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Assessing the Impact of Turkish Soft Power on Pakistan–Turkiye Relations: The Interplay of Media Consumption, Cultural Diplomacy, and Public Perceptions

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ABSTRACT

The study will analyse and focus on the impact of soft power of Türkiye in expanding the trajectory of Pakistan and Türkiye relations through the television drama, digital media products and other cultural products (Mohydin, 2020a; Nye, 2008). It suggests that Turkish media has emerged as a powerful tool to increase mutual affinity and emotional ties as well as people interactions between the two countries, and that it is playing an important role in the field of cultural diplomacy (Cummings, 2003; Yilmaz & Shakil, 2025). Today, in the 21st century, the strategic and economic relationship of the two countries is intertwined in the mists of media-based cultural exchange in shaping the intentional relationship. One such popular phenomenon in Pakistan is the Turkish popular culture. The dramas based on history, family, and things related to the Ottoman/Istanbul/Ijttihad civilisation have garnered massive Pakistani audiences (Mohydin, 2020a; Talal, 2021). This paper is based on the theories of "media", "soft power" and "cultural diplomacy", as well as "constructivism", to illustrate the mechanism of social construction of interstate relations through media narratives (Nye, 2008; Cummings, 2003; Wendt, 1992). The study doesn't define Turkish dramas as just entertainment but as a tool of identity projection, public diplomacy, audience attraction, attitude change and foreign policy formation. A secondary-content analysis based on scholarly research as well as other internal (e.g., policy documents) and external (e.g., public commentary, media reports) content sources and materials will be utilised (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis implies that the Pakistani media has helped increase Türkiye's cultural presence in Pakistan and has also strengthened the notion of brotherhood and mutual values among Pakistanis (Yilmaz & Shakil, 2025). The study ends with the conclusion that soft power diplomacy has emerged as a significant area of Pakistan–Türkiye relations and will continue to play a positive role in bilateral goodwill, cultural exchange and diplomacy.

Keywords: Turkish soft power; Pakistan–Türkiye relations; cultural diplomacy; public diplomacy; television dramas; media influence; constructivism; audience reception; transnational culture; identity formation

INTRODUCTION

International relations have been more widely studied in the 21st century compared with conventional diplomacy, military alliances and economic cooperation. The role of culture, media and digital communication in influencing state and public perception of foreign relations is becoming more and more important (Kia et al., 2025; Nye, 2008).

In this context, popular media is a more effective means of cultural projections on the global context, especially for aggravating Turkish property on television dramas, global episode transmission and social media circulation (Mohydin, 2020a, 2020b).

The expansion of media in Pakistan is highly visible and welcoming to its audience. Turkish dramas have increased to an extraordinary level of popularity and are extremely influential in shaping public perception of Türkiye (Mohydin, 2020a; Talal, 2021).

In fact, Pakistan and Türkiye have long-standing relations based on religious affinity and political goodwill, along with continuous diplomatic assistance in various fields (Khan & Din, 2017; Zeb &

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Shkurti Özdemir, 2024).

But with the sensibility of the Turkish dramas, media contents and similar elements in Pakistani households and online communities and daily conversations, this relationship is seen as a cultural issue in recent years (Associated Press of Pakistan, 2025; Zeb & Shkurti Özdemir, 2024).

This is very important and not just because it has been declared, agreed in treaties, or reflects well on international relations; it is also because public imagination, emotional connection, and symbolic familiarity play a part in international relations as well (Wendt, 1992; Yilmaz & Shakil, 2025). Historical series, especially Turkish dramas such as Diriliş: Ertuğrul, have emerged as strong series by intertwining issues of Islamic history, honour, sacrifice, family and the collective memory with cinematic qualities (Mohydin, 2020a, 2020b; ―How Turkey's Soft Power Conquered Pakistan,‖ 2020).

In this paper, the author aims to state that the media is a soft power instrument and it can affect Pakistan – Türkiye relations with its characteristics. Soft power is the ability of a country to reach other countries positively in terms of culture, values and policies instead of using force and pressure (Nye, 2004, 2008). ―Cultural diplomacy‖ can be defined as the process of promoting understanding and positive relations between societies through cultural exchange and communication (Cummings, 2003; Kia et al., 2025). Constructivism also posits that identities and interstate meanings are socially achieved with recurring interaction, representation, and interpretation (Wendt, 1992, 1999). These frameworks collectively indicate that Turkish media is not an export of entertainment: it is a tool to project a culture which affects the formation of identity, public opinion, and foreign policy debates.

Because Turkish dramas are attracting an unusually high number of viewers, the case of Pakistan is particularly relevant. According to research and media reports, Ertuğrul Ghazi is one of the most talked about overseas dramas in Pakistan at the moment, sparking fan websites and extensive internet discussion, and generating emotional engagement among viewers (Mohydin, 2020a, 2020b; Talal, 2021). The popularity of Turkish media is further acknowledged at the level of public and institutional interest in Turkish media, as evidenced by recent public media collaboration and public diplomacy agreements between Pakistan and Türkiye, as well as the organisation of joint broadcasts in the two countries (Anadolu Agency, 2025; Associated Press of Pakistan, 2025; Directorate of Communications, Republic of Türkiye, 2025). This paper will therefore analyse Turkish soft power practices seen from three perspectives, namely cultural visibility, audience reception, and public diplomacy, which are helpful in symbolic and practical terms to enhance bilateral relations.

The case of Pakistan and Türkiye is very promising as a context for this soft power mapping, of which actors are needed, for mutual understanding, and for the development of bright prospects. The political goodwill, religious unity and support between the two countries go back to the days of the Ottoman period and the initial phase of Pakistan statehood. Studies on the subject reveal that the roots of the relationship extend beyond the formal diplomatic relations established in 1947 and may have also been traced back to the emotional support the Indian Muslims extended to the Ottoman Caliphate during the Khilafat movement (Khan & Din, 2017; Minault, 1982). Since then, Pakistan and Türkiye have been having mutually friendly ties through diplomatic, defence, trade and cultural spheres (Zeb & Shkurti Özdemir, 2024). This historical background is relevant since Turkish media arrives in a relationship where there is a sense of civilizational imagination and sentiment in common.

The cultural aspect of this relationship has emerged and been institutionalised in particular, which is essential in the current era. The strategic importance of communication, broadcasting and

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cultural cooperation has been seen in the recent media ties and cooperation between Pakistan and Türkiye. Mutual understanding is a factor that states actors are aware of, which media can help them achieve, thanks to joint broadcast operations, media working groups and public diplomacy (—Pakistan‘s PTV and Türkiye‘s TRT,‖ 2024; Directorate of Communications, Republic of Türkiye, 2025). This is a very important achievement as it shows that Türkiye's soft power is not working in a vacuum, but is becoming known and encouraged more and more in official bilateral formats.

Theoretically speaking, this paper builds upon soft power, cultural diplomacy and constructivism, which are three approaches that are interconnected. Soft power helps to understand the importance of attraction in world politics and how cultural products can be politically influential (DiploFoundation, 2025; Nye, 2004, 2008). Cultural Diplomacy is an understanding of how states and societies may try to influence foreign perceptions and foster goodwill through cultural exchange (Cummings, 2003). Constructivism is the way in which social identities, meanings and interests are produced, not predetermined, but rather in a process of interaction, discourse and representation (Wendt, 1992). Transferred to Pakistan–Türkiye relations, these frameworks imply that Turkish dramas help in the social construction of bilateral affinity by rendering Türkiye both visible, emotional and also symbolically important to Pakistanis.

This topic has relevance beyond the media world. It addresses the ever-changing phenomenon of diplomacy in an era of globalisation where public opinion, electronic circulation and cultural familiarity are increasingly influencing political relations (Nye, 2019). The examples listed below in the list of Turkish media show the influential effect of popular TV series, video streaming companies and online fan groups, as well as embassies and treaties, to create a national brand. That has significance for Pakistan, where Turkish dramas have secured big audiences from people of every type, as within the country, there could likely be a better sense of feeling with Türkiye via cultural intake (Talal, 2021; Yilmaz & Shakil, 2025). The Pakistani audience is a significant platform that serves as a cross-pollinator for culture and diplomacy in relations between Türkiye and the country.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- How does Turkish media function as a soft power resource in Pakistan?
- In what ways do Turkish television dramas influence Pakistani perceptions of Türkiye?
- How do media consumption and cultural exchange contribute to Pakistan–Türkiye relations?
- How do soft power, cultural diplomacy, and constructivism explain this relationship?
- What policy implications emerge from the growing media-based cultural connection between the two countries?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are:

- To analyse Turkish media as an instrument of soft power in Pakistan.
- To examine the ways Turkish dramas shape perceptions of Turkish culture, identity, and society.
- To explore how cultural exchange strengthens people-to-people ties between Pakistan and Türkiye.
- To interpret the phenomenon through the lenses of soft power, cultural diplomacy, and constructivism.
- To propose recommendations for future cultural and media cooperation.

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SCOPE OF THE STUDY

So this paper is all about Turkish Television dramas, digital media circulation and related cultural products that are forms of soft power in Pakistan. It looks at the role of these media forms in public diplomacy relations and the impression they create in the minds of the Pakistani audience (Mohydin, 2020a, 2020b; Talal, 2021). The study does not statistically measure the effects of the audience on the media; seeing this, the study embraces the various studies, media reports, and policies that have been developed in the field of the Turkish media and tries to examine the media from the broader cultural and diplomatic perspectives (Associated Press of Pakistan, 2025; Directorate of Communications, Republic of Türkiye, 2025). The study is confined to the Pakistan – Türkiye dynamics, but the findings and conclusions have the potential to be transferred to other transnational cultural sphere dynamics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic research on Turkish media in Pakistan can be conceptualised as lying amidst the fields of soft power studies, cultural diplomacy, audience reception and media globalisation. The common point in all this literature is that television dramas and even other cultural products are not neutral and that they are valuable tools of international influence, which contribute to the image the foreign public has of a country (Cummings, 2003; Mohydin, 2020a; Nye, 2008).

For the case of Türkiye, the scholar and policy-oriented institutions have begun to refer to Turkish drama exports as a successful example of cultural projection, which brings the country's visibility far beyond official diplomacy (Directorate of Communications, Republic of Türkiye, 2025; Mohydin, 2020a, 2020b). To date, Pakistan is one of the clearest examples of this evolving process as Turkish dramas resonate well with the local audience (Saleem & Sadiq, 2021; Talal, 2021; Yilmaz & Shakil, 2025).

Media consumption, cultural exchange, and public diplomacy are the three streams of soft power of the Turkish state that have helped in the reconfiguration of the Pakistan - Türkiye relationship. It contends that Turkish television dramas and digital cultural products have shaped the public perceptions by ‗recycling' narratives of history, identity, family, morality and civilizational memory in Pakistan and that with the mediation of digital technology, they extended Türkiye's cultural visibility (Yilmaz & Shakil, 2025). One of the main ideas in the literature is based on the soft power theory developed by Joseph Nye. Nye's main principle is that attraction, rather than coercion, is the more effective tool for a state to use when wanting to sway another state and that certain resources enable attraction, such as culture (Nye, 2004, 2008, 2019). This idea is utilised in a great deal of cases within the media industry where the images of a country could circulate via movies, TV, and digital content in ways that are emotionally and socially memorable (Mohydin, 2020a, 2020b).

Turkish dramas fit in this model especially well; they have high production values and high moral content and are also culturally exportable (Mohydin, 2020b; ―How Turkey's Soft Power Conquered Pakistan,‖ 2020). As far as soft power is concerned, these dramas will make Türkiye visible, known and deserving of admiration to other audiences (Nye, 2004, 2008).

Numerous analyses of the global penetration of Turkish television reveal a significant fact that, in geographical terms, it has turned into a serious soft power tool. Soap operas, they conclude, have proven to be useful vehicles for the public diplomacy of Türkiye as they enable foreign audiences to travel to Turkish ideas, values and imagination in an easy way (Mohydin, 2020a; Yilmaz & Shakil, 2025).

Unlike the official state discourse, dramas achieve their function via storytelling, identification

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with characters, and emotion. This is particularly useful in situations where cultural aspects or moral issues are more accessible to audiences (Cull, 2008; Mohydin, 2020b).

The fan following of these dramas has been added by the inclusion of religious themes, family-centric stories and settings based on history, which cater to the priorities of Pakistan (Ahmed & Basharat, 2023; ―How Turkey‘s Soft Power Conquered Pakistan,‖ 2020; Talal, 2021).

Witnessed by the size of this reception, empirical studies in Pakistan have attested to it. Various factors that have attracted Pakistani audiences to the series were found in the research of Ertugrul Ghazi, they are: Quality of Storyline, Historical Atmosphere, and Islamic Values (Ahmed & Basharat, 2023). A study on Pakistani youth conducted in Karachi also revealed that Turkish historical dramas had a remarkable impact on the thinking and views of the participants, as the majority of them said they had been influenced by the dramas (Talal, 2021). A separate study based on a survey was undertaken by Hazara University, where most respondents were found to watch dramas on a regular basis, and English dramas such as Turkish dramas had a significant popularity amongst the Pakistani population because of their captivating storylines and culture. All these studies point to the fact that the Turkish media has not just profusely penetrated the Pakistani sphere, but it has already become a piece of the broader cultural dialogue of young people, families and netizens (Ahmed & Basharat, 2023; Saleem & Sadiq, 2021; Talal, 2021).

One of the key aspects of the literature is audience interpretation. The meaning of a drama does not need to be determined at the time it is produced; it is constructed by the response to, translation of, discussion of, and reframing of the drama in the receiver's context (Irfan, 2022). The study of Urdu dubs of Turkish television series in the households of Pakistan revealed that the processes of dubbing, translation and censorship importantly play a negative role in changing the meaning and constructing pleasures of viewing (Irfan, 2022). The study reveals that Pakistani women television viewers responded to Turkish dramas on many bases, such as curiosity, religious similarity, the aesthetic factor or the interest in contemporary but culturally related family stories (Irfan, 2022). This is important as it suggests that transnational media operate through localised interpretation and not merely through cultural imitation (Irfan, 2022; Malik et al., 2019). That is, Pakistani audiences use their social and moral structures to appreciate the Turkish culture as their own.

The other focus is on parasocial interaction and online fan communities (Horton & Wohl, 1956). One study on Ertuğrul Ghazi viewers revealed that viewing drama through social media made viewers emotionally connected to the characters on one side, contributing to the escalating cultural power of the drama. The authors argued that online communities helped maintain the attachment to the series and increased the engagement beyond the television screen. It is significant to soft power because such parasocial identification with fictional stories can result in social relations and relationships that affect attitudes towards the country shown in the show (Nye, 2008). In the Pakistan-Türkiye context, it implies that Turkish dramas affect not only a nation's viewing patterns but also their sentiments toward Türkiye, Turkish history and being Muslim themselves (Ahmed & Basharat, 2023; Yilmaz & Shakil, 2025).

Turkish Dramas as Soft Power In Pakistan

Turkish television dramas can be viewed as a good sample of soft power in the media. For instance, the Turkish series, including Diriliş: Ertuğrul, enjoyed unprecedented success and popularity in Pakistan, beyond serving merely as entertainment, they came to be cultural phenomena shaping discourses of identity, image and perceptions about Türkiye (―How Turkey‘s Soft Power Conquered Pakistan,‖ 2020). The study carried out in Pakistan regarding the perception of Turkish drama indicates that these dramas establish an emotional tie, cultural acquaintances and a positive perception of Turkish society among the viewers (Saleem & Sadiq, 2021). Being successful in the

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base, one can notice that the process of attraction in Pakistan's case is more effective than coercion to influence foreign public attitudes, as indicated by Nye's notion (Nye, 2004).

The Pakistani case also indicates that media soft power efforts need to be done through shared values and resonance. One of the main themes of Turkish dramas is Islamic history, family ethics, loyalty, sacrifice, and civilizational pride, which makes them very attractive to the Pakistani audiences (Yilmaz & Shakil, 2025). Meanwhile, particularly through TV shows and digital media, the dissemination of these dramas has helped to foster new types of cultural diplomacy by placing images of Türkiye in Pakistan's daily lives (Cummings, 2003; Mohydin, 2020a). Thus, this case concretely shows that the media could play a role as an instrument for diplomacy to change the perception of the foreign public about a country (Cull, 2008).

In addition, the literature confirms that Turkish dramas are understood in different ways by audiences. Some think that they are enriching the culture and helping to improve the spirit, while others fear that they bring in values or lifestyles which are not considered the norm of Pakistan (Malik et al., 2019; Saleem & Sadiq, 2021).

This study, published in the Journal of Media Studies, revealed that while many dramas in Türkiye were popular among people, there were some who realised that the social norms of Pakistan are not the same as those in Türkiye (Malik et al., 2019). It's a necessary antidote to too rosy narratives about soft power, as it demonstrates attraction doesn't obliterate difference. Instead, audiences work out what they like and dislike and what they transform (Irfan, 2022; Malik et al., 2019). Therefore, it would be no exaggeration to say that the influence of the Turkish media in respect of the Pakistani society is not a total one but a partial, selective and interpretative one (Irfan, 2022).

A wider literature on the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Türkiye gives historical and political context to this cultural connection. The relationship between the two countries is deep-rooted and has extended back in history, even before Pakistan's independence. Muslims had sympathy and support for the Ottoman Empire (Khan & Din, 2017; Minault, 1982).

Türkiye soon accepted the country as an independent state after 1947, and both countries signed the cooperation agreements regarding early friendship and then regional and strategic agreements (Khan & Din, 2017; Zeb & Shkurti Özdemir, 2024). The significance of this history is that Turkish dramas are met within an arena created by centuries-long familiarity, goodwill and civilizational affinity (Khan & Din, 2017; Zeb & Shkurti Özdemir, 2024). Cultural media, then, is not the formation of a relationship from scratch, but the reproduction of the type of relationship that already existed (Khan & Din, 2017; Zeb & Shkurti Özdemir, 2024).

In the present context, the soft power of Türkiye emanates from its cultural images portrayed in the dramas, Islamic history and its tinges in the stories, and its family-oriented values, which may be relatable to many in Pakistan and appealing to them. That would be through persuasion and emotional engagement, not force. The audience does not have to like Türkiye; they voluntarily make themselves susceptible to content they have rolled out from Türkiye because it is meaningful to them.

WHY MEDIA MATTERS

Additionally, it is an instance that illustrates Nye's claim that public diplomacy is one of the key elements of soft power (Nye, 2008). Turkish dramas can be seen as an instrument that works as a public diplomacy since they, unlike official state communication instruments, send a picture of Türkiye to the outside world directly. Media that have been at home meeting with governments, now address the population and influence the common opinion. That's the sort of indirect impact Nye is referring to when he states that attractions can generate foreign impacts (Nye, 2004).

WHY PAKISTAN IS IMPORTANT

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Pakistan provides a good case as the response of the audience was quite wide, and it was also quite cordial, particularly in respect of Ertuğrul Ghazi (—How Turkey‘s Soft Power Conquered Pakistan,‖ 2020). The case proves the fact that soft power is best centrifugal when the cultural product resonates with the audience. The very reason that Turkish dramas were not successful in Pakistan was not just because they were popular, but because they were being appreciated for their religious, historical, moral and brotherhood values. That resonance further added to the exposure of the Turkish culture and enhanced the image of Türkiye in Pakistan.

WHAT THIS MEANS THEORETICALLY

There are three ways this case corresponds to Nye's theory:

It demonstrates that influences are drawn from culture.

It demonstrates that the media can extend that influence beyond the country.

It proves foreign public can build a positive attitude without any political pressures.

The case introduces, at the same time, a new twist in Nye's theory. Studies of the impact of Turkish dramas in Pakistan indicate that it is not just about the soft power; it is about ideological impact as well, based on how the content is interpreted (Yilmaz & Shakil, 2025). On the whole, the case confirms Nye's theory, but it reveals that there is a wider range of influences from the media than mere attraction (Nye, 2004).

More recent policy developments also indicate that the media aspect of the relationship is becoming institutionalised. Pakistan and Türkiye signed agreements for strengthening media cooperation in 2024 and joint broadcasting with cultural communication in the spring of 2025 (Associated Press of Pakistan, 2025; Directorate of Communications, Republic of Türkiye, 2025; —Pakistan‘s PTV and Türkiye‘s TRT,‖ 2024).

Such developments indicate that state actors are now alerted to the fact that the media is a part of the diplomatic setup and can play a significant role in bilateral relations (Anadolu Agency, 2025; Associated Press of Pakistan, 2025; Directorate of Communications, Republic of Türkiye, 2025). It's a popular drama like Ertuğrul Ghazi being official material means that it is also useful for diplomacy (—Pakistan‘s PTV and Türkiye‘s TRT,‖ 2024). The media's soft power impacts are no longer limited to the private sphere of viewing, but now it's getting to public policy, and international communication is a strong indicator for this (Associated Press of Pakistan, 2025; Kia et al., 2025).

In terms of the influence of the media, it is also noted that Turkish dramas have an effect on lifestyles and symbolic consumption. Some research highlights that the audiences may develop a curiosity regarding fashion, aesthetics from past periods, travel fantasies and other cultural preferences related to Turkish offerings (Irfan, 2022; Saleem & Sadiq, 2021). Simultaneously, another study revealed that viewing Turkish dramas did not necessarily lead to a wish to visit Türkiye, indicating that the two do not necessarily go hand in hand between cultural attraction and behavioural change (Malik et al., 2019). It is also important to note this nuance as it demonstrates that soft power can be subtle and indirect. It can influence the way another society thinks about the other society, even if it does not affect its everyday practices (Nye, 2004, 2008). This consequently makes the formation of images a core output of the influence of the Turkish media in Pakistan (Mohydin, 2020a; Yilmaz & Shakil, 2025).

All the literature taken together indicates three general conclusions. To begin with, Turkish dramas are de facto soft power instruments, as they put Türkiye on the map, make it charming and culturally readable to the Pakistani audience (Mohydin, 2020a; Nye, 2008; Talal, 2021). Second, the reception of the audience in Pakistan is active and selective, influenced by dubbing, religiosity, gendered uses, and engagement with the online world (Irfan, 2022; Saleem & Sadiq, 2021). Third,

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Pakistan and Türkiye already enjoy a political ground on which they have established cultural relations, and it is easier and more effective to institutionalise that (Zeb & Shkurti Özdemir, 2024). The literature is still lacking in a comprehensive sense of the intertwining of these cultural, political, and interpretive perspectives, and how they play off each other to redefine interstate relations. This paper seeks to fill that void, linking the use of media to public diplomacy and constructivist identity formation (Nye, 2008; Wendt, 1992, 1999).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is based on three underlying approaches, namely soft power, cultural diplomacy and constructivism. These ways are mutually effective as they throw light on how as well as what Turkish media influence in Pakistan (Cummings, 2003; Nye, 2008; Wendt, 1999). Soft power is a rationale that draws attention, cultural diplomacy is a process of how to exploit cultural contents to establish relationships, while constructivism brings out the sense of how meanings, identities and preferences are socially produced through a repeating process (Cummings, 2003; Nye, 2004; Wendt, 1992).

Soft Power, according to Nye's proposition, is the ability to attract others by appealing to them, as opposed to coercing them or paying them (Nye, 2004). Cultural resources play an integral part in this process as they engender admiration, familiarity and emotion. Turkish dramas are a soft power source due to the fact that they portray Turkish culture, the relations of the family members, history and moral codes that fit foreign audiences (Mohydin, 2020a, 2020b; Talal, 2021). This attraction is accentuated in Pakistan by the religious and civilizational themes, which are familiar and relevant for viewers (Ahmed & Basharat, 2023; Yilmaz & Shakil, 2025).

The rationale is extrapolated into the field of communication and exchange by cultural diplomacy. It pertains to the usage of types of culture to create understanding and positive perceptions across the borders (Cummings, 2003; Kia et al., 2025).

The relevance of Turkish media lies in the creation of such channels through dramas, documentaries, joint productions or public broadcasting deals, with which the state can communicate indirectly to foreign media publics (Associated Press of Pakistan, 2025; ―Pakistan‘s PTV and Türkiye‘s TRT,‖ 2024). For this study, the sudden circulation of positive imagery about Türkiye in Turkish dramas is taken as cultural diplomacy as they create the symbolic closeness to Pakistani audiences (Mohydin, 2020a, 2020b; ―Pakistan‘s PTV and Türkiye‘s TRT,‖ 2024).

The deepest interpretive layer is from constructivism. Constructivist scholarship suggests that identities, interests and relationships are not necessarily predetermined by geographical location; they are being created by language, 'interpretations' and social negotiations (Wendt, 1992, 1999). This point of view is particularly helpful when assessing the media, as these media narratives create what people think represents the country (Wendt, 1999).

Pakistani audiences and viewers of Turkish dramas are engaging in a meaning-making process, which has an impact on how Türkiye is imagined socially and politically (Ahmed & Basharat, 2023; Irfan, 2022). This image of Türkiye as culturally closer to us, historically in sync with us, and morally serious is thus not a natural one, but a media-fabricated one with an audience-constructed interpretation.

Three matched theoretical lenses in which this study is anchored: soft power, cultural diplomacy and constructivism. These frameworks collectively provide an account of the role of Turkish media in shaping the perception, moulding public opinion and aiding in the reconfiguration of the relationship between Pakistan and Türkiye. The main theme is that the media are not only a direct force of persuasion or state coercion, but are also a means of attraction, symbolic communication and identity construction (Cummings, 2003; Nye, 2008; Wendt, 1992). The exposure of the

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audience to cultural content through their consumption of Turkish dramas in Pakistan is a strategy by which a positive projection of the image of Türkiye is made abroad with the consent of the audience (Mohydin, 2020a, 2020b). Turkish media can therefore be analysed from the cultural and diplomatic aspects with the support of these theories.

SOFT POWER

The conceptual underpinning of this study is mainly based on the theory of soft power as formulated by Joseph Nye. Soft Power is a term coined by Nye that describes how a nation can influence another's opinions by drawing them in and convincing them without having them pay or be coerced (Nye, 2004, 2008). Soft power is basically dependent on three resources: culture, political values, and foreign policy, Nye says (Nye, 2004). Within this, a country comes to wield influence by being liked, understood and respected or acceptable to others (Nye, 2004, 2008). This renders media particularly significant as a vehicle by which culture is spread around the world and is one of the most obvious ways of micro- and macro-culture circulation (Cull, 2008; Mohydin, 2020a).

The dramas in Türkiye fulfil Nye's explanation in the sense that they demonstrate Turkish society, history and values emotively liked by Pakistani viewers. Instead of resorting to force, they resort to narration, identification of characters, appearance and moral in order to generate admiration and emotion (Ahmed & Basharat, 2023; Mohydin, 2020a). All sorts of foreign publics take pleasure in consuming cultural content, and in so doing they become more positive about and about the country that provides it (Nye, 2004, 2008). In the case of Pakistan, Turkish content has contributed to making Türkiye a sign of historical dignity, Islamic identity and cultural sophistication (Mohydin, 2020a, 2020b).

We need to be able to use soft power in a credible way and in a consistent manner that matches the expectations of the audience, Nye also notes (Nye, 2004). This point is crucial for the media in Türkiye as it is the dramas which incorporate Islamic imagery, family values and historical contexts with a high standard of production that resonate well with their viewers from Pakistan (Mohydin, 2020a; Yilmaz & Shakil, 2025). There are two key elements to the attraction delivery: familiarity and aspiration. It is both common sense to have a resonance with the moral and religious sensibilities of Pakistani people and aspirational enough to depict Türkiye as stylish, modern and culturally confident (Mohydin, 2020a, 2020b). Turkish dramas can thus not be confused as only entertainment but as a resource of influence working through attraction.

CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

The second theoretical lens is cultural diplomacy, defined as the means to enhance mutual understanding between societies through strategic cultural exchange, communication and artistic output (Cummings, 2003; Kia et al., 2025). Cultural diplomacy could be said to be a special part of public diplomacy; it is a way of engaging foreign publics directly with culture, as opposed to through formal diplomatic statements (Cull, 2008; Cummings, 2003). The image projected by one nation on another can be modified through a variety of media, including film, television, language, heritage, music and literature (Cummings, 2003). In such a way, culture becomes a bridge between societies, places of familiarity and emotional connection, which can help in the context of the general lines of diplomacy.

As an indirect conveyor of messages of Türkiye's stories and social values, Turkish media operates as cultural diplomacy in Pakistan, so that they can be easily understood by ordinary viewers (Ahmed & Basharat, 2023; Mohydin, 2020a). Especially historical dramas can provide positive images of Ottoman history, Islamic civilisation, and Islamic moral leadership, which can help to increase positive perceptions of Türkiye (Mohydin, 2020a, 2020b). Although these media are not

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the diplomacy in the traditional sense, they are useful for diplomacy by creating goodwill, instilling interest, and stimulating cultural dialogue (Cummings, 2003; Kia et al., 2025). In such a way, Turkish drama can be put forward as a cultural language through which Türkiye communicates with the Pakistani public.

This framework is particularly applicable given the fact that there have been policy developments in recent years that acknowledge media cooperation institutionally. The close proximity of agreements on bilateral broadcasting, media collaboration and public diplomacy indicates that there is some awareness about the cultural significance of media exchanges between Pakistan and Türkiye (Associated Press of Pakistan, 2025; Directorate of Communications, Republic of Türkiye, 2025). As a result, cultural diplomacy is not only an intangible concept, but is also increasingly made manifest in concrete bilateral projects (Anadolu Agency, 2025; Kia et al., 2025). In this sense, one can say that the Turkish media is a soft but strategic instrument for Türkiye to build relationships.

CONSTRUCTIVISM

The third level of theory in the constructionist theory. Constructivism in the field of international relations (IR) posits that identities, interests, and relations are not only the result of material power but also are shaped through ideas and norms, discourse and interaction (Wendt, 1992, 1999). Constructivists argue that states are not only stable, but also have to be understood in terms of the meanings given to them by social and political practice (Wendt, 1992, 1999). Such meanings are shaped and disseminated in a variety of contexts, of which television and digital media are key, thus making this an important focus for media analysis.

In the context of the present study, constructivism contributes to an understanding of how Turkish dramas contribute to the construction of the image of Türkiye in the public consciousness of Pakistanis. As well as being dramas that tell stories, the dramas tell a Turkish—historical, moral, civilizational, and reachable to feelings (Mohydin, 2020a, 2020b). The audiences then decipher these representations using their culture, religious beliefs and social systems in Pakistan (Irfan, 2022; Malik et al., 2019). That is, the meaning of the media of Türkiye cannot be determined exclusively by producers but, it is socially created by means of receiving and interpreting (Irfan, 2022; Wendt, 1999).

Constructivism has the effect of linking media discourses to interstate relations, too, which makes it another essential tool. Especially, if the perceptions of the public are formed as a result of repetition of Turkish materials, then Pakistan's relation with Türkiye is also being shaped by cultural communication as well as official with the governments (Wendt, 1992; Yilmaz & Shakil, 2025; Zeb & Shkurti Özdemir, 2024). This means that Turkish dramas help shape a social imagination in which Türkiye presents itself as a friendly and familiar, and civilizationally close partner (Mohydin, 2020a, 2020b). These meanings have relevance: They impact the reception and maintenance of political cooperation.

INTEGRATING THE THREE LENSES

The three frameworks complement and do not stand alone. Soft power can account for its mechanism of attraction, cultural diplomacy can account for communicative function of attraction, and constructivity is for the formation of meaning and identity through the attraction (Cummings, 2003; Nye, 2008; Wendt, 1992). Consequently, they demonstrate that the media in Türkiye has impact not only through viewing, but also through creating knowledge and perception as well as emotional attachment and symbolic belonging (Mohydin, 2020a, 2020b). In Pakistani context, it is a reason enough to understand why these Turkish dramas are both culturally important as well as diplomatically, likewise (Associated Press of Pakistan, 2025; Directorate of Communications,

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Republic of Türkiye, 2025).

The case study is understood better by the use of the framework. Turkish media evidently falls under Nye's soft power category as it is based upon _culture and values' that captivate other countries (Nye, 2004). However, the constructivist perspective reveals that the impact of such an attraction is not the same for everyone, its interpretation varies from one individual to another, depending on the social context, gender, class and religious orientation (Irfan, 2022; Saleem & Sadiq, 2021). It has to be noted that the impact of the Turkish media is a reality, however, it is mediated and negotiated and not automatic (Irfan, 2022; Malik et al., 2019). Thus, the study has explanatory depth with regard to theoretical integration and analytical balance.

The study's bits of relevance in analysis within the frames supplied by these concepts and theories, the research can be seen as interpreting Turkish dramas as tools of image making, identity formation and diplomatic influence. At the same time, this phenomenon of popularity of Turkish media in Pakistan is not understood as a purely cultural phenomenon, but as a way of transnational communication attracting and creating meanings in interstate relations (Mohydin, 2020a; Talal, 2021; Yilmaz & Shakil, 2025). This renders the theoretical context particularly relevant for the perspective on the interaction of media consumption, cultural exchange and public diplomacy in the Pakistan-Türkiye relationship (Associated Press of Pakistan, 2025; Directorate of Communications, Republic of Türkiye, 2025).

The soft power, cultural diplomacy and the constructivism are the theoretical bases of this study. According to Nye's soft power theory, one of the important tools for influencing others is culture and media, which is basically attraction instead of coercion that can be used by states to change the preferences of others (Nye, 2004, 2008). Cultural diplomacy also helps to understand the role of television drama and other cultural products as indirect media of public diplomacy in creating understanding between countries (Cull, 2008; Cummings, 2003). Constructivism further maintains that identities and interstate meaning are socially produced and can, therefore, be affected by media discourses and representation (Wendt, 1992, 1999) and hence media narrative can influence how foreign public imagine a nation. These are the three together that explain the mechanics of media consumption that lead to emotional affinity, cultural familiarity, and symbolic appreciation of relations between Pakistan and Türkiye (in the case of Turkish dramas in Pakistan).

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative secondary content research to understand the mechanism of soft power of Türkiye in the reconfiguration of Türkiye–Pakistan relations. This is an appropriate approach as the subject matter is one of meanings, narratives, perceptions and public diplomacy, not simply of behaving directly and measuring that behaviour. It comes from different sources such as Scholarly articles, Pakistan – Türkiye relations involving institutional reports, policy statements, and media coverage of Pakistani dramas and soft power . The material was analyzed thematically in order to find recurring patterns concerning the concepts of cultural attraction, the audience reception, the symbolic identity and the bilateral media cooperation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The interpretations in the article does not tell about statistical causality but it is an indication of social and diplomatic importance of Turkish media in Pakistan. The analysis resulted in four thematic areas. The first one was soft power/attraction, which looked at Turkish dramas to see how they generate good impressions of Türkiye (Nye, 2004, 2008). The second was audience reception, looking at how the audience in Pakistan relates to, processes, and emotionally invests in the Turkish content (Irfan, 2022; Malik et al., 2019). The third was public diplomacy and bilateral cooperation; where the relationship between both cultures was discussed through the recent media deals and official recognition of the relationship (Associated Press of Pakistan, 2025; Directorate of

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Communications, Republic of Türkiye, 2025). The fourth was identity construction, dealing with the way media discourses contribute to the formation of common meanings in reference to history, religion and 'neighborhood' of civilizations (Wendt, 1992, 1999). By this prism the paper can link media reception with outcomes on the diplomatic and social level.

DISCUSSION

The results reveal that Turkish media has influenced Pakistan–Türkiye relations through emotional and political aspect. Emotionally, dramas have churned parasocial attachment as in the case of Diriliş: Ertuğrul, particularly among younger and digitally engaged Pakistani audience (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Talal, 2021). Politically, the prominence of the Turkish media has opened the gates for decision makers to see communication and the broadcasting area as a diplomatic tool (Associated Press of Pakistan, 2025; ―Pakistan‘s PTV and Türkiye‘s TRT,‖ 2024). There is a two-way interaction between these two levels: The enthusiasm of the audience legitimizes the official one and the official one will support the promotion of the Turkish content. Thus, in this respect, soft power becomes a loop of media-product consumption and governmental-policy.

The single most significant result of the findings is that the dramas of Türkiye are successful because they fulfil the cultural affinity that already exists in Pakistan. Islamic history, heroism, modesty, familial loyalty, and moral struggle are themes which resonate strongly in the Pakistani context (Ahmed & Basharat, 2023; Yilmaz & Shakil, 2025). Such an alignment is not necessarily a reflection of similar societies, but it certainly is a reflection of a moderate cultural gap between societies that can often be productive. The main reason why viewers enjoy Turkish production is that viewers believe it to be both familiar yet add value and novel while visually pleasing (Irfan, 2022). This is the ideal for soft power, as attraction can be mixture of similarity and difference (Nye, 2004).

The same applies in regards to Türkiye's entertainment industry, as there are certain instances where the Turkish media has assisted to promote a positive image of Türkiye. Turkish dramas are helping to present a sense of groundedness and moral consistency, as well as richness of culture for Türkiye in Pakistan (Mohydin, 2020a, 2020b). This perception becomes significant because how publics view such diplomatic partnerships is shaped by international images. With a positive attitude among Pakistanis on the cultural side the task of official cooperation becomes easier to justify and hold. The soft power effect is not singular, however, and has an impact on the emotional atmosphere in which bilateral relations are experienced.

At the same time, it is important to note that there were some limitations. It can't be hoped that the differences between two countries, such as Pakistan and Türkiye, are erased from Turkish media without their active involvement, and uniform political alignment is not brought about. Some spectators watch Turkish dramas, but they don't want to adopt the social norms of Türkiye or be closer with people from Türkiye (Malik et al., 2019). This implies that soft power is a selective and mediated phenomenon, which is subject to local interpretation, censorship, translation, and audience values (Irfan, 2022). While there is an impact, we cannot make this as extreme as full cultural convergence. It is more appropriate to conclude that the Turkish media does not lead to assimilation but affinity.

Media and diplomacy is becoming more an institutionalised relationship. The two countries have signed various deals in joint media discipline broadcasts, public diplomacy, and communication in recent years, suggesting the strategic importance of cultural communication between Pakistan and Türkiye (Anadolu Agency, 2025; Associated Press of Pakistan, 2025; Directorate of Communications, Republic of Türkiye, 2025). Their incorporation of popular dramas is particularly notable in terms of the affiliation of public taste and foreign policy in practical terms

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(—Pakistan‘s PTV and Türkiye‘s TRT,‖ 2024). This is part of what can be regarded a global trend about the use of culture and cultural industries to complement traditional diplomacy (Cull, 2008; Cummings, 2003). In Pakistan-Türkiye case, one of the clearer instances of the soft power in bilateral statecraft is media cooperation.

Constructivist theory is relevant in explaining this process (Wendt, 1992, 1999). Türkiye is distant yet the image of it—along with other sets of related stories and public commentary—in the Pakistani imagination is not set, it is continually constructed. Turkish dramas act as a part of this identity construction as they project Türkiye as a modern, serious, historical yet contemporary country (Mohydin, 2020a; Yilmaz & Shakil, 2025). The importance of this representation is grounded in the fact that as well as policies, states are also judged based on the meanings given to policies through public discourse. In this regard, Turkish media contributes to the formation of emotional, symbolic and socially woven relationship instead of simply strategic ones.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study includes several recommendations for policy makers, media organizations as well as researchers. In the first place, there should be increased cooperation in media production between Pakistan and Türkiye, such as co-produced dramas, documentaries, and digital cultural content, as well.This kind of cooperation would expand each other's knowledge and decrease countries' reliance on unidirectional culture. Second, public broadcasters need to make sure their productions are translated, dubbed and localized into high quality quality to keep cultural exchange accessible but without losing the meaning .Thirdly, official cultural diplomacy, which should continue beyond television, should involve universities, film festivals, youth exchanges, writer collaboration, etc. Fourth, both states should invest in research on audience reception and receptivity particularly among digital communities in the cities, youth and women. This would assist bodies of governance to not only know what people view but also, how they view it. Fifth, it is important to combine media cooperation and promotion with other public diplomacy activities to combat misinformation, build positive image and enhance people-to-people trust . Lastly and least, policy should not be used as a substitute for critical awareness but celebration, as media attraction is powerful but is not transformative. All soft power must be credible, consistent and culturally sensitive in order to be sustainable (Nye, 2008, 2019).A number of policy and academic implications are recommended based on the study. Firstly, the relationship should grow at bilateral stories production, this means that the production of TV shows, documentary filmmaking in Pakistan and Türkiye in the form of a joint initiative has to be extensively grown so that the flow is executed both ways. Co-productions would give both countries opportunities to address each other in more nuanced and joint manner in terms of portraying the history, values, and social issues shared by both countries. This would also enhance cultural reciprocity and the imbalance which occurs when one partner country's media do the bulk of the sharing (—Pakistan‘s PTV and Türkiye‘s TRT,‖ 2024).

Secondly, public broadcasters and other cultural entities need to reinforce the editorial adaptation and other localization strategies like dubbing and subtitling. The study reveals that significance of translated meaning, viewer's enjoyment and interpretation have far-reaching implications of the Urdu-dubbed Turkish serials consumed in Pakistani society (Irfan, 2022). As for localization, that would help to maintain nuance in a content and make it accessible to a larger group of people. It would also help to allow the media to cooperate in a manner that takes into account the local cultural environment and regulation.

Third, more focus should be seen by both the states on cultural diplomacy for young people. From the research of surveys and audience studies, the youth have been seen as the most active viewer of

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Turkish dramas in Pakistan (Saleem & Sadiq, 2021; Talal, 2021). Younger audiences are more active on social media, thus having the potential to influence public discourse on foreign culture more broadly. They should, therefore, facilitate youth exchanges, content analysis projects and online cultural forums for them to critically and creatively engage with Turkish and Pakistani narratives, by universities, media organisations and public agencies.

Fourth, politicians should take media cooperation seriously as one of the foreign policy dimensions not as a symbolic add-on. This change is already happening and was reflected in the recent Pakistan-Türkiye Broadcasting and Public Diplomacy Agreements (Associated Press of Pakistan, 2025; Directorate of Communications, Republic of Türkiye, 2025). Potential future endeavors may include shared training sessions, common archives, historical video and documentaries, and yearly cultural forums. These measures would also help to cement the soft power achievements and keep the soft relationship alive and kicking beyond a here and there popular moment.

Ultimately, more studies need to be conducted on the after effects of the Turkish media influence in Pakistan. While there are existing studies that demonstrate high levels of popularity and positive nature of this reception, more extensive research of the development through time and differences in receptions of different audience groups concerning Turkish content is needed (Malik et al., 2019; Yilmaz & Shakil, 2025). Gender differences, class-based viewing patterns, online fan behavior and the correlation of media consumption and attitudes towards Türkiye as a tourist destination, cultural partner and/or diplomatic ally could be explored in future research. With a more comprehensive empirical literature, the scope of Turkish soft power and its boundaries could be better understood.

CONCLUSION

Turkish soft power has proven to be quite effective in reframing the Pakistan – Türkiye relations in the context of media consumption, cultural diplomacy and public perception (Nye, 2008; Yilmaz & Shakil, 2025). Turkish dramas are instrumental in increasing the presence of Türkiye in Pakistan and have given an emotional and positive picture of the Turkish society (Mohydin, 2020a; Talal, 2021). It will be seen that these cultural products are firmly integrated into the bilateral relationship itself because of multiple experiences, the act of translation, the experience of the connectivity with the internet and policy recognition (Associated Press of Pakistan, 2025; Irfan, 2022). The end product is a diplomacy that is not just governmental, but one of multi-faceted audiences, stories and imagination. It can be observed that on the one hand, the Pakistani visibility of Türkiye and the emotional affinity has been increased by the Turkish dramas, especially historical and family dramas and on the other hand, new layers of people to people connection have been created. When analyzed with the lens of the constructivism, it can be seen that these dramas are creating shared meanings, which is enhancing the sense of civilizational closeness and goodwill feelings among people (Wendt, 1992, 1999). The policy convergence in media and communication sector is another evidence of the institutionalisation of this cultural aspect of the relationship between Pakistan and Türkiye in the future (Directorate of Communications, Republic of Türkiye, 2025).

Drama reception in Türkiye is a good example of Nye's soft power theory in Pakistan. Soft power, which was identified by Nye, has been defined as the use of attraction to alter the preference of others, and culture, values and policies will be the sources of soft power (Nye, 2004, 2008). A prime example of this process is the success of Turkish dramas in Pakistan as people are naturally watching them which presents the ideas of Turkish history, Islam and family values in an attractive manner.Without pressure or tangible incentives, the only means of Turkish media's persuasion to the Pakistani audience is through emotional appeal, familiarity, and cultural appreciation. The Turkish TV in this manner can be seen as a tool of public diplomacy which can improve the

Türkiye image and bilateral goodwill (Cull, 2008).

In terms of Pakistan–Türkiye relations, this translates into Turkish dramas being a part of the effort to build an image of Türkiye as a reliable and easily accessible partner with cultural and civilizational ties. Media accounts of an interstate relationship are not only symbols of an interstate relationship, but they are symbolic means of producing interstate relations, that is, they prompt their viewers to invest meaning into them through repeated cultural ‗medial exposure' (Wendt, 1999).

According to this study, Turkish media is most effective when it takes advantage of historic and cultural relationships that already exist and novelty and good storytelling persists (Khan & Din, 2017; Zeb & Shkurti Özdemir, 2024). It also proves that the role of PD is not only restricted to the government's official communication but entertainment, digital distribution and symbolic identification are all involved in PD (Cull, 2008; Nye, 2019). This translates into the Pakistan and Türkiye context of cultural cooperation having become more relevant to the conduct and continuity of the relations between two countries beyond being merely about politics. Thus, a considerable part of the Turkish media is a potent soft power asset for the reconfiguration of Pakistan–Türkiye relations.

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