have contributed to the movement of people and goods freely across the borders of the two countries. Indeed, Syrian president Bashar Assad coined the word “Shamgen” for a single visa to be valid in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey similar to the European Union's Schengen visa to be introduced.²⁴⁰ Parallel to these developments, in July 2010, Turkey led the effort for the establishment of a Close Neighbor Economic and Trade Association Council with Lebanon, Jordan and Syria.²⁴¹ According to the declaration,

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Republic of Lebanon (...) have decided to establish a 'Quadripartite High Level Cooperation Council' (HLCC) and to create a zone of free movement of goods and persons among our countries. (...) Ministers responsible for other areas, such as energy, trade, customs, agriculture, health, investments, internal affairs, water, environment, transportation and others depending on the agenda, may also participate in the Council. With the development of cooperation to cover areas of mutual interest, the Council may be modified to include ministers responsible for such areas in their respective countries.²⁴²

Table 10. Turkey's Trade with Syria (\$ millions)

Syria	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Import	463	506	413	358	272	187	377	639	328	663
Export	281	267	411	395	552	609	798	1115	1425	1845
Total	745	773	824	752	824	797	1175	1754	1753	2507

Data Obtained from the Turkish Ministry of Economy

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

Turkish Airlines, in this context, which had already operated flights to

²³⁹ *New York Times*, 28 May 2011.

²⁴⁰ *Hürriyet*, 7 March 2011.

²⁴¹ Kirişçi, “Comparing the Neighborhood Policies of Turkey and the EU in the Mediterranean,” p.36.

²⁴² Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Joint Political Declaration on the Establishment of the High Level Cooperation Council among Turkey, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon,” Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/joint-political-declaration-on-the-establishment-of-the-high-level-cooperation-council-among-turkey_-syria_-jordan-and-lebanon.en.mfa>

Damascus, Amman and Beirut, added Aleppo to its list of destinations in those countries (Table 5). Relatively smaller countries than Iran and Iraq, Turkish Airlines had not adopted an expansionist strategy in a similar manner to these countries. However, the frequencies of already existing routes increased. For instance, the number of Turkish Airlines flights to Syria increased from four per week to twenty-one.²⁴³ This is also a good indicator of how the movement of people and goods has accelerated and Turkish Airlines is playing a role there.

Turkey's bilateral trade with Syria has been on the rise. Especially, the volume of exports has outnumbered the volume of imports since 2004, which demonstrates Turkey's export potential to Syria (Table 10). In 2010, 899,000 people from Syria, 72,000 people from Lebanon, 88,000 people from Jordan entered Turkey (Table 4). Among the same group of countries, Turkish Airlines carried 242,000 people from/to Syria; 141,000 people from/to Lebanon, and 146,000 people from/to Jordan (Table 4). People-to-people contacts may contribute to the dismantling of taboos about and prejudices of both societies against each other. According to Basheer M. Nafi,

In a very short period of time, the opening of the Syrian-Turkish border and the strengthening relations between the two countries have engendered economic vitality on both sides of the border and transformed the way Turks and Syrian Arabs view each other.²⁴⁴

The idealistic aim behind the improvement of relations in terms of diplomatic, economic and societal contacts is to contribute to peace and stability in the region. By developing close relations with Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, Turkey aims to enhance its influence in the Arab world. Contrary to this idealist picture, the realities of the Middle East made a comeback.

²⁴³ *Zaman*, 22 June 2010.

²⁴⁴ Basheer M. Nafi, "The Arabs and Modern Turkey: A Century of Changing Perceptions," *Insight Turkey* 11, no.1 (2009), p.78.

In the context of Syria, Turkey has broken almost all ties with the Assad regime that continues to suppress the opposition in his country through the use of brutal force. At the time of the writing of this thesis, the relations are at very low level. The Assad regime in Syria is internationally isolated with few exceptions. The policy adopted by Turkey is to support a peaceful transition to democracy in Syria. In this context, the political will that brought the relations to level of high engagement mentioned above has disappeared. Although this situation affects the movement of people and goods across the borders negatively, Turkey has adopted a policy to stand by the Syrian people rather than a authoritarian regime that uses brutal force against its citizens. By April 2012, Turkish Airlines stopped its flights in Syria²⁴⁵ and Turkey's policy of achieving economic interdependence and free movement of people cannot be implemented. The future course of events remains to be seen as well as their implications for Turkish Airlines.

Turkish Airlines and Turkish Foreign Policy in Israel

Turkey was one of the first countries to recognize the independence of Israel.²⁴⁶ The fact that both countries were the allies of the United States in the Middle East was the main determinant of the relations between Turkey and Israel during the Cold War. Surrounded by hostile Arab neighbors, Israel viewed Turkey's friendship as an asset in the region. However, those two countries could not develop close relations due to the Arab-Israeli conflict until the Oslo Process in the 1990s. Since the Oslo Process, two

²⁴⁵ NTVMSNBC, 27 March 2012, "THY Suriye Seferlerini Durdurdu," Accessed on 2 April 2012, Available [online] at: <<http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25334222/>>

²⁴⁶ Dov Waxman, "Turkey and Israel: A New Balance of Power in the Middle East," *The Washington Quarterly* 22, no.1 (Winter 1999), p.30.

countries have worked closely in the areas of commerce and military cooperation. Turkey's threat perception from its neighbors Greece, Syria and the PKK pushed it towards an alliance with Israel in order to counterbalance those actors.²⁴⁷ However, as Turkey has improved its relations with Greece, Syria and the leader of PKK Abdullah Öcalan was captured in 1999, alliance with Israel for Turkey lost its significance compared to the 1990s. Despite this change in the political conjuncture, Turkey and Israel have pursued good relations as the two functioning democracies and developing economies in the Middle East. In line with these close contacts, commercial relations and people-to-people contact have been regarded as two important aspects of the relations between the two countries.

The relations entered an era of continuous decline after Israel's military operation in Gaza in December 2008. A series of events including the Turkish prime minister's harsh criticism of Israel at the Davos World Economic Forum and the so called "sofa crisis"²⁴⁸ further deteriorated the relations. Israel's military operation in May 2010 against a flotilla carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza and the death of nine Turkish activists in international waters caused the relations to reach a nadir. Since Turkey's three conditions (an official apology by Israel for the killings, compensation for the victims, and lifting the Gaza blockade) to normalize the relations have not been met by the Israeli side, the relations remain at a considerably low level.

Although Turkey has taken some steps to degrade the level of its relations with Israel, including recalling its ambassador and suspension of military agreements,

²⁴⁷ Malik Muftu, "Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle East Journal* 52, no.1 (Winter 1998), p.35.

²⁴⁸ International Crisis Group, "Turkey's Crisis over Israel and Iran," *Europe Report*, no.208 (8 September 2010), p.3.

nothing has been done to abrogate the free trade agreement.²⁴⁹ In addition, the free-free travel for Israeli citizens was not questioned.²⁵⁰ Those two steps illustrate that Turkey still prioritizes commercial relations, tourism and personal contact with Israeli people in a way to facilitate the improvement of relations in political arena. Indeed, Turkey's business relations with Israel seem to be immune to the political crisis between the two countries with some exceptions (Table 11).²⁵¹

Table 11. Turkey's Trade with Israel (million \$)

Israel	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Import	529	544	459	714	805	782	1082	1448	1075	1360
Export	805	861	1083	1315	1467	1529	1658	1935	1528	2080
Total	1335	1406	1542	2029	2272	2311	2740	3383	2603	3440

Data Obtained from the Turkish Ministry of Economy

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

At first glance, it might seem that Turkish Airlines as the only airline company operating in İstanbul-Tel Aviv route could have been negatively affected by all these tensions. Especially considering the decline in the number of Israeli tourists visiting Turkey since 2009, one might expect that the demand for Turkish Airlines would have shrunk. Contrary to this assumption, it rather has been the charter flights between Tel Aviv and Antalya that have been affected negatively from the rising tension between the two countries.²⁵² According to the CEO of Turkish Airlines, Temel Kotil, regular scheduled flights continue without interruption since Turkish Airlines not only carries Turkish passengers from İstanbul to Tel Aviv, but also transfer passengers from other destinations such as New York-İstanbul-Tel Aviv route, which is used by 80 to 100

²⁴⁹ Kemal Kirişçi, "Comparing the Neighborhood Policies of Turkey and the EU in the Mediterranean," p.34.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ *New York Times*, 2 July 2010.

²⁵² *Hürriyet*, 14 September 2011.

passengers on every New York-Istanbul Turkish Airlines' flight.²⁵³ In spite of the statements by Turkish Airlines of its being immune to the negative developments between Turkey and Israel, it is also true that there is an opportunity cost for Turkish Airlines as long as the relations remain at their low level.

Turkish Airlines and Turkish Foreign Policy in the Gulf Countries²⁵⁴

Turkey's relations with the Arab states of the Persian Gulf traditionally have been limited both politically and economically. The sub-region has been out of Turkey's direct sphere of influence mainly for geographical reasons. With the exception of Saudi Arabia, which is significant for the Muslim population in Turkey for religious reasons, Turkey's interest in the sub-region has been to a limited extent. However, the rise of the AKP in Turkey, which has Islamic roots, has provided new opportunities to improve the relations with the Gulf countries.

Economic motives also have played an important part in this policy change. Turkey's need for new markets and foreign capital has accelerated the efforts to further develop the relations.²⁵⁵ Indeed, the fact that the Gulf countries are mostly oil rich increases the potential of trade and investment. Turkey's growing and dynamic economy has also been regarded as a positive factor which increases the Arab capital inflow to Turkey. From 2001 to 2010, bilateral trade between Turkey and six Gulf countries quadrupled. It reached its peak in 2008 with 16.6 billion dollars, but had a

²⁵³ Airkule, 14 September 2011, "İsrail Krizi THY'yi Etkiledi mi?" Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at:<<http://www.airkule.com/default.asp?page=haber&id=10031>>

²⁵⁴ Gulf Countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

²⁵⁵ Birol Başkan, "Turkey-GCC: Is There a Future?" *Insight Turkey* 13, no.1 (2011), p.163.

decline of 100% due to the global financial crisis (Table 12).

Table 12. Turkey's Trade with Gulf Countries²⁵⁶ (\$ millions)

Gulf Countries	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Import	939	951	1123	1478	2209	2774	3174	4360	2665	3638
Export	1036	1215	1677	2297	3012	3636	5568	12268	5390	6409
Total	1974	2165	2802	3776	5222	6410	8742	16628	8056	10049

Data Obtained from the Turkish Ministry of Economy

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

The role played by Turkish Airlines in the Gulf is in the appreciated by Turkish state officials. For instance, the president of Turkey, Abdullah Gül, emphasizes how the opening by Turkish Airlines of a new flight route to Muscat shortened the distances and increased interaction between Turkey and Oman.²⁵⁷ In addition to this role, a specific task has been assigned to the national airline by the Turkish state to carry pilgrims to Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia. For instance, in 2010, it carried 100,000 people for this specific purpose alone.

Another factor that increases the significance of the Gulf for Turkish Airlines is the existence of its regional competitors. As Turkish Airlines aims to make İstanbul an aviation hub, Emirates has the same purpose for Dubai. It is also true for Etihad, Gulf and Qatar Airways, aiming to increase their share in the world aviation market, to make their places of origin aviation hubs (Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Doha) in addition to representing their states by carrying their flags worldwide. Qatar Airways, for example,

²⁵⁶ Gulf Countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

²⁵⁷ Turkish Presidency, “Cumhurbaşkanı Gül Omanlı Bakanları Kabul Etti,” Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <<http://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/170/49018/cumhurbaskani-gul-omanli-bakanlari-kabul-etti.html>>

represents Qatar by flying airplanes with the country's name into airports around the world and the word Qatar appearing in its advertising.²⁵⁸ The strategies adopted by Turkish Airlines for promoting its own brand, which at the same time promotes the image of Turkey, are similar to the strategies adopted by the airlines of the Gulf.

As a part of promoting its own brand, Turkish Airlines sponsors sports teams, players and events such as FC Barcelona, Manchester United FC, Kobe Bryant, Caroline Wozniacki and Turkish Airlines Euroleague²⁵⁹; Emirates sponsors Arsenal FC, AC Milan, Emirates Cup, Rugby World Cup.²⁶⁰

Another parallel with Emirates is the role played by the both in humanitarian relief. Recently, Turkish Airlines has involved in humanitarian relief in Somalia, Japan and Libya. Compared to Turkish Airlines, which operates on an ad hoc basis, Emirates is more institutionalized with its Emirates Foundation specifically for the purpose of humanitarian, philanthropic aid and services for children in need.²⁶¹ As Turkish Airlines' involvement in such areas contributes to the image of Turkey worldwide as a soft power tool, so does Emirates' involvement for Dubai and the United Arab Emirates.

²⁵⁸ Peterson, p.747.

²⁵⁹ Turkish Airlines, "Sponsorships," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <<http://www.turkishairlines.com/en-TR/sponsorships/index.aspx>>

²⁶⁰ Emirates Airlines, "Sponsorships," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <<http://www.emirates.com/english/about/sponsorships/sponsorships.aspx>>

²⁶¹ Emirates Airlines, "The Emirates Airline Foundation," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <<http://www.emiratesairlinefoundation.org/english/index.aspx>>

CHAPTER 5

TURKISH AIRLINES AND TURKEY'S OPENING TO AFRICA

Turkish foreign policy's multi-dimensional thinking has broad implications for Turkey's relations with various geographies. In this chapter, the geography that is further elaborated is Africa in relation to Turkish foreign policy and Turkish Airlines. Turkish Airlines is one of the main tools of Turkey's opening to Africa. It has adopted an expansion strategy parallel to the vision of Turkish foreign policy in the continent. Today, Turkey is visible in Africa more than ever. It facilitates Turkey's strategy in Africa through its scheduled flights, cargo operations and humanitarian aid. Turkey's national airline complements the efforts done by Turkish diplomats and business people who aim to develop political, economic and societal ties with the countries in the African continent. It is an asset for Turkey in Africa to shorten the spatial distances and facilitate the movement of people and goods on both sides. Although Turkish Airlines is relatively a newcomer in the African civil aviation market compared to former colonial powers' national airlines such as Air France and British Airways, its contribution to Turkey's development of commercial ties with the countries in Africa should not be underestimated. Thus, Turkish Airlines is the chosen instrument of Turkey that acts like a soft power tool to help Turkey achieve its foreign policy goals in Africa.

Turkey's relations with the countries in the African continent remained limited until Turkey's official acceptance of the Africa Action Plan in 1998.²⁶² Turkey's growing interest in Africa aims to develop political, economic and cultural ties with the countries in the continent. Especially after it was announced that 2005 would be the “Year of Africa” in Turkey, the Turkish government as well as other institutions

²⁶² Numan Hazar, *Küreselleşme Sürecinde Afrika ve Türkiye-Afrika İlişkileri* (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Medya Hizmetleri, 2003), p.129.

including Turkish Airlines have accelerated their efforts in order to strengthen the relations with African countries. Since 2005, Turkey has been in an effort to be actively involved in African affairs. Some diplomatic initiatives of Turkey closely related to the continent in the multilateral level are the following: observer status in the African Union (2005), a non-regional member of the African Development Bank (2008), a member of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Partners Forum (IGAD) (2008) and accreditation to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (2005) and East African Community (EAC) (2010).²⁶³

Turkey hosted a Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit in İstanbul between 18 and 21 August 2008 with the theme “Solidarity and Partnership for a Common Future” attended by 50 African heads of state and government or their representatives.²⁶⁴

Turkey also hosted the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Conference of the United Nations in May 2011 in İstanbul of which 33 of 48 LDCs are African countries. Turkish President Abdullah Gül, in his speech at the conference, stated that Turkey's developmental aids to the LDCs had reached up to 2 billion dollars per year.²⁶⁵ Perhaps, Turkey's increasing visibility in the international institutions contributes to Turkey's image in the eyes of African people and hence its soft power.

Parallel to this active multilateral engagement with Africa, Prime Minister

²⁶³Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Turkey-Africa Relations,” Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at:<<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-africa-relations.en.mfa>>

²⁶⁴ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit,” Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at:<<http://africa.mfa.gov.tr/default.en.mfa>>

²⁶⁵ Turkish Presidency, “President Gül’s Address at the Inauguration of the 4th UN Conference on the LDCs,” Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at:<<http://www.tccb.gov.tr/speeches-statements/344/79788/president-guls-addreb-at-the-inauguration-of-the-4th-un-conference-on-the-ldcs.html>>

Tayyip Erdoğan visited Ethiopia in 2005,²⁶⁶ South Africa in 2005²⁶⁷ and 2011,²⁶⁸ famine-hit Somalia in 2011.²⁶⁹ Moreover, President Abdullah Gül conducted official visits to Kenya and Tanzania in 2009; DR Congo, Cameroon and Nigeria in 2010; and Ghana and Gabon in 2011.²⁷⁰ All those high level visits can be interpreted as Turkey's commitment to engage with Africa both politically and economically.

In the official schedule of the visits, President Gül not only attends political meetings to conclude agreements to improve bilateral political relations but also attends business councils in order to facilitate the interaction of business people in both sides that may reflect positively to the continent's economic relations with Turkey. In those visits, the role that Turkey can play in the global arena in order to tackle the issues faced by the African countries is also underlined. It is stated that Turkey represents the interest of Africa in many international organizations and forums including the G20.²⁷¹ All these indications demonstrate that Turkey has accelerated its efforts to be more active and visible in the African continent since the declaration of Turkey's opening to Africa.

In the short run, this engagement helped Turkey winning a seat in the UN Security Council for the 2009-2010 term. During the election process, Turkey's bid was

²⁶⁶ Ahmet Kavas and Hasan Öztürk, *Rising Africa and Turkey* (İstanbul: Tasam Yayınları, 2006), pp.28-29.

²⁶⁷ Kavas and Öztürk, pp.28-29.

²⁶⁸ *Today's Zaman*, 4 October 2011.

²⁶⁹ BBC, 19 August 2011, "Somalia Famine: Turkish PM Erdogan Visits Mogadishu," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14588960> >

²⁷⁰ Turkish Presidency, "Visits," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online]: <http://www.tccb.gov.tr/sayfa/ziyaretler/>

²⁷¹ Turkish Presidency, 29 April 2011, "Türk Halkı Afrika Halklarına Her Zaman Özel Bir Yakınlık Duydu," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <<http://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/170/79678/turk-halki-afrika-halklarina-her-zaman-ozel-bir-yakinlik-duydu.html>>

supported by the African delegations which have a crucial weight considering the one country, one vote principle in the United Nations General Assembly. However, Turkey's engagement with Africa is not limited to a short-term basis. Rather, Turkey as a country that aims to have a say on world affairs has decided to develop more permanent relations with African states. Therefore, the decision to increase the number of Turkish embassies on the African continent should be interpreted as an indication of Turkey's opening to Africa on a permanent basis and demonstrating its will to be an aspiring player in the African affairs.

Turkish diplomatic engagement is not limited to the development of political relations, but also aims to foster economic relations focusing on trade and investment. One indication of this is the appointment of non-career diplomats to the posts of Turkish ambassadors in the continent that are thought to possess professional skills to develop the economic relations. For instance, Turkey's current ambassador to Nairobi, Tuncer Kayalar, previously served as the Undersecretary of the Prime Ministry for Foreign Trade between 2002 and 2009. He also served as the Chairman of the Administrative Boards of the Turkish Eximbank and the Export Promotion Center of Turkey.²⁷²

In line with the policy of increasing the number of Turkish embassies in Africa, Turkey recently has decided to open 15 new embassies (Ghana, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Angola, Mali, Madagascar, Uganda, Niger, Chad, Tanzania, Mozambique, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Zambia). In this context, Turkish embassies in Dar-es-Salaam (May 2009), Abidjan (November 2009), Yaoundé (January 2010), Accra (February 2010), Bamako (February 2010), Kampala (March 2010), Luanda (April

²⁷² Turkish Embassy in Nairobi, "Ambassador's Biography," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <<http://nairobi.be.mfa.gov.tr/AmbassadorsBio.aspx>>

2010) and Antananarivo (April 2010) have started to function.²⁷³ The number of Turkish embassies is expected to increase to 32 by the end of 2012.²⁷⁴ Although Turkey's diplomatic success in the continent is far from being consolidated, compared to the pre-1998 years significant steps have been taken.

Another area where Turkish involvement in Africa is visible in the area of education in which there are 60 schools run by Turkish Gülenist Movement in 30 African countries.²⁷⁵ The graduates of those schools are regarded as trade ambassadors helping Turkish business people to establish trade links in Africa.²⁷⁶ These schools are also visited during the official visits of the Turkish delegations in Africa including the visits done by President Abdullah Gül. Akgün and Özkan elaborate further by focusing on Turkey's involvement in Africa via state agencies such as The Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) and the Directorate for Religious Affairs of Turkey (Diyanet) as well as civil society organizations like TUSKON (Confederation of Business people and Industrialists of Turkey) and IHH (Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief).²⁷⁷ All these examples demonstrate how the Turkish state supports the engagement of governmental and non-governmental actors in line with the foreign policy considerations.

There has been a visible development in the area of commercial relations in recent years. Turkey's policy that aims to increase the volume of trade with African

²⁷³ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Turkey-Africa Relations,"

²⁷⁴ *Sabah*, 24 March 2011.

²⁷⁵ *The Economist*, 25 March 2010.

²⁷⁶ Joshua D. Hendrick, "Globalization, Islamic Activism, and Passive Revolution in Turkey: The Case of Fethullah Gülen" *Journal of Power* 2, no.3 (2009), p.358.

²⁷⁷ Mehmet Özkan and Birol Akgün, "Turkey's Opening to Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 48 ,no.4 (2010), p.536-540.

countries has been quite successful considering the sharp increase both in the volume of exports and imports (Table 14). Thus, Turkey's engagement with the African continent should also be considered in the context of its economic interest. Turkey as an emerging trading state takes economic considerations into account more and more in the making of foreign policy.²⁷⁸ In line with this trading state mentality, the Turkish government encourages Turkish business people to find business partners in the African continent.

In this context, TUSKON as a business association needs to be mentioned that plays a leading role on Africa. TUSKON, as an umbrella organization with more than 11,000 business people as members, is in search for new markets and new contracts in the African continent. According to TUSKON Secretary General Mustafa Günay, “TUSKON is committed to serve its country and people.”²⁷⁹ In a very short period of time it had succeeded in organizing eleven “Foreign Trade Bridges.” The first of its kind in “Turkey - Africa Foreign Trade Bridge -1” between May 8-9, 2006 with the participation of a total of 500 business people from 35 different countries, and 1,000 business people from Turkey.

During those events, business people had the opportunity to develop one-to-one contacts with their foreign counterparts. The participants are also given the opportunity to conduct regional business trips to important industrial and commercial cities to meet with local business people for cooperation and trade opportunities.²⁸⁰ Before 2010, 40,000 bilateral business meetings were held between Turkish and African participants. TUSKON continued Africa trade bridges in 2007 with 800, in 2008 with 1,000, in 2009

²⁷⁸ Kemal Kirişci, “The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State,” *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no.40 (2009), pp.29-57.

²⁷⁹ Chatham House, “Turkey-Africa Relations,” 14 April 2011.

²⁸⁰ TUSKON, “Türkiye-Africa Foreign Trade Bridge,” 8-9 May 2006.

and 2010 with 800 business people from Africa.²⁸¹

Table 13. New Turkish Airlines Destinations in Africa since 2005

Country	City	Date	Country	City	Date
Morocco	Casablanca	March 2005	Libya	Binghazi	May 2009
Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	April 2006	Tanzania	Darussalam	June 2009
Sudan	Khartoum	April 2006	Uganda	Kampala	June 2010
Nigeria	Lagos	July 2006	Egypt	Alexandria	June 2010
South Africa	Cape Town	September 2007	Ghana	Accra	July 2010
South Africa	Johannesburg	September 2007	Libya	Misrata	December 2011
Kenya	Nairobi	February 2009	Somalia	Mogadishu	March 2012
Senegal	Dakar	April 2009			

Data Obtained from Turkish Airlines Press Releases

In the African context, it is possible to argue that the availability of Turkish Airlines flights and cargo services have a positive impact for Turkish business people who want to do business with African countries. The President of TUSKON Rızanur Meral confirms that in addition to free trade agreements and opening new embassies, Turkish Airlines' direct flights to the African countries that they do business can be regarded as a great asset in the way of boosting Turkey's export potential.²⁸² The President of Turkish Exporters' Assembly, Mehmet Büyükekşi, who is at the same time a member of Turkish Airlines Board of Directors has stated that Turkey's exports have risen between 5 to 20 per cent in the countries to which Turkish Airlines flies.²⁸³

When the President of Turkey Abdullah Gül was in Ghana for an official visit he stated that “since Turkish Airlines started its flights to Ghana, the distances have been

²⁸¹ Chatham House, “Turkey-Africa Relations”.

²⁸² TUSKON “Başbakan Recep Tayyip Erdoğan'ın Katılımı İle TUSKON Genişletilmiş Başkanlar Kurulu Toplandı,” Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <http://www.tuskon.org/icerik/haber_detay.php?id=874>

²⁸³ *Zaman*, 1 July 2010.

shortened and opportunities have increased for both sides.”²⁸⁴ Furthermore, on the official website of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is stated that “It is no doubt that, for increasing Turkey’s commercial and economic relations with African countries, Turkish firms should have access to easy, cheap and fast transportation.”²⁸⁵

The chairman of the Turkish Airlines Board of Directors, Hamdi Topçu, confirmed the coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in an interview responding to a question on Turkish Airlines' involvement in Africa.²⁸⁶ Topçu gave that interview to a magazine published and sponsored by the Turkish Exporters' Assembly, the Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Investment Support, and Promotion Agency and Turkish Airlines distributed to the Business Class passengers of Turkish Airlines. All these statements demonstrate that there is a consensus in Turkey among the state officials, business people and Turkish Airlines regarding the benefits that Turkish Airlines' involvement in Africa brings to the development of economic relations of Turkey in the African continent at the same time contributing to Turkey's image positively by acting as a soft power tool. It should be expected that the opening of the new flight routes will continue with the coordination of state, business people and Turkish Airlines in the African context. Recently, the President of TUSKON has requested Turkish Airlines to add DR Congo and Cameroon to its list of destinations as

²⁸⁴ Turkish Presidency, 26 March 2011, “Türkiye’nin Afrika Açılımı: Gana ve Gabon’a Cumhurbaşkanlığı Düzeyinde İlk Ziyaret,” Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <<http://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/170/79301/turkiyenin-afrika-acilimi-gana-ve-gabona-cumhurbaskani-duzeyinde-ilk-ziyaret.html>>

²⁸⁵ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “The Summit,” Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <<http://africa.mfa.gov.tr/the-summit.en.mfa>>

²⁸⁶ *The Turkish Perspective*, March-April 2001, Issue 3.

well as increasing the baggage limits for the passengers.²⁸⁷

In general, Turkey's trade with Africa quadrupled between 2001 and 2010 from 4.1 billion dollars to 16 billion dollars. A sharp increase occurred between 2001 and 2008, from 4.1 billion dollars to 17 billion dollars in the trade volume, between Turkey and the all African countries. After the 2008 global financial crisis, a relatively minor decrease in the trade volume was seen by almost 1 billion dollars in the years 2009 and 2010 (Table 14). African Union Commissioner of Trade Elizabeth Tankeo praised Turkey's win-win approach to Africa and responded positively to opening new embassies and opening new flight routes in the continent as well as the efforts of Turkish business community in general and TUSKON in particular to develop relations with the continent.²⁸⁸

These figures and statements show that Turkey's opening to Africa has worked quite well in terms of the improvement of economic relations with the continent. However, we also must emphasize that despite quadrupling the trade volume in ten years, Africa's share in Turkey's total trade is still small. The goal of achieving 30 billion dollars trade volume once put by Turkish business people could not be reached by 2010. However, it might not be wrong to argue that the negative influence of global financial crisis had also slowed down the dynamism in the trade relations of Turkey with African countries.

When we look at the figures of tourism in the same time period from, 2001 to 2010, the number of tourists entering Turkey with passports of African countries doubled (Table 15). Although this cannot only be attributed to Turkish Airlines, certainly it plays a positive role in that sense. It also reduces the barriers at the societal

²⁸⁷ *Zaman*, 25 March 2010.

²⁸⁸ *Zaman*, 16 June 2010.

level with those countries. As people-to-people contact increases, prejudices on both sides can be overcome easier that facilitates relations based on mutual understanding and cooperation. In that sense, Turkish Airlines can be regarded as a soft power tool for Turkey in Africa contributing positively to such process.

Table 14. Turkey's Trade with Africa (\$ million)

Africa	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Imports	2819	2696	3338	4820	6047	7405	6784	7770	5700	6414
Exports	1521	1697	2131	2968	3631	4566	5976	9063	10180	9283
Total	4339	4393	5470	7789	9679	11970	12760	16834	15880	15697

Data Obtained from Turkey Ministry of Economics

Table 15. Number of People Entered Turkey from African Countries (in thousands)

Africa	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Tourists	181	185	174	198	233	233	258	312	426	377

Data Obtained from Turkish Statistical Institute

Turkish Airlines and Turkish Foreign Policy in North Africa

Turkey's relations with North Africa have always been more developed compared to Sub-Saharan Africa both in political and economic terms. The developments in North Africa directly influence the way in which Turkish foreign policy is formed. For instance, the recent uprisings and regime changes in the context of the Arab Spring in North Africa have influenced Turkey which cannot be a bystander to the course of events in North Africa by default. Hence, Turkey must pursue an active foreign policy in the region.

Table 16. Turkey's Trade with North Africa (\$ million)

North Africa	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Imports	2115	2138	2519	3231	4212	4878	3616	5267	3542	4306
Exports	1150	1267	1577	2203	2544	3097	4030	5850	7445	7025
Total	3264	3405	4096	5435	6757	7975	7646	11,118	10,987	11,331

Data Obtained from Turkish Ministry of Economy

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

Turkish Airlines and Turkish Foreign Policy in Libya

In the past decades, the relations between Turkey and Libya witnessed ups and downs. The relations between Turkey and Libya started to develop in April 1999 after the UN Security Council lifted the sanctions against that country. In line with this policy, Turkish Airlines started its flights to Libyan capital Tripoli in July 1999. Therefore, mutual interaction gained some momentum. Despite this, the relations could not develop much further. Since 2009, Turkey has increased its involvement in Libya. In that context, in May 2009, Turkish Airlines started to fly to Benghazi as an indication of the developing relations between Qaddafi regime and Turkey. By 2009, Turkish firms had 60 million dollars worth investment in Libya in the construction, agriculture, mining, production and service sectors. The Turkish construction sector has been involved in projects worth 26.4 billion dollars building ports, roads, shopping malls, hotels in the country.²⁸⁹ Bilateral trade reached 11 billion dollars by 2010 (Table 16). However, this rosy picture in terms of developing economic relations was disturbed by the internal unrest in Libya against the authoritarian Qaddafi regime. Turkey, benefiting from the status quo initially, was hesitant to support the rebels against Colonel Qaddafi. Prime Minister Erdoğan was reluctant to call on Qaddafi to step down as he had done for Mubarak in Egypt a month earlier. Another reason explains Turkey's hesitancy was the Turkish population in Libya. Turkey feared that those people would be held prisoners by Qaddafi regime if it openly backed the rebels.

²⁸⁹ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Türkiye-Libya İlişkileri," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at:< <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-libya-iliskileri.tr.mfa>>

Aware of this risk, Turkey started a campaign to evacuate its citizens as well as foreign citizens. The armed conflict between the rebel forces and Qaddafi regime put the lives of many in danger. People were evacuated from Libya by ferries and planes. Turkish Airlines took up the role of bringing people from Libya to Turkey. This means that Turkish Airlines also rescued foreign citizens from Libya in addition to Turkish citizens. This role clearly demonstrates that Turkish Airlines acts like a soft power tool. The foreign citizens who were evacuated from Libya as well as their governments were thankful to Turkey, hence Turkish Airlines. Through these operations, Turkish Airlines promoted its own brand as well as Turkey's nation brand as a strong and benign country.

In the post-Qaddafi era, Turkish Airlines was the first airline company to land in Libya since the suspension of flights due to the armed conflict.²⁹⁰ Also, on 5 December 2011, Turkish Airlines added another flight destination in Libya. It started to fly to Misrata in December 2011 (Table 13).²⁹¹ All these developments are in line with Turkey's relations with the newly established National Transitional Council in Libya. It is still doubtful whether Turkey can keep its advantageous position in the post-Qaddafi Libya, but the economic relations were disrupted due to the political and economic instability in the country during the armed conflict between the parties. If Turkey continues or increases its engagement in Libya, it is without a doubt that Turkish Airlines will increase its frequencies of flights or add new flight destinations to the places that it already flies in Libya.

²⁹⁰ *Sabah*, 8 November 2011.

²⁹¹ *Zaman*, 9 December 2011.

Table 17. Turkey's Trade with Libya (\$ million)

Libya	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Import	848	754	1073	1514	1989	2297	400	336	403	426
Export	67	165	255	337	384	489	643	1074	1799	1932
Total	915	919	1327	1851	2373	2787	1043	1411	2202	2358

Data Obtained from Turkish Ministry of Economy

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

Turkish Airlines and Turkish Foreign Policy in Morocco

Turkey's relations with Morocco prioritize economic and cultural cooperation since there is no political issue that can cause direct confrontation between the two countries. Hence, the cooperation in those fields can be observed as long as this situation remains. Turkish Airlines opened a new destination to Casablanca on March 2005 in cooperation with Royal Air Maroc. Turkey's bilateral trade volume with Morocco in the year 2004 was 436 million dollars without a Turkish Airlines flight. In the year 2008, the trade volume reached its peak with 1.3 billion dollars. In four years, trade with Morocco tripled after opening the new Turkish Airlines route (Table 18). There was a decline in line with the global trend in international trade after 2008 affected by global financial crisis but still the improvement after Turkish Airlines started its flights is clear.

Although this rise cannot exclusively be attributed to Turkish Airlines, its impact needs to be mentioned in order to understand one of the factors that explain this increase. Other important factors are the free trade agreement that came into force on 2006 and visa-free travel between the two countries. It should be kept in mind that the

regime in Morocco is a monarchy. For now, regime in Morocco seems to be relatively immune to the unrest in the Middle East and North Africa. However, it is still too early to conclude that the current regime in the country may survive this turmoil in the medium run.

Table 18. Turkey's Trade with Morocco (\$ million)

Morocco	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Import	38	68	77	106	143	174	198	361	235	397
Export	98	138	181	330	371	551	722	958	600	624
Total	136	207	258	436	514	725	920	1318	835	1021

Data Obtained from Turkish Ministry of Economy

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

Turkish Airlines and Turkish Foreign Policy in Egypt

Turkey and Egypt traditionally have been rivals in terms of increasing their spheres of influence in North Africa and the Middle East. On the level of economic relations, a free trade agreement came into force in March 2007 which has had a positive impact on the economic relations between the two countries. Turkish investors have invested around 1.5 billion dollars in Egypt the last few years.²⁹² The trade volume between the countries was around 3.1 billion dollars in 2010 (Table 19). To further increase the economic contacts, Turkish Airlines started its flights to Alexandria on June 2010 as the second city it flies to in Egypt (Table 13).²⁹³

As in the case of Libya, Egypt has been influenced tremendously by the upheavals in the region. As a result, its autocratic ruler Husnu Mubarak had to leave his post. Turkey from the very beginning had supported the anti-Mubarak forces in Egypt.

²⁹² Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Türkiye-Mısır Ticari ve Ekonomik İlişkileri," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: < <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-misir-ticari-ve-ekonomik-iliskileri.tr.mfa3> >

²⁹³ The other city is Cairo.

Hence, the attraction of Turkey and Erdoğan is on the rise. In the post-Mubarak era, despite the disruption of economic relations due to the political instability in Egypt, the level of cooperation between the two countries may be enhanced if this trend continues. Turkish Airlines will benefit from the potential future close relations and contribute to the movement of people on both sides.

Table 19. Turkey's Trade with Egypt (\$ million)

Egypt	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Import	92	118	189	255	267	393	680	943	642	926
Export	421	326	346	473	687	709	903	1426	2618	2251
Total	513	445	535	728	955	1102	1583	2369	3260	3177

Data Obtained from Turkish Ministry of Economy

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

Turkey and Turkish Airlines in Sub-Saharan Africa

Turkey's engagement with Sub-Saharan Africa is a recent phenomenon. Traditionally, that region has not been given much significance since it was conceived as very far territories beyond Turkey's reach. However, with Turkey's opening to the African continent as a part of rethinking its foreign policy has changed the attitudes and perceptions of Turkish policy makers towards the region. As the distances are shortened by advanced transportation and communication technology in the era of globalization, Sub-Saharan Africa has gained some attention in the minds of the Turkish foreign policy elite. Currently, Turkey is continuously opening new embassies in many Sub-Saharan countries to increase its diplomatic engagement. Turkish Airlines has started to fly to many cities located in the Sub-Saharan region especially since 2009. Primarily linking Turkey to the cities Turkish Airlines contributes to Turkey's commercial and cultural potential. As Turkish Airlines is more visible in the region, so does Turkey and

Turkish business people in search of new markets and business. Current trade volume that is around 4-5 billion dollars has a potential to increase further if Turkey and Turkish Airlines increases its engagement (Table 20). Hence, the role played by Turkish Airlines is a typical soft power tool for Turkey to boost its presence in the geography and image in the minds of people.

Table 20. Turkey's Trade with Sub-Saharan Africa (\$ million)

Sub-Saharan	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Imports	704	558	820	1589	1835	2526	3168	2503	2158	2108
Exports	371	430	554	765	1087	1469	1947	3212	2735	2258
Total	1075	988	1374	2354	2922	3995	5114	5716	4893	4366

Data Obtained from Turkish Ministry of Economy

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

Turkish Airlines and Turkish Foreign Policy in South Africa

Turkey's trade relations with its only African G-20 partner, South Africa, represent a significant case for this study. South Africa, not surprisingly, is Turkey's biggest trading partner in Sub-Saharan Africa. After suspending flights to South Africa in March 2003,²⁹⁴ Turkish Airlines flight routes to Cape Town and Johannesburg were reopened in September 2007, the year in which the trade volume made a peak with 2.8 billion dollars. The potential in the bilateral trade might have encouraged Turkish Airlines to reopen those routes. However, from then onwards, there has been a continuous decline in the trade volume between the two countries. There is a trade imbalance in favor of South Africa since Turkey imports gold and coal, which are high in value. Despite Turkey's efforts to promote exports and investments in South Africa by organizing a furniture exhibition, a textile fair, and a major mission led by the

²⁹⁴ *SkyLife*, May 2007.

Turkish State Minister for Foreign Trade, Zafer Çağlayan, who was accompanied by 80 business people and a large contingent of media representatives and officials in 2009,²⁹⁵ the trade volume experienced a decline (Table 21).

Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan, in a recent visit to South Africa in October 2011, stated that Turkey wanted to sign a free trade agreement with South Africa in order to boost economic relations between the two countries.²⁹⁶ Erdoğan also discussed the role played by Turkish Airlines in relations with South Africa in particular and Africa in general. He said that the distances between İstanbul-Ankara-İzmir and Pretoria-Johannesburg-Cape Town had been much shortened thanks to some policies including the restart of direct flights between the two countries.²⁹⁷ These statements corroborate the fact that Turkish Airlines is a soft power tool that shortens the mental and spatial distances and facilitates people-to-people contact between Turkey and South Africa.

Table 21. Turkey's Trade with South Africa (\$ million)

South Africa	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Import	345	211	336	1007	1260	1793	2172	1502	1103	890
Export	78	88	122	190	316	598	654	1239	867	369
Total	423	299	457	1197	1576	2392	2826	2741	1970	1259

Data Obtained from Turkish Ministry of Economy
 Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

²⁹⁵ Tom Wheeler, "Ankara to Africa: Turkey's Outreach Since 2005," *South African Journal of International Affairs* 18, no.1 (2011), pp.43-62.

²⁹⁶ *Today's Zaman*, 4 October 2011.

²⁹⁷ Antalya Chamber of Commerce and Industry, "Serbest Ticaret Anlaşması İmzalarsak, Her İki Ülkenin Halkı da Bundan Kazançlı Olur," Accessed on: 24 March 2012, Available [online]: <http://www.atso.org.tr/detay/2/1/1/1393/serbest-ticaret-anlasmasi-imzalarsak-her-iki-ulkenin-halki-da-bundan-kazancli-olur.html>

Turkish Airlines and Turkish Foreign Policy in Nigeria

Another important country for Turkey in the Sub-Saharan Africa is Nigeria. Both countries are members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation as well as D-8. Nigeria is rich in terms of natural resources of oil and gas. Its population is around 150 million, which makes it attractive to Turkish business people for establishing commercial relations. Especially, Turkish construction companies are operating in Nigeria building roads, railways, hospitals and schools. It is expected that Nigeria will become the largest economy of Africa in 10-15 years.²⁹⁸ Under these circumstances, the economic relations between the two countries are given importance by Turkey.

Turkey's trade relations with Nigeria demonstrate a positive correlation between the trade volume and opening a Turkish Airlines flight destination in that country. Before July 2006, there were no Turkish Airlines flights from Turkey to Nigeria. In July 2006, Turkish Airlines started to fly to Lagos. In 2005, trade volume between Turkey and Nigeria was 333 million dollars. In 2007, it jumped into 627 million dollars. By reaching its peak in 2009 with 862 million dollars, it ended up with 853 million dollars in 2010 with a minor decline (Table 22). Therefore, the trade volume in 2010 with Nigeria reached 2.5 times of the trade volume in 2005, a year without a Turkish Airlines route between the two countries. Currently, there is a trade imbalance in favor of Nigeria. It is believed that Turkish Airlines can contribute to raise Turkey's export potential in the country.²⁹⁹ Aware of this potential, Turkish Airlines is planning to fly to

²⁹⁸ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Türkiye-Nijerya Ekonomik İlişkileri," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at:< http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-nijerya-ekonomik_iliskileri.tr.mfa>

²⁹⁹ Turkish Exporters Assembly, "Sorunlar Aşılırsa Nijerya'nın Çok Büyük Bir Potansiyeli Var," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at:<<http://www.tim.org.tr/tr/aktuel-timden-haberler-sorunlar-asilirsa-njeryanin-cok-buyuk-bir-potansiyeli-var.html>>

Kano and Abuja in 2012 in addition to its existing Lagos route.³⁰⁰

Table 22. Turkey's Trade with Nigeria (\$ million)

Nigeria	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Import	228	182	223	194	234	380	494	522	605	603
Export	69	63	66	80	99	83	133	281	258	251
Total	297	244	290	275	333	463	627	802	862	853

Data Obtained from Turkish Ministry of Economy

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

Turkish Airlines and Turkish Foreign Policy in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is one of the few countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa with which Turkey had engaged before its policy of opening to Africa. Diplomatic relations between the countries started during the Ottoman Empire under Sultan Abdülhamid's rule. Turkey's first embassy in the African continent was established in Addis Ababa as early as 1926.³⁰¹ Today, Ethiopia is still significant for Turkey with its strategic location in the Horn of Africa and its population of 85 million. More than 200 Turkish firms operate in Ethiopia to utilize from this economic potential.³⁰² After Turkey and Ethiopia signed a civil aviation agreement on January 2005, Turkish Airlines opened a new flight destination to Addis Ababa in April 2006 (Table 13). Turkey's bilateral trade volume with Ethiopia was 140 million dollars in 2005 without a Turkish Airlines flight between the two countries.

³⁰⁰ *SkyLife*, January 2012.

³⁰¹ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Türkiye-Etyopya Federal Demokratik Cumhuriyeti Ekonomik İlişkileri," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: < http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-etyopya-federal-demokratik-cumhuriyeti-ekonomik_iliskileri.tr.mfa >

³⁰² Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Türkiye-Etyopya Federal Demokratik Cumhuriyeti Ekonomik İlişkileri,"

After April 2006, when Turkish Airlines became involved in the market, in three years it rose up to 264 million dollars. After reaching its peak in 2009, it decreased to 216 million dollars mainly due to the decline in the Turkish exports to Ethiopia (Table 23). Thus, Ethiopia is another case where Turkish Airlines has a positive impact especially for Turkish exporters to access the Ethiopian market easier.

Table 23. Turkey's Trade with Ethiopia (\$ million)

Ethiopia	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Import	0	8	20	18	30	24	43	39	35	41
Export	69	63	66	80	99	83	133	281	258	251
Total	69	70	86	98	129	107	176	320	293	292

Data Obtained from Turkish Ministry of Economy

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

Turkish Airlines and Turkish Foreign Policy in Somalia

The recent famine and drought in Somalia has attracted the attention of Turkish public opinion. The Turkish government actively campaigned to raise funds for humanitarian relief in the Horn of Africa. The Turkish media and civil society were fully mobilized to raise consciousness to the situation. Turkish Airlines did not have any flights from Turkey to Somalia at that time. However, Turkish Airlines took up another role to corroborate Turkey's efforts to help the Somalians. In that sense, Turkish Airlines transported a portion of the aid collected by TİKA (the Turkish Agency for Cooperation and Development), the Turkish Red Crescent Society, the Directorate of Religious Affairs and AFAD (the Disaster and Emergency Agency) to Somalia on its cargo planes.³⁰³ Turkish Airlines not only provided the efficient transformation of humanitarian aid to Somalia, but also started a campaign in its flights to raise funds for

³⁰³ *SkyLife*, September 2011.

Somalia in cooperation with Turkish Red Crescent Society. During its flights between 23 August and 4 September 2011, the flight attendants asked the passengers to voluntarily contribute to raise funds to relieve the humanitarian situation in Somalia.³⁰⁴ In consequence, 968,644 Turkish Liras were raised by Turkish Airlines personnel and passengers. The value of those efforts reached up to 2.2 million Turkish Liras, including the transportation of humanitarian aid and fund raising campaign.³⁰⁵

On 6 March 2012, Turkish Airlines began its scheduled flights to the Somali capital Mogadishu, being the first major commercial airline to landing the city for more than 20 years. The first flight of Turkish Airlines was welcomed by high level politicians, including the President of Somalia, United Nations officials, and ambassadors. The inauguration of flights to Somalia not only demonstrated Turkey's will to be more active player in the Horn of Africa, but also demonstrates the political motives behind Turkish Airlines' decision to fly to highly unstable country.³⁰⁶ The statements of Ahmet Davutoğlu confirm the existence of political motives behind Turkish Airlines' decision to start flight to Somalia. He emphasized the role played by Turkish Airlines in Somalia increasing the visibility of Turkey in Africa and facilitating the development of transportation infrastructure in the country which was taken up by Turkey.³⁰⁷

It seems that Turkish Airlines will increase its engagement in Africa with the

³⁰⁴ Turkish Red Crescent, "Türk Hava Yolları İyilikte de Yükseldi," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <<http://new.kizilay.org.tr/kurumsal/ghaber.php?t=-Genel.Haberler-Turk.Hava.Yolari.Iyilikte.de.Yukseldi>>

³⁰⁵ *Yeni Şafak*, 5 October 2011.

³⁰⁶ BBC, 6 March 2012, "Somalia: Turkish Airlines Begins Flights to Mogadishu," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-17269620#TWEET94279>>

³⁰⁷ *Zaman*, 23 February 2012.

adoption a new strategy aiming to double the number of destinations it flies in Africa by replacing the existing Airbus 330s that fly to African cities with Boeing 737-900ERs³⁰⁸ that will contribute to Turkey's aspiration to develop political, economic and social ties in Africa. According to the January 2012 issue of *Skylife* magazine, Turkish Airlines will start scheduled flights to Abidjan (Ivory Coast) and Kinshasa (DR Congo) as well as Kano and Abuja (Nigeria) by the end of that year.³⁰⁹ Moreover, one of the reasons why Turkish Airlines continuously increases its engagement in Africa is the fact that 60% of Turkish Airlines passengers in the flights from/to Africa transfer to other destinations by using İstanbul as a hub.³¹⁰ Perhaps this also contributes to the attractiveness of İstanbul and Turkey since Turkish Airlines offers connections to almost all parts of the world. Hence, it offers a gateway for its African passengers to the rest of the world.

As the next Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit which will take place in Africa in 2013 is approaching, Turkey aims to grow its political and economic ties with the African countries. Turkey has recently announced its candidacy for another term in the United Nations Security Council for a non-permanent seat for the 2015-2016 term. Similar to the previous election process in the United Nations for Turkey's candidacy for the 2009-2010 term, Turkey needs the support of the African countries and their votes in order to get elected once more. The foreign policy elites in Turkey see Turkey's opening to Africa as a step forward to increase Turkey's say in world affairs, increase its share in the African markets as well as having better relations through economic and

³⁰⁸ Tolga Özbek, "THY Afrika'yı Uçuracak," Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <<http://www.havayolu101.com/2010/11/13/thy-afrikayi-ucuracak/>>

³⁰⁹ *Skylife*, January 2012.

³¹⁰ *Zaman*, 17 February 2012.

cultural interactions. Turkey needs Turkish Airlines to better achieve these goals and Turkish Airlines needs Turkey to be more engaged in this geography that will increase its share in the global civil aviation market.

CHAPTER 6

TURKISH AIRLINES AND TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION AND THE BALKANS

The end of the Cold War brought a mentality change in the making of Turkish foreign policy. Especially, this is true for the countries that had lived under the communist regimes in the former Soviet Union and the Balkans. Many studies have been done so far that attempt to explain this radical shift in Turkey's position vis-à-vis those countries. There is a rich literature that tries to explain the main dynamics behind this policy change in Turkish foreign policy regarding them.

From a different angle, this chapter focuses on the involvement of Turkish Airlines in the former Soviet Union and the Balkans in accordance with the developments in Turkish foreign policy. More specifically, it is argued that Turkish Airlines has facilitated Turkey's opening up to the countries that declared their independence from the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Turkey's reaction to the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia cannot be fully understood without taking its national airline into consideration. Thus, once the perception of those countries changed, Turkish Airlines facilitated the development of commercial, tourism and cultural relations with the countries through air links. For some countries, Turkish Airlines not only linked them to Turkey via air transportation, but also opened them up to the rest of the world. Today, Turkish Airlines is one of the major international carriers in the former Soviet Union and the Balkans thanks to the strategies adopted by Turkey in the past. In this chapter, the role played by Turkish Airlines as a soft power tool in those geographies is covered with a background of political and economic developments that have influenced it.

Turkish Airlines and Turkish Foreign Policy in the Former Soviet Union

Russia has always been perceived as one of the biggest powers that the makers of Turkish foreign policy had to take into account. Between the sixteenth and the twentieth centuries, the Ottoman Empire and Tsarist Russia were involved in continuous wars because of their conflict of interest in various areas. Hence, “the Russian threat” is one of the most historically rooted discourses in Turkish foreign policy. Despite this history of conflicts, the end of the age of empires and the establishment of the new regimes in Turkey and Russia opened a new path in their bilateral relations after the First World War. In the interwar period, the Soviet Union was considered as one of the most important allies of Turkey. Both countries agreed on the principle of non-interference into other’s internal issues which facilitated the consolidation and the legitimacy of the newly established regimes.³¹¹ Hence, the type of the regime in the Soviet Union was not perceived as a threat by the Republican political elite in Turkey. In the realm of economic relations, cooperation was much more visible. Those relations also benefited Turkey’s nascent national airline in 1933. A Tupolev ANT-9 civilian aircraft was given by the Soviet Union to Turkey as a gift for the 10th anniversary of the foundation of the Turkish Republic.³¹² Another example is the establishment of Turkey’s largest textile factory in Kayseri in 1935 with the help of Soviet experts.³¹³

The relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union deteriorated with the

³¹¹ Erel Tellal, “1923-1939 SSCB’yle İlişkiler,” in *Türk Dış Politikası Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar Vol.1*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 2008), pp.315-320.

³¹² Nergiz, pp.86-87.

³¹³ Oleg A. Kolobov et al., *Çağdaş Türk-Rus İlişkileri: Sorunlar ve İşbirliği Alanları 1992-2005*, (İstanbul: TASAM Yayınları, 2006), p.39.

inception of the Second World War. Turkey's desire to stay out of the war at any cost was not serving at the interest of Moscow. Especially, Turkey's control over the Straits and their significance for the security of the Soviet Union caused major disagreements.³¹⁴ At the end of the war, the Soviet Union demanded a change in the international regime governing the Straits. However, Turkey strongly objected to this change because it aimed to retain full sovereignty over those waterways.³¹⁵ Thus, the perception of the Russian threat reemerged after the end of the Second World War. This had pushed Turkey to side with the United States and its allies that are fearful of a communist takeover in Europe, which was devastated politically, economically and socially. The rise of the Soviet Union as a superpower and its desire to export its communist ideology constructed a communist threat in the "free world" in which Turkey saw itself a member. In the sharply divided world of the Cold War, Turkey defined itself as the guardian of the Western values as a NATO member against the communist threat. Therefore, the emergence of the "communist threat" was added to Turkey's already existing "Russian threat." Under those circumstances, Turkey's relations with the Soviet Union remained very limited.

Despite the fact that economic relations could not develop much due to the political considerations in general,³¹⁶ from the second half of the 1960s onwards, the Soviet Union financially and technically assisted Turkey to establish new enterprises including the İskenderun Coal and Steel Factory, the Aliğa Oil Refinery, the

³¹⁴ Tellal, pp.501-509.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Gülten Kazgan, "Ticaretî İzleyen Bayrak," in *Türkiye-Rusya Arasında İhtilaflı Konular ve Çözümleri*, ed. Gülten Kazgan (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2008), p.1.

Seydişehir Aluminum Factory and the Bandırma Petro-Chemical Factory.³¹⁷ Especially from the mid-1980s onwards when the intensity of the Cold War softened, economic relations further developed. In September 1984, a natural gas agreement was signed.³¹⁸ In 1987, another agreement was signed with regard to the cooperation in the construction sector.³¹⁹ In 1989, the Sarp border gate was opened, which increased the flow of goods and people.³²⁰ Until the opening of the border gate, the movement of people across the borders had been limited. For instance, the number of Soviet Union citizens entering Turkey in 1964 was only 418. This number reached 1800 in 1970 and 40,015 in 1980.³²¹ Today, more than six million people visit Turkey from those countries (Table 27) and the trade volume reached up to 56.5 billion dollars in 2008 (Table 26).

Turkey's response to the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union that included the use of Turkish Airlines as a tool to open up to those geographies should be interpreted by taking these historical facts into account. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, 15 countries declared their independence. In this part of the chapter, Turkey's relations with those countries with the exception of the Baltic countries are dealt focusing on Russia, Ukraine, Southern Caucasus and Central Asia with a special emphasis given to Turkish Airlines.

³¹⁷ Kolobov et al., pp.8-9.

³¹⁸ Volkan Ş. Egider and İtr Bağdadi, "Turkey–Russia Energy Relations: Same Old Story, New Actors," *Insight Turkey* 12, no.3 (2010), p.229.

³¹⁹ Kazgan, p.2.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Kemal Kirişçi, "A Friendlier Schengen Visa System as a Tool of 'Soft Power': The Experience of Turkey Soft Power," *European Journal of Migration and Law*, no.7 (2005), pp.355-356

Table 24. Passengers Carried by Turkish Airlines in the Former USSR

Country	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010 ³²²
Russia	48,297	68,278	75,449	77,329	107,232	180,334	267,515	420,451	488,016	503,998
Ukraine	78,884	91,279	100,245	126,533	148,072	213,865	260,698	298,104	332,407	305,457
Georgia	26,157	29,807	11,978	21,166	33,007	71,873	100,187	139,483	179,793	163,355
Azerbaijan	33,295	42,938	50,945	68,296	83,433	986,09	111,006	160,304	253,511	253,843
Kazakhstan	41,734	58,133	61,345	79,831	89,867	144,538	155,496	142,883	149,305	112,723
Turkmenistan	20,185	22,032	22,767	31,907	34,023	44,473	51,048	92,086	130,472	121,911
Uzbekistan	25,962	34,254	42,360	43,965	46,948	48,180	52,906	62,280	62,941	64,620
Kyrgyzstan	20,243	24,317	29,171	39,913	48,433	62,159	84,024	91,082	85,851	76,350
Tajikistan	0	0	0	0	0	10,719	25,272	27,474	26,308	24,204

Data Obtained from Public Diplomacy Office of Turkish Prime Ministry

Table 25. Flight Destinations Opened by Turkish Airlines in the Former USSR³²³

City	Date	City	Date
Moscow	December 1989	Rostov	February 2006
Baku	March 1991	St. Petersburg	March 2006
Almati	May 1992	Yekaterinburg	April 2006
Tashkent	May 1992	Dnepropetrovsk	April 2006
Ashgabat	March 1993	Minsk	May 2006
Kiev	November 1993	Batumi	May 2007
Bishkek	May 1993	Ufa	March 2009
Tbilisi	August 1996	Lviv	July 2009
Odessa	March 1997	Sochi	May 2010
Simferopol	May 1999	Nakhchivan	June 2010
Astana	October 2005	Kishinev	October 2010
Dushanbe	January 2006	Kharkov	March 2012
Donetsk	February 2006	Novosibirsk	March 2012
Kazan	February 2006		

Data Obtained from Turkish Airlines

Table 26. Turkey's Trade with the Countries of the Former Soviet Union (\$ million)

Former Soviet	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Import	4630	5555	7777	12927	17,252	23373	31,263	42,612	26,044	30,888
Export	1978	2279	2963	3962	5057	6993	10,088	13,938	8763	11,058
Total	6608	7834	10,740	16,889	22,309	30,366	41,351	56,550	34,807	41,946

Data Obtained from Turkish Ministry of Economy

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

³²² December 2010 is not included.

³²³ Except Baltic Countries (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) which are not covered in this chapter.

Table 27. Number of People Entered Turkey from the Former Soviet Union (in thousands)

Country	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Azerbaijan	179	163	193	330	412	380	435	460	424	486
Belarus	17	36	45	62	77	85	107	153	142	152
Armenia	7	18	23	33	37	42	53	64	65	69
Georgia	164	162	168	235	367	549	631	830	995	1112
Kazakhstan	38	44	55	83	106	136	195	213	219	248
Krgyzstan	8	10	14	25	31	41	45	48	41	36
Moldova	46	46	55	72	91	109	145	142	118	96
Uzbekistan	21	20	19	20	25	29	43	69	74	68
Russia	757	946	1258	1603	1865	1853	2465	2879	2695	3107
Tajikistan	1	2	2	5	7	12	36	36	20	18
Turkmenistan	15	21	16	27	34	49	76	89	112	114
Ukraine	177	193	225	294	380	488	593	731	575	568

Data Obtained from Turkish Statistical Institute

Note: The numbers are rounded.

Turkish Airlines and Turkish Foreign Policy in Russia

The relations between Turkey and Russian Federation entered a new path after the dissolution of the USSR. First of all, Russia was no longer Turkey's immediate neighbor. Instead, it was replaced by newly independent countries such as Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia, which will be discussed further below. Even before the official disintegration of the Soviet Union, just one month after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Turkish Airlines started scheduled flights to Moscow in December 1989. By March 2012, Turkish Airlines operated scheduled flights to eight cities in Russia. Since 2006, six more cities have been added to the list of Turkish Airlines flight destinations in Russia (Table 25).

There are some political and economic factors that need to be mentioned explaining this growth in the Russian civil aviation market. Today, Russia is Turkey's number one trading partner. In addition, Turkey attracted 3.1 million Russian tourists in

2010 (Table 27). The amount of Turkish investment in Russia reached 17 billion dollars.³²⁴ Those developments were unimaginable just two decades ago. Especially, over the course of the last ten years, Turkey's political and economic engagement with Russia has enhanced. Turkish Airlines not only utilizes from the emerging demand in this market but also creates its own demand through its aggressive expansion strategy. Thus, Turkish Airlines as a soft power tool facilitates economic interdependence through trade and investment as well as mutual understanding between societies through personal contact.

In the 1990s, Turkey's relations with Russia experienced ups and downs. For instance, Turkey and Russia sided with opposing parties in the conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh,³²⁵ Bosnia and Kosovo.³²⁶ There was also mistrust between the countries with regard to the Chechen Wars and the PKK.³²⁷ However, from a macro point of view, threat perceptions diminished for both sides.³²⁸ The development of economic relations in the 1990s was fostered by suitcase trade which reached a volume of 5-15 billion dollars according to different estimates.³²⁹ However, both countries were badly affected by the 1998 Asia economic crisis, which reversed the positive trend in the bilateral

³²⁴ Ahmet Evin et al., *Getting to Zero: Turkey, Its Neighbors and the West*, (Washington D.C.: Transatlantic Academy, 2010), p.14.

³²⁵ Duygu Bazoğlu Sezer, "Turkish-Russian Relations: The Challenges of Reconciling Geopolitical Competition with Economic Partnership," *Turkish Studies* 1, no.1 (Spring 2000), p.76.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.60.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.76.

³²⁸ Şener Aktürk, "Turkish-Russian Relations After the Cold War (1992-2002)," *Turkish Studies* 7, no.3 (2006), p.339.

³²⁹ Kolobov et al. , p.24.

trade relations.³³⁰

From the side of politics, Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit's visit to Moscow in 1999 is considered to have been a turning point for the relations.³³¹ Ecevit conducted his visit despite the opposition in Turkey that was critical of Russia's treatment of the Chechens.³³² This visit demonstrated Turkey's desire to further develop the relations at political, economic and societal levels. From the Russian side, the Turkish Parliament's denial of permission to the United States to use its soil to open a second front in Iraq in 2003 was interpreted as Turkey emerging as an independent player.³³³ It can be argued that this decision changed the way in which Russia perceived Turkey in the realm of foreign policy. Perhaps, a Turkey that could say "no" to the United States on a strategic issue could be taken more seriously by Russia to further develop bilateral relations.

The energy dimension of Turkey's relations with Russia is one of the most important aspects of the economic relations between the countries. Turkey is highly dependent on the import of Russian energy sources. For instance, in 2008 Turkey imported 34% of its coal, 33% of its oil and 62% of natural gas from Russia.³³⁴ Turkey's energy dependence weakens Turkey's hand vis-à-vis Russia in the foreign policy realm. Turkey cannot openly oppose Russia because its opportunity cost is too

³³⁰ N.Y. Ulçenko, "Rusya ve Türkiye Ticaret İlişkileri: Büyüme ve İstikrarsızlaştırma," in *Türkiye-Rusya Arasında İhtilaflı Konular ve Çözümleri*, ed. Gülten Kazgan (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2008), p.189.

³³¹ Bülent Aras and Hakan Fidan, "Turkey and Eurasia: Frontiers of a New Geographic Imagination," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no.40 (2009), p.209.

³³² Bazoğlu Sezer, p.66.

³³³ James W. Warhola and William A. Mitchell, "The Warming of Turkish-Russian Relations: Motives and Implications," *Demokratizatsiya* 14, no.1 (Winter 2006), p.130.

³³⁴ Egider and Bağdadi, p.233.

high for it. For instance, Turkey had to turn a blind eye to Russian policies towards Ukraine and Georgia even though its discontent.³³⁵ Turkey's energy dependence on Russia also creates a trade imbalance in favor of Russia. Hence, Turkey aims to enhance its export potential in Russia in order to reduce this imbalance. Perhaps Turkish Airlines opening new flight routes in Russia helps Turkish exporters in search of new business partners in Russia.

In December 2010, Turkey and Russia signed an agreement in the area of nuclear energy. In that context, a Russian-led consortium will build and operate a \$20 billion, 4.8 gigawatt nuclear power plant in Akkuyu.³³⁶ The fact that Turkey's first nuclear power plant will be built by a Russian company is significant to demonstrate that the high level partnership between the countries in the field of energy.

Table 28. Turkey's Trade with Russia (\$ million)

Russia	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Import	3436	3892	5451	9033	12,906	17,806	23,508	31,364	19,450	21,601
Export	924	1172	1368	1859	2377	3238	4727	6483	3202	4628
Total	4360	5064	6819	10,892	15,283	21,044	28,235	37,847	22,652	26,229

Data Obtained from Turkish Ministry of Economy

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

High level state visits from both sides demonstrated the political will to increase cooperation in the areas of energy, commerce and tourism. Indeed, Vladimir Putin, who visited Turkey in 2004, was the first Russian head of state to visit in 32 years.³³⁷ During his visit, six cooperation agreements in the areas of energy, finance and security were

³³⁵ Aras and Fidan, p.212.

³³⁶ F. Stephen Larrabee, "Turkey's Eurasian Agenda," *Washington Quarterly* 34, no.1 (Winter 2011), p.105.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.112.

signed.³³⁸ In return, Turkish President Abdullah Gül's visit to Moscow in 2009 was the first visit of a Turkish head of state to Russia.³³⁹ He also visited Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan, where Turkey has cultural ties.³⁴⁰ During Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan's visit to Russia in March 2011, it was agreed that the reciprocal visa requirements would be lifted which was believed to foster trade and tourism.³⁴¹

Within this political and economic background, Turkish Airlines operated scheduled flights to eight cities in Russia by March 2012. In addition to the already existing Moscow route which started immediately after the end of the Cold War, Turkish Airlines added Yekaterinburg, Kazan, Rostov and St. Petersburg to its list of destinations in 2006. With starting scheduled flights to Ufa (2009), Sochi (2010) and Novosibirsk (2012), the number reached eight (Table 25). The demand for Turkish Airlines is high because of the quality of service it offers compared to Russian carries. Indeed, Turkish Airlines won a prestigious award from Russian Ministry of Transportation for its successful flight operations in Russia.³⁴²

Without knowing all the economic and political developments listed in previous paragraphs, it would not be possible to understand the increasing engagement of Turkish Airlines in Russia. As Turkish Airlines flies to new destinations in Russia, new opportunities are created for Turkish exporters in search of new markets. This would help Turkey reduce the trade imbalance in favor of Russia. In 2010, compared to 21.6 billion dollars of imports from Russia, Turkey's exports were only 4.6 billion dollars

³³⁸ Richard Weitz, "Russian-Turkish Relations: Steadfast and Changing," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 21, no.3 (2010), p.63.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.64.

³⁴⁰ Weitz, p.64.

³⁴¹ *Radikal*, 17 March 2011.

³⁴² *Skylife*, October 2010.

(Table 28). The flights of Turkish Airlines also increases Turkey's tourism potential by minimizing the time and cost. Turkish Airlines also offers Russian passengers to connect with the rest of the world with a stop in the İstanbul hub. Considering Turkish Airlines' role to facilitate Turkey's foreign policy objectives in Russia, it can be regarded as a soft power tool.

Turkish Airlines and Turkish Foreign Policy in Ukraine

Both countries being littoral states to the Black Sea, Turkey and Ukraine value each other's friendship for geopolitical reasons. Especially, for Ukraine, Turkey is a gateway for its access to the Mediterranean Sea.³⁴³ There are a number of fields in which the two countries can cooperate to promote their regional partnership including energy and security.³⁴⁴ However, Turkey's relations with Ukraine are usually tied to Russia because the latter sees the former as part of its zone of political, economic, historical, cultural and psychological influence.³⁴⁵ Especially, since the 2010 presidential elections in Ukraine, Russia's influence in Ukrainian foreign policy has been much more blatant.³⁴⁶ For instance, Russia and Ukraine agreed on stationing the Russian Black Sea fleet in Ukraine until 2042.³⁴⁷ Considering Turkey's dependence on

³⁴³ Kemal Olçar, *Karadeniz Politikaları ve Türkiye-Ukrayna Stratejik İlişkileri* (İstanbul : IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2007), p.319.

³⁴⁴ Marat Terterov et al., "Russian Geopolitical Power in the Black and Caspian Seas Region: Implications for Turkey and the World," *Insight Turkey* 12, no.3 (2010), p.199.

³⁴⁵ Sergey Glebov, "Ukraine's Changing Foreign Policy: Implications on the Black Sea Security," *Insight Turkey* 13, no.2 (2011), p.133.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.130.

³⁴⁷ Glebov, p.142.

Russia, Turkey and Ukraine cannot develop a strong regional partnership bypassing the Russian interest in the Black Sea region.

Apart from energy and security aspect of the relations, bilateral trade, investment and tourism have been the most influential factors shaping the Turkish-Ukrainian relations.³⁴⁸ Turkey's trade volume with Ukraine peaked in 2008 with 8.3 billion dollars. However, because of the impact of the global financial crisis, it made a downturn. By 2010, the total trade volume was 5.1 billion dollars. Turkey runs a trade deficit to Ukraine (Table 29). In order to reduce this deficit, Turkey aims to increase and diversify its exports to Ukraine. The number of Ukrainian tourists entering Turkey reached a peak in 2008 with 761,000 people. Similar to the trade figures, it made a downturn and by 2010 the number was 568,000 (Table 27). During the official visit of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich to Ankara, it was decided to lift the visa requirements and sign a free trade agreement.³⁴⁹ Perhaps, these new regulations may increase the flow of goods and people on both sides.

Table 29. Turkey's Trade with Ukraine (\$ million)

Ukraine	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Import	758	991	1332	2509	2651	3059	4519	6106	3157	3833
Export	289	313	445	576	821	1121	1481	2188	1033	1260
Total	1047	1304	1776	3085	3472	4180	6000	8294	4190	5093

Data Obtained from Turkish Ministry of Economy

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

³⁴⁸ Zeyno Baran, "Turkey and the Wider Black Sea Region," in *The Wider Black Sea Region in the 21st Century: Strategic, Economic and Energy Perspectives*, ed. Daniel Hamilton and Gerhard Mangott, (Washington D.C.: Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2008), p.95.

³⁴⁹ *Hürriyet*, 23 December 2011.

According to the Ninth Development Plan 2007-2013, the most important factor that would enhance the trade relations between the countries is the improvements in the area of transportation.³⁵⁰ In that context, Turkish Airlines flies to seven cities in Ukraine. By March 2012, Turkish Airlines operated scheduled flights to Kiev (1993), Odessa (1997), Simferopol (1999), Donetsk (2006), Dnepropetrovsk (2006), Lviv (2009) and Kharkov (2012) in Ukraine (Table 25). During my interview with the Vice President of Turkish-Ukrainian Business people Association Burak Pehlivan, he said that Turkish Airlines had finally managed to overcome the bureaucratic hurdles in Ukraine to open new flight routes and increase the frequencies of its flights. He emphasized how Turkish Airlines help business relations and tourism develop further between the two countries. In addition, he underlined the significance of the recent codeshare agreement signed between Ukrainian Aerosvit and Turkish Airlines which further facilitated Turkish Airlines' aggressive expansion in the Ukrainian market. Finally, he emphasized the role played by Turkish Airlines to link Ukraine with the rest of the world, considering the fact that 45% of the passengers that fly from/to Ukraine use İstanbul as a transfer hub.³⁵¹ Hence, Turkish Airlines is an important soft power tool of Turkey's opening up to Ukraine and Ukraine's opening up to the rest of the world.

³⁵⁰ Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, *Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler: Özel İhtisas Komisyonu Raporu*, (Ankara: Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, 2007), p.70.

³⁵¹ Burak Pehlivan, Interview by the author. E-mail. 22 January 2012.

Turkish Airlines and Turkish Foreign Policy in the Southern Caucasus

The countries located in the Southern Caucasus are Turkey's immediate neighbors. Until 1991, there was only one country in the region as Turkey's immediate neighbor, namely the USSR. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan declared their independence. Turkey had to adjust its foreign policy in the region according to the new geopolitical realities.

Azerbaijan is the most significant country for Turkey in the region primarily for ethnic and cultural reasons. Even before its declaration of independence, Turkey took some actions in order to link with its ethnic relatives. One of the actions taken by Turkey was the inauguration of Turkish Airlines scheduled flights to Baku. The decision to fly to Baku was taken by President Turgut Özal himself, who saw Azerbaijan as a vital country for Turkey's opening up with the rest of the Turkic world in Central Asia. In March 1991, Özal conducted a visit to Moscow, Kiev, Baku and Almati. At the end of his trip, Turkish Airlines started to operate flights to Baku on 25 March 1991.³⁵² Thanks to the availability of those flights, Azerbaijan's connection to the rest of world ceased to be under the monopoly of Moscow.

Since Azerbaijan declared its independence in 1991, under the slogan of "one nation and two states", Turkey has sided with Azerbaijan on regional issues including the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.³⁵³ However, Azerbaijan as a small country adopts

³⁵² Kozlu, pp.98-99.

³⁵³ Baran, p.100.

rather a balanced foreign policy that always takes the Russian factor into account.³⁵⁴

Turkey and Azerbaijan have a shared border through the latter's exclave Nakhchivan autonomous region, which was established with the Treaty of Kars in 1921.³⁵⁵ Turkey opened a consulate in Nakhchivan in February 1993, which demonstrates Turkey's commitment to support the sovereignty of Azerbaijan on a territory that it has a common border.³⁵⁶ This diplomatic support was strengthened lately in June 2010 when Turkish Airlines started scheduled flights to Nakhchivan. Bilateral trade was 2.4 billion dollars by 2010 (Table 30). In the same year, 486 thousand Azeri citizens visited Turkey (Table 27). Turkish Airlines that carries business, tourism and cultural ties may positively contribute to the future increases in those numbers.

Table 30. Turkey's Trade with Azerbaijan (\$ million)

Azerbaijan	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Import	78	65	123	136	272	340	330	928	753	865
Export	225	231	315	404	528	695	1048	1667	1399	1550
Total	303	296	438	539	800	1036	1377	2596	2152	2416

Data Obtained from Turkish Ministry of Economy

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

Turkey is the first state to recognize the independence of Georgia,³⁵⁷ an important country in terms of border and energy security.³⁵⁸ In addition, it is a buffer

³⁵⁴ Araz Aslanlı, "Azerbaijan-Russia Relations: Is the Foreign Policy Strategy of Azerbaijan Changing?," *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 9, no.3 (Fall 2010), p.145.

³⁵⁵ İbrahim Kaya, "Türkiye-Ermenistan İlişkilerinin Normalleş(tiril)mesi: Hukuksal Değerlendirmeler," in *Yeni Dönemde Türk Dış Politikası : Uluslararası IV. Türk Dış Politikası Sempozyumu Tebliğleri* (ed) Osman Bahadır Dinçer, Habibe Özdal, Hacali Necefoğlu (Ankara: USAK Yayınları, 2010), p.226.

³⁵⁶ Elbrus İsayev, "Türkiye'nin Dış Politikasında Nahçıvan Meselesi," in *Yeni Dönemde Türk Dış Politikası : Uluslararası IV. Türk Dış Politikası Sempozyumu Tebliğleri* (ed) Osman Bahadır Dinçer, Habibe Özdal, Hacali Necefoğlu (Ankara: USAK Yayınları, 2010), p.410.

³⁵⁷ Ekrem Eddy Güzeldere, "Turkish Foreign Policy: From 'Surrounded by Enemies' to 'Zero Problems,'" *C.A.P. Policy Analysis*, no.1 (2009), p.16.

³⁵⁸ Aras and Fidan, p.206.

zone between Turkey and Russia as well as a gateway for Azerbaijan and Turkic republics in the Central Asia.³⁵⁹ All these considerations influence the formation of Turkish foreign policy towards Georgia. Turkey needs to pursue a balanced policy in Georgia not to upset Russia and defend the independence and territorial integrity of Georgia. For instance, during the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia, Turkey could not openly criticize Russia, which does not recognize the borders of Georgia.³⁶⁰ During the war, transportation, energy and other infrastructure networks in the region were disrupted which harmed the interest of Turkey in the region.³⁶¹ Hence, Turkey initiated the Caucasus Platform for Stability and Cooperation in order to find diplomatic solutions to the disagreements in the Caucasus rather than using military power which is an undesired scenario for Turkey's interest in the region.³⁶²

Turkey is a major trade partner for Georgia. However, for Turkey trade with Georgia does not have a significant value.³⁶³ In the area of civil aviation, the level of cooperation needs to be mentioned. The airport in Batumi is run by a Turkish company TAV, which has a bus connection to the Turkish town Hopa, which is geographically very close. Hence, a passport is not needed to fly to Batumi Airport from a Turkish city.³⁶⁴ In Batumi, Turkish construction companies build hotels in order to make the

³⁵⁹ Candan Azer, *Babadan Oğula Güney Kafkasya : Türkiye-Güney Kafkasya İlişkileri*, (İstanbul: Truva, 2011), p.543.

³⁶⁰ Weitz, p.80.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Larrabee, p.107.

³⁶³ Güzeldere, p.17.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., p.16.

city a center of tourism.³⁶⁵ Turkish Airlines began operating scheduled flights to Tbilisi and Batumi in March 2012. As it was mentioned, the flights to Batumi operate like a domestic route and increase the level of interaction between Georgia and the Black Sea coast of Turkey. As long as there is a political stability in Georgia, Turkey will benefit from reciprocal commercial activities and tourism that will be facilitated by Turkish Airlines operating regular scheduled flights between the countries.

Turkey's relations with Armenia are one of the most puzzling issues in the post-Soviet space. Turkey recognized the independence of Armenia without any reservations as it had all other newly independent republics.³⁶⁶ Turkey also invited Armenia to participate in the initiative to establish the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization.³⁶⁷ However, the diplomatic relations between the countries have not been established until today due to several reasons. The most important reason is Armenia's occupation of an Azerbaijani territory Nagorno-Karabakh as a result of a war between the countries in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Turkey's policy is not to open the land border as long as the military occupation continues.³⁶⁸ In addition, the fact that Armenia does not recognize the Treaty of Kars (1921), which drew the border line between the countries is another major obstacle to establishing diplomatic relations between the countries.³⁶⁹ Another important issue that creates tension between

³⁶⁵ Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey's 'Demonstrative Effect' and the Transformation of the Middle East," *Insight Turkey* 13, no.2 (2011), p.38.

³⁶⁶ Mustafa Aydın, "Foucault's Pendulum: Turkey in Central Asia and the Caucasus," *Turkish Studies* 5, no.2 (2004), p.10.

³⁶⁷ Mehmet Altun, *Dış Dünyanın Anahtarı; DEİK : Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu'nun İlk Yılları, 1985-1997*, (İstanbul: Kurumsal Yayınları Araştırma, Danışmanlık, Tanıtım ve Organizasyon Hizmetleri Ltd. Şti., 2009), p.298.

³⁶⁸ Baran, p.99.

³⁶⁹ Aydın, p.10.

the countries is Armenia's allegations for the recognition of the tragic events of 1915 as genocide.³⁷⁰ Because of all these considerations, there is mutual distrust between the countries that makes it harder to normalize the relations. Moreover, the black and white perceptions about those political and historical issues prevent a successful rapprochement between the two countries.

Despite this negative picture, some positive steps have been taken to improve the relations. In October 2009, an agreement between the countries was reached that would establish diplomatic relations and open the border.³⁷¹ However, the Turkish government could not bring the protocols to the parliament to be ratified because of the ongoing occupation of Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh, although there is no reference to that conflict in the text. Russia is a key country in the resolution of the conflict, but it is not in Russia's interest to help the issue resolved because the ongoing conflict increases Armenia's dependence on Russia to protect its national security.³⁷² If the Turkish-Armenian border is opened, which is currently guarded by the Russian army,³⁷³ Armenia's geographical isolation would be over. In addition, Armenia would be considered for pipeline and railway projects, from which it is currently excluded due to political reasons.³⁷⁴ Those scenarios are not desired by Russia, which aims to keep its

³⁷⁰ Emre İşeri and Oğuz Dilek, "The Limitations of Turkey's New Foreign Policy Activism in the Caucasian Regional Security Complexity," *Turkish Studies* 12, no.1 (2011), p.44.

³⁷¹ *Hürriyet Daily News*, 10 October 2009.

³⁷² Larrabee, p.108.

³⁷³ Mehmet Dikkaya, "Türkiye-Ermenistan Sınır Kapılarının Açılmasının Olası Etkileri," in *Yeni Dönemde Türk Dış Politikası : Uluslararası IV. Türk Dış Politikası Sempozyumu Tebliğleri* (ed)Osman Bahadır Dinçer, Habibe Özdal, Hacı Necefoglu (Ankara: USAK Yayınları, 2010), p.251.

³⁷⁴ Dikkaya, p.250.

political and military dominance over Armenia.³⁷⁵ Thus, the normalization of the relations between Turkey and Armenia requires the consent of other regional actors as well and it is very difficult to achieve that in the current conjuncture.

Although the land border between Turkey and Armenia is closed, air links between İstanbul and Yerevan have been open since 1995 with some exceptions in 2000 and 2001 due to a draft resolution in the US Congress regarding the genocide issue.³⁷⁶ Currently, Armenian Airways operates regular flights between Yerevan and İstanbul.³⁷⁷ Thanks to the availability of direct flights between the countries, Armenian citizens can look for employment in Turkey.³⁷⁸ According to an estimate, the number of Armenian citizens that illegally reside and work in Turkey is around 40,000.³⁷⁹

Even though there is no obstacle for Turkish Airlines operate flights to Armenia, it chooses not to open up to the Armenian market. During my interview with the former President of Turkish Airlines Board of Directors Candan Karlıtekin, he said that political considerations are the main reason behind Turkish Airlines' decision not to operate flights to Armenia.³⁸⁰ Currently, political considerations triumph over economic considerations. Perhaps, Turkey wants to use Turkish Airlines as a bargaining tool to force Armenia to give up more concessions to better integrate with the rest of the world. From an economic point of view, Turkish Airlines would benefit from the opening of

³⁷⁵ International Crisis Group, "Turkey and Armenia: Opening Minds, Opening Borders," *Europe Report*, no.199 (14 April 2009), p.21.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.5.

³⁷⁷ Güzeldere, p.17.

³⁷⁸ Azer, p.535.

³⁷⁹ Güzeldere, p.17.

³⁸⁰ Candan Karlıtekin, Interview by the author.

the Yerevan route. For instance, it can offer a connection for its Los Angeles passengers to fly to Armenia with only one stop in the İstanbul hub. If Turkey and Armenia can overcome the political and historical hurdles and normalize their relations in the future, without a doubt Turkish Airlines will be one of the instruments that would further accelerate the process as a soft power tool. If Turkish Airlines operates flights between İstanbul and Yerevan, this will not only connect those two cities, but will also connect Armenia with the rest of the world. It will also facilitate the movement of people on both sides in the areas of business and tourism. Unfortunately, it will be highly optimistic for those scenarios come true in the near future.

Turkish Airlines and Turkish Foreign Policy in Central Asia

Another region where Turkish Airlines is used as part of Turkey's political opening is Central Asia. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Turkey became the first country to recognize the newly independent countries of Central Asia in December 1991.³⁸¹ Turkey's cultural, lingual and religious ties with the newly independent countries of the Central Asia explain Turkey's quick reaction to this political change.³⁸² The populations that had lived under the Soviet system were now free to develop political, economic and societal ties with Turkey. During my interview with Özdem Sanberk, who served as the Undersecretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 1991 and 1995, he listed the strategies adopted by Turkey with regard to those countries

³⁸¹ Aydın, p.3.

³⁸² İter Turan, "Türkiye'nin Dış Politikasında Orta Asya Ülkelerinin Rolü ve Önemi," in *Türkiye-Rusya Arasında İhtilaflı Konular ve Çözümleri*, ed. Gülten Kazgan (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, August 2008), p.95.

as follows: establishing transportation and communication links, encouraging cultural interaction, offering financial assistance and cooperating in the area of energy.³⁸³

As part of Turkey's strategy to establish transportation links, Turkish Airlines started to fly to Almati (1992), Tashkent (1992), Ashgabat (1993) and Bishkek (1996) (Table 25). It can be said that Turkish Airlines was used as a soft power tool to open up to this geography. The purpose was to carry business people, industrialists, tourists and students from all over the world.³⁸⁴ In 1992, Turkish Airlines also offered a special discount to provide a plane in the service of 90 business people that represent 32 American and 48 Turkish companies that visited Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for them to get to know the region and the business potential.³⁸⁵ In the 2000s, Turkish Airlines added Astana (2005) and Dushanbe (2006) to its list of destinations in the region (Table 25).

Although Turkey's initial enthusiasm about the opportunities to develop political, economic and cultural ties with the countries in the region could not reach its original goals due to some limitations, Turkey's cooperation with the countries in Central Asia in many fields could be realized thanks to the policies adopted at the right place and the right time. The trade volume with five Central Asian countries demonstrates an increasing trend, which reached 6.5 billion dollars in 2010 (Table 31). Without the involvement of Turkey's national airline, Turkey's opening to the Central Asia would lack a significant component. Offering air links to those countries not only connected them with Turkey but, also reduced their dependence on Moscow for their

³⁸³ Özdem Sanberk, Interview by the author. Note taking. İstanbul, Turkey. 10 November 2011. Boğaziçi Üniversitesi. İstanbul. Turkey.

³⁸⁴ Umut Arık, "The New Independent States and Turkish Foreign Policy," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 6, no.1 (1996), pp.34-35.

³⁸⁵ Altun, p.306.

opening up to the rest of the world. Today, Russia continues to view Central Asia as its backyard³⁸⁶ where the countries are still governed by authoritarian leaders that were a product of the Soviet system.³⁸⁷ As long as this geopolitical reality of the region does not change, Turkey's engagement with Central Asia will face some limitations that also limit the involvement of Turkish Airlines in the regional civil aviation market.

Table 31. Turkey's Trade with the Central Asian Countries³⁸⁸ (\$ million)

Central Asia	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Import	218	444	558	873	1043	1745	2483	3498	2228	4033
Export	348	399	613	832	928	1358	1945	2258	2124	2514
Total	566	843	1171	1705	1971	3104	4427	5756	4352	6548

Data Obtained from Turkish Ministry of Economy

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

Turkish Airlines and Turkish Foreign Policy in the Balkans

Since the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Turkey's interest in the Balkan region has increased. Turkey's response to these developments aimed to develop close contacts with the independent countries in the region. Although Turkey was unable to develop close ties with all of the countries, ethnic and religious groups in the Balkans, there are a number of factors that explains Turkey's overall engagement with the Balkans. The first factor is the common history, considering the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the populations in the Balkans.³⁸⁹ The

³⁸⁶ Turan, p.100.

³⁸⁷ Aydın, p.6.

³⁸⁸ Central Asian countries are Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

³⁸⁹ Türbedar, pp.140-141.

Balkan region was considered to be one of the most stable and core areas of the Ottoman Empire until the late nineteenth century.³⁹⁰ Because of this common history, there are people of Turkish origin living in Balkans and people of Balkan origin living in Turkey. Especially, Turkish citizens whose ancestors lived in the Balkans lobby the Turkish government to pursue an active foreign policy in the region.³⁹¹ The Balkan region is also important for Turkey because of its geographical proximity and security reasons.³⁹² Because of these historical and geopolitical reasons, Turkey seeks to enhance its power in the region through several means. Turkey aims to be an influential actor in the Balkan affairs by using soft power mechanisms.

As one of the soft power tools, in the 1990s Turkish Airlines was used to link the newly independent countries and Turkey which are linked to Turkey historically and culturally. Hence, Turkish Airlines facilitated Turkey's efforts to increase its presence in the region almost after a century. This trend continued in the 2000s by adding new flight destinations in the region that increased Turkey's visibility through air transportation. However, apart from Turkey's general policy towards the Balkans, one country deserves a closer look both for Turkish foreign policy and Turkish Airlines.

Among the Balkan countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina holds a significant place in Turkish foreign policy. During the Bosnian War between 1992 and 1995, Turkey strongly supported a NATO intervention in order to protect the country from Serbian aggression.³⁹³ Turkey aims to contribute to the peace in Bosnia through facilitating

³⁹⁰ Hajrudin Somun, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Balkans and 'Neo-Ottomanism': A Personal Account," *Insight Turkey* 13 no.3 (2011), p.34.

³⁹¹ Türbedar,, p.141.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Zarko Petrovic and Dusan Reljic, "Turkish Interests and Involvement in the Western Balkans: A Score-Card," *Insight Turkey* 13, no.3 (2011), p.161.

dialogue among different religious and ethnic groups and use of diplomacy to help the country to resolve its problems with its neighbors and to accelerate its Euro-Atlantic integration.³⁹⁴

As a symbolic gesture to Bosnia's efforts of consolidating its sovereignty and independence, the first civilian flight to Sarajevo after the war was made by Turkish Airlines on 25 November 1995.³⁹⁵ Since November 1997, Turkish Airlines has been operating regular scheduled flights to the Bosnian capital Sarajevo (Table 32). Thanks to the political significance of Bosnia and Herzegovina for Turkey, Turkish Airlines purchased 49 percent of the country's flag carrier, B&H Airlines.³⁹⁶ During our interview with a high level officer at Turkish Airlines, it was confirmed that this deal could take place because of political considerations rather than economic interest.³⁹⁷ Although there might be some economic value, this instance shows that national airlines may sometimes involve in unprofitable deals to promote a political goal. In this case, Turkey's policy included supporting the national airline of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

³⁹⁴ Türbedar, p.143.

³⁹⁵ Türk Hava Yolları, *75.Yılında Türk Hava Yolları*, p.238.

³⁹⁶ Turkish Airlines, *Turkish Airlines Annual Report 2010*, p.11.

³⁹⁷ A mid-ranking Turkish Airlines officer, Interview by the author. Note taking. İstanbul, Turkey. 13 December 2011. Turkish Airlines Head Office. İstanbul, Turkey.

Table 32. Flight Destinations Opened by Turkish Airlines in the Balkans since 1989

City	Date	City	Date
Bucharest	March 1993	Pristina	April 2002
Tiran	October 1995	Ljubljana	January 2006
Sofia	October 1997	Belgrade	March 2006
Sarajevo	November 1997	Podgorica	July 2010
Skopje	September 1998	Thessaloniki	May 2011
Zagreb	October 1998		

Data Obtained from Turkish Airlines

Turkey’s economic engagement with the region is not limited to the civil aviation sector. Turkey seeks to further enhance its economic visibility in the Balkans. For instance, Turkish construction companies are involved in important projects such as building airports and roads.³⁹⁸ Specifically, in the Western Balkans, Turkey’s trade volume with the countries (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo) reached only 2.1 billion dollars by 2010 (Table 33). According to *The Economist*, “High-profile road and airport projects give a false impression of huge Turkish investment. Except in Albania and Kosovo, there has been more talk than cash.”³⁹⁹

For Turkey to be more engaged with the region economically, which will increase its political power, Turkish Airlines is an important asset. In addition to symbolic and political acts, it can be used in the region to facilitate the activities of Turkish business people in search of new partners. Considering the fact that there is no visa requirement to travel between the countries of the Western Balkans and Turkey, it may also foster reciprocal tourism, which will contribute to foreign exchange earnings and mutual understanding between societies as a soft power tool. Aware of this

³⁹⁸ Bedrudin Brljavac, “Turkey Entering the European Union Through the Balkan Doors: In Style of a Great Power?,” *Romanian Journal of European Affairs* 11, no.2 (2011), p.85.

³⁹⁹ *The Economist*, 5 November 2011.

potential, in March 2011 Turkish Airlines initiated a project called “Balkans without a Visa” that emphasized the historical and cultural proximity between Turkey and the Balkan nations to encourage Turkish people to visit Balkans with special offers.⁴⁰⁰ If Turkish Airlines continues to engage in such activities, it will increase contacts at economic and societal levels.

Table 33. Turkey’s Trade with the Countries in the Western Balkans⁴⁰¹ (\$ million)

Western Balkans	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Import	42	46	87	202	266	190	252	265	276	552
Export	302	389	571	740	908	1114	1982	2289	1615	1604
Total	345	435	658	942	1174	1305	2235	2554	1891	2157

Data Obtained from Turkish Ministry of Economy

Note: Numbers are rounded. Sums may not match.

⁴⁰⁰ Turkish Airlines, 30 March 2011, “Vizesiz Balkanlar Projesi ile Balkanlar’ ın Tüm Başkentlerine Türk Hava Yolları ile Vizesiz Uçun,” Accessed on 24 March 2012, Available [online] at: <<http://www.turkishairlines.com/tr-tr/kurumsal/basin-odasi/basin-bultenleri/6224/vizesiz-balkanlar-projesi-ilebalkanlar-in-tum-baskentlerine-turk-hava-yollari-ile-vizesiz-ucun.aspx>>

⁴⁰¹ Western Balkan countries are Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, the relationship between Turkish Airlines and Turkish foreign policy was examined by focusing on developments in Turkish foreign policy and their implications for Turkish Airlines both in history and contemporary times. Taking Turkish foreign policy as an independent variable and Turkish Airlines as a dependent variable, the relationship between them was analyzed through the use of various sources in order to reach general findings.

The first finding of this thesis was the close relationship between politics and national airlines in the global context. Although it is very difficult to reach a causal relationship between the two, it was demonstrated that national airlines that are fully or partially owned by states are used by their governments to promote certain political goals especially in the realm of foreign policy. As the chosen instruments of their governments, national airlines often are involved in operations that are guided by political motivations. Hence, it is frequently observed that national airlines help their home governments achieve certain political goals.

As the main focus of this thesis, it was primarily found that Turkish Airlines has become a foreign policy tool of Turkey. Although the developments in Turkish foreign policy have always influenced the operations of Turkish Airlines, from the 1980s onwards, Turkish Airlines has been openly used as a foreign policy tool that facilitates Turkey's opening up to various geographies. The first time that Turkish Airlines was openly used as a foreign policy tool was during the Özal era and in the context of Turkey's reaction to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. During the AKP era, this usage has spread up to other regions and coincided with Turkey's aspiration to become an

international player and Turkish Airlines' goal to become a global airline company.

Another important finding of the thesis is that the Turkish Airlines is still used as a foreign policy tool even though majority of its shares do not belong to the Turkish state anymore. Despite the fact that the state is a minority shareholder, it retains the golden share and strongly influences the management of Turkish Airlines. It was found that this influence specifically manifests itself in the area of foreign policy. Therefore, Turkish Airlines facilitates Turkey's foreign policy openings in coordination with Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to decide on route openings and some other issues depending on the context.

More specifically, Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East, which aims to create a region of peace and stability through a liberal visa regime and free trade agreements, is complemented by Turkish Airlines as a soft power tool. It was found that as the relations between Turkey and a Middle Eastern country develop further, it is more likely that Turkish Airlines opens new flight routes in that specific country or increases the frequencies of the existing flight routes that contribute positively to the trade and tourism figures as well as mutual understanding between societies.

Furthermore, it was found that Turkish Airlines is one of the main pillars of Turkey's opening to the African continent. In addition to the diplomatic and economic engagements in the continent that are in coordination with each other, Turkish Airlines establishes air links with the countries that were once considered as remote areas. In that sense, it facilitates the achievement of Turkish foreign policy on the continent. It was also found that there is a positive correlation between trade and tourism figures and Turkish Airlines route openings.

Another finding of this thesis was that Turkish Airlines has become one of the

leading airline companies in the post-Soviet space since the end of the Cold War in line with the general orientation of Turkish foreign policy. Turkey's reaction to the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union cannot be fully understood without taking Turkish Airlines into account. In that sense, it was demonstrated that there is a close relationship between the developments in foreign policy and the involvement of Turkish Airlines in this region. It was also found that the involvement of Turkish Airlines in the Balkans is always in relation to the policies adopted by Turkey both in the bilateral and the regional levels.

Overall, it was shown that foreign policy considerations that are determined by the Turkish government strongly influence the operations of Turkish Airlines as a national flag carrier airline company. Similar to some other national airlines, it is viewed as the chosen instrument of Turkish foreign policy. Thus, it was demonstrated throughout the thesis, Turkish Airlines which promotes the name of Turkey all over the world and enhances the image of Turkish foreign policy in the eyes of foreign publics, is a soft power tool.

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