



Protector, Partner, Powerbroker: Turkey's Smart Power in the Arab Region Post-2011

HDR ORAL PRESENTATION

Khalid Al Bostanji

This thesis investigates how Turkey (now Türkiye) constructed and deployed 'smart power' across the Arab world in the ten years that followed the Arab Uprisings, examining the fusion of religious soft power, strategic communication, economic engagement, and military capability within its regional foreign policy. Centring the concept of the smart power as both a political instrument and a tool of influence, the research traces how Ankara positioned itself as a protector, partner, and powerbroker in moments of regional crisis. Through case studies including Palestine, Libya, Syria, Iraq, and Arab Gulf states, the thesis analyses how Turkish leaders, particularly President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, mobilised narratives of shared faith, historical responsibility, and humanitarian concern to legitimise policy choices and cultivate regional legitimacy.

Drawing on discourse analysis of speeches, press releases, media interventions, and diplomatic messaging, the project highlights the ways Turkey leveraged its image as a defender of Muslim communities to advance geopolitical interests. The findings contribute to broader debates on soft power, identity politics, and the foreign policies of emerging middle powers. By examining how narratives of the smart power are reconstructed and projected through statecraft, this research provides new insight into the symbolic, material, and political dimensions of Turkish influence in the contemporary Arab Region.

Details

Thursday, 04 December
2025 at 10.30-11.30 am
in CAIS Lecture Theatre

Online via Zoom

Meeting ID: 859 4112 0739

Passcode: 953368

Contact

T — 02 6125 1061

E — hdr.cais@anu.edu.au



**Australian
National
University**