

# Changing Practices in International Broadcasting

## The BBC World Service Example

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### Abstract

Looking at the history of international broadcasting, one can observe that governments utilised international media as an element of public diplomacy as early as 1930s. Some of the first examples are seen at the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) World Service, which runs a Turkish Service since 1939. This research examines the factors that impact on international broadcasting and takes the BBC World Service as an example. It focuses on its Turkish Section in order to consider the changing practices at its language services and explore the influence of the issues such as public diplomacy, technological advances and economic policies on these language services. The BBC World Service and the Turkish section are chosen because they constitute one of the first examples of international broadcasting efforts. The findings are based on data that were collected via in-depth interviews conducted with editors and producers in 2011 at the World Service Central Newsroom and the Turkish Service. This research was funded by TÜBİTAK (the Scientific and Research Council of Turkey) post-doctoral study abroad bursary, at the Communication and Media Research Institute, University of Westminster in London, where the researcher was based as a visiting scholar.

**Keywords:** BBC, World Service, Turkish, public diplomacy, international broadcasting.

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# Uluslararası Yayıncılıkta Değişen Pratikler BBC Dünya Servisi Örneği

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## Özet

Uluslararası yayıncılığın tarihine bakıldığında, hükümetlerin, 1930'lar kadar erken bir dönemde uluslararası medyayı kamu diplomasisinin bir unsuru olarak kullandığı gözlemlenebilir. Bu tür yayıncılığın ilk örneklerine, Türkçe Servisi 1939'dan bu yana yayın yapan, BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation, Britanya Yayın Kurumu) Dünya Servisi'nde rastlanmaktadır. Bu çalışma, BBC Dünya Servisi örneği üzerinden, uluslararası yayıncılığa etki eden faktörleri incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Türkçe Servisini ele alarak, dil servislerindeki değişen pratikleri ve kamu diplomasisi, teknolojik gelişmeler ve ekonomik politikaların dil servisleri üzerindeki etkilerini göstermeye çalışmaktadır. BBC Dünya Servisi ve Türkçe Servisi uluslararası yayıncılığın ilk ve en uzun süre devam eden örneklerini teşkil ettiği için seçilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın bulguları, 2011'de BBC Dünya Servisi merkezi haber odası (World Service Central Newsroom) ve Türkçe Servisi'ndeki editör ve yapımcılarla yapılmış derinlemesine görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmış verilere dayanmaktadır. Araştırmacının Londra Westminster Üniversitesi İletişim ve Medya Araştırmaları Merkezi'nde misafir öğretim üyesi olarak bulunduğu bu çalışma, TÜBİTAK yurt-dışı araştırma bursu kapsamında desteklenmiştir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** BBC, Dünya Servisi, Türkçe, kamu diplomasisi, uluslararası yayıncılık.

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## Introduction

In an era where technologies allow instantaneous information exchange across national borders, global interdependence increasingly challenges nation-states in areas such as media, technology, politics and economy. One of the factors that contributed to increasing globalization and global interdependence in these areas was the advent of the electric telegraph as a new technology in the 19th century. It altered the speed of transmitting news as well as the format and style of newsgathering and production due to its influence on the emerging news agencies and mass newspapers (Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen 1998; McPhail, 2006; Thusu, 2006).

Although the history of international communication goes back to ancient empires, it was not until the late 19th century that it truly became a constituent of political, cultural and economic power on a global scale. The advent of the electronic telegraph, some argued, led the governments to realise as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the news and new communication methods not only influence markets but they also influence “foreign policy and public opinion” (Winseck and Pike 2008, p.15).

Another factor that led the governments to consider international communication as a pivotal element of foreign policy and public diplomacy was the advent of radio. Joseph Nye (2008, p.97) suggests that “the advent of radio in the 1920s led many governments into the arena of foreign-language broadcasting, and in the 1930s, ideologies such as communism and fascism were promoted with favourable images to foreign publics”. The big news networks such as *Deutsche Welle*, *Radio France International* and *BBC World Service* were considered as the prime examples of elements of public diplomacy (Hachten and Scotton, 1996). Public diplomacy is defined as “a government’s process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies” (Touch 1990, p.2).<sup>1</sup>

As Woods (1992, p.2) remarks, the use of radio differed on either side of the Atlantic. The radio in the US was used to disseminate entertainment programmes to South America. However, in Europe, it first became a tool for reaching out to the colonies and then a tool for propaganda, especially at the start of the Second World War. Woods specifically draws attention to Britain’s response to radio and notes how Britain recognised its potential as “an instrument for social manipulation rather than entertainment” and “an instrument for foreign policy whose function would be to disseminate informational propaganda to the rest of the world” (1992, p.35). One of the first examples of such activity was initiated in Turkish in 1939 by the BBC World Service. The Turkish Section’s radio services had been operational for 72 years until 2011, when they were shut down due to a combination of financial and technological reasons.<sup>2</sup>

In this light, this research focuses on the changes in broadcasts of the BBC World Service, which transformed its colonial mission and adapted to the needs of the globalising media environment. It considers its historical development by tracing one of its oldest language services, Turkish section, in  
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- 1 Moreover, public diplomacy is seen as one of “soft power’s key instruments. Soft power refers to the ‘ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment. A country’s soft power is considered to rest on its resources of culture, values, and policies’ (Nye 2008, p.94).
- 2 Since May 2011, output of the Turkish section can only be reached on its website. The Turkish section’s TV package programmes were also broadcast on the affiliate NTV news channel in Turkey, but these transmissions were halted on June, 14 2013, during the Gezi protests in Istanbul (Bianet, 14 June 2014) Also see for details: <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/toplum/147611-bbc-turkce-ye-neden-hala-ihitiyacimiz-var>

order to examine the challenges that influence international broadcasting and consider various pressures coming from adaptation to technologies, financial cuts, and /or changing political climate and needs. The main questions that are addressed in this study are: “What are the factors/mechanisms that influence international broadcasting? To what extent is news production influenced by the requirements of public policy and/or pressures of technological developments of the so-called new media and/or globalising trends in communication?”

The methodology used in this research includes various components. The collection of secondary data was gathered through books, articles, and audio-visual material produced by the BBC. The collection of primary data was gathered through interviews and the completion of an internship at the BBC World Service which helped the researcher observe how news production was taking place, and establish contacts for in-depth interviews with editors and journalists. This has proved to be a viable strategy to get access into the working culture of the World Service, and to utilise the snowball sampling technique to have access to respondents.

The data collection began in March 2011 when the first contact was made with the Turkish section at the BBC World Service. The researcher’s formal application for an internship at the BBC World Service was accepted at the end of March 2011 and the internship began on May 16, 2011. It was a turbulent time for the language services when decisions about redundancies were being made.

During the internship it was possible to observe the ways in which editors worked in the main newsroom in English (Central Newsroom) and the Turkish section of the World Service at the Bush House in London. The first week of the internship was spent at the English language newsroom, one week at *World Have Your Say* programme and one week at the Turkish section. The internship was formally completed in June. In total, 26 qualitative interviews were conducted between March and July 2011. After the internship, several visits were paid to the Turkish section until the end of September 2011, thanks to the good relations that were established with the staff there. In these visits it was possible to clarify issues arising from previous visits and benefit from the documents in the archives and secondary sources such as the in-house magazines and publications.<sup>3</sup>

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3 Moving to the new broadcasting centre of the BBC began in 2006 as a project. The World Service moved to the new premises in here 2012. For West One, see:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/keyfacts/stories/bh\\_development.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/keyfacts/stories/bh_development.shtml)

When the proposal for this research project was written, there were talks about closing down the Turkish section of the BBC as part of cutting down public expenses in order to alleviate the impact of economic recession in the UK.<sup>4</sup> The World Service authorities later decided to close down the radio part of the Turkish service and keep the online and TV ventures. These cuts were decided at the end January 2011 and envisaged 16 per cent overall cut in the World Service Budget and full and partial closures of the language services. According to this decision, Albanian, Macedonian, Portuguese for Africa and Serbian languages as well as English for the Caribbean regional service would be fully closed. Azeri, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, Spanish for Cuba, Turkish, Vietnamese, and Ukrainian was set to face partial closures.<sup>5</sup> One could argue that in the post 9/11 climate and the ensuing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is not surprising to see there are increasing efforts to reach out to Muslim or Arabic speaking countries all around the world. But, one can equally question the viability of the Turkish section at the BBC, as Turkey is now a candidate country to the European Union and is considered more democratic and liberal than neighbouring Muslim countries. Therefore, the research also aimed to find out the factors that influenced this decision, whether, for instance, the cuts were made based solely on economic reasons or other issues such as foreign policy choices/priorities. The findings of the study suggest that the dynamics of public diplomacy plays a lesser role in the news production process at the World Service Turkish section today than it did during the Second World War and Cold War period. Instead, it would not be wrong to argue that the demands of 24 hour global news production, the effects of the changing funding structure, and the influence of news media in general seem to be more influential on the current journalistic practices.

## **International communication, broadcasting and public diplomacy**

Historically, international communication and media have been central elements of foreign policy and public diplomacy efforts. For instance, Joseph Nye (2008, p.97) suggests that “the advent of radio in the 1920s led many governments into the arena of foreign-language broadcasting, and in the 1930s, ideologies such as communism and fascism were promoted with favourable images to foreign publics”. Hachten and Scotton (1996, p.166) maintain that

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4 <http://www.cnnturk.com/2010/dunya/09/09/bbc.turkce.kapaniyor.mu/589202.0/>

5 [http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2011/01\\_january/26/worldservice.shtml?intcmp=239](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2011/01_january/26/worldservice.shtml?intcmp=239)

“transnational radio -now supplemented by global television, the Internet-” is a major conveyer of public diplomacy.

As Woods (1992, p.2) remarks, Britain was the first country to recognise the political potential of the radio, the new media of 20th century. In contrast with its commercial and entertainment-based use in the US, radio in Europe first became a tool for reaching out to the colonies and then a tool for propaganda, especially at the start of the Second World War. Woods believes Britain’s response to radio was unique because Britain recognised its potential as “an instrument for social manipulation rather than entertainment” and “an instrument for foreign policy whose function would be to disseminate informational propaganda to the rest of the world” (1992, p.35). Indeed, the BBC radio had initially aimed to broadcast to the colonies of the British Empire under the “Empire Service” in 1932 which later became a regular service. The Empire Service was re-branded in November 1939 as *Overseas Service*.<sup>6</sup> It assumed a big role after the beginning of the Second World War and “began to evolve, becoming a British counter to propaganda from the Axis powers and a symbol of resistance in Nazi occupied Europe” (McCarthy and Jenner 2011, p.5).

After the end of the Second World War, Cold War rhetoric began to dominate international communication. In this period two issues were significant: the tension between communism and democracy; and the issues of dependency and modernisation due to the emergence of new nation states after the process of de-colonisation. During the 1950s and 1960s, institutions such as the BBC and VOA (Voice of America) continued to expand their activities in multiple languages in order to promote “fundamental concepts of free speech, free press and democracy” (McPhail, 2006). International broadcasts on short wave radio by these organisations “helped to crack information monopolies”, namely the public service broadcasting systems in Europe. In the case of the BBC, these efforts were also considered to be “tied to foreign policy goals” (Price 2009, pp.197-199).

International communication thus continued to be relevant to long-standing issues such as nation-state policies of exercising cultural or political hegemony over others; dominance of the “West” over the “East”; and issues of representation, propaganda/public diplomacy and creating public opinion

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6 [http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specialreports/000000\\_aboutus.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specialreports/000000_aboutus.shtml)

(McPhail, 2006). The nation states come under pressure to co-exist with these globalising networks, and find a “balance” between the requirements of their own needs and the needs of “contemporary globalization” and increasing internationalisation (Held et. al 1999).

Hesmondhalgh (2006, p.32) defines “internationalisation in media as a process whereby media ownership, production and consumption spill over the borders of nation states”. This “spill-over” of media messages and images across national borders creates “questions of cultural domination” of one nation state over the others. He discerns two main theoretical approaches to this phenomenon. The first one relates to a political economy perspective, embodied in the concept of “cultural imperialism” (cf. Herbert Schiller), and the second relates to the “liberal” perspective, where the exchange of cultural goods are seen as elements of “soft power”<sup>7</sup> which could have been instrumental in foreign policy development (cf. Joseph Nye).

Downing (2007), similarly refers to the political economy approach as the perspective that considers media ownership, the relationship between national, regional and international markets and the unequal competition between them as one of the dominant paradigms to consider international communication. According to him, the cultural imperialism thesis had a “negative” outlook on the effects of media products that originate in the West and are consumed in the non-Western contexts. The cultural imperialism thesis was known as “Dependency Theory” in Latin American countries which highlighted the “colonial” heritage that is inherent in international communication networks. It also considered globalization’s negative influence on local cultures, languages, economy and traditions (also see Semati, 2004; Sreberny and Paterson, 2004; McNair, 2006; Thususu, 2006). One of the alternative perspectives on globalization has been to consider it from a cultural perspective where trans-border flows and “exchange” allow “cultural syncretisation” and creation of hybrid identities (Hesmondalgh 2006, p.41) In this context, the role of international broadcasting was seen as “democratising” because international broadcasting organisations such as the BBC or CNN also offered an opportunity for audiences living under repressive regimes to access information and evade state censorship on news in their countries (Sreberny 2000, p.107).

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7 Public diplomacy is considered as an element of “soft power” of states (Nye, 2008).



For example, the influence of the CNN International television channel in the dissemination of images and issues that contribute to the creation of “international public opinion”, was labelled as the “CNN effect” in shaping international relations. Since the 1990s both state and non-state actors have actively been involved in setting up transnational television channels to reach out to fellow diasporic groups, or fellow ethnic communities in neighbouring countries to influence public opinion and to continue their cultural, political and/or economic hegemony. These efforts gained prominence in the period after the September 11 attacks on the World Trade organisations, as global news networks, including the BBC, have set up new channels to reach the public in Muslim countries (Kamalipour, 2007). Perhaps the most significant efforts of using public diplomacy as an element of foreign policy was seen in the in the post-September 11 climate when BBC launched television channels in Arabic and Persian. For some commentators such developments are significant because the global networks such as BBC World have then become “a central source of information about world affairs” (Gilboa, 2008).

The BBC World Service is considered as an element of Britain’s public diplomacy because of its “benefits to the UK abroad”. The World Service is also seen as a conveyer of soft power, which is believed to rest on the editorial principles of the BBC such as fairness, accuracy, and impartial and fact-based reporting of news. These principles, according to commentators, are the factors that earn respect from audience abroad, thus increasing the positive impact of Britain internationally (McCarthy and Jenner, 2011).

## The news culture at the BBC World Service

The World Service now operates as part of the Global News division whose output includes international television channels, radio and international-facing news websites. BBC World Service is comprised of international radio and online services in 32 languages and TV channels in Arabic and Persian.<sup>8</sup> Its operating principles were laid in 1942 as part of the BBC Charter and License Agreement. Some of principles sanction the objectivity and balance of the broadcasts on the World Service. For instance BBC output was supposed to reflect Britain’s official view alongside the views that oppose it on controversial international issues in order to maintain a balanced view of events. Additionally, “intervening in other countries’ politics and persuading

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8 [http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specialreports/000000\\_aboutus.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specialreports/000000_aboutus.shtml)

audiences” were considered as inappropriate in terms of the mission of the World Service (Walker 1982, pp.14-15).

The BBC License agreement stipulated that World Service should produce international broadcasts (bulletins, programs etc.) in the languages designated by the government. In return, the government takes the financial responsibility of the cost of the broadcasts, but requests working in close co-operation. Contrary to the “license fee” funding system of the domestic BBC output, it was agreed that the transnational broadcasts of the World Service would be funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as part of a Grant-in-aid (Walker 1982, p.14).

The dependence to Grant-in-Aid for its budget has been one of the most critical issues about the World Service. The issue of “independence” or “impartiality from its paymaster” [Foreign Office funds] has constituted one of the most delicate qualities of the World Service vis-à-vis professional standards of journalism. Many commentators (Jaber and Baumann 2011, p.172) suggested that due to the government funding the World Service at times was expected to “rally behind” foreign policy moves. However, the World Service editors strived to maintain an “aura of impartiality” in the face of reporting controversial international events.

According to Taussig (2008, pp.591-92) the World Service does not want to be seen as fulfilling the same function as the British Council, as one of Britain’s cultural diplomacy tools because this could implicitly imply “promoting” Britain, which would contradict with BBC’s editorial independence. Taussig remarks that one “pragmatic” solution to this conflicting situation was to mention in Foreign Ministry’s 2005 Public Diplomacy report that the ministry acknowledges the independence of the BBC World Service. The report also makes reference to the agreement that consulting the ministry for its long-term investments would not be in breach of BBC’s editorial independency. Later, in 2007 in the operating agreement with the BBC management (BBC Trust) the World Service’s mission was defined as “to provide a trusted, relevant and high quality international news service” which can offer “independent analysis and explanation” of complex issues in order to sustain citizenship around the world (McCarthy and Jenner 2011, p.3).

Time spent at the Central Newsroom of the World Service during the internship allowed for observations to be made on how the editorial principles are implemented on the ground. The Central Newsroom, was comprised of 40 editors/journalists in total. Ten of these editors/journalists

were the regional editors, another ten covered the global newswire and the rest covered the world briefing sections. What is known as the “core”, the central desk, produces the 24 hour rolling news bulletins which are broadcast globally. There are six senior editors/producers who work as “duty editors” at the central desk. They work for on a specific rotation of shifts and all are responsible of the central output. The internship at the desks around the core allowed the researcher to establish contact with a number of editors, who later participated in the interviews. The editors who participated in the research agree that the World Service is a public diplomacy tool, but they stress the fact that this does not pose a threat to the journalism culture at the World Service. All the respondents maintained that they uphold the principles of independent, objective and impartial journalism and that the government at any stage has not influenced their work.

A former senior executive of the BBC World Service during the Cold War (1970s and 1980s) explained how adhering to BBC’s broadcasting principles such as balance and objectivity could become a problem between the BBC administration and the government authorities as follows:

There were always complaints, when I was in the secretariat I dealt with loads of these. If a minister complained about bias or inaccuracy, I would investigate it. If there was bias the BBC would admit it, but if there was not, the BBC would write to them saying we looked into it. There were always complaints going back and fro, but there was no atmosphere of fear of the government, ever. I think it is a deep-seated cultural thing; it is not that the written defences are terribly strong for the BBC. If you look at the constitution, there is no law saying the BBC must be independent, unbiased. It is a very peculiar old-fashioned system that works under the documents, which are very feeble. But, there is the expectation in the BBC, in the public and the government that it should be independent, it should be unbiased... The charter and the articles of associations, they are very feeble, there is nothing strong in them. So it is not the paper that makes the BBC independent, it is the mind, it is the individuals are right down the line and are not frightened of the government (Interview, 10 April 2011).

Scholars of British broadcasting history, like Jean Seaton (2008, p. 445), explain this phenomenon of “adhering to the BBC news culture and values” at the World Service as the “embeddedness of the domestic BBC news process in the World Service and the entrenchment of the World Service in the wider BBC”. Some editors argued that BBC World Service can be a tool of public diplomacy because it sets a good example and demonstrate the “best practice” in impartial and objective journalism. In this way, the good example and good

deeds of the BBC World Service creates a positive and respectable image for Britain as a country internationally. This is explained by, the Controller of the World Service at the time, as follows:

It is seen as an element of public diplomacy simply because it is important, it projects such a positive image of Britain. But BBC World service channels are not used to broadcast stuff that would make Britain look good in the eyes of the world, these are absolutely two separate things, because we do such a good job and because we are seen to be impartial with the British government that we are trusted...We have proved over the years that we have taken a very objective and impartial stance over the years. Including the issues that touched the British government (Interview, 16 June 2011).

The principals of impartiality, accuracy and balance are deemed indispensable characteristics of BBC Journalism and the journalists and editors who have taken part in the interviews are adamant supporters of these principals. The notes from the participant observation in the Central newsroom and interviews conducted with editors such as above, indicate that the news culture of the World Service is very much embedded and engrained in the institutional identity and passed onto the producers in the language services too, through training and newsroom practices. These editorial principles and the news values that are also transferred to the language services are connected to the news produced by the “core” desk. During the time spent at the Turkish section, it was possible to observe that the news items from the English newsroom usually were covered in the same order of significance. Some of the news that were considered to be “globally” important during the first week of the internship included Queen Elizabeth’s visit to Ireland and the arrest of former head of International Monetary Fund (IMF) Dominique Strauss Khan’s in New York. The Queen’s visit was also important as a “national” event because the Queen was the first monarch to visit Ireland in 100 years, making it an extraordinary event considering the historically conflicted relationship between the two countries. Apart from such globally newsworthy items of the agenda, at the Turkish section priority was given to stories, which were about places to which Turkey has geographical or cultural proximity, such as the ensuing conflict in Syria. But as the following sections reveal the “connection” between the English newsroom and the language sections were much “closer” and more “rigid” until about the 1980s, when the language sections were allowed to practice “real journalism” and not just translations of the English newsroom.

## The changing practices in the language services: The Turkish section example

The BBC began its first foreign radio broadcasting in Arabic in 1938, followed by Turkish in 1939 on the eve of the Second World War.<sup>9</sup> The transmissions of the Turkish service began on the 20th November 1939.<sup>10</sup> From the onset the transmissions were aimed at influencing public opinion in Turkey in order to secure its support for the allied forces, especially during the Second World War (Nohl, 2010).

In 1940 the Empire Service, which was re-branded as ‘External Services’, increased the transmissions in the Turkish language. Firstly, this was a diplomatic move in order to counter-balance propaganda coming from other European countries, such as Germany, in the Middle East. Secondly, Turkey’s disarmament agreement with Germany towards the end of the War, (18 July 1948) led the British government to take new measures. For instance, in 1942 transmissions in Turkish rose to five- minute bulletins per day, and in 1946, the broadcasts in Turkish were one hour per day (Nohl 2010, p.175). Andrew Mango, who was the Head of South European service which included Turkish, Greek, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian in the 1970s, can be seen as the founding father of the BBC Turkish section. He recalls that in the early days of the Cold War, the BBC had decided not to engage in “black propaganda”. However, the news that was broadcast at the World Service was centrally produced and disseminated to the language services. The language service editors could only use a low level of flexibility to choose or not to choose the news items that came from the Central Newsroom. However, as Mango recalls, the “centralised and top-down way of producing news was the norm” at the World service for a long period (Interview, 7 October 2011).

Gamon McLellan, who joined the Turkish section in 1979 after Andrew Mango and became its head in the 1980s, recalled the period as follows:

Formally the arrangement was that the BBC is editorially responsible for the content of the output. But the government in those days prescribed the languages they broadcast and how long they broadcast. That has changed a lot in late 1980s and early 1990s, after a lot of exchange between the government and the organisation because the government is not an expert on broadcasting.

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9 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc//resources/factsheets/1930s.pdf>

10 <http://www.turkishtimes.co.uk/haber/ingiltere-basini/496-calisanlari-bbc-turkce-servisini-anlatti>

Now it is done in a way of consultation between the two. In 1979 when I joined, it was not like that” (Interview, 28 July 2011).

The government’s influence on the choice of foreign language broadcasts was significant for the Turkish section. As McLellan remembers, days before he became the head of the Turkish section at the end of 1979, Turkish was one of the seven languages that the BBC was considering to “discontinue”, and “of course we all started lobbying like mad and in the end the decision was reversed in the case of Turkey” (Interview, 28 July 2011).

According to Gamon McLellan, aside from the Second World War, there were two periods when the Turkish service was particularly valid in Turkey. “One was the run up and the immediate aftermath of the 1960 coup, when Andrew Mango was the head, and the period after the 1980 coup.” (Interview, 28 July 2011). The coup on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1980, only a few months after the risk of closing down the Turkish section, proved how important it was to keep the Turkish service because the news was censored in Turkey. Former head of Turkish Service, Hüseyin Sükan, stated that during this period, the Turkish service stepped in to “enhance” the news provided by the national broadcaster TRT and worked with journalists who came from Turkey in order to overcome the limitations imposed on the media in Turkey at the time. The service in that period first focused on world news coming from the central core, and then news on Turkey. Although the main practice at the World Service was that the language services worked more like a “translation service”, this began to change and the Turkish service was allowed for the first time to “produce their own news” by the head of the BBC Education Section (Interview, 20 March 2011).

In early 1980s, the people working at the Turkish section received journalism training at the BBC in order to learn how to write news properly. Nevsal Baylas, who was the producer on duty on the night shift when she received the news that the army took control of the government in 1980s coup. According to her, the “real journalism at the Turkish service began after the coup” because they were interviewing politicians, journalists etc. who were banned from state television and radio during the military government period (Interview, 25 August 2011).

The role of the BBC Turkish service in providing independent and non-censored news increased audience interest in international broadcasts in Turkey. The BBC Turkish service was the first to cover live the first elections after the military government stepped down in 1983 and they utilised a computer to

predict the results for the first time. The media structure changed dramatically in Turkey in the 1990s: FM radios flourished, the state monopoly over broadcasting was broken and there were more news and news outlets available. The BBC Turkish service was no longer the “primary source” for international and/ independent news. So the Turkish service, like many others had to “reinvent “ their mission and strived to turn their expertise to providing the analysis and depth that are not offered by the national news outlets. According to Sükan, BBC World Service realised in the 1990s that the emergence of the FM radios was a big challenge to their established short-wave transnational system. The BBC was under the threat of losing its relevance to audiences abroad. Turkish service began to look for partners in Turkey to broadcast its radio programmes on FM wave and also explored the possibility of TV productions on a national channel. (Interview, 20 March 2011) Since the 1990s and early 2000s the service turned its attention to technological developments and introducing new content such as online sites and television packages that were shown on the national NTV channel in Turkey. These changes were general changes that the BBC World Service in general had to adopt in many parts of the world due to the increase in the use of new technologies, use of FM radio and de-regulation in the national media systems in a number of countries. For instance, in 2005, the director of the BBC World Service, Nigel Chapman<sup>11</sup>, delivered a speech to all the editors that set some major priorities for the World Service to be accomplished by 2010. These targets especially included starting TV broadcasts in languages other than English and the increased use of “new media” platforms. Hüseyin Sükan noted that the decision to start TV broadcasts in Turkish on NTV was not part of this strategy:

The BBC began the Arabic and Persian services in television because the government told [them] that they had to begin these transmissions. But the TV initiative of the Turkish service was not part of the general strategy of the World Service, [it was its own initiative]. There is a partnership with NTV that has been going on with NTV. It began to receive news summaries from [the Turkish section] in 2003, began live connections in 2005 and buying TV packages in 2007. The costs of these programmes are shared with the NTV and everyone here at the department was trained to produce for television. The BBC could hardly believe that we could succeed in this endeavour.

This initiative of the Turkish Section has become a role model for the other language services because it emerged out of the initiative of Turkish Service. This can also be seen as part of BBC Turkish trying to make itself

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11 [http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/2010/docs/051025\\_fullspeech.pdf](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/2010/docs/051025_fullspeech.pdf)

relevant to the Turkish audiences in the new situation. In fact in 2005, as Sükân stated, BBC World Service shut down 10 language services, 8 of which were the broadcasts that were transmitted to countries that became members of the European Union (Interview, 20 March 2011) Since 2010, there were also talks about closing down the Turkish section of the BBC in light of cutting public expenses in order to alleviate the impact of economic recession in the UK.<sup>12</sup> The World Service authorities later decided to close down the radio part of the Turkish service and keep the online and TV ventures. In fact the decision to close down some of the language services, including radio for the Turkish Section, came at the end of January 2011. A senior executive, admitted that cutting down a number of radio services, including Turkish, was a very hard administrative decision to make:

When you have to save 16 to 20 percent of your budget you have got to find that somewhere, we have not got anything outside the people, journalists. This is mainly where the budget is, so the distribution of it suffered. So you have to take a decision, you have 32 services, what do you close? It is an extremely difficult decision, because whichever you choose, your decision will have an impact on your reputation, audience, on yourself, on the lives of your journalists, on news (Interview, 16 June 2011).

As previously mentioned, operationally the World Service and the Foreign and Commonwealth office (FCO) is in close consultation with the BBC and it is involved in the process of deciding which languages are broadcast. But the editorial control rests entirely within the BBC. The relationship between the BBC World Service and the FCO is governed by two documents: a- Broadcasting agreement which sets out the aims and objectives of the BBC World Service) b- Financial memorandum (which sets out the financial agreement). Within the BBC ultimate responsibility for BBC World Service is vested in the BBC trust which is the sovereign body of the corporation.<sup>13</sup> In 2010 the Grant in Aid was 286 million pounds. As of 2014 the BBC will take over the BBC World Service's funding-via the license fee, which may hamper the news culture at the World Service.

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12 <http://www.cnturk.com/2010/dunya/09/09/bbc.turkce.kapaniyor.mu/589202.0/>

13 The World service is funded through grant-in-aid from the Foreign and Common Wealth Office allocated as part of the government's spending review process. It has complete editorial and managerial independence however, it reports performance against a number of measures agreed with the FCO annually (BBC World Service 2010, p.26).



The chief editor of the Central Newsroom, the English newsroom for the whole of the World Service, explains how the new funding system will work, as follows:

Annual TV license fees is 145£ and brings 3.8 billion revenue for BBC in general. The Grant in Aid- only funds the World Service and it is 280 million pounds a year. The cuts will be about 16% and from 2014 onwards we will be financed with the license fee. The government says the BBC will safeguard the World Service, but we now need to make our output relevant for the UK audience. (Interview, 19 May 2011).

The former head of service, Hüseyin Sükan, considered the recent cuts in the World Service as a potential negative influence. He reiterated the fact that they did not receive any direct involvement in their editorial policy from the government, but he said he believes this might become a more pressing issue when the World Service stops being funded by the Grant-in-aid. It is expected that in 2014, 650 jobs will be cut in order to save 46 million pounds per year. In the case of Turkey, the senior executive maintained that the BBC felt the need to follow the requirements/pressures of the new technologies and new media environment, so the decision to shut down the radio service on FM was based on technological pressures. She explained this process as follows:

You have got to have your eyes on the future, you cannot wait until the internet arrives in Turkey, or to have high penetration, because by then there will be people who have already gone with it...The future is about remaining relevant to the audiences and making sure that we cover the niche we have always covered: first and foremost the international news. It is what we are here for and also fill the gaps, regionally, but the resources are a huge headache (Interview, 16 June 2011).

As the executive maintained, the cuts in the overall output of the World Service, had cost the BBC “30 million audiences in the process” but their priority was to “remain relevant to the audiences” and the keep up with the requirements of the “new media” environment. The current head of the Turkish Service, Murat Nişancıoğlu, explains that every broadcasting organization sets new targets and directions for itself during various periods and this also happened in the World Service. He explains that the new priority regions for the World Service are Asia and Africa. It is slowly withdrawing from places outside these regions, and also trying to find new ways of “being meaningful” for the local audience in Britain (Interview, 25 September 2011).

## Conclusion

This study explored the factors that impact international broadcasting, with a special interest in looking at the interplay between the requirements of around-the-clock globalised international news reporting and the expectations of public diplomacy goals.

The study took the BBC World Service and its Turkish section as its focus because they represent one of the oldest examples of international broadcasting practices that have gone through many transformations. The World Service, which started with the mission of connecting “London” with the colonies of the British Empire, was met with a new mission and challenge at the beginning of the Second World War. Turkish Service’s emergence in this period also exemplified the early mission that was expected of international broadcasting at the time, which mainly focused on reaching out to foreign publics and was driven by foreign policy goals.

This mission continued into the Cold War period, when the two major hegemonic powers in the Western and Eastern blocks determined the contours of international politics. The interviews with senior editors of the Cold War period revealed that in this period the relationship between the central newsroom and the language services was a one way, or top-down relationship. The language services were mainly expected to translate the news coming from the English newsroom. The Turkish Service faced the risk of closure at the end of 1970s, but the military coup in Turkey in 1980 facilitated an understanding on the part of the authorities to realise the significance of the BBC World Service in supporting freedom of press and the media in Turkey during the times when media was under strict control. The 1980 coup in Turkey, however, was a turning point in the news production process in the Turkish section. The restrictive media environment in Turkey found an outlet with the support of the BBC editors, which also necessitated training the editors at the Turkish section in order to engage in more skilful journalistic production. The Turkish section, in this way, moved away from only translating news in English to producing their own stories, relevant for their audiences.

However greater democratisation and diversification of the media in Turkey in 1990s necessitated a re-definition of the services of the World Service for Turkey. The comments from the interviews suggest that the relevance of public diplomacy, especially for the Turkish section, has diminished after the

end of the Cold War. The dynamics of public diplomacy seem to be playing a smaller role in the news production process at the World Service today than it did during the Second World War and Cold war period. Instead, the demands of 24 hour news production, technological advances and the effects of the changing economic structuring of the BBC in general seem to exert more influence on the current news culture and journalistic practices. The editors at the English newsroom especially reiterated their belief that editorial guidelines and principles of the BBC in general are strong enough not to be manipulated for public diplomacy goals. This is why, even if the BBC World Service is seen as a public diplomacy tool, in their view, this does not compromise their professional standards.

After the mid- 2000s the factors that impact international broadcasting seem to be shifting from public diplomacy targets to meeting the demands of a competitive global news production environment. Changes in the BBC World Service in general and the BBC Turkish Section in particular stem from the demands of the globally structured 24 hour rolling news production and the impact of new technology such as applications and the use of video and sound in online services. The financial re-structuring of the BBC World Service in 2014 is another catalyst that will probably bring more changes in the services and output of the BBC World Service.

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