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Soft Power in Public Diplomacy: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Film "Ayla"

Kamu Diplomasisinde Yumuşak Güç: "Ayla" Filmi Üzerine Bir Eleştirel Söylem Analizi

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Abstract

In international relations, public diplomacy adopts different methods of engagement and communication beyond traditional or classical diplomatic approaches. It aims to establish successful communication with target countries and their public, deliver intended messages, correct misconceptions, and foster economic, political, and cultural partnerships. Soft power, an essential component of public diplomacy, serves this purpose by enabling countries to achieve success in their relationships with other nations and their peoples. Cinema, as one of the soft power tools countries possess, is effectively used to establish positive communication with desired countries and achieve intended goals. This study aims to uncover how the film "Ayla" is used as a soft power tool within the context of public diplomacy and identify the prominent codes highlighted in the film. Additionally, the study seeks to determine how discourses, characters, settings, and plot structures related to soft power are constructed in the film. The research employs Fairclough's critical discourse analysis method and examines the 2017 Turkish film "Ayla". The findings indicate that the film contains elements that contribute to public diplomacy between Türkiye and South Korea and is thus utilized as a tool of soft power. The film emphasizes the shared bonds between the two countries through its script, actors, and dialogues.

Keywords: *Public Diplomacy, Soft Power, Cinema*

Öz

Uluslararası ilişkilerde yürütülen geleneksel veya klasik diplomasi yöntemlerin haricinde farklı ilişki/iletişim yollarını benimseyen kamu diplomasisi, hedef ülkelerle ve onların halklarıyla başarılı iletişim kurmak, verilmek istenen mesajları ulaştırmak, yanlış düşünceleri düzeltmek ve ekonomik, siyasi, kültürel ortaklıklar sağlamak için gerçekleştirilmektedir. Kamu diplomasisinin önemli unsurlarından biri olan yumuşak güç ise bu amaca hizmet etmektedir. Öyle ki, yumuşak güç aracılığıyla ülkeler, başka ülkelerle ve onların halklarıyla kurduğu ilişkilerde başarıya ulaşmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ülkelerin sahip olduğu yumuşak güç unsurlarından biri olan sinema da, istenilen ülkelerle/halklarla olumlu iletişim kurmak ve amaçlanan hedeflere ulaşmak için etkin şekilde kullanılmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda yapılan çalışmanın amacı, kamu diplomasisi bağlamında yumuşak güç unsuru olarak "Ayla" filminin nasıl kullanıldığını ve hangi kodların öne çıkarıldığını ortaya çıkarmaktır. Bununla birlikte çalışmada ele alınan filmde, yumuşak güç bağlamında söylemlerin, karakterlerin, mekanların ve olay örgüsünün nasıl oluşturulduğunu tespit etmek de amaçlanmıştır. Çalışmada, Fairclough'un eleştirel söylem analizi yöntemi kullanılmış ve 2017 Türkiye yapımı "Ayla" filmi incelenmiştir. Araştırmada elde edilen sonuçlara göre film, Türkiye - Güney Kore ekseninde kamu diplomasisine katkı sağlayacak unsurlar içermekte, dolayısıyla bir yumuşak güç unsuru olarak kullanılmaktadır. Filmde, senaryo, oyuncular ve diyaloglar ile iki ülke arasındaki ortak bağlara vurgu yapılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Kamu Diplomasisi, Yumuşak Güç, Sinema*

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Introduction

Public diplomacy, which was divided by the innovative technological developments that emerged in the second half of the 20th century, became an important decision-making element of the international order brought by the new era, including individuals, civil societies, the public, and the media.

It is obvious that especially the media is extremely important in terms of giving direction, forming opinions and influencing society. Due to this importance, the role of the media in disseminating state policies, directing them to the target societies, and ensuring that the messages they want to convey are delivered as desired is getting stronger day by day.

The concept of public diplomacy, which has been applied throughout the ages with different names but for the same purposes, was introduced to the literature with the contributions of Edmund Gullion in 1965. Gullion's main contribution was to state that the field of international relations has traditionally been included in the concept of public diplomacy.

The public diplomacy aims are to identify the needs of countries with different cultures, understand the human element and become familiar with their cultures. In this way, it is possible to compensate for misunderstandings between societies and deliver the desired messages to the right place, at the right time and in the right way. As a result, positive relations between different cultures and societies are established and maintained by the state or through non-governmental organizations.

Mass media such as newspapers, television, radio, cinema and TV series, periodicals and new media have a great role in public diplomacy. Cinema, which is an important factor among the mass media tools that are the subject of our study, can easily convey the messages intended to be conveyed in terms of public diplomacy activities to the target audience it wants to address, especially since it can affect people emotionally.

Communicating national cultural elements to large masses through cinema, which is a means of cultural diplomacy, reveals the importance of the mission of cinema in promoting the country and its culture. Cinema is an element of soft power that entertains the audience it appeals to, makes them think, destroys the negative prejudices acquired by different societies in various ways, ensures the recognition and adoption of national culture, and as a result, gives prestige to states under the purpose it serves. Culture, which is the system formed by the common idea and unity of life, which is believed to be an important building block of a country's material and spiritual value system, supports and contributes to the soft power of its country to the extent that it is respected and admired by the societies of other states.

Big countries use the soft power element effectively in terms of cinema. One of these countries is undoubtedly Turkey. So much so that Turkey also functions as a bridge connecting the East and the West through cinema. Turkey brings Turkish culture to different parts of the world with million-dollar domestic film and series productions and uses cinema efficiently as a soft power element (Deniz, 2010).

The movie "Ayla" discussed in this study is a movie based on a true story about the adoption by Turkish soldiers of a Korean girl who was orphaned on the battlefield during the Korean War in 1950. This film emotionally told the Turkish and South Korean soldiers about the rapprochement between the two communities and the bond of friendship filled with human elements that formed between them and served an important function in public diplomacy.

Starting from this point, the study aims to reveal how the movie “Ayla” is used as a soft power element in the context of public diplomacy and which codes are highlighted. In the study discourse analysis method, one of the qualitative research methods, was used.

1. Literature Review

Years after the concept of public diplomacy was used by Edmund Gullion, Joseph S. Nye expressed the concept of “Soft Power” in his works, and thus this new concept took its place in the literature (Medin & Koyuncu, 2017, p. 838).

Nye mentioned this concept in his work “The Imperative to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power” (Bound To Lead), which he wrote in 1990, and then stated the importance of the concept of soft power in his article compiling this work (Özel, 2018, p. 5).

Joseph S. Nye states that the United States, in addition to being powerful economically as well as militarily, also has a significant potential in terms of soft power, which is a third element (Nye, 1990, p. 155).

When we look at the working principle of public diplomacy, we see that it emerges as states influencing the people of other states by using their attractive aspects. The concept of public diplomacy has a direct connection with power. However, what is meant by power is not hard power. According to Nye, this is soft power, which means achieving the determined goal by creating a center of attraction with elements including economic and cultural values (Nye, 2011, p. 10-11). While the functioning of traditional diplomacy is shaped as a result of the relations between governments, the functioning of public diplomacy includes the relations developed with the public opinion of the countries of the world and the activities related to carrying out the desired information and impact studies by attracting their attention (Snow, 2009, p. 6). Public diplomacy, as an element of soft power, is the effort to give the desired positive message to the public opinion of other countries (Melissen, 2007, p. 5). Unlike the hard and military power elements within the scope of traditional diplomacy, public diplomacy creates an attractive and moderate atmosphere by using soft power elements. In other words, it works to ensure that the cultural heritage and political image of a state becomes an area of attraction where it can be easily and positively perceived and accepted by the social elements of other states. It is extremely important to influence the behavior, perception and thinking of the public opinion of other states (Pratkanis, 2020, p. 111).

Nye emphasized the importance of soft power for a state to implement with the contribution of its culture and values, with statements such as “The attraction and responsibilities that arise when a state’s policies based on universal values and its culture intersect with the values and interests shared with other states will make it easier for the state to achieve the results it desires and targets.” (Nye, 2005).

By ensuring the use of soft power between nations, a peaceful atmosphere can be created by introducing political, economic, and cultural cooperation, which are public diplomacy tools. Countries are trying to reach important positions by promoting themselves well, can be centers of attraction in cultural and economic terms, do not have trust issues and do not create problems in joint work, can find themselves in a position to become an indispensable and sought-after country in foreign policy, and are extremely important in international politics by increasing their strategic value score from the perspective of foreign public opinion (Kömür, 2020, p. 91).

Today, world countries choose to support the development and economic programs of target countries by regulating their foreign policies both actively and constructively, in order to increase the value of their country's image from the perspective of the target countries. Providing state support, especially in the fields of education, art and literature, which are elements of public diplomacy, both contributes to increasing the image of the country and makes it possible to achieve the planned goals. It is a fact that studies carried out in these areas play an important role in the promotion of the country.

Just as the economically and militarily powerful United States of America, China and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics provided aid to underdeveloped or developing countries with weak economies during the Cold War, Türkiye also tries to establish ties with its target countries through economic and humanitarian aid. In addition, our country adopts peaceful ways in the field of foreign policy, as in every other issue, and continues its promotional activities through cultural interaction, which is one of the soft power elements (Çavuş, 2012, p. 27).

Türkiye's remarkable soft power resources are its domestic and foreign policies and most importantly its cultural values. Nye emphasized that the most important soft power elements of a country are government policies and values (Nye, 2005, p. 22). In particular, the Turkish Cooperation Coordination Agency, which was established in 1992 during the Presidency of Turgut Özal, has carried out and continues to carry out significant work in the field of public diplomacy in Türkiye. The institution, which has carried out joint work in sociocultural, economic, commercial, and military fields through development and development aid in Türkiye's bordering countries and also in Turkish-speaking countries, continues these activities uninterruptedly (Özkan, 2015, p. 18).

Thanks to the globalization of information technology, films have taken their place in our lives as the most convenient means of communication by transferring images, stories, culture and values to audiences around the world (Crane, 2014, p. 365-382).

Many countries have invested in the film industry to build "Soft Power". At the same time, some rising film industries in different parts of the world are trying to promote their national cultures by using mass communication. In this regard, Hollywood in the United States, Bollywood in India, Nollywood cinema in Nigeria and China's film common model can be cited as examples (Guan et al., 2023, p. 2).

J. Street, one of many scientists who think that cinema is a very important means of shaping public opinion and international political influence through the use of cinema as an element of soft power, points out that there are important connections between political powers and elements of commercial culture. For the people of the world, American cinema has been an important part of the socialization process and played an active factor in the formation of consumption habits and image-building activities (Keune & Frants, 2017, p. 155). Türkiye, on the other hand, strengthens the Turkish image with the films and TV series it markets, especially in the Balkan countries and the countries in the Arabian Peninsula (Rahte, 2017, p. 67). According to Işık (2019, p. 68), "Ayla", a joint production between South Korea and Turkey, is one of the important projects produced by Turkey. With the Ayla film, Turkey, South Korea in particular, and in the Asian region in general, have strengthened their image and used their soft power effectively.

It is observed that the marketing and launching of Turkish series internationally within the scope of Soft Power creates a sense of identification in favor of Turkey in the regions where

they are broadcasted. Especially Turkish series that show similar cultural characteristics to the cultures of the countries where they are broadcasted result in viewers preferring these series that contain elements similar to their own culture at high rates. Thus, Turkey's positive image takes its place at the international level. The export of TV series abroad, which started with Kazakhstan in 2001, reached its highest point with the export of 70 Turkish series to 75 countries as of 2014. It is also seen that the rate of those watching Turkish series in many Arab countries and Jordan has increased to 83%. At this point, it should be emphasized that the most important role in ensuring the formation of a positive image of a country belongs to the mass media along with political, economic, artistic and sports activities (Andaç & Ateşoğlu, 2015, p. 669).

The United States of America, which benefits from different areas and different elements in order to achieve its goals, shapes the American society as well as the people of the world countries on an intellectual and religious level by using Hollywood cinema within the scope of soft power practices (Göksu, 2023, p. 849). In addition, it can draw frameworks that suit its goals in economic and socio-cultural terms. In fact, it is clear that the films released in Arab countries and the Balkans as a soft power element contribute to Turkey in terms of tourism. On the other hand, it can be said that the spread of Turkish culture, values and policies to the Middle East and Balkan countries is provided by the soft power effect (Ünal, 2019, p. 50).

America prepares a ground through communication channels in the minds of its own people or the people of foreign countries with the films it produces in order to provide a legal cover for the actions it plans to carry out in the near or distant future. Due to the ideological impact that films leave on the audience, political actions are accepted over time and gain the desired legitimacy.

On the other hand, it is seen that cinema, used as a soft power element, has effectively penetrated the people of other countries under its purpose in areas such as social life, architecture, education, music, religion, and culture, which reflect the American understanding of life (Medin & Koyuncu, 2017, p. 841).

When the history of Turkish cinema is researched, it is seen that the content of the films is about the lives of historical heroes. Some of these are films about characters such as Tarkan, Malkoçoğlu, Kara Murat, and they were presented to the audience with the addition of imaginary heroes depending on their content and period. These films, which gained audience support, enabled Turkish cinema to be productive for a long time. It is seen that many noteworthy films have emerged as historical and biographical films, which started to be produced after 2000, have been popular, appreciated and supported by the public. Movies such as "Devrim Arabaları" (Tolga Örnek, 2008), "Veda" (Zülfü Livaneli, 2010), "Fetih 1453" (Faruk Aksoy, 2012), "Çanakkale 1915" (Yeşim Sezgin, 2012), "Çanakkale Yolun Sonu" (Kemal Uzun, Ahmet Karaman, Serdar Akar, 2013), "Kelebeğin Rüyası" (Yılmaz Erdoğan, 2013), "Son Mektup" (Özhan Eren, 2015), "Fatihin Fedaisi Kara Murat" (Aytekin Birkin, 2015), "Sarıkamış Çocukları" (Mutlu Karadoğan, Can Ulkay, 2017), "Ayla" (Can Ulkay, 2017), "Deliler" (Osman Kaya, 2018), "Direniş Karatay" (Selahattin Sancaklı, Selman Kayabaşı, Mehmet Aslantuğ, 2018), "Hürkuş: Göklerdeki Kahraman" (Kudret Sabancı, 2018), "Türkler Geliyor: Adaletin Kılıcı" (Kamil Aydın, 2020), "Akif" (Sadullah Şentürk, 2021), "Malazgirt 1071" (Bilal Koyuncu, Özgür Bakar, 2022), "Bandırma Füze Klübü" (Ömer Faruk Sorak, 2022), "Hayvan" (Bülent Terzioğlu, Atilla Barışer, 2022), "Sevmedim deme" (Burak Kuka, 2022), "Barış Akarsu: Merhaba" (Mert Dikmen, 2022) have received the appreciation of the audience (Çalışkan, 2023, p. 147).

It is seen that films that reflect the stories of famous figures in society have melodramatic elements, while films containing historical elements and sadness are handled in a dramatic style. Shaped as objects of remembrance, these films include historical events and people who have a place in the memory and culture of the society. It can be said that the personal developments of the people and characters mentioned in the films as a result of their experiences occupy an effective and important area in the memory of society. The difficulties experienced, the efforts to overcome the obstacles encountered and the transformations that individuals undergo reach the audience through storytelling. Therefore, the more successfully a film is constructed, the more it is recorded in the memory of the audience by associating it with the story. We can say that such films play a role in transferring the past to new generations in terms of Turkish history and culture, thus keeping the past alive. These films, shot in melodrama style, mostly deal with topics such as love, effort, sacrifice and humanity. It is seen that the musical factor and the language structure used in these films, in which the conflict between good and evil, cause-effect relationships and emotional relationships are depicted as narrative elements, remind us of old Yeşilçam melodramatic films (Çalışkan, 2023, p. 147).

Nuri Bilge Ceylan, who is regarded as a leading figure in the new wave of Turkish cinema, has achieved both national and international success with her distinctive qualities and has elevated Turkish cinema to a significant position worldwide (Atam, 2010). In addition to representing our country by participating in 17 film festivals, Ceylan also managed to make its world premiere in the short film competition section at the Cannes international film festival. In 1997, he attracted the attention of important film critics and the audience with his first feature film called *Town*. After that, he continued to increase his success with the movie "May Trouble", which he shot in 1999. . He received many awards both at home and abroad with this film. Ceylan's successes enabled his films *İklimler* (2006), *Üç Maymun* (2008), *Kış Uykusu* (2014), and *Ahlat Ağacı* (2018) to receive support from the Ministry of Culture. (Durmuş, 2024, p.406-412).

In order to increase the success of Turkish cinema and to represent it in the world, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism provided significant support to the cinema industry in the 2000s. At the same time, festivals pave the way for films to gain value, and especially award-winning films are shown in many countries around the world, enabling them to reach large audiences (Yetkiner, 2019, p.55- 89). Nuri Bilge Ceylan, as a world-wide award-winning director, actually means Turkey's success in the field of cinema. We can state that it is a priority to ensure that Turkish culture is recognized by foreign cultures and that negative perceptions about Türkiye begin to be eliminated (Durmuş, 2024, p.421).

2. Methodology

The study aims to reveal how the film "Ayla" is used as a soft power tool within the context of public diplomacy and which codes are emphasized. It also aims to identify how discourses, characters, settings, and narrative structures are constructed to concerning soft power within the film. In the research, purposeful sampling was used for the investigation of the 2017 Turkish film "Ayla" The critical discourse analysis method, as outlined by Norman Fairclough, was employed in the study. Thus, the film was analyzed using Fairclough's three-stage critical discourse analysis method, which includes description, interpretation, and explanation. The choice of Fairclough's method is because it allows for exploring alternative ways to understand

what discourse is and how it functions. This method prioritizes analyzing the text, discourse, social practices, text producers, media outlets, and political/ideological structures.

In the study, the following questions have been addressed:

Q1: How are Türkiye and South Korea portrayed in the film, and which characteristics are emphasized?

Q2: How is the Turkish element depicted in the film, and which traits are highlighted?

Q3: Does the film contain elements that serve public diplomacy and soft power?

3. Critical Discourse Analysis of the Film “Ayla”

3.1. About the Film

Title/Name: Ayla

Release Date: 27 October 2017

Producers: Mustafa Uslu

Production Company: Dijital Sanatlar Production

Director: Can Ulkay

Write: Yiğit Güralp

Music: Fahir Atakoğlu

Stars: İsmail Hacıoğlu, Kim Seol, Çetin Tekindor, Lee Kyung-Jin, Ali Atay, Murat Yıldırım

Country: Türkiye, South Korea

Language: Turkish, Korean, English

Running Time: 125 minutes

Type: Drama, War, History

3.2. Synopsis

Tablo 1. Characters and Their Roles in the Film

Name of Characters	Roles of Characters
İsmail Hacıoğlu	Petty Officer Süleyman (Young)
Çetin Tekindor	Petty Officer Süleyman (Elderly)
Kim Seol	Ayla (Young)
Lee Kyung-Jin	Ayla (Elderly)
Ali Atay	Petty Officer Ali
Murat Yıldırım	First Lieutenant Mesut
Eric Roberts	Major General Coulter

In the 1950s, Türkiye, as a member of NATO, sent troops to the war between North Korea and South Korea. Among these soldiers was Petty Officer (PO) Süleyman. The story outlines the heartwarming and hopeful tale of PO Süleyman and a little girl found crying next to her

slaughtered family during the war, who was later named Ayla. Directed by Can Ulkay, the 2017 film “Ayla” is based on a dramatic true story from the Korean War, which took place from June 25, 1950, to July 27, 1953. In the film, PO Süleyman from İskenderun volunteers to join the army for the Korean War. During the war, PO Süleyman encounters a five-year-old Korean girl, whose family has been slaughtered near their village. Finding her utterly alone, he takes her to his unit. His fellow soldiers give her the name Ayla, meaning “halo” or “light around the moon” reflecting their compassion for the child. In the film, PO Süleyman and his fellow officers care for little Ayla, forming a strong bond with her. Quickly becoming the unit’s beloved mascot, Ayla participates in all military activities and brings joy to the soldiers. Over time, she comes to see PO Süleyman as a father figure and even calls him “Daddy” Her learning of Turkish and her ability to express herself to PO Süleyman further strengthen their affectionate relationship. After about 1.5 years, the Turkish unit’s mission in Korea is complete, and it’s time to return to Türkiye. PO Süleyman wishes to bring Ayla back with him, but legal obstacles prevent him from doing so. He leaves her at an orphanage established with Turkish aid and support. In a poignant scene, they part with a promise to reunite. For sixty years, PO Süleyman and Ayla remained apart. However, with the help of his wife Nimet and a research journalist, PO Süleyman’s hope of finding Ayla is realized. The film, which begins dramatically, concludes with a touching and happy reunion at Ankara Park in South Korea. Based on historical facts, the film portrays the warm and sincere relationships between Turkish, American, and South Korean soldiers, highlighting the admiration that American and South Korean officers have for Turkish soldiers, which adds a sense of closeness for the viewers. The emotional core of the film is the deep human connection between PO Süleyman and the orphaned Ayla, which is explored intensely throughout the movie.

3.3. Analysis of the Film

3.3.1. Description

In this stage of the film analysis, dialogues from the film “Ayla” used by Türkiye as a soft power tool, have been examined. The selected dialogues reflect the relationship between Türkiye and South Korea and encompass the messages that Türkiye aims to convey.

Dialogue 1:

Major İskenderun: Why did I call you, Süleyman? We are sending soldiers to South Korea, you must have heard.

Petty Officer Süleyman: I heard, Sir. May God not embarrass us.

Major İskenderun: Amen. The Ankara battalion is ready, but we received orders to send reinforcements. I thought of you, Süleyman. Your absence here will be a loss for me, but there is a need for good soldiers like you, experts in their field, over there. What do you say?

Petty Officer Süleyman: I would be honored, Sir.

Major İskenderun: Be well. Do you have anyone waiting for you?

Petty Officer Süleyman: Yes, Sir, and they are dearer to me than my own life, like my homeland.

Dialogue 2:

Nuran: What are you doing all the way in Korea, Süleyman?

Petty Officer Süleyman: Don't speak like that. The people there need our country, and our country needs me. How could I run away from that, Nuran?

Dialogue 3:

South Korean Soldier: The number of orphaned children is steadily increasing.

South Korean Commander: The number of children cared for by the Turks never decreases. Moreover, all of them are our children. They travel thousands of kilometers and shed blood to help us. They will also take care of our children. The Turks have offered to open a school for the children.

Dialogue 4:

South Korean Commander: In Kunu-ri, we saw that our bond is not only with the Americans but also with the Turks. The Turks have a famous saying: "Even if we give our lives, the homeland shall remain." As long as this homeland remains, the struggle you have fought alongside us will never be forgotten.

Dialogue 5:

Turkish Newscaster: (Immediately after the Marmara earthquake) The world is mobilized, and even our allied country South Korea is with us with unlimited support and all its resources. Not only did the South Korean rescue teams reach our country without delay, but also the South Korean President, leading the entire nation, sent aid to our country.

Dialogue 6:

Epilogue: Süleyman and his daughter Ayla reunited in Seoul on April 10, 2010, 60 years later, and never separated again. According to UNICEF, there are 28 million child victims of war worldwide, just like Ayla, and 1.5 million of them live in our country with us.

Dialogue 7:

PO Süleyman's Father-in-Law: (Regarding the Turkish soldiers going to fight in South Korea) The other side of the world. Well done to the soldiers. I didn't have a son so that I could send him and be proud.

Dialogue 8:

PO Süleyman: (addressing Nuran) The world is big, and the distances are long, but I have two fires burning inside me that defy all of that: one is to help people I don't know (the South Koreans), and the other is our love, which burns even more intensely with my longing for you. So, I'm not afraid, and neither should you be. Together, we possess two treasures in this vast world that can overcome anything. Their names are goodness and love.

Dialogue 9:

Major Fuat: Friends, this summer, North Korea ruthlessly invaded the country from top to bottom. However, the Peace Forces repelled the enemy troops to their own borders and rescued South Korea from the invasion. Now it's time to deliver the final blow at the border. The destination is Kunu-ri. For the first time, as the Turkish army, we will be close to direct combat. You must have understood better from the situation you saw on the way how sacred this mission is.

Dialogue 10:

South Korean Soldier: They found the little girl (Ayla) in the middle of a massacre on their route. Since they couldn't leave her behind, they took her with them. It's an extraordinary act.

General Coulter: Yes, indeed. The Turks are interesting people. When a call went out to the entire world, the Turks were the first to respond. When this war goes down in history, neither you nor I will be remembered, my friend. It will be them (the Turks) who will be recorded in the history books.

Dialogue 11:

Radio Broadcast: Türkiye's efforts to provide troops to the United Nations to fight against communism in Korea are today considered one of the most significant steps in foreign policy. Türkiye has undertaken to send a battalion of 4,500 soldiers to South Korea.

3.3.2. Interpretation

In this section of the research, an analysis has been conducted based on the dialogues and scenes in the film. The interpretation part of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is carried out with these two elements in mind, particularly focusing on analyzing the dialogues to uncover the underlying meanings.

The first element that stands out throughout the film, which is used as an element of soft power in the context of public diplomacy, is the courage and sacrifice of the Turkish soldier and therefore of the Turks. This is supported by the dialog between Major İskenderun and PO Süleyman at the beginning of the movie, the dialog between Nuran and PO Süleyman, and PO Süleyman's father-in-law's words about the Turkish soldiers who went to war in South Korea: "The other side of the world. Well done to the soldiers. I didn't have a son so that I could send him and be proud". The willingness of the Turks to go to war for South Korea, which they have never seen, and for the people of South Korea, which they have never met, and their loyalty/obedience to both their homeland and their military leaders in this regard show how much of a warrior and brave nation Turks are. Besides the warrior aspect of Turks and Turkish soldiers, their selfless side is emphasized on several occasions, such as PO Süleyman's feeding the ants on the warship instead of killing them, his embracing Ayla, whom he met in the village during the war, as his child and not wanting to be separated from her for the rest of his life, and PO Süleyman's emphasizing that it is wrong to kill a human being before going to war.

The compassion and helpfulness side of the Turks and Turkish soldiers are also prominent elements in the film. The recurring presence of Turkish soldiers selflessly protecting and expressing affection for South Koreans in numerous dialogues and scenes throughout the film serves as a testament to the compassionate nature of Turkish soldiers and, by extension, the Turkish people. In one scene, the South Korean Commander says, "The number of children cared for by the Turks never decreases. Moreover, all of them are our children. They travel thousands of kilometers and shed blood to help us. They will also take care of our children. The Turks have offered to open a school for the children," which supports the themes of compassion and selflessness. In another dialogue, PO Süleyman tells Nuran, the woman he loves, that being able to help unknown people, that is, South Koreans, and to do good is a treasure. Additionally, at the beginning of the film, North Korean soldiers kill all the people in a village in South Korea, leaving only a young girl, Ayla, kneeling helplessly among the dead. PO Süleyman sees Ayla, reaches out to her, and she embraces him, crying. PO Süleyman takes her to the military base in his arms, violating regulations, and expresses his desire never to part from her. He forms a deep bond with Ayla, sees her as his own daughter, and chooses to

stay with her instead of returning to his fiancée, who subsequently leaves him to marry someone else. PO Süleyman's and the Turkish soldiers' expressions and behaviors highlight the nation's and the military's sacrifice, love, and compassion towards others. Moreover, at the end of the film, it is emphasized that, according to UNICEF, there are 28 million child victims of war worldwide, similar to Ayla, with 1.5 million living in Türkiye. This underscores Türkiye's humanitarian nature and its willingness to embrace victims, especially children.

Another significant element highlighted in the analysis is the brotherhood, friendship, loyalty, and love between Türkiye and the South Korean people, and vice versa. The South Korean Commander's statement, "In Kunu-ri, we saw that our bond is not only with the Americans but also with the Turks. The Turks have a famous saying: "Even if we give our lives, the homeland shall remain." As long as this homeland remains, the struggle you have fought alongside us will never be forgotten," reflects this bond, brotherhood, and friendship. Additionally, the film includes another important element covering the support provided by the South Korean President and Korean people immediately after the Great Marmara Earthquake. This demonstrates the unshakable bond between the two countries. South Koreans and Turkish soldiers are depicted as very happy.

In addition to the love and brotherhood between the two countries, diplomatic relations are also a prominent point. The film includes a radio news report stating, "Türkiye's efforts to send soldiers to the United Nations to fight against communism in Korea are considered one of the greatest steps in foreign policy today. Türkiye has undertaken to send a unit of 4,500 soldiers to South Korea." Subsequently, when the Turkish soldiers arrive in South Korea and disembark from the ship, they are greeted by many South Koreans of all ages, holding Turkish and South Korean flags. These scenes are viewed as the beginning of diplomatic relations between Türkiye and South Korea. This bond, established on solid foundations, continues to this day. The father-daughter relationship between PO Süleyman and Ayla is, in fact, a manifestation of the diplomatic and brotherly bond between Türkiye and South Korea. PO Süleyman supported Ayla during wartime, formed a deep connection with her and did not want to part from her. Thus, the film conveys Türkiye's support for South Korea during its most difficult times. In this role, Türkiye has taken on the role of both a brother and a protective father-older brother.

3.3.3. Explanation

In the explanation section of the research, conclusions were not drawn solely from the dialogues in the film. The film's screenplay, the historical and political relationship between Türkiye and South Korea, the film's director, producer, scenes, music, sociological context, and other significant elements all played a role in the film's explanation. The explanation part of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis involves integrating all these elements.

In light of this, the analysis of the film reveals the following key elements; the courage and selflessness of Turks-Turkish soldiers, the compassion and benevolence of Turks-Turkish soldiers, the patriotism of Turks-Turkish soldiers, the brotherhood, friendship, and love of Türkiye and the Turkish people for South Korea and its people, the cooperation between the two countries, the loyalty and diplomatic relations between the two countries.

In the Korean War, which took place between South Korea and North Korea between 1950 and 1953, the United States of America and the United Nations Alliance, including Türkiye, sided with South Korea, while the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union entered

the war on the side of North Korea. The war lasted almost three years and ended with the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement. During the war, Türkiye supplied military and humanitarian support which helped establish a close relationship with South Korea. Türkiye also formed close relationship with the United States, the Western world, and the United Nations, and thus achieved diplomatic success. The Korean War and the military relationship between Türkiye, South Korea, and the United States are depicted from the perspective of Türkiye, and elements such as homeland, nationalism, military power, courage, and benevolence are mostly attributed to Türkiye and the Turks.

The films directed by Can Ulkay, such as “Türk İşi Dondurma” (2019), “Sarıkamış Çocukları” (2017), and “Dumlupınar: Vatan Sağolsun” share themes of nationalism, patriotism, Turkish identity, and bravery as covered in “Ayla” Similarly, Fahir Atakoğlu, who composed the soundtrack for “Ayla” has also created music for films like “Sarı Zeybek” (1993), “12 Mart: İhtilalin Pençesinde Demokrasi” (1994), “Muhteşem Yüzyıl” (2011), “Fatih: Avrupa’nın Kaderini Değiştiren Adam” (2012), and “Türk İşi Dondurma” (2019). These films also focus on themes related to Türkiye, the homeland, the nation, nationalism, and grandeur. Thus, the film “Ayla” consciously incorporates elements from both its director and composer to serve as a soft power tool.

Throughout the film, the dichotomies such as north-south, good-evil, strong-weak, just-unjust, and protector-oppressor are established. Türkiye, the Turkish people, and the Turkish soldier are encoded with qualities such as bravery, trust, peace, goodness, love, honesty, openness, friendship, protection, helpfulness, loyalty, brotherhood, self-sacrifice, fearlessness, devotion to the homeland, and fidelity.

Considering the elements mentioned, along with the film's relationship to historical reality and accuracy, the film's director, the composer, the dialogues, the scenes, the historical and current relations between Türkiye and South Korea, the box office revenue, the cast, and the screenplay, it is possible to say that the film has been successfully created as a soft power tool for Türkiye.

Just as Turkey used its soft power in South Korea and Asia with the film “Ayla”, it has also successfully used cinema as a soft power element in the Balkan countries with other films it has produced. Especially in Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia, people are including the Turkish films they watch in their daily conversations. Thanks to Turkish films, the image of Turks and Turkey in the Balkan countries has become positive, strong and inclusive (Bayraktar, 2012, p. 187).

Conclusion

Countries can use soft power elements to create positive images of themselves on other countries and the people in those countries, to establish diplomatic relations, to appear strong, and to gain an advantageous position in international relations. Soft power, an important part of public diplomacy, is realized through elements such as education, art, communication, culture, and health. Through communication, which is one of these soft power elements, countries often provide their movies, TV series, documentaries, and social networking platforms to other countries, sometimes for a fee and sometimes for free. Through these communication media/products, countries not only introduce their own culture, values, and characteristics to other countries but also build the image of the country and its people positively on the people in the target country.

Cinema is undoubtedly one of the most popular mediums of communication used as an element of soft power. The United States, the United Kingdom, and Türkiye are in a dominant position in terms of using cinema and TV series as an element of soft power and ensuring that they are watched in other countries. In particular, the fact that Turkish TV series are marketed to many countries in different geographies of the world and reach high viewership numbers expresses Türkiye's success in this field. In addition, Turkish films are also screened in many different countries. "Ayla" is one of the important films that Türkiye offers to other countries to increase its recognition, gain profit and especially to use it as an element of soft power.

In line with this, the study aims to reveal how the film "Ayla" is used as an element of soft power in the context of public diplomacy and which codes are highlighted. In the study, the critical discourse analysis method was used to achieve the objective. The film "Ayla" was analyzed using Norman Fairclough's three-stage critical discourse analysis method, which consists of description, interpretation, and explanation. The film analysis was conducted considering the script, music, scenes, social practices, producer, broadcasting entity, and political/ideological structure.

According to the results obtained from the analysis of the film, Türkiye is portrayed as a savior and a friendly country. The Turkish soldier is positioned as brave, selfless, devoted to his homeland, highly skilled in military knowledge and abilities, helpful, and compassionate. The Turkish people are also depicted as a noble nation devoted to their country, loving their soldiers, generous, selfless, brave, and valuing friendship and brotherhood. There are no negative elements regarding Türkiye, the Turkish people, or the Turkish soldier in the film. South Korea and the South Korean people are portrayed as a victimized and oppressed nation defending their homeland at all costs. Because of the support they get, they are grateful to Türkiye and the Turkish soldier, viewing Türkiye as a friend and an ally country. Hence, they show gratitude through government and public support after the Marmara earthquake, demonstrating their brotherhood and unity with Türkiye.

The most prominent and frequently addressed theme in the film is PO Süleyman's willingness to protect Ayla at the cost of his own life and his unwillingness to be separated from her. PO Süleyman lived his life dreaming of being reunited with Ayla. Similarly, Ayla loved PO Süleyman as her father and always wanted to stay with him. Ultimately, Ayla and PO Süleyman were reunited and lived together until the end of their lives. The underlying message in the subtext of the script and characters is that PO Süleyman represents Türkiye, and Ayla represents South Korea. Through Ayla and PO Süleyman, the film emphasizes elements of introduction, mutual assistance, protection, becoming a family, love, and loyalty between Türkiye and South Korea. Ayla is depicted as oppressed, in need of help, innocent, good, and helpless, much like South Korea. PO Süleyman, on the other hand, is positioned as a protector of South Korea, akin to Türkiye, willing to risk his life, fighting for South Korea, never leaving her, and viewing her as a sibling, child, and family.

Another prominent theme in the film "Ayla" which Türkiye has successfully used as a soft power tool and presented to other countries, is the portrayal of the Turkish soldier as devoted to the homeland, brave, fearless in battle, compassionate, highly skilled, supportive of the oppressed, and always victorious over the enemy. The film even depicts the Turkish soldier as unconditionally obeying his superiors' orders. Only PO Süleyman has not obeyed Emre to stay with Ayla. With a command from his superiors, he goes to fight in a country he has never known. The Turkish soldiers demonstrate superior performance in battle. In some scenes, two Turkish soldiers even overcome dozens of enemy soldiers. Another significant aspect that

highlights the Turkish soldiers is their compassion. The soldiers' love and protection for the family are exemplified by PO Süleyman's care for and preservation of ants.

In conclusion, the film "Ayla" created by Türkiye to use as a soft power tool with South Korea, the United States, and the Western world, has successfully served this purpose. Through the combined efforts of its director, music producer, screenplay, actors, and individual scenes, the film functions as a tool for promoting Türkiye, solidifying its international image, and garnering support on both the state and public levels.

Declarations

* *Ethical Approval:* Since the study relies on secondary data analysis and does not involve human subjects, ethical approval is not required.

* * *Publication Ethics:* This study has been prepared in accordance with the rules outlined in the "Guidelines for Scientific Research and Publication Ethics of Higher Education Institutions." Additionally, the article has been scanned using the Turnitin plagiarism detection software, and no instances of plagiarism have been detected.

* *Author Contribution Statement:* The study is single-authored and does not adhere to the guidelines regarding "author contribution statement."

* *Conflict of Interest:* There is no direct or indirect financial, commercial, legal, or professional relationship or conflict of interest involved in the study.

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