

Geopolitics to Geocriticism

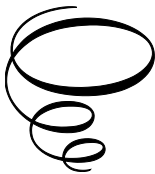
Geopolitics to Geocriticism:

*A Study of TV Series in Türkiye,
Serbia, Romania and Beyond*

Edited by

Deniz Bayrakdar

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Geopolitics to Geocriticism: A Study of TV Series in Türkiye, Serbia,
Romania and Beyond

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PREFACE

TV series reach beyond the boundaries of national and cultural restrictions, due to their powerful use of the formulaic basis of their genres, thus melting them into both local and global flavours. The cultural industries, when compared to the worlds of politics and economics, - which are exposed to crisis, turmoil, changes and transformations in countries like the Balkan states and Türkiye - can sustain the strength of these nations' voices in the global arena and fulfil a more impactful function of smart power.

The chapters found here are, to a large extent based on the results of the bilateral project “220N370_TV Series: A Comparative Perspective -Serbia and Turkey 2021-2023”, supported by The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia (MoESTD). Since the 2000s, there has been increasing cultural and economic cooperation between Türkiye and Serbia. The project aimed to contribute to the bilateral activities in the sciences and arts. Comparative research into TV series has previously been conducted on Arabic, post-Soviet Asian Republics, those Balkan countries with a Muslim population, and Greece. This project has been the first and therefore unique comparative study to attempt to understand and analyse the geopolitics reflected in the geocriticism of Serbia and Türkiye through TV series.

Furthermore, the contributions also rely on other projects realised by Turkish, Serbian, and Romanian scholars, with a methodological approach based on print and social media analysis, focus group studies, genre and cultural proximity, relying on comparative analyses.

The findings and conclusions of the chapters - partially based on the TÜBİTAK-MoESTD project – primarily address and discuss the question of “how geopolitics intersects with geocriticism”. Further contributions tackle genre proximity, as a key to understanding why TV series made in Türkiye reach audiences beyond these countries, falling within the scope of arguments for cultural proximity. Studies on the categorisation of the genres on OTT and traditional TV platforms, transnationalisation, popular geopolitics, soft power, public and cultural diplomacy, cartographies, intertextuality and referentiality, and the financial literacy of the viewers are analysed using new approaches by the scholars. Analysis of the historical genre of Serbian and Turkish series shows how the past and the present is

amalgamated in these products, and shapes a new narration of history, reflecting traces of today's political events while making reference to some future perspectives. This collection relies on the analyses of TV series in Türkiye, Serbia and Romania, while reference is made to other countries, as the global markets for Turkish TV series.

Popular geopolitics is mediated through TV series, movies, books, cartoons and other cultural products and objects, for the sake of soft power. It tends to enhance the geographical policies produced and discussed within different popular cultural tools and includes conveying political and cultural messages from one country's geography to other lands and the people living in these lands. (Tuathail, 1996: 109). This is not only through written and verbal expressions of the political actors, but it can also be produced and disseminated through the news media and the visual and audio tools of popular culture¹. Alongside overtly political strategies, acting to reach their aim accordingly through hard and/or smart power, soft power as defined by Nye (2008) and developed by newer perspectives, and referring to the development of public diplomacy into realms of cultural and engagement diplomacy, is discussed in this collection in most of the chapters focusing on the comparative perspectives of TV series in the Balkans and Türkiye.

The series analysed within the scope of this collection are important soft power devices, as they are mostly the ones with the highest ratings. Coding the soft power of a country is a delicate matter and is realised in most cases by cultural strategists in the states involved, and by the creators in the sector.

Balkan countries, in the cases of Türkiye, Serbia and Romania, bring local flavours with a global appeal to the market, as a consequence of the 'attractions' of the geopolitical realities, despite being on the 'threshold of Europe' rather than at its heart, as they still hold distinct characteristics of their geographies, languages, ethnicities and cultures.

The chapters herein, hence, address the issue of cultural industries in the case of TV series, not only as texts, but also as important carriers of the geopolitical issues articulated through geocritical analyses, speaking both of the books as the basis of these TV series, or of the stories which have become history, and of differences that are used to show the polarised identities in these narratives.

The collection consists of chapters mapping the Turkish, Serbian and Romanian TV Series' facts and figures, their genre system, as well as their narrative structures, production modes, and cartographies. The collection includes chapters prepared on TV series produced in Türkiye, Serbia and Romania. In addition, interviews with title sequence artists of Turkish series

¹ 220N370_TUBITAK Project Report, 2023

Şahsiyet/Persona (2018), and the observations of a teacher who works as an extra in the sector bring their rich and not often heard stories from the coalface of production in the sector into this collection.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This volume, “TV Series: Türkiye, Serbia, Romania and Beyond. From Geopolitics to Geocriticism” is the culmination of a long journey from the conceptualisation of a project to the final version, enhanced and enriched with chapters from invitees, alongside interviews and essays.

In the summer of 2020, the call for a proposal for a bilateral programme by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia (MoESTD) was the impetus for Prof. Deniz Bayrakdar, Kadir Has University and Prof. Nevena Daković, Faculty of Dramatic Arts, University of Arts in Belgrade to revive a long history of networking as colleagues in writing and editing academic work.

After intensive discussion on possible themes in July 2020, Prof. Daković and Prof. Bayrakdar agreed on the subject of the proposal: a comparative analysis of Serbian and Turkish TV series. The preparation phase, through parallel and active organisation on both sides, revealed a fruitful base for the project proposal. As is now well-known, Turkish TV series have achieved marked success in terms of exports, and they bear witness to the efficacy of cultural diplomacy as a tool of soft power, not only in countries with cultural proximities, but worldwide. Several academic publications have focused their research mainly on these topics, with exceptions dealing with this matter critically, principally on how the Turkish TV series have reached viewers beyond their geographically proximate borders. On the other hand, the Serbian series did not have this worldwide rate of distribution nor a competitive achievement in quantitative facts and figures or similarities concerning their production values. Hence, the idea evolved to investigate “how to weigh up these two countries’ TV series?” Which theories could help us to analyse them in an appropriate way? The idea of geopolitics and geocriticism as methodological approaches was thus chosen as the main basis for comparative analysis. Both project teams worked on the conceptualisation of the proposal to be forwarded to TÜBİTAK and MoESTD.

This phase was challenging as I was not sure whether such a new approach would be accepted by the Scientific Councils of Türkiye and Serbia. We forwarded the project proposal in autumn of 2020, and the results

were announced in 2021, and so the project was launched on September 1st, 2021.

Prof. Daković and Prof. Bayrakdar wrote their proposals with the full support of their teams.

I wish to thank Aliye Atalay, who has been with us during the whole proposal writing period, encouraging us with her accurate reading and calculating the work packages, facts and figures, and checking its aims, missions and visions, as an experienced businesswoman. The constellation of the project team on both sides resulted in bringing on board researchers working in the fields of film and cultural studies, sociology, anthropology, psychology, methodology, statistics, gender studies, and finance. We are grateful to all the professors who agreed to work with us. Prof. Dr. Belma Öztürkcalı, Assoc. Prof. Hilmi Bengi, and Assoc. Prof. Özlem Avcı Aksoy supported the literature survey during the proposal period, and in the first phase after the approval of the project. Hilmi Bengi supported the print media analysis, while Özlem Avcı Aksoy and Assoc. Prof. İrem İnceoğlu contributed to the discussion on “how to apply the methodology” during this phase. Dr. Özen Baş contributed precious methodological suggestions on social media analysis. During this phase, the main hero of the whole process was TÜBİTAK assistant Fatma Memici, an MA student on Kadir Has graduate programme, who also has written her thesis on this subject. A whole group of MA and undergraduate students from Kadir Has University Communication Faculty, and Radio, Television and Cinema Department, as well as New Media, Public Relations, and Visual Communication Design Departments scrolled the Instagram pages for three months and searched for those images which had been pre-coded by Deniz Bayrakdar and Fatma Memici. They realised the coding of the Instagram images of the chosen TV series for the project, they analysed the print media literature and finally a “codebook” was worked out as a new methodology in TV series research. I would like to thank Serim Şahin, whose print media analysis contributed valuable analyses with her sociology background.

The project had a duration of two years between 2021-2023, with three work packages, the media analysis, the focus group study and data analysis. In the second phase, a conference was organised by Prof. Nevena Daković and her team, at which we presented the results of the first work package under the title “Coding the Soft Power: A Matrix of Turkish TV Series”. I would like to express appreciation of Fatma Memici, for her valuable contribution to the research, leading a group of assistants and working out the codes that were searched for in the Instagram pages of the chosen series. Prof. Levent Soysal shaped our presentation with his expert critical approach and added the transnational and global perspective to the essay.

The summer of 2021 was the time for designing the focus group studies in both countries. I am grateful to Levent Soysal for inviting the undergraduate, MA and PhD students to the sessions, and leading the first focus group study, along with Belma Öztürkcal, who realised the focus group session on the topic of “finance and TV series”. The Serbian scholars team took part in the focus group, consisting of Prof. Nevena Daković, Assoc. Prof. Alexandra Milovanović, Vanja Sibalić, and Iva Leković. They enriched the discussions with their profound knowledge of film, TV and theatre studies. We are also very grateful for their support. The Turkish scholars team was represented by Assoc. Prof. Melis Behlil, Assoc. Prof. İrem İnceoğlu, and Prof. Deniz Bayrakdar. Both Dr. Behlil and Dr. İnceoğlu, as outstanding academics, gave depth to the discussions, and deepened the political and economic aspects of analysis of the TV series. The first focus group students were PhD students Tuğba Göçer, Gülçin Çaktuğ Kurt, and Gökçe İnce, and Fatma Memici, from the MA programme, and İlgi Duran, and Sıla Karataş from the undergraduate programme of the Communication Faculty, Kadir Has. They viewed the series and enlivened the discussions with their intertextual, rich and elaborated look at these cultural products. We heartily thank both the Serbian and Turkish scholars and students for being there, and for discussing all the questions with resolute dedication.

The focus group studies continued, and two more sessions were realised. Again, Belma Öztürkcal and this time Deniz Bayrakdar led the discussions. These last two focus group meetings, with new faces from MA and PhD classes, and undergraduate students have shown us that the younger generation is far in advance of us in understanding this coded communication system of series – even very simple ones - with their astute understanding. The second and third focus group meetings demonstrated that the students, including my TV Series class students, Ayşe Ekin Sağıroğlu (Psychology) and Zeynep Şengöz (International Relations), along with Nazlı Hazar, Aylin Berna Zamandar Başoğlu, and Cemal Çimen of the Communication Studies MA and PhD programmes, made for excellent discussants, who analysed the chosen series, but also referred to other series worldwide, just like the first group of students. Sude Özer and İlgi Duran produced the recordings and transcriptions, using all available digital technologies, which accelerated the process.

From October 2022 onwards, a new TÜBİTAK assistant, Sercan Gündoğar was the leading assistant who helped us with the second and third work package process of the project until the end, with his attentive and thoughtful way of completing the assignments. His contribution to the project has been invaluable. He assisted us throughout all the stages, and worked in very close cooperation with the STAR assistants İlgi Duran and Sude Özer. Sude Özer

has been the second great hero of the project: as an engineering student, she learned in a very short time to process all the data of the project in the MAXQDA program. If we have been successful in delivering a rich and profound final report, I owe a lot to Sude Özer's dedication, intellect and readiness to work day and night with us. The STAR assistant, Yağmur Kara from TOBB University of Economics and Technology has brought to the table her comprehensive knowledge of geopolitics, and all her willpower to finalise the data analysis in a very accurate way deserves our appreciation. Sercan Gündoğar and Yağmur Kara have worked with me in the last three months and helped me to finalise the report.

In May, 2022 we held two workshops, and the professors invited, such as Prof. Arzu Öztürkmen, Prof. Selin Tüzün Ateşalp, Assoc. Prof. Ürün Yıldırım Önk, plus the Serbian team of Prof. Nevena Daković, Prof. Aleksandra Milovanović and Iva Leković, shared with us their views and the results of their projects. We express our thanks to them all.

An online seminar was organised online by the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO, with speakers from the TV series sector, together with bureaucrats and Serbian and Turkish scholars. First of all, I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Öcal Oğuz, the President of the Commission, and Özge Züleyha Ömeroğlu, the expert on the Communication Committee, and Selenay Çakıcı, Esra Hatipoğlu, and Sema Dinçer Akmeşe, who organised the event, and invited the professors who took part in the online seminar.

In 2021, an undergraduate course was conceptualised by Deniz Bayraktar, and a 14-week project-based seminar on TV series was conducted at Kadir Has University. I am grateful to all the students who took part in these lectures, and expressed their fresh views, coming from different backgrounds such as psychology, engineering, finance and film studies.

A big thank you goes to Dr. Ebru İmamoğlu, TÜBİTAK senior expert, who assisted me throughout the project. I always felt safe in the knowledge that we were working with such a perceptive and experienced specialist.

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Assoc. Prof. Ulaş Karakoç, the Kadir Has University reviewers or our project, for their pointed and enlightening review, which eased the way to the final stage of the project proposal.

This collection is based on the work of this project, but it has been enriched by scholars whom I met during the project, and who have generously accompanied me in this book project. I am grateful to Prof. Dr. Selin Tüzün Ateşalp from Marmara University, and Assoc. Prof. Ürün Yıldırım Önk, from İzmir Yaşar University for their essential contribution to the book on the basis of their research. Prof. Dr. Marian Tutui from Hyperion University, Bucharest, greatly enriched the book with the chapter on Romanian TV series, mapping the Balkans.

Selçuk Yavuzkanat, as the administrator of the project, and as a statistics expert has given us strength, with his contributions on facts and figures, in the most accurate and reliable way. As the Deputy Director of the Directorate of Cinema, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, he also represents the official view and has provided essential information on the sector. We fully appreciate his support throughout the stages, especially in the urgent moments of project reports, and during other relevant activities.

I wish to thank both the title sequence artists of *Şahsiyet/Persona*, Ethem Cem and Enes Özenbaş, who accepted our invitation to share their experiences with us. As young pioneers in the new generation of visual communication designers they have shown us that there is a promising future full of hope.

Our book cover page was designed by Derin Derman, who also organised the interviews with the title sequence artists, so I owe a big thank you to him.

Many thanks to Assoc. Prof. Levent Soysal, Assoc. Prof. Melis Behlil, and Assoc. Prof. İrem İnceoğlu, who have reviewed the chapters and guided us with their insightful remarks.

Robert Lewis has always supported me in the proof-reading of my English texts, and having him in this book project made me feel relaxed as I knew I could rely on his guidance. I am grateful to him, as he has worked as the English editor with accuracy, great dedication and excellent reviewing.

The assistant editors, Yağmur Kara and Sercan Gündoğar realised the formatting of the chapters, and checked all the references, as well as preparing the various files that accompany the book. I would like to thank both of them, whose support during the preparation of the final report has continued to the present day, and they accompanied me right up to the end, in reaching the ‘other shore’.

Completing a project is a heavy responsibility, and in finalising this edition, we can never claim to have achieved a perfect and definitive version encompassing all the aspects of this subject. I apologise for any oversight on

my part, if I have forgotten anyone's contribution, however small. Nevertheless, this acknowledgement addresses – hopefully - all the scholars, colleagues and assistants who have put their efforts into both the project and the book. I thank them all wholeheartedly.

Deniz Bayrakdar

INTRODUCTION

DENİZ BAYRAKDAR

Scholars, cultural strategists and artists from Türkiye, Serbia and Romania have contributed to this collection, with their knowledge, experience and the findings of their research, in most cases in a comparative way, seeking an answer to various research questions - such as looking at narrative structures, production modes, finance, cartography, real and fictional spaces, tourism, global and local effects - targeting the confrontation of geopolitics with geocriticism in the sample TV series.

In his introduction to the work *The Geopolitics of TV Series, How Cultures of Fear, Humiliation, and Hope Are Reshaping the World*, Dominique Moïsi (2018) points to the replacement of national passions by ideologies between the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. He sees that quests for identity nowadays have replaced “ideology as the motor of history.” Consequently, emotions play a more significant role in a world where the media function as a “sounding board and a magnifying glass” (Moïsi 2018, 12). He explains his choice of three primary emotions in his work: “fear, hope, and humiliation”, since they are linked with the notion of confidence as the distinctive element in times of challenges for the whole of humanity, in individual nations, and in relations with each other¹. TV series reflect the fear, humiliation, and hopes of society, and especially triumph over fear (Moïsi, 2018). These emotions furthermore overlap with the expectations on the viewers’ side. Considering the time spent viewing television – over 4 hours daily on average in Türkiye – and being active in social media as well, the impact of these TV series and the feedback on them in Instagram and YouTube accounts is self-explanatory, and it is also obvious that the sector is aware that their sizeable financial clout and the support behind them prove that state policies see them as influential soft power instruments.

According to Moïsi (2018), geopolitics is about realism, and emotion is about its effect. Emotions in TV series, according to Martínez and González, “unveil our values as well as our position in the larger social structure

¹ Bayrakdar et al (2023). 220N370_TÜBİTAK Project Report.

(which) makes them an important source of self-knowledge and also knowledge about the world.”² “The emotional return” which is revealed through postmodernism, can be traced in the ways that TV series function by building “affective moments,” creating aesthetic values, structuring a relation between moral emotions, and identification with the characters³. Compared to cinema spectators, TV series audiences have the powerful influence to change the flow of the narratives, or even to cease production at all. This should be considered very carefully, as the TV series producers/creators have the power to direct attention through their attraction aimed at the emotions of the audience. The same is true for the audience, who can abruptly change the direction of this influence⁴.

The geopolitics in the series becomes visible when studying them through the geocritical approach of Bertrand Westphal, which opens up new ways of mapping the TV series. The complexity of the modern world, as a consequence, brings geopolitics to the foreground⁵ According to Tally Jr., space has gained importance in literary and cultural studies since the Second World War, and the ‘spatial turn’ was supported by postmodernism and the critique of poststructuralism (Westphal, 2011). Postcolonialism, globalisation and the rise of information technology changed the basis of space, turning out to be ‘timely’. The ‘geocentered’ approach to literature and cultural studies is the result of Bertrand Westphal’s research; his work on the Mediterranean applies a multifaceted approach, in using “classical myth, modern fiction, historical works, tourist brochures” (ibid). The understanding of a place is not only realised through one’s own experience, but also through reading about others’ experiences in books, or watching them in the film of a TV series. Westphal’s argument relies on the fact that all kinds of writings “partake in a form of cartography”, as a map really does not say everything about this space (ibid). The referentiality of fiction points out a place – real or imaginary – transforms this place and makes it part of a fictional world. Geocriticism reveals ‘real’ places “by understanding their fundamental fictionality or vice versa”. Westphal names it ‘oscillation’, the referentiality operating between fiction and the ‘real’ world in constant motion (ibid). Referential characteristics are used to create characters and space in the fictional narrative of TV series, and these commonly refer to other texts like other media productions and social relationships⁶. In accordance with Westphal’s statement, “we have always maintained that fiction has a

² Martinez and Gonzales 2016, 12 in Brenes 2016, 174.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Bayrakdar et al (2022-2023). 220N370_TV Series:

A Comparative Perspective_From Geopolitics to Geocriticism_Project Reports.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

mimetic relationship to the World “ (2011), cultural products such as novels, films, plays and TV series, reflect several phenomena arising in the real world, stories of everyday life, from love stories to social problems, and even large-scale tragic events such as wars and times of crisis, as discussed in the chapters of this volume; how the chosen series have embedded the reality of the past and present into fiction.

This collection makes use of referentiality based on geopolitics. Reading each chapter allows for a comparative look at the countries mentioned and their worlds in TV series, depicting real worlds enveloped within powerful fictions. The collection is organised into three parts, consisting of ten articles, two interviews and one essay, as follows:

Part I: The Turkish TV Series Sector: On Facts and Figures, Genres, Transnationalisation and Finance

The first chapter is written by Selçuk Yavuzkanat, Deputy General Director of the Directorate of Cinema, in the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. In his chapter, “An Overview of Turkish TV Series”, he points out the global economic size of the television industry, approaching an income of 94 billion dollars. The TV series constitute approximately 40% of total broadcasting. Turkish TV series are exported to more than 170 countries, reaching a massive 700 million viewers.

Yavuzkanat states that the popularity of the Turkish contents supports cultural promotion, tourism and language teaching. He introduces the history of Turkish TV broadcasting and TV series, the transformation influenced by new technologies, and he offers a historical summary from the first Turkish TV series onwards, arriving at the stage today where a variety of TV series is offered by traditional channels, and foreign and national digital TV platforms.

Selçuk Yavuzkanat lists the main characteristics of the Turkish series as “being stereotypical storylines, multiple stories intertwined and a tendency more towards universality than topicality”. He states that according to interviews with scriptwriters, Turkish TV series are mostly taken from true stories, and that audience response and taste, as well as the integration of cultural elements, build a crucial part in the development phase of the narratives. The choice of spaces, foregrounding touristic regions, such as cultural heritage sites, but also little villages used to reflect everyday life, representing family relations and societal encounters through high quality production values, are important characteristics of Turkish TV series. Selçuk Yavuzkanat adds that the Turkish TV series genres are enriched with new hybrid forms and styles, and direct their interest towards fantasy and

science fiction genres on digital platforms. Selçuk Yavuzkanat finds that the success of the Turkish series is beyond mere statistics, giving the example of the winning of Emmy Awards, which shows the qualitative achievements of the sector.

Ürün Yıldiran Önk, in her chapter entitled “A Comparative Analysis of Dizi Genres in Turkey: OTT Platforms vs Traditional TV” discusses changes in the media game, due to the increasing power of television, including the political, in line with the emergence of OTT platforms. She underlines the role of TV dramas in this change and sees the academic studies as parallel to these facts, while discussing the methods and approaches in studying TV series, which are mainly based on textual analysis or audience studies which have become popular, and recently producer centred studies which moreover tend to have ideological approaches “neglecting production context”. Her research relies on genre studies on two dizi broadcasting systems, OTT platforms and traditional TV. She underlines the fact that TV drama genres in general originate from film genres, referring to a wide range of literature on the genre, to make up the thin dividing line between the classification of the productions and the audience’s expectations, thus facilitating a basis for marketing and sustained feedback. Yıldiran Önk delineates the chronology of TV drama on Turkish television from traditional to digital. With the aim of analysing the genre preferences of Turkish OTT platforms and Turkish traditional TV channels, in comparison with their ratings, she classifies Turkish dizis, comparing the genre analysis results with the officially announced ratings for both platforms. The research based on 106 dizis shows significant differences between them, apart from the comedy and action/crime genres, but with matches concerning the popular genres. Yıldiran Önk indicates the new genre traits, and reboots and sequels, according to her findings. She comes to the conclusion that “genre preference is highly dependent on audience expectations” for both platforms. This chapter is the result of long research, and brings to the table valuable and insightful perspectives, in a comparative way.

Selin Tüzün Ateşalp, in her chapter “The Transnationalisation of Turkish TV Dramas: The Latin American Case” explores the reasons behind the transnational success of Turkish dramas, based on in-depth interviews with TV executives and distributors. She particularly focuses on the successes in the Latin American market. First, she briefly explains the development of the Turkish TV drama industry, due to transformations in broadcasting since the 1980s, as a result of those neo-liberal policies adopted in Turkey. She gives an overview of the economic and political factors that are influencing Turkish TV drama aesthetics. She particularly

focuses on the factors that increase the melodramatic tone of Turkish TV dramas and makes a link to the Yeşilçam heritage. Tüzün Ateşalp underlines that the universal stories of Turkish TV dramas, their emphasis on human emotions, and their high production values attract both domestic and transnational audiences. She refers to La Pastina and Straubhaar's multiple proximities between television genres and audiences (2005), and stresses the importance of genre, value and thematic proximity, to explain Turkish TV dramas' appeal for the Latin American audience. However, Tüzün Ateşalp argues that, in order to fully and accurately understand the reasons behind the successes in Latin America, market dynamics as well as audience preferences should be taken into consideration.

Deniz Bayrakdar and Belma Öztürkcal explore the reception of TV series by the viewer, focusing on financial terminology, using social media insights and focus group studies with students and scholars from various academic backgrounds in Türkiye and Serbia. Their chapter, part of the project "TV Series: A Comparative Perspective - From Geopolitics to Geocriticism, Serbia and Turkey" supported by TÜBİTAK-MoESTD, analyses the impact of "star and social media personas" on viewers, and the influence of "user-generated content" on ratings and narrative changes. Using the MAXQDA program, they coded participants' comments on selected TV series, presenting their findings through word clouds that highlight the awareness of terms like 'money', 'finance', and 'wealth'. The study identifies *Babil* and *Bir Zamanlar Çukurova* as TV series giving prominence to the highest number of finance-related keywords. The research suggests that TV series can enhance awareness and calls for further quantitative studies in the area of finance.

Part II: Serbian, Romanian and Turkish Series: "Where Geopolitics Meets Geocriticism"

Nevena Daković and Aleksandra Milovanović, in their chapter "Soft Power of The TV Series (Serbia and Turkey): Heritage Drama, Heterotopia and Double Occupancy," provide a theoretical mapping of the soft power effect of Serbian and Turkish TV series - *Senke nad Balkanom* and *Pera Palas'ta Gece Yarısı*. The premise that the TV series as a format has 'overpowered' all other media formats among various aspects of cultural influence (from the production boom and their overwhelming reception to the realm of soft power), further points to the significance and gravity of the "European television renaissance" (Barra and Scaglioni 2021, 1). As a part of this trend, Daković and Milovanović underline the worldwide success of Turkish TV series, and the high-quality wave of recent Serbian TV series.

Their discussion is based upon the notion of “double occupancy” (Burgoyne 2021) – standing for a global analytical approach – with a focus on heritage drama TV series that thematise the (hi)stories of two Balkan cityscapes (Belgrade / *Senke nad Balkanom* and Istanbul / *Pera Palas'ta Gece Yarısı*). They point out that the heritage drama is dedicated to the “invention of tradition” (Hobsbawm 2012, 2), playing an important role in building up national identity, and representing the past as popular history. Moreover, the popular genre of TV series “fills the lacuna left by official history,” working as an agent of soft power, and re-writing European history in the borderlands of Europeanised Balkan countries, which are culturally and geographically part of Europe, but not “always of its political space”.

Iva Leković contributed to the collection with the chapter “Balkan Cartographies: Geocritical Analysis of Serbian and Turkish TV Series”, with a comparative analysis of Serbian and Turkish TV series – *Black Sun* and *Bitter Lands*, *Persona* and *Besa* – adding a newer production *The Gift* on top of the chosen case studies of the project which is the basis of this book. Arguing that Serbian and Turkish TV series “stretch narratively and metaphorically throughout the Balkans and Anatolia”, the author makes a critical reading of the Balkans, on the basis of the series’ narratives and their visual design, exploring how the representation of spaces intersects with the representation of identity, further expanding on the relations between body and space, identity and spatial transgressions, in order to provide an outline of the cartography of the region. She states that Serbian and Turkish TV series show large quantitative differences in terms of production, which can be found reflected in their spatial representations, as Serbian TV series are scarcely spatially homogeneous, showing “multiethnicity, and multiculturality, transgressions and border crossings”, while Turkish TV series “often imply transgression within national borders”. Using Bhabha’s term of ‘third space’, that “carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (1994, 56) and thereof Soja’s adoption and expansion of Bhabha’s term, Iva Leković applies this concept in her chapter, to help us understand “the everlasting in-betweenness between the First and Second World” present in regional serial narratives. Referring to Bachelard (1994), she argues that the landscapes often mirror the inner worlds of the characters, which adds another layer to the analysis of textually constructed spaces. Considering the Serbian and Turkish TV series in the context of the Balkan cartographies, and in relation to the idea of a third space, Iva Leković accepts them as the offspring of a process of spatial performativity, the performance of identity, transgression of genre and national borders, dominant power discourses, and ambiguity towards its own Otherness.

Hilmi Bengi and Yağmur Kara, in “The Sublimity of Love and Tolerances Over Fear and Humiliation: A Geocritical Approach to the Turkish Family Melodrama *Bir Zamanlar Çukurova / Bitter Lands*”, present profound analysis of *Bir Zamanlar Çukurova/Bitter Lands*. The chapter covers the background of the region Çukurova, bringing its geographical, historical and economic characteristics to our attention, and applying the theories of popular geopolitical perspective and the referentiality of geocriticism. The “geo-centred” perspective embedded in this family melodrama is analysed from different viewpoints. Novels set in this region by authors such as Yaşar Kemal, the cultural heritage of the region, political and social issues such as gender and labour relations, and the transition from agriculture to industry in the 1970s are referred to, in order to provide a comprehensive background to the production. The authors, in referring to the theoretical approach of Dominique Moïsi, bring up the emotions of love and tolerance in the series, juxtaposing them with ‘fear and humiliation’, and analysing a family melodrama. Bengi and Kara contribute to the richness of the collection in terms of genre studies, embellished with theories of popular geopolitics, as they state, “*Bitter Lands* can be analysed beyond merely being a TV series.” Hence Bengi and Kara frame their analysis from different perspectives, such as coding the landlord and labourer relations, gender perspective, and audience comments, integrating them in one axis in the words “*Bitter Lands* not only reflects the production dynamics of a specific region as an agricultural and industrial area, but also incorporates references to its geostrategic position, considering its proximity to the Middle East.”

Özlem Avcı Aksoy, in her chapter “Historical Television Series as a Means of Cultural Representation. *Awakening: The Great Seljuk/Guardians of Justice*,” questions the discourse of the series through concepts such as “history, religion, identity, national unity and integrity and cultural expansionism” and does this with a geopolitical approach. She both focuses on the contents and its reception on the YouTube channel, taking the forms of expression and symbols used in the series, while applying a semiological and linguistic approach, and looking at the construction of the cultural and religious discourse in the narrative. In the first stage, the series is analysed as a field of representation and discourse, and then as the transformation of discourse to a tool of cultural diplomacy in the international arena. Avcı Aksoy discusses culture, history and geopolitics, to provide an introduction to how TV series share ‘meanings’ which are decoded on the part of the audience, and this underlines how cultural influence is parallel to the degree of cultural closeness and similarity. She finds that expansionist policies are more than the expansion of national borders, but should be understood as the “development of intellectual, vital and religious borders.” She thinks of

history as a situation not only about the past, but especially about the present and the future, referring to Nora (2006, 17). Avcı Aksoy applies the word 'difference' as a keyword to construct the meaning and the identities in the representations of cultural products. With a strong theoretical basis, she presents *Awakening: The Great Seljuk*, making a categorisation and then depicting the semiological and linguistic values of the narrative, and the audience's likes, comments and discussion of the series.

Her analysis shows the intertwined nature of history and geography, and their role in shaping identity and culture, by foregrounding the difference (Hall, 2017) between "us and other" and using this contrast in the narrative as a powerful tool of cultural diplomacy.

Marian Tutui, in his chapter "A Romanian Series (1978) About the Adventures on the Seas of Some Romanians, Turks and Greeks, Including Pirates and Exploration", directs our attention to a TV series produced for children and young people. *All Sails Up! / Toate pânzele sus!* (1977, Mircea Mureșan), is adapted for the screen from Radu Tudoran's (1910-1992) novel with the same title (1954). Hence, Marian Tutui gives an introduction to the series for children and youth in Romania, foregrounding the interplay between the novel and the series with a geocritical approach.

He introduces a short history of Romanian TV series, referring to the times before and after the fall of communism in Romania (December 1989), and he argues that the early success of the series produced for children and young people established a standard and a tradition, being still the best series of all time. He takes account of the critique made on the series as being produced in the spirit of nationalism promoted by the country's leader Nicolae Ceaușescu, as it awakened ideas that the country had a maritime tradition and fearless explorers, Tutui adds, that it had some figures like Radu Tudoran himself and Julius Popper who made the expedition to Tierra del Fuego. He adds to this the information that Balkan countries like Yugoslavia and Bulgaria produced films and series bringing important figures in their history to the fore, like Nikola Tesla. He further mentions Baha Gelenbevi's film on Hayreddin Barbarossa, and Greek films in the same sphere. Marian Tutui finds that Radu Tudoran's work in an age of 'social realism,' brings an exception to the ethos of the realist trend. Tutui parallels the novel and TV series' timing with Romania's gaining of independence and their obtaining of ports on the Danube and the Black Sea. This chapter sheds light on an earlier time and a different category of films/series, which he still considers as being the best.

Deniz Bayrakdar, in her chapter, asks the question “Is ‘the Caucasian Chalk Circle’ Reversed in Turkish and Serbian TV Series?⁷”, which was revealed to her as the core of the code co-occurrence analysis of the bilateral project between Türkiye and Serbia. *Bir Zamanlar Çukurova / Bitter Lands*, *Babil / The Choice*, *Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu / The Great Seljuks: Guardians of Justice* and the Serbian series *Besa* show that the quest for fatherhood dominates the core plot of several family and social melodramas, as well as in historical genres.

This chapter relies on discussion of the referentiality/intertextuality referred to by Westphal (2011), and derives its hypothesis from a significant work of literature *Der Kaukasische Kreidekreis* by Bertolt Brecht (1944), developing a circular model in the form of a matrix on the transformation of a Chinese verse play into a poem by Dichter Henschke, which was the basis of the theatre play by Bertolt Brecht. Bayrakdar argues that this quest for maternity, “who is the real mother of the child?” has been reversed into the question “who is the real father of the child?”, leading us to the metanarrative in these series: “who is the real owner of the territory?”

Part III: Voices from the Turkish TV Series Sector: Experiences and Imaginations

Robert Lewis’ contribution reads like a diary of his encounters in Turkish film and TV series, in search of “Hollywood/Bollywood magic”. His essay shows that he is a flâneur, following the highlights of the Istanbul International Film Festival, working in Cihangir, Sarıyer and many other districts of Istanbul, realising a mapping of the city, presenting its cartography through several little anecdotes. Robert Lewis speaks of the phenomenon of attempting “to be within touching distance of the famous” or “to achieve fame for just a moment”. This probably could be read as cultural capital according to Bourdieu, without making any specific theoretical references - which I am sure he is inclined to do. He feels that Turkey is his home and writes tellingly about the corners where film casts and crew “invade the whole city”, not only the Cihangir represented by the cats in the photograph. The 24 hours of an ‘extra’ is full of surprises, such as meeting Ali and dining with him. Ali has become well-known as the star of TRT’s current dizi Project - before he hits Robert Lewis on the head with a chess-board! He travels to Sarıyer on the same day as he was earlier seen

⁷ The first draft of this chapter was presented in the workshop series as a part of the project’s activities in 2022.

teaching a doctor in the centre of the city, and the next stop on his peripatetic journey is Balat, at the other end of Istanbul, Kadir Has University and this is followed by other ‘extra’ work. There is a lot more to read in his essay, and one can only imagine how Robert Lewis has experienced the city while travelling around on the coat-tails of the famous; thanks to the map he inserted in his chapter, we know a little bit of the geography of his travels, and reading between the lines, we can see how much of a valuable contribution he has made to the sector, running from one set to the other, and then returning to his ‘day’ job as a teacher.

The last two chapters are interviews realised with the title sequence artists of *Şahsiyet / Persona* (2018). The artists, Ethem Cem and Enes Özenbaş, share with us their educational backgrounds, the core of their artistic creations, the process of designing title sequences, and their past and future projects, with a profound focus on how they worked on *Şahsiyet*. Both interviews enlighten us about the existence of a new generation, whose abilities go beyond national borders, how the ‘new line’ of work of the cultural industries function through networking overseas, and how the inspiration of bright and insightful minds and creative hands is in demand in the US and Europe.

The chapters in this volume contribute profound discussions and analyses on TV series in Türkiye, Serbia and Romania, focusing on geopolitics and geocriticism at the macro level; they also further the reflections on soft power, coded throughout the series, pointing to the transformations of genres and ‘cycles’, intertextuality and referentiality, spaces and places, identity and memory building, and finance and foreign markets at the meso level, referring to quantitative and qualitative research findings, plus essays and interviews. The collection is a unique approach, based on a comparative project on Türkiye and Serbia, enhanced with invited chapters on Türkiye and Romania, along with essays offering a fresh discussion on the series in these countries and their influence locally and globally, offering statements and arguments which could be further developed by graduate students and scholars with new approaches, by producers and creators in the series sector, taking the ideas and thoughts into consideration for new projects, and by strategists who work in the area of cultural diplomacy and engagement diplomacy, in coding soft power through TV series, especially in times of crisis, but also for the purpose of a sustainable approach to foreign countries beyond the borders.

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