

Part II: Narratives as Power: How Turkey's Hybrid Statecraft Targets India

Date: 28-01-2026

CNSS Team (Middle East)

Executive Summary

The [first part](#) of this dossier titled "[From Campuses to Conferences: How Turkey Exports the Pakistan-Aligned Narrative on India](#)" prepared by the CNSS team in December 2025 mapped how Turkey exports Pakistan-aligned narratives on India through diaspora organisations, academic forums, civil society platforms, and state-adjacent institutions.

This second part deepens the analysis by examining the structural and theoretical foundations that sustain this ecosystem over time. It focuses on how academic legitimacy is manufactured, how informal power structures within the Turkish state, including elements often described as the 'deep state', provide continuity and deniability, and how these tools function within a broader framework of hybrid warfare, public diplomacy, and proxy influence. The concluding sections assess the strategic implications for India and outline policy-relevant responses.

Key arguments advanced in this section include:

- Academic and civil society platforms act as narrative multipliers that launder Pakistan-aligned positions into global intellectual, media, and policy spaces.
- Turkey's ideological projection is sustained not only by overt diplomacy but also by informal state-linked networks that give durability and institutional depth to its alignment with Pakistan.
- Ankara's approach reflects a hybrid warfare model in which soft power, public diplomacy, and proxy actors reinforce hard geopolitical objectives.
- India's response must extend beyond defensive counter-narratives to include calibrated external partnerships particularly with countries in Turkey's neighbourhood such as Greece, Cyprus, Armenia, and Israel to build parallel soft-power and intellectual ecosystems.
- India's response must therefore be institutional, long-term, and narrative-driven rather than episodic or reactive.

Building on the mapping of actors and platforms outlined in Part One, this section shifts focus from 'who' disseminates Turkey's Pakistan-aligned narratives to 'how' these narratives acquire legitimacy and policy influence. The emphasis here is on the deeper mechanics of narrative production: academic validation, informal state support, and hybrid influence strategies, that allow Ankara's ideological positions on India to circulate globally with minimal resistance.

Academic Platforms as Narrative Multipliers

In contemporary geopolitics, power is exercised not only through military deployments or diplomatic negotiations but through the ability to shape how conflicts are framed, interpreted, and morally judged. States increasingly compete over narratives: over who is seen as the victim, who claims ethical authority, and which interpretations gain acceptance in global policy and intellectual circles. Universities, think-tanks, civil society forums, and transnational academic networks have therefore emerged as critical arenas of strategic contestation, where political objectives are advanced less through overt advocacy than through the language of scholarship, human rights, and moral solidarity.

Turkey's evolving foreign policy under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan exemplifies this shift toward narrative-centric statecraft. Alongside conventional diplomacy and defence cooperation, Ankara has invested heavily in projecting ideological narratives abroad, particularly on issues it frames as moral causes within the Muslim world. Kashmir has increasingly featured within this landscape: not as a bilateral dispute involving India and Pakistan, but as a symbolic issue through which Turkey signals pan-Islamic leadership and strategic alignment with Islamabad.

The preceding analysis by the CNSS team demonstrated that this positioning is not confined to official diplomatic statements or episodic political rhetoric. Instead, Turkey's Pakistan-aligned narrative on India is sustained through a layered ecosystem involving diaspora organisations, academic institutions, think-tanks, and civil society platforms operating across national boundaries. It is within this ecosystem that academic platforms and events acquire strategic significance, functioning not as neutral venues of exchange but as narrative multipliers that lend intellectual legitimacy and global visibility to contested political claims.

Such platforms demonstrate how **soft power** is exercised through academia and civil society institutions in Turkey and Pakistan to construct a strategic information environment in which anti-India narratives gain traction. Conferences, seminars, and scholarly forums structured around themes of social justice, human rights, and Muslim solidarity do not introduce Kashmiri voices as constituents of the Indian Union but as representatives of an imagined independent political entity. These subtle yet consequential distinctions weaken Delhi's credibility in international discourse and align closely with Pakistan's and Turkey's ideological positioning on the Kashmir issue.

Academic discourse, in this sense, does not merely reflect geopolitical alignments; it actively participates in their reproduction and dissemination, shaping how conflicts are understood far beyond the region in question.

This pattern is not confined to South Asia. From Greece's vantage point, Turkey's mobilisation of narratives, academic platforms, and civil society networks functions as a parallel layer of strategic activity that reinforces its more visible geopolitical behaviour in the Eastern Mediterranean. As Dr Dionyios Tsirigotis, Assistant Professor at the University of Piraeus in Greece, notes, Turkey's

cultivation of scholarly networks, think-tank partnerships, and civil-society intermediaries allows it to normalise strategic claims and embed preferred discursive frameworks within transnational epistemic communities, thereby amplifying the reach of its material power.

This narrative projection, however, is not uncontested within Turkey's own intellectual community. As [Jerusalem-based Turkish scholar Turku Avcı](#) has noted, President Erdogan's approach to Kashmir reflects ideological signalling rather than principled foreign policy, grounded in a selective and inconsistently applied interpretation of international justice shaped largely by domestic political narratives. Such critiques underscore that Turkey's alignment with Pakistan on Kashmir is a conscious political choice rather than collective national consensus.

Yet the presence of intellectual dissent does not significantly constrain Turkey's external narrative behaviour. The persistence of Ankara's Pakistan-aligned messaging, despite internal critique, points to deeper structural drivers that extend beyond public debate or scholarly disagreement. Narrative projection on issues such as Kashmir is sustained not merely by political leadership or ideological alignment, but by entrenched institutional mechanisms that ensure continuity, discipline, and strategic coherence across state and quasi-state actors.

Deep State Dimension

This coordinated projection is underpinned not only by overt institutions but also by less visible and more entrenched structures within the Turkish state, often described under the rubric of the "[deep state](#)" (*derin devlet*). Historically understood as a clandestine network of military officers, intelligence operatives, security agencies, elements of the judiciary, and organised crime, the Turkish deep state has long operated in parallel with formal democratic institutions.

While the influence of the classical military-bureaucratic deep state has receded, a reconfigured version persists. This [new deep state](#) functions through informal networks of nationalist, security, and intelligence actors who exert behind-the-scenes influence over foreign policy orientation and ideological projection. These informal power centres provide continuity and institutional weight to Turkey's alignment with Pakistan and facilitate the use of third-party proxies such as academic institutions, think-tanks, and diaspora organisations. In this sense, narrative warfare becomes embedded within the state's strategic culture rather than being confined to temporary political leadership.

Hybrid Warfare Model and implications for India:

From a theoretical perspective, Turkey's campaign against India can be understood through the frameworks of public diplomacy and proxy influence. Rather than relying exclusively on conventional state-to-state confrontation, Ankara employs a [hybrid model](#) in which non-state actors, soft power instruments, and narrative tools complement its diplomatic and defence policies. By mobilising diasporas, think-tanks, universities, and international conferences, Turkey practices

public diplomacy aimed at cultivating moral authority and legitimacy by positioning itself as a champion of the Muslim world and of ‘oppressed causes.’

As elaborated in [Part I](#) of this article-series, these platforms do not operate in isolation but frequently mirror, amplify, and legitimise Pakistan’s long-standing narrative positions on Kashmir and India’s internal security challenges. Academic forums, civil society initiatives, and diaspora statements originating in Turkey often reproduce framing conventions long employed by Pakistani diplomatic and informational campaigns, indicating a convergence rather than coincidence.

At the same time, this is not merely soft power projection. It represents an ideological patronage system in which Turkey supports and sustains networks aligned with its geopolitical vision, particularly in coordination with Pakistan. Such structural support reflects a conscious strategy of long-term influence-building rather than ad hoc expressions of solidarity.

For India, the implications are manifold. This narrative campaign risks eroding India’s reputation in multilateral forums, particularly in the Muslim world and among European civil society networks. By internationalising allegations of oppression, demographic manipulation, and human-rights violations, Turkey creates conditions in which third-party actors can influence policy debates and institutional positions at bodies such as the UN or the OIC. This dynamic not only complicates India’s diplomatic environment but also lends legitimacy to Pakistan’s framing of Kashmir.

Domestically, the external amplification of insurgent narratives, whether related to Maoism (as highlighted in part 1) or [Kashmir-based separatism](#), can bolster the ideological standing of such movements and potentially provide them with moral and rhetorical reinforcement from abroad.

Strategic Responses for India

In response, India must adopt a multi-layered strategic approach. Diplomatically, it should raise anti-India diaspora narratives in engagements with Turkey, European governments, and EU institutions, ensuring that these concerns are formally registered as part of a broader contestation of narrative warfare. Intelligence and security agencies should systematically map Turkish-linked networks: universities, NGOs, think-tanks, and diaspora organisations, tracking funding sources, partnerships, and messaging trajectories.

Strategically, India’s external communication architecture must be strengthened through a proactive and credible counter-narrative. This includes high-quality public diplomacy initiatives emphasising India’s democratic credentials, secular foundations, and legitimate security imperatives. White papers, expert-led seminars in friendly European countries especially Greece, Cyprus, Armenia etc, op-eds in international media, and sustained engagement with global think-tanks should form part of this effort.

Further, India should deepen academic diplomacy by building collaborative research programmes with Turkish and European universities to address intellectual imbalances and promote rigorous scholarship on Kashmir and internal security. Parallel academic and policy platforms can also highlight Turkey's own [democratic backsliding](#) and selective human-rights advocacy, including systemic repression of minorities such as the Kurds.

On the multilateral front, India should leverage forums such as the UN, OIC, and Islamic civil society networks to build coalitions resistant to ideologically driven narrative warfare. In the long term, institutionalising strategic narrative capacity: through a dedicated Strategic Narrative Unit within the National Security Council Secretariat or Ministry of External Affairs, would allow India to monitor propaganda, analyse narrative threats, and coordinate sustained counter-messaging.

Beyond counter-narrative and institutional measures, India should also explore calibrated external partnerships that subtly offset Turkey's ideological and soft-power projection. New Delhi already maintains productive political and security relationships with countries in Turkey's immediate neighbourhood such as [Armenia](#), Greece, and Cyprus each of which has experienced strategic friction with Ankara. Structured engagement with these states, particularly in the domains of academia, culture, civil society dialogue, and strategic communication, would allow India to build parallel soft-power ecosystems without framing them as adversarial blocs.

The case for such engagement is reinforced by regional assessments from Greece itself. According to Dr Tsirigotis Dionysios, the scope for deeper Indian engagement with Greece and Cyprus in non-military domains remains "substantial and strategically underutilised." He highlights academic exchange, joint research initiatives, and collaborative think-tank platforms as effective vehicles for building shared analytical frameworks on hybrid influence and regional connectivity. Crucially, he argues that such cooperation enables India, Greece, and Cyprus to construct a shared narrative space without militarising their partnerships, remaining consistent with India's preference for non-aligned yet networked diplomacy.

In this context, India may also consider selective participation in existing minilateral frameworks, such as the [Greece-Cyprus-Israel trilateral format](#), through a flexible "3+1" engagement model focused on academic exchanges, policy dialogues, technology cooperation, and cultural diplomacy. Such involvement would signal India's willingness to shape narrative and intellectual spaces in regions where Turkey has sought disproportionate influence, while remaining consistent with India's preference for issue-based, non-alliance partnerships rather than formal strategic blocs.

Conclusion

Turkey's narrative campaign against India should be understood not as episodic rhetoric or issue-specific advocacy, but as a sustained form of strategic influence embedded within Ankara's contemporary foreign policy toolkit. By combining academic legitimisation, civil society

mobilisation, diaspora outreach, and informal institutional support, Turkey has developed a model of narrative projection that allows it to internationalise contested claims while retaining diplomatic deniability. This approach reflects a broader evolution in statecraft, where influence is exercised less through direct confrontation and more through the shaping of moral authority, intellectual consensus, and policy discourse.

Crucially, this strategy is structurally reinforced. Informal power networks within the Turkish state provide continuity beyond leadership cycles, while ideological alignment with Pakistan supplies ready-made narratives that can be amplified across transnational platforms. The result is not merely reputational pressure on India, but a gradual conditioning of global debates particularly in academic, journalistic, and multilateral spaces, where adversarial framings risk becoming normalised over time.

For India, the implications are therefore strategic rather than cosmetic. Narrative erosion, if left unaddressed, can translate into diplomatic friction, constrained policy space, and the legitimisation of external interference in India's internal security discourse. Responding to this challenge requires more than reactive rebuttals. It demands an institutionalised narrative strategy that integrates diplomacy, intelligence assessment, academic engagement, and strategic communication into a coherent national capability.

Turkey's case illustrates a wider reality of contemporary geopolitics: the boundary between soft power and strategic coercion has blurred, and narratives have become a persistent domain of competition. Safeguarding India's strategic autonomy in this environment will depend on its ability not only to contest hostile narratives, but to shape intellectual and moral frameworks proactively through sustained partnerships, credible scholarship, and long-term strategic clarity.

***Includes views shared by Dr Dionysios Tsirigotis, Assistant Professor at the Dptt of IR and European Studies, University of Piraeus in Greece.**