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**Neo-Ottomanist Hegemonic Order and its  
Implications on Ankara's Foreign Policy in the  
Balkans**

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Balkans**

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Last but not least, I would like to thank my family: my parents for supporting me wholeheartedly throughout writing this thesis and keep asking me when the work would be finished.

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## List of Abbreviations

AFAD	Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığı)
AKP	Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)
BSEC	Black Sea Economic Cooperation
CHP	Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi)
CSCE	Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe
DEİK	Foreign Economic Relations Board (Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu)
DHKP-C	Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front Devrimci (Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi)
DIYANET	Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı)
DTP	Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi)
EU	European Union
GDF	General Directorate of Foundations (Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü)
HDP	People's Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi)
HSYK	Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (Hâkimler ve Savcılar Kurulu)
İHH	Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief İnsan (Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsanı Yardım Vakfı)
IR	International Relations
ISPAT	Investment Support and Promotion Agency of Turkey (Yatırım Destek ve Tanıtım Ajansı)
KDK	Coordinatorship of Public Diplomacy (Kamu Diplomasisi Koordinatörlüğü)
KDTP	Turkish Democratic Party of Kosovo (Kosova Demokratik Türk Partisi)
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi)
MRF	Movement for Rights and Freedom (Hak ve Özgürlükler Hareketi)
MÜSİAD	Independent Industrialists and Businessmen Association (Müstakil Sanayici ve İş Adamları Derneği)
OHAL	State of Emergency (Olağanüstü hal)



OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OYAK	Armed Forces Mutual Assistance Fund (Ordu Yardımlaşma Kurumu)
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan)
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RS	Serb Republic (Republika Srbska)
SDA	Party of Democratic Action (Stranka Demokratske Akcije)
SEE	South-eastern Europe
SEECF	South East European Countries Cooperation Process
TBMM	Grand National Assembly of Turkey (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi)
TDBB	Union of Turkish World Municipalities (Türk Dünyası Belediyeler Birliği)
TDV	Turkey Diyanet Foundation (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı)
TFP	Turkish Foreign Policy
TİKA	Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (Türk İşbirliği ve Kalkınma İdaresi Başkanlığı)
TİM	Turkish Exporters' Assembly (Türkiye İhracatçılar Meclisi)
TMV	Turkey Maarif Vakfı (Türkiye Maarif Vakfı)
TOBB	Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği)
TOKİ	Public Housing Development Administration (Toplu Konut İdaresi Başkanlığı)
TSK	Turkish Armed Forces (Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri)
TÜSIAD	Turkish Industry and Business Association (Türk Sanayicileri ve İşadamları Derneği)
TUSKON	Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists in Turkey (Türkiye İşadamları ve Sanayiciler Konfederasyonu)
UETD	Union of European Turkish Democrats
YAŞ	Supreme Military Council (Yüksek Askeri Şura)
YDK	Investment Advisory Council (Yatırım Danışma Konseyleri)
YÖK	High Education Board (Yüksek Öğretim Kurumu)
YTB	Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (Yurt Dışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı)

## Introduction

Probably the first questions that arise when one starts to depict Turkish foreign policy (TFP) towards the Balkans are '*what does Turkey really do in the region and what does it really want to achieve?*' which practically means that research may focus on the *tools* and the *object* of Ankara's external ambitions. Nevertheless, for the author, to reveal the *cause* seemed to be more relevant because it may provide a deeper understanding of Turkish foreign policy's nature, motives and makes its prediction easier.

Re-emergence as a powerful regional actor was a sign of a turn in TFP under the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) rule. The AKP being in the power since 2002 has produced probably one of the most debated and discussed contemporary foreign policies during the last more than a decade. This debate, or these debates – presented in a given chapter – preliminary rather focused on Ankara's EU accession, later its stance towards its Western partners and its search for new allies. It is safe to say that the majority of scholars have chosen the Middle East as a case study to test and analyse Turkey's foreign relations and their changing dynamics. The Arab Spring, and its tremendous effects in 2011 put Turkey, again in the centre of analysis and promoted it, again, to become a model for democratizing Arab countries. The 'Turkish model,' later Ankara's growing difficulties in the Middle Eastern neighbours, especially the Syrian war has kept Turkey an important focal point of IR and FPA literature. However, Turkey's growing leverage on its neighbours during the last 10-15 years also affected its relations with south-eastern European countries.

News, articles, policy papers focusing on Turkey's activism in the Balkans began to be frequently published / issued after the recently-nominated, new Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu's visit in Sarajevo in fall 2009. At a conference organized in the Bosnian capital, he elaborated his ideas about Turkey's historical mission in the Balkans and the need to reinstate good intraregional relations. His speech brought back Turkey to the spotlight (at least in the Balkans' context) and gave an impetus to political analysts, researchers and journalists to work on Turkish foreign policy in South-Eastern Europe. Ankara's successes in the region – as a facilitator of the rapprochement between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, trade agreements, almost immediate

recognition and support of Kosovo, spectacular expansion of Turkish organizations etc. – provided enough ground for speculations and researches about the features of Ankara's ambitions in the region. The public interest increased even in Hungary, as the issue was presented in various articles and lectures.<sup>1</sup>

Lectures at international and domestic conferences or at simple university courses where the author had opportunity to present his ideas about Turkish foreign policy towards the region, questions have aroused usually focusing on Ankara's political interests and its aims at achieving *something*, in the Balkans. This *something* was generally associated with *hegemony*. This narrative to explain Turkey's activism in South-Eastern Europe, especially after 2009 when Ankara's commitment for a much more tangible international presence has become obvious, has shaped the author's focus point to begin to deal with Turkey's leverage in the region. Without paying too much attention about the emerging discourse about Turkey's (possible) rupture with its (former) Western allies and Western orientation the author wanted to go beyond 'traditional' IR and FPA approaches and narratives concerning Turkey and understand the very nature of Turkish foreign policy in the Balkans.

'Go beyond' during the PhD studies resulted in frequent research trips to the region. Between 2011 and 2018, the Author has spent several months in the region; nearly two months in various Balkans countries, making researches and doing interviews with scholars, politicians and journalists about the topic. These journeys were taking place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia (FYROM) and in Bulgaria. Probably the most influential field experiences were acquired during his staying in Turkey, especially in Ankara, at the Middle East Technical University where he had the opportunity to get familiar with the Turkish (and even English) academic literature about the issue. His point of view was also shaped by trips within Turkey. By visiting various towns and cities in the country from south-eastern Anatolia's Syrian border to Edirne, as well as the most Westernized cities, such as Izmir or conservative strongholds, like Konya put the picture in a different aspect. Interviews with experts and politicians alongside what he has seen in the Balkans and in Turkey convinced him to use a different approach to explain Turkish foreign policy.

These characteristics of the period have produced a rather *Area Studies* than *International Relations* epistemology. This has changed the *problématique's* starting

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<sup>1</sup> It is enough to think Erhan Türbedar's presentation about Turkish foreign policy in the region, in 2012 at the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs.

point. Without going into details about the difference of the two disciplines – it is enough to mention that the end of Cold War rather favoured the IR theories and approaches as they were able to provide a globally used explanatory framework based on rational choice theory that contributed to the decline in AS's popularity –, the main result was that the author has become more susceptible for the region and especially for its internal dynamics. Based on these experiences and knowledge, he got convinced by the end of his research about three findings.

1) Describing the TFP and the in the region as Ankara's endeavour to create hegemony or – in a more realistic approach – dominance *over* various Balkans countries leads to a cul-de-sac. Portraying Turkey's growing diplomatic activities as simple power projection of an emerging, ambitious middle power does not give adequate explanations to understand what is behind of this phenomenon. Albeit the literature about regional hegemony is growing and it could provide some useful explanations and valuable findings, as an analytical approach it remains too questionable and consequently too discussible. First of all, there is no consensus about the precise conditions for the notion of 'being dominant over a region.' Economic leverage does not lead to direct political leverage automatically and it is also arbitrary to set a level of (inter)dependence based on a given percentage of trade or investment. Concerning the political leverage, it is even more complex issue, and it is even more difficult to provide tangible conditions or given numbers about the measurability of hegemony or dominance. Furthermore, many scholars also express their doubts about Turkey's hegemony in the Balkans. For instance, Buzan sees that although Turkey plays an important role in the region, according to him Ankara cannot compete with the EU or US in shaping the region's future and it will remain an insulator state despite its leadership's willingness to break out from this status (Buzan – Wæver, 2003, 394-395).

2) The above-mentioned first-hand experiences were convincing to pay more attention on domestic political changes and dynamics in Turkey itself. The Justice and Development Party took the power in November 2002 by a surprising electoral victory that granted the party a two-third majority in the parliament and prevented the previous government's coalition parties to pass the

10 percent threshold. This victory was surprising (or historical) for another reason as well: the party has managed to form a single-party government which put an end to an eleven-year-long period of almost permanent government coalition crisis. The upcoming years brought nearly constant electoral success for the AKP that has started to create its own regime. This topic will be elaborated later in details; here it is enough to note that the party's position, its clienteles has become more and more apparent. The AKP-era – which is still far from its end – has been featured by steady economic growth and prosperity – except in 2009 when huge downturn of GDP affected the country – providing adequate support from the society. Alongside with the political stability produced by the single-party government, this ensured the AKP enough opportunity to face its internal adversaries, especially the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK), the establishment, left-wing social groups and the Gülen movement, a former ally. By handling these opponents, the party has created its own leverage over the society – let's say its own political *hegemony* in Turkey. A hegemony that influences almost every part of the daily life.

3) Current Turkish society is a product of its own cultural and historical past. As it is highly propagated in Turkey, the country has multiple identities in line with its rich cultural heritage. This narrative appears related to the Balkans as well; when one visits especially Muslim inhabited regions of the peninsula the similarities with Turkey could be easily identified. According even to Turks, they feel themselves 'at home' in the Balkans. This 'feeling' is embedded into the Turkish society by various waves of immigration and influx of hundreds of thousands people – Turks, Pomaks, Bosniaks, Albanians – that have taken place during the last more than one and half century. Descendants in many cases preserve the history of their family, ancestry sometimes in more palpable way or sometimes at least with a positive stance on the region. This feature, – affecting the society in Turkey – was a particular argument for not to neglect the historical background of the current situation and also pay attention to societal actors during the research.

It has become obvious that although the relations between Turkey and the Balkans<sup>2</sup> provide an excellent ground for a thesis presenting and discussing the history of Turkish foreign policy with a historian's tools and point of view, it, however, could not be enough to explain the current relations adequately. History and the developments of bi- and multilateral relations, the notion of Balkans and Ottoman heritage occupy an important part of this dissertation. Nevertheless, simply revealing the various conflicts of the last century, immigration waves, wars and Turkey's current activities in a linear manner would have narrowed the scope of the thesis and hide important social and political changes in the country's recent history. Nonetheless, the author admits that more extended researches and prospective publications about the history of relations between the Balkans and Turkey would strengthen the Hungarian *Balkanologie*.

These findings also pointed out the importance of two notions: *power* and *dynamism*. The preliminary assumption of the research – Turkey's hegemony or dominance over various countries directly put *power* into the heart of this research project. Nevertheless, further fieldworks convinced the Author, that scope from predominantly inter-state relations should be switched to domestic level. Power that runs and shapes politics within a country shapes its foreign policy as well. In a country like Turkey, where power struggle was so apparent during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (relatively frequent coup d'états, regimes changes) and successive hegemonic and counter-hegemonic project dominated the political landscape from the Young Turks to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's AKP. That is why the Author decided to highlight the changes of Turkish domestic political structure which influences the country's foreign activism. This focal point – the nature of power in the domestic Turkish context – made it indispensable to turn towards a theory that has adequate explanatory force to understand

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<sup>2</sup> The Author has to address the problem of definition of the 'Balkans.' A number of approaches exist that defines the region geographically, politically and consequently gives different country groupings for it. According to some perceptions, even Turkey shall be considered as a Balkan country which also underlines the country's relevance for the region (some five percent of Turkey, including the half of Istanbul and its metropolitan area is also located in the geographical Balkan area). Without presenting the literature about the possible definition of the region the Author defines the Balkans as a political-geographical area consisting of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania, Bulgaria and Romania. The Author does not consider Greece to be part of this analytical country grouping. Its reason is twofold. Firstly, it is linked to the fact that during the Cold War, Greece's history and development started to diverge from Socialist Balkan states (that now, after a long period of transition, intend to catch up to Athens). Secondly, Greek-Turkish relations are more intensive due to the permanent problems such as the dispute about the exact delimitation of the Aegean Sea border and more importantly, because of the Cyprus issue. The involvement of this issue would extend the limits of present thesis. Slovenia is not considered as a Balkan country, either. Due to its different history – it was a core part of Austria for centuries – and the lack of Ottoman conquest, it shall be put to other country group such as Central Europe.

the dynamics of internal factors and features of Turkish foreign policy. The dynamics also suggested orienting towards a theoretical framework that can explain the causes of changes in Turkish foreign policy.

Robert W. Cox states ‘Theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose’ (Cox, 1981, 128). These considerations set the focus on Gramscianism and Neo-Gramscianism that has been proven to be useful and fruitful theoretical approaches for this thesis. After the emergence of AKP as a governmental party in 2002, the scholars did not predict a long future based on the party Islamic roots and the fate of its predecessors – banned regularly by the Constitutional Court. Although the AKP got a remarkably strong presence at the parliament only with one opposition party (Republican People’s Party, CHP), the secular elite and especially the Army were observing with deep suspicions the party’s rhetoric, domestic and foreign policy endeavours. The experience about the closure of former Islamist parties oriented the AKP leadership to use a more Pro-European rhetoric and follow an EU-conform policy-making. Accompanied with a remarkable economic growth, this policy ensured electoral victory for the following elections.

After tackling the threat imposed by the Kemalist establishment – namely the memorandum in April 2007 and the so-called ‘constitutional coup’ attempt by the Chief Prosecutor and Constitutional Court in 2008 – the AKP continued to increase its influence. This process was – at least indirectly – helped by various investigations and probes, like the Ergenekon and Balyoz. These contributed to weaken the opposition forces, as (retired) generals, university rectors, Leftist politicians, intellectuals and journalists were detained and later condemned for prison. These affaires have decreased the criticism against the government. Moreover, they also influenced the relations between the AKP and the Army by easing the transformation of the latter’s leadership. The next wave of internal fights started at the end of 2013: probes were launched by the judiciary, however this time they aimed at pro-government circles and led to government crisis. This attempt refrained as a coup attempt by the “parallel state” (*paralel devlet*) – the Gülen movement (later referred as FETÖ, a terrorist organisation) – was handled by the mass dismissal and an open war against the movement. This internal struggle culminated in the 15 July coup attempt which failed and paved the way towards even harsher retaliation and almost the annihilation of the movement.

The 2010 constitutional referendum also paved the way towards the growth of AKP’s power as it made more difficult to ban political parties and changed the

Constitutional Court's stature. The general elections in June 2011 granted the highest share of votes in the party's history: near 50 percent. Although the third Erdoğan government's term second half resulted in unprecedented social unrest and corruption scandals, AKP manage to overcame these challenges and even win the local elections in March 2014. This era has been finished by Erdoğan victory at the presidential elections in August 2014. He could save its position after the 2015 June elections when the AKP could not seize the simple majority. The snap elections in November secured the party a comfortable majority in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) but the Turkish 'War on Terror' launched in July 2015 led to the gradual destabilization of the country, growing insecurity, perpetual attacks by PKK/TAK and ISIS. Although the coup attempt in 2016 did not achieve its goal the increasing authoritarian tendencies, spreading violence and the gradual crackdown of Kurdish political movement with the constitutional change open a new chapter of the modern history of Turkey.

These domestic changes affected the country's foreign policy in a great manner. One of the main theoretical questions of the thesis is that how domestic political (power) transformation shapes a country's foreign policy goals, tools and characteristics. The other one is related to how international world order influences the nature of the domestic power, and consequently the foreign policy.

In this context this thesis intends to provide adequate answers to the question of 1) *whether Gramscian and Neo-Gramscian theory can be as a theoretical framework* in the analysing the Turkish foreign policy in the Balkans. This piece would make an attempt to elaborate 2) *why and how Turkish foreign policy has changed during the AKP-era*, especially after the nomination of Davutoğlu. The thesis 3) *reflects to the current debate about Turkish foreign policy* conflicts with its traditional Western allies and its reorientation towards its 'newly found' neighbourhood. In this respect, this work 4) *evaluates Ankara's foreign policy* as well.

To answer these questions and achieve these goals, this dissertation is divided into three main parts. The first one portrays the methodology and hypotheses, elaborates the theoretical foundations and gives an overview about the debates on TFP. In the second main chapter, the Author presents the AKP's political emergence and the internal power transformation that features the period between 2002 and 2018. Although the dissertation outlines the historical background of the political trajectory of Islamist parties, it rather focuses on this 16-year-long period which starts 3 November 2002 by the electoral victory of the AKP and lasts until the 24 June 2018 parliamentary



and presidential elections which cemented the AKP's power and introduced the presidential system in Turkey creating a cornerstone in the process of hegemony building. This chapter elaborates the features of the AKP's hegemony in Turkey and its neo-Ottoman political cultural characteristics. This section also shows how neoliberal world order affected Turkey. The third part establishes the links between the party's hegemony and its foreign policy towards the Balkans. This chapter explains why usually Muslim communities play a central role in Turkey's ambitions and how Turkish decision-makers portray the Balkans. It analyses the activities of Turkish foreign policy institutions and the non-governmental actors' role in representing Ankara's interests. Furthermore, this chapter also address the economic relations between Balkan countries and Turkey.

By the end of the introduction, the Author has to confess why he has chosen this topic for research beyond his willingness to contribute to the development of Social Sciences and to enlarge the available knowledge about Turkey and the Balkans.

### **1) Testing theory**

This thesis's theoretical framework offers a unique case and approach to explain current political dynamics within Turkey and its foreign policy making, especially towards the Balkans. Gramsci's political materialist theory about hegemony and the construction of hegemonic bloc is not unknown in the Hungarian and international literature, however, in Hungary its 'application' is very limited. There is no Hungarian translation of his famous *Prisons notebooks*; only some chapters or parts were published that is far inadequate to make extended research in Hungarian about his theory that explains why his idea had very limited effects on Hungarian researches. Nonetheless, his ideas have a valuable explanatory capability to reveal and understand AKP's domestic politics in Turkey, and some dimensions of its foreign policy. Nevertheless, it is just one side of the coin.

The 're-invention of Gramsci' by American IR theorists helped to redefine its preliminary, rather society-oriented theory. Robert W. Cox has changed the previous scope by broadening to the global level. He and his followers offered a system-level analytical framework based on permanent change and movement refusing a static approach and admitting the relevance of dynamism. This theory explaining the world order by the US neoliberal hegemony that other states

intend to adapt and realize their own (neoliberal) hegemonic projects creates a valuable opportunity to analyse Turkish foreign policy at system-level. By combining these two theories, it provides a case for expanding 'usual' theoretical frameworks. Finally, the poor representation of Neo-Gramscian theory in Hungarian literature also legitimizes the Author's choice that could contribute to broaden the tools for conceptualizing and understanding a given country's foreign policy.

## **2) Importance of Turkey**

Turkey as a middle-power has a particular role in current international relations. Possessing with a strategic location, it occupies the interception of three conflict zones that shapes contemporary international relations. Nowadays, one of these regions seems to be rather peaceful – the Balkans where two bloody wars were taking place in the 1990's. Other two regions, the Caucasus and the Middle East constitute a troublesome neighbourhood for Turkey. Ankara's involvement in the Syrian war also strengthened its leverage in the international field. As a host of more than 3 million refugees, it was a key actor in handling the 2015 refugee crisis that also affected Hungary. Turkey could give a fresh impetus to the EU accession negotiations benefitting from the crisis.

Furthermore, Ankara conducts a rather proactive foreign policy in order to influence of the outcome of current political processes at adjacent territories. Its position, its ambitions also increase the country's importance within the international community: the AKP's government growing activities passed the border of the neighbouring regions, and even its 'traditional' partners like the US, EU or Central Asia. Now, Ankara targets Africa, Latin-America and Far-East. During recent years, Turkish foreign policy tools were diversified; e. g. the Turkish Development Agency's (TİKA) performance was rocketing. The foreign policy is just one field that makes Turkey an excellent field of research. The social and political transformation that occurs in the country throughout the Justice and Development Party rule is a particular phenomenon in the Muslim World. Probably Turkey is the Muslim state that made the most steps towards democracy even if this process does not avoid ambiguities and nowadays one can see more authoritarian tendencies in the country that advances to the

presidential system. Despite the difficulties this feature offers a unique case to analyse this transformation effects on foreign policy pursuit.

### **3) Balkans' relevance for Hungary**

Choosing Turkey's relations with the Balkans as a central *problematic* of the research was highly linked to Hungary. As a Hungarian researcher, the author wanted to focus on an issue which is not just geographically located close to Hungary but may concern his country's public opinion, academic community and even decision-makers. Turkey's current activities influence a region with which Hungary shares common history. Due to the geographical proximity, Hungary's foreign policy based on its own strategic interests, meets the Turkish one and it may lead to cooperation or even competition. In order to understand Turkey's growing ambitions in the region, it cannot be analysed without extensive research and understanding the internal processes and their effects on foreign policy making. Various centres focusing on the region, such as the valuable work of the Geographical Department of University of Pécs contributed to understand the internal demographic, economic and socio-political development in the Balkans. The Author believes that putting the scope on Ankara in the regional context may also help to understand the internal tendencies.

### **4) Following Orientalist tradition**

The other, Hungary-related aspect was the willingness to follow the Orientalist line in the country's scientific history. Although the author considers himself as a political scientist, he intends to channel its research focus to the East. Started with ÁrmínVámbéry, Ottoman Empire – as Turkey can be considered as its hereditary – was a key element for Hungarian orientalists in order to understand our history and culture. Furthermore, during communist era Hungarian Turkologists such as György Németh conducted their researches in Bulgaria's Turkish inhabited regions. The political scientist approach used in the dissertation intends to broaden and in the same time to follow this Orientalist tradition.

## **5) Author's personal stance**

Closely linked to the above mentioned reasoning, the author personal interest also influenced why he has chosen this topic. A number of years ago, as simple university student he started to deal with Turkish minority living in the Balkans, and later he turned towards Turkey. Meanwhile, he preserved his interest towards Turkish minority groups and the Balkans as a whole which convinced him to bring together these topics in a dissertation. Due to his researches which were realized – alongside with long hours spent in various libraries and archives – as extended field researches in Balkans countries and in Turkey itself, the author hopes that information and sources gathered by previous years may contribute to his deeper understanding of the region and Turkey's domestic and foreign policy.

# **Hypotheses, methodology and literature review**

## **1. Hypotheses**

### **1.1. Conceptualizing Turkish foreign policy**

Before the Author would show the contemporary discourses and ongoing debates about Turkish foreign policy, he has to address the need of a theoretical framework. Although one will see a wide range of interpretations, it is important to point out that the vast majority of scholars agree that something has changed during the AKP governments. The features of this change embrace a wide spectrum: from arguments about the personalisation of external relations (Türkeş, 2008) to the interpretation of a structural change in foreign policy orientation, and not (just) in the process and the tools of policy making. According to the ‘drift-literature’ Ankara has made a major correction in its foreign policy orientation, especially after 2007 or 2009. The most palpable sign of this reorientation was an opening towards the Middle East and Arab countries, which roughly overlapped with the decline of EU accession discourse in Turkish domestic politics and the simultaneous troubles with the EU negotiation process.

The main features of the ‘new’ foreign policy are:

- 1) A new discourse of a more autonomous foreign policy,
- 2) A growing involvement of think-tanks and media in shaping the public opinion about the foreign policy making,
- 3) A growing commitment towards the neighbouring regions, especially the Middle East, the Balkans and the Caucasus,
- 4) A growing activity in Africa, the Far-East and Latin America,
- 5) A declining commitment and increasingly hostile discourse towards Western partners,
- 6) EU accession fatigue and decreasing harmonization/ negotiation efforts,
- 7) A growing importance of soft power and soft power tools,
- 8) An increase in number of foreign policy related institutions
- 9) Growing activism in international organisations.

To conceptualise this change a number of paradigms have emerged. One of them, Eurasianism, or its predecessor, pan-Turanism<sup>3</sup> was rather a common interpretation of Turkish foreign policy orientation in the 1990s (Türk, 2013). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turgut Özal turned towards the Central Asian Turkic republics aiming at creating new leverage over the newly independent countries. Özal was the first Turkish leader facing the radical geopolitical challenges that came with the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, the Soviet Union, the Yugoslav wars and the second Gulf war that pushed Turkey to reconsider its Cold War position and redefine its identity in line with its ‘national interests.’ The ideological tool for this expansion was pan-Turanism or pan-Turkism that intended to build on the Turkic identity. During the 1990’s, the efforts did not achieve the desired results,<sup>4</sup> and the very end of the nineties brought a new impetus into Ankara’s endeavours to become a member of the European Union. Nevertheless, the commitment towards Central Asia and the Turkic cause has not vanished from Ankara’s diplomatic landscape completely. Interestingly, this concept reappeared as Eurasianism (Tüysüzoğlu, 2014) that was a left wing idea, but it gained support in nationalist and even Islamist circles.<sup>5</sup> Although various nationalist groups have been disseminating the idea of a Turkic centric world, Turkish Eurasianism gained after the early 2000’s a new momentum. After translating Alexander Dugin Russian Geopolitics the Turkish public could become familiar with Russian Eurasianism and Dugin’s anti-US stance that found some supporters (İmanbeyli, 2015). While Ankara started to establish closer relation with Moscow and Erdoğan raised the idea of joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation several journalists and pundits have thought that Turkey had a real ambition to create a strategic partnership with Asian countries.

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<sup>3</sup>Pan-Turanism appeared at the beginning of the 20th century and played a major role in the Ottoman Empire’s entering the World War I. It aimed at unifying the Turkic people of Central Asia within the Empire that could not achieve its realisation. However, the idea was influential for the contemporary intellectuals, and could survive the Atatürk era and the following decades when pan-Turkist ideology was banned from the state apparatus and foreign policy making. During this time the ideology of pan-Turanism has transformed to pan-Turkism and it started to focus mainly on Turkic people. It re-emerged as an accepted but not promoted ideology (by the state) during the 1970’s when Alparslan Türkeş became the leader of the extreme right in Turkey. The collapse of the Soviet Union created considerably better conditions for the ideology as Ankara has become able to shape effectively its relations with Central Asia and the Caucasus (Azerbaijan).

<sup>4</sup>One of the main projects was to create a common alphabet that failed due to the resistance of the Central Asian republics. Turkish language could not become a lingua franca in the region, either. Even the preliminary impetus creating new international organisations with the participation of Turkic republics had limited results. The expected Turkic alliance also failed due to the deteriorated relations with Uzbekistan.

<sup>5</sup>The Gülen movement has rapidly become an influential actor in Central Asia. As usual, the movement focused on the education sector. It established a number of high schools and universities in Central Asia that emerged as the best educational centres in the region.

Nevertheless, the distance and diverging interest with Russia concerning Ukraine, Syria or the Caucasus, the Russian sanctions and diplomatic row after downing the SU-24 in November 2015 have shown the conflicts.

The beginning of the 2000s, when the anchor of the Turkish foreign policy was EU-membership, a number of scholars explained the changes by referring to the Europeanisation of Turkish foreign policy. In case of Turkey as an aspirant or candidate-state, the process of Europeanisation<sup>6</sup> was defined in terms of the domestic changes which occurred due to the adaptation to European legislation, norms and the implementation of the harmonisation process (Ulusoy, 2009; Kaliber, 2012). The EU played a substantial role in stimulating internal change (Mültüfer-Bac, 2005, 17). In this regard, one perceives the changes in Turkish foreign policy as a result of a top-down process between the EU and the candidate country (Ovalı, 2012). As Ovalı states:

‘When foreign policy is considered, the EU lacks its supranational power but still capable of imposing pressures on Turkey to furthering the structural and ideational transformations in the foreign policy domain. Therefore, the effects of Europeanization in Turkish foreign policy through conditionality were not only limited to administrative and institutional changes but in the meantime transformed Turkey’s traditional security-dominated foreign policy approach as well (Ovalı, 2012, 4).’

According to this interpretation, Ankara could re-evaluate its relations with its neighbourhood and also transform the rigid foreign policy making process to a more European one that involves the *vox populi* in the decision making process. The foreign policy has become a part of public debate and civil society also appeared as an important factor in shaping the country’s relations. For instance, the government’s effort to solve the Cyprus issue is a clear sign of the Europeanisation of the foreign policy (Tersi, 2005).

However, the loss of momentum in the EU accession talks, especially after the end of 2006 also resulted in a slowdown in the Europeanisation. The transformation of agenda setting in Ankara’s foreign relations, like opening towards the Middle East and growing difficulties with Brussels and other EU member countries, like Germany and France needed to be admitted by a new paradigm. Ovalı argues that the unsuccessful Annan Plan referendum and the deteriorating relations with Cyprus and it’s blocking the opening of new negotiation chapters significantly contributed to this turn. This

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<sup>6</sup> The notion of Europeanisation has various approaches. Usually the scientific literature labels the bottom-up process of the EU member states to build, strengthen the institutions of the European Union (e.g. European Parliament). Another interpretation of Europeanisation refers to the candidate countries’ internal processes aiming at adapting to the Union norms and legislation.

change can be evaluated as the ‘Re-nationalization’ of Turkish foreign policy (Ovalı, 2012, 11). The paradigm of Europeanization as an explanation of Ankara’s diplomacy has become more and more marginalized due to the increasing ‘self-confidence’ of Turkish governments. The 2009 economic crisis in Europe and the subsequent euro crisis that affected the Eurozone, especially Greece, a country that Turkey shares a common border with, also contributed to the decrease of the EU institutions’ influence. The EU’s difficulties in handling the refugee crisis in 2015-2016 was also perceived in Turkey as a clear sign of its transformative power’s decline (Öniş-Kutlay, 2017). Some highlight that these crises led to the de-Europeanization of Turkish foreign policy (Ovalı, 2013, Demirtaş 2015) through impelling decision makers in Ankara to find new alternatives for investment and trade. Simultaneously, the decline of the EU also contributed to a more ambitious and self-conscious Turkey and the worldwide economic crisis was one of the main factors behind the country's current drift away from Europeanization (Ovalı, 2013, 21).

Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz also reflect to a drift that changed the focal point in Turkish foreign policy from Europeanization to “soft Euro-Asianism” (Öniş – Yılmaz, 2009). They argue that this new shift means that ‘foreign policy activism is pursued with respect to all neighbouring regions but does not form an EU axis’ which is very distinct from the “hard Euro-Asianism” what would result a more palpable loss of the EU and Western orientation (Öniş – Yılmaz, 13, 2009). According to them, a great number of elements of continuity can be identified within the AKP’s foreign policy when compared with the previous governments. Throughout its first term, the AKP executed a set of economic and democratic reforms initiated by the Ecevit government (1999-2002). This period lasted until 2005 and it was the Golden Age of Europeanisation in Turkey. After 2006, the decline in EU commitment paved the way for a “soft Euro-Asianism” that also showed many similarities with the previous government, for example with that of Özal, which practically means that elements of Europeanisation and euro-asianism ‘have coexisted during both period ‘(Öniş – Yılmaz, 16, 2009).

Others state that the Turkish foreign policy has gone through a Middle-Easternisation that has changed Ankara’s point of gravity and pushed towards a rather Middle-East oriented policy. This literature has intended to prove the reality of this turn by a number of already mentioned examples (downturn in Turkish-Israeli relations, rapprochement with Syria, deeper involvement in regional conflicts etc.). Scholars



explain this process with the emergence of the AKP as an Islamist (or at least pro-Islamist) party that embraced Turkey's cultural and religious identity and tried to find a foreign policy that fits better to the country. As a Muslim country having an Islamist party at power, one can accept that Turkey has become more interested in the Muslim Middle Eastern neighbourhood. Furthermore, until 2012, Ankara's activism was regarded as a positive phenomenon in the region as well, as Meliha Altunışık's researches have shown.<sup>7</sup>

Probably the most famous paradigm for Turkish foreign policy is Neo-Ottomanism. As it will be a pivotal notion for the dissertation, the Author here just summarises the main tenets and features of this approach. Primarily, it is important to note that Neo-Ottomanism has emerged much before the rise of the AKP. It was often used to describe Özal's foreign policy, at the beginning of the nineties. Later, the expression reappeared during the AKP's rule to portray Ankara's growing involvement in its neighbourhood, especially in the Balkans and the Middle East. Stemming from the word Ottoman, the scholars and journalists intended to describe Turkey's activism in the former Ottoman territories, and its efforts to become a hegemon – or at least a dominant player in the adjacent areas. This endeavours were legitimized by historical and cultural arguments and the survival of a vast Ottoman heritage (See among others: Anastasakis, 2012; Gangloff, 2001, 2005; Tanasković, 2010; Taşpınar, 2008).

The explanations of the above-mentioned change are also numerous. The literature of the so-called paradigms – Asianism, Euro-Asianism, Middle-Easternization, Europeanization, Neo-Ottomanism – gives usually two kind of explanations: a) the foreign policy change is linked to the AKP, b) the international system/structure compelled the AKP to pursuit such a pro-active, outward-looking foreign policy.

A number of authors portrayed the change as the outcome of the Justice and Development Party's ascend to power (Robins, 2006; Alessandri, 2010; Balcı, 2010). Some analysts assign this drift to the new elite, with a 'distinctly new worldview' (Reynolds, 2012, iii). For instance, Aras and Görener offer an identity-based explanation for Turkey's foreign policy activism in the Middle East. They apply in their

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<sup>7</sup>The opinion polls about the image of Turkey conducted during the last five years have demonstrated, especially in 2009 and 2010 that the country's perception has changed drastically in a positive way compared to the beginning of the 2000s. Various factors shaped the new image: the launching of the EU accession process, the prospering economy and increasing cultural presence in the region (see the success of Turkish soap operas). Finally, the political emergence of the Justice and Development Party carried a positive message for the Islamists (parties) of the region. The Moroccan Justice and Development Party has declared many times that it was inspired by AKP.

analytical framework the notion of national role which is the ‘policy-makers’ understanding of what their nation stands for in the international arena’ (Aras-Görener, 2010, 76) and consequently they focus on Erdoğan and Davutoğlu’s discourse. Although they see some similarities between Özal and the AKP’s foreign policy-makers they rather emphasize the novelty. While Özal’s regional activism was driven by economic necessity, the AKP’s regional initiatives are motivated by a normative moral framework (Aras – Görener, 2010, 83). As other features of AKP-led foreign policy, they distinguish the collaborative stance on regional and global level as well, the ‘bridge discourse that was more frequent at the beginning of AKP’s era than later.

Marc Pierini admits that various factors influence Ankara's foreign policy-making that make it less and less predictable. Among these factors, like energy dependency or the geostrategic positioning of the country at the interconnection of frozen or particularly vivid crises and conflicts, he underlines the influence of the AKP’s vote maximization attempts. For ballot box success, the party needs to rely on its core electorate’s religious and nationalist feelings (Pierini, 2013). Some even go as far to suggest that simply political gains at domestic level influenced the foreign-policy making of the AKP. Many think that the anti-Israel rhetoric employed by Prime Minister Erdoğan in the run-up of local elections in March 2009, was at least partially motivated by domestic political purposes (Sengupta, 2014, 12). Göktürk points out that the AKP’s commitment towards the EU membership – shaping Ankara’s external efforts – has been a tool for legitimating its power. After 2006, the government continued to use diplomacy as a means for social and political legitimacy (Göktürk, 2014, 91). Some scholars argue that Turkish foreign policy is rather a populist one by underlining that the AKP seeks to attract the attention of domestic constituency and international public opinion (Demirtaş, 215). Even if economy or other issues draw more attention, diplomacy appears in the domestic political field (Yanık, 2012). These authors interpret the government’s foreign policy as an extension of domestic politics to the international sphere. Other interpretations setting the level of analysis on domestic social transformation (having a historical materialist approach) are limited in the literature. They argue that the rise of AKP (and preliminarily, Islamist parties) resulted in a more proactive foreign policy and the extensive use of soft power compared to the more inward-looking and security-oriented Kemalist elites (Yalvaç, 2012, 2014).

Others emphasize the importance of the international system and argue that contemporary Turkish foreign policy is a response to the current challenges. Şaban

Kardaş proposes to position the Turkish diplomacy in the changing international system (Kardaş, 2013). Özhan underlines that Turkey seeks to find its position and adapt to the fundamental change in the world order, however, according to him, claims about the 'axis shift' are unfounded (Özhan, 2010). Göktürk argues that the new Turkish foreign policy stems from a pragmatism that considers the religion as a 'frame of reference' having the capability to encompass the multiculturalism already realized during the Ottoman times. Furthermore, Davutoğlu's Strategic Depth doctrine intends to place Turkey in the centre of Afro-Asia, at the middle of regional interconnections. By doing this, Ankara's policy can be perceived as a 'civilization-based geopolitical initiative' (Göktürk, 2014, 103).

Keyman and Gümüşcü state that the profound and severe crisis of globalisation - economic crisis, increasing security risks, lack of global leadership, poverty, exclusion, food security, climate change etc. - produced the feeling of uncertainty and insecurity. In order to tackle these threats and the 'global turmoil', Turkey has created a proactive foreign policy that was termed as 'active globalisation' (Keyman - Gümüşcü, 2014, 71-73). By engaging in global problems and in global debates, Turkey's position has been strengthened vis-à-vis the global turmoil (Keyman – Gümüşcü, 2014, Larrabee, 2010b)

Obviously, a country's foreign policy cannot be negligent to the global challenges; nevertheless, it is usually shaped by strong domestic actors and interests. Even the answers to the above-mentioned global problems are given by a domestic regime that could be different.

The AKP's pro-activism is not independent of the features of its own conduct of domestic policy and the interests of the social classes represented by the party. The majority of these global challenges were present for Turkey during decades (turmoil in the Middle East, Caucasus, Balkans, terrorism, poverty etc.), however, not every Turkish government was as proactive as the AKP's ones. The Author intends to prove that transformation of foreign-policy making (involvement of think-tanks and the public etc.) was in line with the emergence of the party as a strong internal actor that needed a new style (and allies) in weakening the influence of the state-centric and powerful Kemalist elites. In line with this change, foreign policy activism also had become an important tool to legitimize the AKP at the domestic and the international level, too. Despite the already showed criticism of American and Western-European scholars and journalists, the country's efforts to bring peace and stability to the surrounding regions usually met the support of US and EU politicians.

The change of global structure could not leave the Turkish foreign policy unaffected; however, the Author believes that very severe domestic incentives shaped its pursuit as well. A number of explanations pointed out the role of this domestic transformation, nevertheless the research of the relation between the influence of the global and local structure on Ankara's foreign policy behaviour got limited limelight. The Author aims at analysing the relation of global and local structure and explaining the Turkish foreign policy pursuits by the interrelation of the two levels.

Consequently, two levels of analysis shall be distinguished. Concerning the local level, the Author aims to show the AKP-created system in work. He will describe the regime built by the AKP after the successive electoral victories, and how it affects the pursuit of foreign policy. The already mentioned debates showed that Turkish foreign policy has been described as drifting, (De-)Europeanized, Middle-Easternised, Eurasian and Neo-Ottoman. The Author argues that characteristics of the system shall be portrayed as Neo-Ottoman.

## **1.2. Hypothesis 1 – Neo-Ottomanism in Turkish foreign policy**

After becoming familiar with the main paradigms that aim at describing Turkish foreign policy, it is important to settle the hypotheses of the dissertation. Due to the already mentioned two-level analysis, the Author will focus on the AKP's rise and the transformation of power at the domestic level that led to a significant change of Turkish foreign policy. This development paved the way for a new vision in cultural and identity policy and the change of traditional orientation and tools in foreign policy making. Thus, the central argumentation concerning the internal effects on Turkish foreign policy is based on the following hypothesis:

*H1: The emergence of AKP as an internal hegemon creates a Neo-Ottoman regime what shapes its foreign policy.*

After establishing H1 it is essential to define and specify the expressions used.

**“emergence of the AKP”**: this expression describes the ascendancy of the party to the power due to its successive electoral victories. It also reflects to the process that

resulted in the monopolisation of power and the increasing authoritarian tendencies. This emergence also refers to the weakening of the Kemalist elites, especially the Army and the Constitutional Court and the changes in state administration.

**“internal hegemon”**: the expression refers to the notion of hegemonic bloc in a Gramscian term. It means that a party managing to acquire power was successful to establish its own hegemony by coercion or co-optation of various elements of the society.

**“Neo-Ottoman regime”**: Neo-Ottomanism refers to the cultural and ideological features of the hegemonic bloc created by the AKP.

**“to shape its foreign policy”**: this expression refers to the effects of the Neo-Ottoman turn in domestic policy on the foreign policy features. By having a 'new foreign policy vision' compared to the previous governments the AKP has brought a number of novelties in form of orientation and tools into the conventional Turkish diplomacy. Even if it follows the main patterns of the ‘Kemalist cabinets’, the cultural and identity aspects or at least their emphasis have changed according to the domestic hegemonic orders’ cultural and identity politics. Therefore, the Neo-Ottoman regime influences the diplomacy; however, the Author does not label Turkey’s foreign policy as Neo-Ottoman.

So what is Neo-Ottomanism? Certainly there are several problems that arise. Preliminary the prefix ‘Neo’ raises concerns as it supposes that an Ottomanism that has ended at some point of the past is (re)emerging right now. Actually the problem stems from the definition of Ottomanism. Historically, Ottomanism (*Osmanlılık*) was an ideology created by a movement to save the Ottoman Empire during the last decades of the Sultanate.<sup>8</sup> This ideology, usually advocated by the establishment and the central elite in Istanbul until the very end of the Empire was one of the competing ideologies of that time - like Islamism (supported especially by Sultan Abdülhamid) and (Pan-Turkism) -, and was clearly disseminating the idea that the Empire can be saved by only the use of nationalism and the creation of a Turkish nation.<sup>9</sup> So this historical background shows, Ottomanism practically has nothing to do with Republican Turkey, what is more the nationalist project of Young Turks, and the formation of a nation-state based on the principles of Turkish nationalism by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The latter

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<sup>8</sup> *Yeni Osmanlılar* (New-Osmanists) was a group of intellectuals like İbrahim Şinasi, Namık Kemal, Ziya Paşa and Ali Suavi, aiming to save the Empire from the decline culminating in territorial losses and subsequent defeats from Western powers and Russia. They also propagated a reform program.

<sup>9</sup> This division was stated firstly by a Tatar immigrant, Yusuf Akçura.

symbolises rather a clear break with the imperial project aiming at postponing the *chute de l'Empire* and giving an Ottoman identity to its inhabitants divided along ethnic and religious lines.

During the Republican era, Ottomanism could be associated with three groups: 1) a group that defended the Ottoman dynasty and tried to bring it back to the power, 2) a group of conservative-nationalist people who have given great importance to the Ottoman past and heritage, 3) certain groups in the Post-Cold war era supporting the idea of *Pax Ottomana* (Neo-Ottomanism) in order to tackle the domestic and foreign problems in Turkey and its neighbourhood (Çetinsaya, 2003, 361).

Mainly two approaches depict our notion. The most common use of Neo-Ottomanism is to be found in foreign policy, so as the Author has already mentioned, it appears as a paradigm for foreign policy. The core of this interpretation lies in the assumption that Turkey intends to become more active in the adjacent (former Ottoman territories) regions based on its historical and cultural heritage that serves as a legitimising tool for Ankara. Although this thinking appears in every interpretation of Neo-Ottomanism, the perceptions of these foreign policy endeavours are diverging.

The emergence of Neo-Ottomanism occurred in line of the rehabilitation of the Ottoman Empire in public and more importantly, in diplomatic discourse. This change was influenced by Turkey's turn to the Arab states in the 1970s due to the economic problems following the petrol crisis (Ankara wanted to bargain lower prices) and the deteriorating relations with its Western partners over Cyprus. The references to the common Ottoman past have appeared in the speeches of Minister of Foreign Affairs İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil in 1969 (Yanık, 2016, 474).

The first appearance of the expression of Neo-Ottomanism may also highlight the very core problem that engulfs the perceptions of the notion. Kemal Karpat mentions that the first use of Neo-Ottomanism is linked to Greece (Karpat, 2002, 524). After the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, Athens has begun to label the Turkish foreign policy as Neo-Ottoman aiming at its expansionist characteristics. This interpretation perceives Ankara as a threat to its neighbourhood and titles it as a revisionist power. This narrative does not refer to the historical Ottomanist movement or imperial ideology to create a common identity for Ottoman subjects and gaining their loyalty but the empire-building process of Ottoman dynasty resulting in on the one hand one of the greatest Empires in World history but on the other the conquest of independent states in the Balkans and the Middle East that brought these territories – especially according to

the Balkan perceptions – under Ottoman Yoke with bloodshed. Due to the fact that in the Balkans the nation-building processes and independence movements of Christian peoples were conducted against Ottomans, the ‘Turks’ have become an eternal enemy who has brought backwardness into the region and prevented it from a Western European-style internal development. According to the general perception in the region this fall-back explains the historical root of current underdevelopment and the internal conflicts of the region. School books and national media are also strengthening this image, especially in Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia. Through education, this anti-Turk and anti-Muslim perceptions and cultural codes were passed down from generations to generations. In a given situation they could be reinstated and use as a mobilisation tool like it happened during the Bosnian war (1992-1995). After many decades of the Balkan Wars which marginalised Turkish state presence on the peninsula, the threatening image of Turks still persisted in the 2000s (Gangloff, 2005).<sup>10</sup> In this context, Turkish activism labelled ‘Neo-Ottomanism’ that re-emerged in the 1990s and 2000s usually was welcomed at least by caution if not by hostility. Others believe that probably David Barchard has used the term in a scientific work David Barchard “Turkey and the West” booklet published in 1985. He argued that the imperial consciousness in the Turkish society is a more politically potent force than Islam and when the country gains economic strength it would assert itself as a leader in the Middle East (Yanık, 2016, 475-476).

All in all, the references to the Ottoman Empire and Islamic heritage have become more frequent by policy makers in the 1980s. In case of Middle-Eastern countries, they preferred referring to the common past, culture and religion than to the Ottoman Empire. They intended to omit the Empire and they presented a common historical and cultural anchor neutrally in order not to offend their partners’ historical sensitivity. Nevertheless, the image of Ottoman Empire could appear in the relations with the West. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Turgut Özal usually mentioned the Empire as a former Empire that linked Turkey to Europe. An entity has played a great role in European history. (Yanık, 2016).

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<sup>10</sup> Meliha Altunışık points out that ‘The idea of Ottoman geography is dangerous. There is an antipathy against the Ottoman geography. It expresses well-known relations, cultural closeness, but at the same time it makes remember negative things as well. In Turkey’s neighbourhood, most countries gained their independence against the Ottoman Empire. That is why I know that for Arabs Neo-Ottomanism is unacceptable. There is no one who needs a boss or leader like this.’ (Altunışık, 2010, 16-17)

The end of Cold War has created a drastically new geopolitical situation for Turkey that had to be addressed by Turkish political elite. Neo-Ottomanism got more limelight and for some, it even appeared as a tool devoted to entitle Turgut Özal's foreign policy. According to Yavuz, after the end of Cold War, Turkish state had to uncover its oppressed (sub)identities such as Anatolian, Islamic, Balkan, Central Asian and so on (Yavuz, 1998, 33.). He considered a key element in the emergence of Neo-Ottomanism: the rejection of Turkey's accession to the EU (the then European Economic Community). Turgut Özal made a bid for full membership in 1987, in the same decade when other major, Mediterranean states such as Portugal, Spain and Greece (having a long dictatorship period in their recent history) were allowed to join the organisation. However, the EEC rejected Turkey's bid after a thirty-month study, pleading the country's poor economy, demographic boom, shortcomings in civil and democratic rights and finally the cultural differences.

The second major development strengthening Neo-Ottomanism was the war in Bosnia. According to Yavuz, it was a key to the rise of the notion, that various authors, such as Cengiz Çandar and Nur Vergin started to promote the idea that Turkishness was rather a construct for and by Anatolian, Balkan and Caucasian Muslim populations on the basis of their Ottoman past (Yavuz, 1998, 37). Turkish decision-makers also started to make some efforts to secure Bosniaks due to the popular request of 'Neo-Ottoman intellectuals' and Balkan immigrants groups/associations' request to cope with the ethnic-cleansing (Yavuz, 1998, 38). In this interpretation Neo-Ottomanism was a dialectical outcome of various internal and domestic factors shaping the identity seeking of Turkey (Yavuz, 1998).

Albeit Özal did promote a foreign policy focusing rather on Turkic people in the Caucasus and Central Asia, he opened a debate about Turkish identity including ex-Ottoman Muslims (Yavuz, 1998, 24.). This was linked to some advisors, like the influential Turkish intellectual, journalist and political advisor of Turgut Özal, Cengiz Çandar. At the beginning of the Post-Cold War period, when Turkey met the problem of repositioning itself in the new world order, and a relative decline in its previously appreciated role as a bastion against the Soviet Union, Çandar proposed to reconsider the country's foreign policy on the basis of Neo-Ottomanism. His 'invention' has become well-known as well as much criticised in Turkey and abroad, too. In his interpretation the notion was a reflection to the new geopolitical circumstance of the



country after the collapse of the huge neighbour and dramatic changes in the Middle East and the Balkans (Çandar, 2008).

Accordingly, Neo-Ottomanism as a foreign policy paradigm has a rather peaceful approach that aimed at helping the decision makers to reposition Turkey and find a new role in the global turmoil. It intended to use the cultural and historical heritage of the country as a base for creating bridges towards the neighbours, something that can be seen as a common without redrawing the current political borders and boosting Turkish dominance. As Abdullah Gül summarised in 1995:

‘Neo-Ottomanism does not aim to eliminate state boundaries nor seek a resurrection of an unified Ottoman super-state but rather to create a new sense of a macro-identity among populations that share the Ottoman Islamic heritage (Yavuz, 1998, 40).’

Nevertheless, political leaders have thought to avoid the Neo-Ottoman label.<sup>11</sup> Turgut Özal has never mentioned the expression. The first article considered as the proclamation of Neo-Ottomanism was published in *Türkiye Günlüğü* (Kanık, 2011, 5). It was an interview with Turgut Özal, titled “*Türkiye’nin Önünde Hacet Kapıları Açıldı*”<sup>12</sup> where the then President of Republic shared his ideas about the Ottoman heritage (geography and governing practices) that may be used to solve Turkey’s current problems and he points out that:

‘We need to identify and properly analyse several points regarding the geopolitical region that extends from Central Asia to the Balkans, which forms the target area of our leadership role. To a large degree, this region contains Turkish communities [sic] and with this aspect, at the same time, it also harbors the cultural belt that we call Turkish World [sic]. Yet, this region, again to a large extent, contains communities and states that are Muslim but not Turkish, which lived as Ottoman subjects. So, in this region that extends from the Adriatic to Central Asia, we can talk about several different nestled rings that have features in common but are located separate from each other. We should see these rings as areas with large intersection points (translated by Kanık, 2011, 6).’

The above-mentioned rings could be identified as sphere of interests, and the notion of various basins has reappeared at Davutoğlu. Due to the war against the PKK, the interpretation of Ottoman Empire as a country of peaceful coexistence of various ethnic and religious groups, so a romanticised image of the former Empire has been disseminated and propagated by politicians and at some extent, by several scholars as well. By recalling the Kurdish constituencies to a common, peaceful past Ankara tempted to weaken the nationalist Kurdish group in South-eastern Turkey. This

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<sup>11</sup> In 1995 Gül was an ordinary deputy in the TBMM, a member of opposition party RP.

<sup>12</sup> It may be translated as ‘The door of great opportunities opened to Turkey.’

interpretation of history also influenced the social construction of the Ottoman era and helped to redefine the contemporary society's stance towards its Pre-Republican history.

The international scientific community could not neglect the notion either. It has already been familiar with this sense of the notion due to Graham Fuller's work on Turkey. He stated in 1992 that:

'This reexamination and reevaluation of Ottoman history in no way implies the emergence of a new Turkish irredentism or expansionism. It does suggest, however, a renewed interest in the former territories and people of the Empire, which includes Muslims who were part of that Empire. It suggests that certain organic geopolitical, cultural and economic relations may reemerge in the new "normal" regional environment that had been absent during the "abnormal" period of Cold War polarization. It suggests that the Turks may now come to see themselves once again at the center of a world reemerging around them on all sides rather than at the tail-end of a European world that is increasingly uncertain about whether or not it sees Turkey as part of itself (Fuller, 1992, 13.).'

Although the notion was extensively used in the nineties, it has lost its 'popularity'. It reappeared after 2005 to describe the reorientation of Turkish foreign policy towards its neighbourhood. Davutoğlu's and Erdoğan's speeches on Ottoman legacy, shared history and culture gave inspirations to views claiming that Neo-Ottomanism has gained momentum. Independently from the negative or positive understanding, the expression has got much attention in analyses. Ömer Taşpınar, a well-known Turkish expert living in Washington, argues:

'Neo-Ottomanism embraces a grand, geostrategic vision of Turkey as an effective and engaged regional actor, trying to solve regional and global problems. Since the concept of Neo-Ottomanism may evoke an imperial agenda, one important point needs clarification: Turkey, in this neo-Ottoman paradigm, does not pursue a neo-imperialist policy aimed at resurrecting the Ottoman Empire. Instead of imperial nostalgia, Neo-Ottomanism is essentially about projecting Turkey's "soft power"—a bridge between East and West, a Muslim nation, a secular state, a democratic political system, and a capitalistic economic force (Taşpınar, 2008, 3).'

Neo-Ottomanism in his interpretation reconciles the Ottoman and imperial legacy with the contemporary Turkish identity and it offers a more democratic solution for the Kurdish question. Furthermore, this vision provides Turkey with more self-confidence and a sense of *grandeur* as it puts the country in the 'centre'.

Sengupta also thinks that Neo-Ottomanism is rather a soft power tool that enables Turkey to pursue an active foreign policy. She states:

'Internationally, neo-Ottomanism had pan-Turkic and pan-Islamist undertones and was used to stake an economic, cultural, and diplomatic role for Turkey in the newly independent states of the Balkans, Caucasus, and Central Asia as well as the Middle East. Neo-Ottomanism is reflected in Ankara's new activism in the Middle East and is essentially less obsessed with domestic issues like the Kurdish question and more focused on Turkey's "soft power." It seeks to rise beyond this Kemalist paradigm and

embrace a grand, geostrategic vision of Turkey as an effective and engaged regional actor trying to solve regional and global problems. (Sengupta, 2014, 89)'

In later works, Taşpınar distinguishes three visions of Turkish foreign policy, as neo-Ottomanism, Kemalism and Turkish Gaullism (Taşpınar 2011). In this case the third vision deserves more explication. While Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism are common in their nationalism and state-centric focus, Turkish Gaullism refers to a more nationalist, independent and self-confident stance which could culminate in questioning the military alliance with the West and even the need for EU membership. According to him, this vision may harm Turkey's Western alliance and reduce its willingness to cooperate with its current allies.

By stating that the current Turkish foreign policy is Neo-Ottomanist Öztürk argues that:

'Due to the commonalities between the foreign policy approaches of both Özal governments and AKP government, AKP was argued to be a subrogee of Özal and a follower of his so-called Neo-Ottomanist policy. While Kemalist foreign policy orders bearing with the West on every accounts, which has arguably been an alienating factor for Turkey in its region, 'Neo-Ottomanist' foreign policy suggests rooting Turkey in its neighbourhood, without neglecting the global picture. To some, AKP's foreign policy is motivated by Neo-Ottomanism through trying to use its 'soft power' in the region (Öztürk, 2013).'

Despite of the great number of attempts to apply Neo-Ottomanism to Turkish foreign policy, it has limited explanatory value. Firstly, academic literature fails to give a precise definition of the expression. It is presented as a tool of soft power to build bridges between Turkey and its neighbours (Taşpınar, 2008; McDonald, 2012, Sengupta, 2014); a tool for legitimacy (Anastasakis, 2012; Gangloff, 2005; Wiegen, 2009) or it is described as a threatening, hegemony-building policy (Trifković, 2011). Others label the whole Davutoğlu-led Turkish foreign policy due to the change of its orientation as Neo-Ottomanist, because of its massive use of references to the Ottoman Empire, and a multiple identity of contemporary Turkey based on its culture, history and geography (Oner, 2009, Balogh at al., 2013). These diverging views and problems around the measurability (especially when the approach is defined as soft power) do not ease the concept's applicability for the analysis.

Secondly, beyond the shortcomings of the conceptualisation, there are other problems that emerge. Since Neo-Ottomanism is referred to as a tool in foreign policy it cannot provide a whole explanatory framework to describe it. Even if it is defined as some worldview, its applicability is questionable for Turkish ambitions beyond the

former Ottoman geography. Ankara can hardly use it to explain its motives in Central Asia or the EU accession process also lacks the references to the former Ottoman Empire. Furthermore the references to the Ottoman past are not specific features of the Özal or the AKP-era. As Kanık argues:

‘Davutoglu, the AKP and former Prime Minister Turgut Özal are not the only actors who portrayed Turkey liminal and banked on hybrid representations of geography and history and thus, deliberately or not, created an exceptionalist identity for Turkey. If neo-Ottomanism is defined as a discourse that highlights Turkey’s Ottoman past and mixes it with geographical uniqueness to justify an active foreign policy in Turkey’s immediate neighborhood, it can easily be demonstrated that there were shades of unspoken neo-Ottomanism helping to construct an exceptionalist Turkish identity even during the periods in which there was no neo-Ottomanism debate (Kanık, 2011, 2).’

Thirdly, some even disagree with the use of Neo-Ottomanism. Çağpatay argues that the AKP cannot be perceived as Neo-Ottomanist as it focuses more on Arab and Middle Eastern countries thus it should be defined rather Islamist than Neo-Ottoman in a "secular" sense (Çağpatay, 2009). Bechev talks about Neo-Ottoman hype by highlighting the exaggerated importance of the notion (Bechev, 2012).

Finally, subsequent AKP-led governments have never recognised themselves as Neo-Ottomanist, even Davutoğlu refused to use the expression. This reluctance towards the word is obvious if one thinks of the resistance against Turkey in Serbia and Bulgaria. The wording would only have added fuel to the fire.

The problems around the conceptualisation of Neo-Ottomanism in foreign policy suggest using a broader concept. Although the academic literature is limited on this interpretation, the Author also has to address it. This approach does not restrict the Neo-Ottomanism to the level of foreign policy but defines it as an ideology or as an organising force in society.

Murinson argues that ‘Neo-Ottomanism is the ideology of the new Turkish elite, which began to form in Central Anatolia at the end of the 1980s’ (Murinson, 2012), which means that in his interpretation Neo-Ottomanism is not just a describing frame for Turkish foreign policy but an ideological product of the new, domestic elites. These elites are composed mainly from the Central Anatolian, religious bourgeoisie (‘Anatolian Tigers’) who as entrepreneurs managed to gain more influence over Turkish internal and external politics, particularly during Özal, Erbakan and Erdoğan’s era (Murinson, 7, 2012).

Hartmann argues that Kemalism is amorphous enough and adaptable to keep remaining the main ideological tenet of the Turkish Republic, constraining the

transformative power of the Neo-Ottomanism (Hartmann, 2013, 9). Nevertheless, despite the existing debate on the notion, there is no consensus about it. Others also argue that Neo-Ottomanism has gained momentum in internal politics in Turkey, as it started to become more apparent in the daily symbolic politics. The AKP has moved towards monopolising and redefining the Ottoman past (Danforth, 2014; Czajka-Wastnidge, 2015). The legitimacy and usefulness of the above-mentioned, broader understanding of Neo-Ottomanism is supported by the existence of the debate on it within the Turkish society itself. Kınıklıoğlu argues that ‘Osman is making such a forceful return’ in the daily life. He explains this change by stating that ‘The most significant reason is that fundamentally the doctrines of the republic have been unable to respond to the moral and ethical needs of Turkish society’ (Kınıklıoğlu, 2007). Referring to the ‘forceful return’ stems from the daily, tangible appearance of an Ottoman past – supported or not by the government. The emerging nostalgia over the Ottoman past has become a palpable part of the life in the Turkish Republic, as symbols of Ottoman past are coming back day after day. This transformation can be easily perceived through the huge wave of renovation of old Ottoman buildings and historical monuments (not just) all over Turkey. This ‘Neo-Ottoman’ renaissance affects even the restoration and renovation of old houses in historical city centres, like Ankara, Eskişehir – one shall find examples in almost every Turkish city and town – where at least some part of a district got back their old, Ottoman splendour.

The governmental policy to support this renovation activity that may be called Neo-Ottomanist cultural policy creates new – in Pierre Nora’s term – ‘*lieu de memoires*’ where this nostalgia of a splendid, Ottoman past can be felt. Probably the most famous example of it is the Safranbolu UNESCO site. Obviously not just material objects but reinvented traditions and narratives also contribute to this project.

It was already mentioned the notion but particularly as a tool for summarising, naming Turkish foreign policy or foreign ambitions. He emphasizes that not just foreign policy scholars (see Gangloff, Tanasković, Taşpınar etc.) have used the expression but the international and domestic media as well, and not just in Turkey but also in the Balkans for describing Ankara’s diplomacy. Nevertheless, this thesis proposes a broader understanding of Neo-Ottomanism. To accept the legitimacy to use this notion as a tool for conceptualising Ankara’s motives does not mean that it shall be restricted only for foreign policy. On the contrary, the Author suggests using Neo-Ottomanism as an expression for the AKP’s own hegemonic project, based on the characteristics of

cultural policies and internal political discourse taken by successive AKP governments. Furthermore, these features like governmental narratives of Turkish identity, cultural and political interpretation and presentation of the Ottoman past and its use for current daily life – that will be examined in details in next chapters – shall not be separated from foreign policy. According to the Author's view, Turkey's foreign policy shall be understood and analysed as an external projection of the *Neo-Ottomanist domestic hegemonic project*. This thesis accepts that foreign policy making is a more complex issue than a simple 'continuation' of internal politics, however, as it will be proves, they are highly interrelated, especially in the given Turkish case.

### **1.3. Hypothesis 2 – The AKP's neoliberal foreign policy**

Neo-Ottomanism may be placed in the centre of contemporary Turkish cultural policies; however, it is just one side of the coin. The effects of internal changes on foreign policy are not independent from the changes in the international system. As the Author presented, a number of works argues that the adjustment in the global structure or regional sub-structure shaped Ankara's international relations. He also argues that these developments also affected the Turkish society and domestic politics as well. The Author states that the main effects are linked to the neoliberal turn in economy, beginning by the Özal era in the mid-1980s and lasting nowadays.

This neoliberal turn has transformed the society and strengthened the Central-Anatolian business elites during the 1980s and 1990s as well as it contributed to the changes in the political landscape. The emergence of the Anatolian Tigers was a prelude of political adjustment; however, every Turkish government's aim was to establish investment-friendly conditions in the country. Despite the gradual opening to international markets and accepting a rather export oriented trade policy, these years were troublesome for Turkish economy. Ankara had to face several crises in 1994, 1999, 2000 and 2001. The last one particularly damaged the reputation of the government parties and contributed in a great manner to the electoral victory of the AKP in 2002.

Since this electoral victory, the Justice and Development Party has managed to keep the power and follow a neoliberal policy by opening its markets, affiliating with the EU, benefiting from FDI and the positive effects of growing trade. Various business

associations also could take advantage from this neoliberal turn that the government also supported. Not surprisingly, the economy or economic interests also have appeared as important features of the AKP.

The Author argues that the global structure's most important effects on Turkey was the 'victory' of Neoliberalism that linked more the country to the international economy and contributed to the last decades' political changes as well. Having a neoliberal party at power, representation of neoliberal economic values in foreign policy also gain momentum. The interconnection of the social changes as the effects of the global structure influences the contemporary Turkish foreign policy. Consequently, the Author formulates the second hypothesis of the dissertation as:

*H2: The AKP's hegemony is a derivate of the neoliberal global structure that affects its foreign policy by the growing role of the economy.*

Here the Author has to reveal and define the notions used in H2.

**'neoliberal structure'**: the notion refers to the concept that the current world order is establish on a neoliberal hegemony in which the US plays a central role.

**'neoliberalism'**: According to Encyclopeadia Britannica, it is an 'ideology and model that emphasizes the value of free market competition', and 'it is commonly associated with laissez-faire economics (Smith, 2014).' Accordingly, neoliberalism is often coupled with globalisation. Nevertheless, it also has no an accepted definition and scholars are also divided over its concept. This volume due to its scope cannot describe the various interpretation of neoliberalism.<sup>13</sup> The Author defines the notion as a set of ideas advocating to need of free trade, the support of private sector in the economy and economic liberalisation as well as the representation of economic interest in the foreign policy. He emphasizes that neoliberalism in this dissertation is defined as policy affecting various (especially economic and foreign) political fields thus it is not perceived as an ideology.

**'affected the AKP's hegemony'**: The Author refers to the process of the neoliberal world and its implication on Turkey. This phenomenon does not affect only Ankara's foreign policy but the local structure e.g. the emergence of neoliberal classes.

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<sup>13</sup> In order to highligh the main features of neoliberalism see more: Steger – Roy, 2010; Thorsen– Lie 2006.

The Author argues that although the need to tackle the growing global and regional challenges affects Turkish foreign policy, however, its embedment to the international system, and the international neoliberal system compelled the country to be active in its international relations. The emergence of pro-neoliberal classes in Turkey also affected its foreign policy as the economy has become more and more important in diplomatic relations. Consequently, the neoliberal world order pushed Ankara towards a more opened and active, trade- and investment-oriented foreign policy.

The compelling role of economy in Turkish foreign policy making can be conceptualized by the emergence of neoliberalism and the emergence of certain classes that favour neoliberal economic policy. The growing literature on this issue highlighted that neoliberal turn in domestic economic policy under Özal that also paved the way towards the growing representation of economic interest in the diplomacy. After the 2001 crisis, the country has managed to overcome its economic difficulties, especially due to former Vice-President of World Bank Kemal Derviş who has determined the neoliberal economic policy in the first half of the 2000's. The AKP has followed the way that he began and it was proved to be fruitful. Furthermore, neoliberal policy also led to an economic opening, overlapping with the interests of Turkish business groups. During the first years of the AKP at power, the Turkish economic growth was spectacular.

A number of authors also mainly analyse the nature of Turkish economic expansion in the Middle East. This approach also appears particularly often in works on Turkish-African relations where economic considerations are perceived as major driven forces in foreign policy (Marsai, 2016). According to Pintér, although one can see obvious parallels between the previous Özal era's foreign policy and the AKP's one, the new period is rather different because of the influence of economic consideration in foreign-policy making. By promoting peace and stability in neighbouring countries, Turkish government ensures the viable economic relations as well as creates opportunities for investment and trade (Pintér, 2013). Kirişçi characterized Turkey as a 'trading state' (Kirişçi, 2009). Other sees that the economy serves as 'practical hand' and also contributes a very important soft power tool by opening new dialogue channels (Kutlay, 2011).

In their interpretation, Turkish foreign policy is realized with close cooperation of various economic actors, e. g. a number of Turkish business associations (which may



appear as autonomous players in shaping bilateral economic relations, see Tür, 2013) and wealthy businessmen (several hundred businessmen participate in Turkish presidential or prime ministerial visits) in order to boost foreign trade and pave the way towards Turkish investments. The charts and tables cited by these authors also show the spectacular change in the country economic relations. Turkey's foreign trade has multiplied. Due to economic expansion in developing markets, the foreign trade's structure has also changed. Tür points out that the decline of EU's share in exports and imports was huge while the MENA region's share in trade was rocketing (Tür, 2011). This development also suggested for some authors to conclude that Turkey is leaving the Western bloc. In these approaches changing economic relations could be the cause or just a sign for the 'new' Turkish foreign policy that also highlights the clash of various interpretations about foreign activism. This aspect of foreign relations is an under-studies are in literature about the ongoing Turkish foreign policy (Kutlay, 2011, 77), nevertheless the Author believes that it plays a very important role that will be portrayed in relations with the Balkan states.

## **2. Theoretical Foundations**

### **2.1. Gramscianism**

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), as revolutionary strategist and former leader of Italian Communist Party, who was arrested and imprisoned by the Mussolini regime (1926) could see by personal experience the nature of leadership and championed a political and ideological struggle for hegemony (Lipsitz, 1988, 146). Whilst he was jailed, he has produced 2 848 pages handwritten notes that have never been published in Hungarian or in English in its complexity (see more: Hoare – Smith, 1999). Nevertheless, it is possible to apply his theoretical achievements for the current research due to the valuable translations and the literature aiming to evaluate his work. Probably the most significant contribution of Gramsci's theoretical works is the focus on social forces, classes and parties' role within a state – or, in a larger context, inter-state relations. Due to his momentous life when he had to face the collapse of Communist Party's activities in Italy and the establishment of Mussolini's dictatorship, he produced an excellent overview about the relation and interactions of domestic political and social changes.

In his approach, hegemony is placed in the centre. Hegemony, for Gramsci, is a condition in which the governed accepted or acquiesced in authority without the need for the application of force. Although force is always latent in the background, hegemony means leadership rather than domination in Gramscian terms. Gramsci traces the genesis of hegemony to civil society, in the spread throughout society of common conceptions of how things work and ought to work. (Cox, 2004, 311, Karatzogianni – Robinson, 2009, 83).

Thus, the 'moment of hegemony' is never stabile but constantly challenged by subaltern groups and perpetually recreated by the ruling class. The given hegemonic social group always makes efforts to boost consent among the whole population by co-opting or applying force. Due to this constant pressure from the above, hegemonizing is hard work and requires sufficient legitimacy in the daily life, concessions to the displeased groups and keeping alliances between antagonistic groups and nourishing an ideology. Hunt argues that the hegemonic project shall address and incorporate at least partially the ideology and aspirations of subaltern groups, assure the basic of social life and articulate norms which may have considerable trans-class appeal. These tools

altogether result in the 'incorporative hegemony' (Hunt, 1990, 311). Subsequently hegemonic process can be used to neutralize dangerous ideas and groups by assimilating them into the dominant classes. Nevertheless, the weakness of hegemony gives the system a rather volatile and instable feature and risks new challenges when life experiences greatly differ from the legitimizing ideology (Lipsitz, 1988, 147)

To grab the production and society's relations Gramsci has borrowed Georges Sorel's notion of historical bloc (*Blocco Storico*), nonetheless he uses in a new sense. Historical bloc is a result of the unity of structures and superstructures, in other words it 'is the reflection of the ensemble of the social relations of production' which highlights his view about the role of production within the society. While Marxism emphasizes the priority of the production Gramsci gives a more complex approach by revealing the importance of the interaction of the economy, cultural and political sphere. (Hoare – Smith, 1999, 366). In other words, 'material forces are the content and ideologies are the form, though this distinction between form and content has purely didactic value, since the material forces would be inconceivable historically without form and the ideologies would be individual fancies without the material forces' (Hoare – Smith, 1999, 377).

This historic bloc has to have a hegemonic class that rules the system and maintain its stability by unifying the production, political and social sphere and counter alternative class's attempt to challenge. For Gramsci, the emergence of the workers' class is only feasible if it creates its own apparatus, culture based on the political leadership of the party. However, ruling class propagates a common culture and worldview based on his unique position to control and direct the society's superstructure in order to maintain its dominant position, the cohesion and the identity of the bloc. Gramsci outlined two major superstructural levels. One was called 'civil society, that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called private', like the schools, universities, political parties, associations and so on, while the other was termed as "political society" or "the State". He pointed out that 'these two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of "hegemony" which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of "direct domination" or command exercised through the State and "juridical" government' (Hoare – Smith, 1999, 12). By having this favourable position, it could create 'spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group' (Hoare – Smith, 1999, 12).

Social consent can be forced by the state apparatus/political society. The state coercive power disciplines the society's renitent members. Thus he distinguishes two ways to rule or at least two tools in the hand of the ruling class: social hegemony and state domination which function as rewards and punishments for the subaltern social groups. He gives a broader understanding of the State in his Prison Notebooks that is outlined in the above mentioned duality. He defines the modern state as 'State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion' (Hoare-Smith, 1999, 263). By defining the state as a synthesis of civil society and the political apparatus he admits that these are inseparable and the two – consent and coercion – exist in the same time and shape the subordinated groups' world view to accept the current economic-political situation. Like Machiavelli's metaphor about the Centaur ('half-animal and half-human') which incarnates a duality like 'levels of force and of consent, authority and hegemony, violence and civilisation, of the individual moment and of the universal moment ("Church" and "State"), of agitation and of propaganda, of tactics and of strategy etc.' (Hoare-Smith, 1999, 170).

This results that government can gain support from the media because various elites share similar life-styles and values and because it controls directly or indirectly the civil society as these organisations operate within the framework of rules and faces punishment if they pass the room for manoeuvre granted by the legal structure. (Femia, 1987). These considerations put his definition of civil society, political society and state relations contradicts the contemporary approaches which tend to separate the civil and political society (Dikici-Bilgin, 2009, 108-111).

According to Gramsci, hegemony is realized via 'intellectuals' who translate the ruling class's hegemony to the society and act as functionaries of the dominant. This pattern exists in the state's administration but in the civil society as well. He makes difference between two groups of intellectuals: the urban and the rural-type intellectuals. For him, the first group represents those who are loyal to the dominant class and take part actively in building the hegemony while the other type lives in small towns and have regular contacts with the masses, namely the peasantry (Hoare – Smith, 1999, 12-15).

By delineating the main tenets of how the ruling elites intend to preserve their power (the Italian bourgeoisie in his time) he also outlines the successful strategy to challenge the current hegemony. One of the main themes in Gramsci's approach is the difference between the success of Bolshevik revolution and the seemingly limited effect

of Labour movement in Western Europe. According to him, the relation between civil society and state differed greatly in Russia and Western Europe. In Russia, civil society was rather underdeveloped while state apparatus was strong but vulnerable. With the successful revolution (war of movement) it was easy for the Bolsheviks to impose the new order over the whole population (Hoare – Smith, 1999).

On the contrary, in Western European states the civil society under bourgeois control was much more developed, and had strong control over the state bureaucracy. This circumstance made the realisation of the Bolshevik way impossible. Having the hegemony in the bourgeoisie's hand, its resilience would make a war of movement futile. That is why Gramsci proposes another tactic for working classes to seize the power: the war of position. According to him, this will lead to a longer process in which a new, working class-related civil society would emerge acquiring the adequate strength to slowly occupy important state positions. This timely process would coexist with the current, given social-political order and it would be realized *de facto* by the emergence of a counter-hegemonic bloc despite of the possible obstacles erected by the prevailing bourgeoisie.

The process of the emergence of the new hegemonic bloc via war of position (or passive revolution which is also used by Gramsci) is a gradual change (Hoare – Smith, 1999, 109). This means that subaltern social groups slowly emerge and occupy gradually the social superstructure without using force. This process last when the new ruling class accumulates enough legitimacy to establish a new hegemony from the inside out (Hendrik, 2009).

To put it into context, Gramsci distinguishes two kinds of society in Western Europe. The first group, like France and England, had almost fully developed society undergone social revolution. Other states, such as Germany could not finish this process entirely. This proves of social revolution did not finish and the new industrial bourgeoisie could not accede to hegemony while the old order has managed to keep at least some part its power. This stalemate resulted in the notion of 'passive revolution' (Hoare – Smith, 1999, 289-301) that has three fundamental moments ('situation') or equilibrium of forces (equilibrium of social political, equilibrium of political forces and politico-military equilibrium) (Hoare – Smith, 1999, 404-411).

Gramsci states that one feature of the passive revolution is *Caesarism* which is basically occurs when a strong man (like Caesar or Napoleon Bonaparte) seizes the power and overwrite the stalemate between equal and opposed social groups. The

*Caesarism* could be two forms depending which social force was supported by the strong man. It could be progressive when he favours the new order and reactionary when he stabilizes the older one. Nevertheless, he distinguishes an other type of *Caesarism* which stems from the moment when the “political deficiency of the traditional dominant force” is taking place. He sees Napoleon III political trajectory as a result of the internal struggle between rival forces of the same dominant class, like legitimists, Orleanists, Bonapartists, Jacobin-republicans (Hoare – Smith, 1999, 463-471).

To create a counter-hegemonic project one group may address a number of problems. It has to create an alternative discourse that can challenge the dominant one whilst it still preserves some elements of it. It means that new discourse build on the useful part of the current main discourse however, it adds new elements to it thus transforming the ‘common sense’ in a ‘new sense.’ (Hunt, 1990, 314). Like in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the idea serfdom which was a normal legal status and reality in daily life for millions in Central-Europe was challenged and after the adequate reforms it has become obsolete.

Furthermore, a crisis when current dominant groups’ position can be challenged may also open the way to the success of counter-hegemonic project. Hegemonic crises may occur when external or internal problems weaken the integrity of the hegemonic group or the counter-hegemonic project gains convincing force rapidly (Hunt, 1990, 315). Hunt points out that Gramsci places the law in the intersection of civil and political society which on the one hand gives legitimacy for norms and rules while serves as a legal framework for civil society and make public accountability and surveillance on the other. Thus counter-hegemony project may emphasize the importance of law and fight for rights by keeping mind that the only option for success to switch from ‘corporate’ to ‘universal’ level. In other terms, it should represent not just the given group’s interest (at least at the discursive level) but make inter-class alliances by representing universal rights for broader groups. Subsequently single-issue movement has fewer prospects to win that a group articulating a more comprehensive agenda. (Hunt, 1990, 315-322).

## 2.2. Neo-Gramscianism

Historically its stems from the 70s and especially the 80s when Anglo-Saxon IR scholars had to ‘rediscover’ the notion of hegemony and apply for explaining the world order after the relative decline of US power following the fiasco in Vietnam. Hitherto, traditional concept of hegemony – dominance over other states based on military and economic power – was rather banished to the periphery of the discipline.<sup>14</sup> A number of theorists and historians (for instance Robert Gilpin, Robert O. Keohane, Paul Kennedy) depicted the image of classical hegemonic power – the US and its predecessors (Romsics, 2010). This rising popularity of the notion of hegemony resulted in that IR scholars had to trace the contour the new world order that even made the thinking about hegemony more accepted. Various IR schools, Liberals and Realists also engineered their own hegemony approach. Later this process even converged to a realist and liberal synthesis of hegemony, namely the hegemonic stability theory. It proposed an approach argued that a hegemon emerging from the anarchic world order would be able to establish a security and create better prospects for trade and produces goods that benefits every country from. In this approach hegemony was described as something based on material resources (Keohane, 1984).

Despite the growing importance of hegemony in IR, and the fact that Antonio Gramsci wrote his famous *Prison Notebooks* some decades ago, the scientific community did not manage to create a consensual reading of his *ouvrage* and more importantly it was sidelined for decades. Albeit Gramsci stated in his book that his theory may be applied for international relations because

‘international relations react both passively and actively on political relations (of hegemony among the parties). The more the immediate economic life of a nation is subordinated to international relations, the more a particular party will come to represent this situation and to exploit it, with the aim of preventing rival parties gaining the upper hand’ (Hoare – Smith, 1999, 398)

this suggestion did not raise much attention for a long while. The anti-Marxist stance in the US – as leading centre in IR – also boosted this long-lasting negligence. However, in the 1980’s, several authors, like Robert W. Cox and Stephen Gill

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<sup>14</sup> Certainly, hegemony has a long history in international relation thinking, Thukydides was probably the first one in describing the notion.

announced his theory's applicability in International Political Economy and International Relations as well. Especially Cox's writings were crucial from that aspect (Cox, 1981, 1983). While admitting the concept's strength at society and state level, he elaborated in various articles that Gramsci's hegemony theory could be a valuable tool in understanding contemporary international system and the role of international organizations within this order. Antonio Gramsci's theory was applied to the international system in his famous work entitled *Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: an Essay in Method* (Cox, 1983). It is important to note that Cox did not intend in his paper to make omnipotent critics about Gramsci's Prison Notebook, nevertheless he derived some ideas from the Italian thinker's book that he perceived as useful for the revision of international relations theory. He stated that hegemony shall be distinguished from the 'dominance' which is a notion to describe a state's leverage over other state or group of states and not over a system (Cox, 1983, 60).

He divided the roughly last one and half hundred years into four periods (1845-1875, 1875-1945, 1945-1965 and 1965 to the 1980's) when a world hegemony was established (hegemonic) and when 'a dominance of a non-hegemonic kind prevails' (non-hegemonic). According to him, the first one, between 1845 and 1875 was the era of British hegemony, while the following one was rather a non-hegemonic period because the British supremacy was successfully challenged and the world order determined by London in the previous period has been vanished. In the third period, between 1945 and 1965, the United States has managed to recreate a new world order similar to the British one which led to a new hegemonic order. After 1965, 'it became evident that this US-led world order was no longer working well' (Cox, 1983, 60).

As the very core element of his theoretical framework, he defines the notion of hegemony as not dominance over states but the capability to create a global world order that other states could adopt:

'to become hegemonic, a state would have to found and protect a world order which was universal in conception, i.e., not an order in which one state directly exploits others but an order which most other states (or at least those within reach of the hegemony) could find compatible with their interests.' (Cox, 61.)

According to Cox, this kind of hegemonies is founded by strong and powerful states that have undergone a social and economic revolution. The world hegemony is



derived from the dominant social class in the given state. The social and political structure, economy and culture has become as an ideal structure to follow by other states. This order implies a passive revolution on peripheral states that had not undergone through the same social and economic process. Consequently they attempt to incorporate the institutional, cultural and other elements of this hegemony which would be *imparfait*, especially the application of political model as the 'old regime' would keep in various manners its power. According to him, world hegemony is based on the unity of social, economic and political structure and it cannot be simply one of these things (Cox, 1983, 62). The tools to express globally the world hegemony are international organisations (Cox, 1983, 62). He argues:

‘Among the features of international organisation which express its hegemonic role are the following: (1) they embody the rules which facilitate the expansion of hegemonic world orders; (2) they are themselves the product of the hegemonic world order; (3) they ideologically legitimate the norms of the world order; (4) they co-opt the elites from peripheral countries and (5) they absorb counter-hegemonic ideas. (Cox, 1983, 62)’

In his opinion, international organizations are effective tools to facilitate ‘the expansion of the dominant economic and social forces.’ Moreover they perform an ideological role as well (Cox, 1983, 63) as they help to define and legitimise given policy guidelines for states. International organization also uses *Transformismo* as they absorb people coming from the periphery who have to work in line with the interest of hegemonic state. Cox also agrees that ‘Transformismo also absorbs potentially counter-hegemonic ideas and makes these ideas consistent with hegemonic doctrine’ (Cox, 1983, 63).

The collapse of Communist bloc and the Soviet-Union discredited the Stalinist-Leninist understanding of historical materialism and it has given the opportunity towards more extensive researches of Gramsci’s work. This change also gave a fresh impetus to new wave of scholarly works dealing with the possibility to extend Gramscian theory towards IPE and IR. Reflecting to Gramsci’s expression, the neoliberal hegemony deriving from the United States has already created its ‘international historical bloc’ (Gill – Law, 1993, 96). Rupert gives an excellent overview about this process arguing that production of goods made the leader of global division of labour. This gave the opportunity to reconstruct a new world order under American leadership stemming from the historic bloc of American social groups

(capitalists, businessmen) who fostered liberal capitalism in the US and later all around the world (Rupert, 1995).

German and Kenny admit that Gramscian theory offers ‘an ontological and epistemological foundation upon which to construct a non-deterministic yet structurally grounded explanation of change.’ Furthermore, Gramscian approach accepting the human subjectivity provides researchers with a tool to avoid ‘deterministic and ahistoric structuralism’ (German – Kenny, 1998, 5.). According to them, other attractiveness of the theory ‘lies in the employment of his methodology.’

To analyse the relation between the global and local structure and reveal the dynamics of Turkish domestic policy, the Author argues that Gramscian and Neo-Gramscian approach may provide the adequate explanatory framework. Cox and subsequently Gramsci’s main contribution was a new, systemic level critical theory that moved away from the orthodoxy of state-centric interpretations.

The Author believes that the application of the chosen theories does not lead to misunderstanding. Firstly, the two theory’s ontological assumptions stem from the same *problematique*, and they observe the same phenomenon with similar tools. The main difference between the two approaches is the scope. While Gramsci rather concentrates to changes within one state (although he admits the applicability of his theory for international relations), Neo-Gramscianism offers rather a world-level analysis.

The fusion of these levels means the main theoretical approach of this work. The Neoliberal word order and its hegemony helped the emergence of Neoliberal state policies that strengthened certain groups. Gramsci argues that the social groups that manage to adopt the fastest the new economic world order will be able to rule the state sooner or later.

To conclude, Gramsci offers a useful analytical tool in order to conceptualize the social-political transformation taking place in Turkey under the AKP. Nevertheless, the social change in close cooperation with the changes in form of production started before the emergence of the Justice and Development Party. This political turn started with the Özal era that led to the growing influence of the periphery – the Anatolian conservative, Islamist groups which emerged as a counter-hegemonic project.

It is worth emphasizing that Gramsci’s approach is not a novelty for Turkey, both Turkish and foreign researchers have demonstrated its applicability for the AKP era. Some focused on the relation of the Turkish civil society and political society (Dikici-Bilgin, 2009; Zihnioğlu, 2013, Sinan, 2015). Cihan Tuğal made extensive field

research to portray the AKP's emergence and its co-optation of (Radikal) Islamists and the process how it could gain consent. He identifies Islamism as a novel form of counter-hegemonic politics which is termed as religio-moral populism (Tuğal, 2009). Others focused on the nature of Turkish state (Öncü, 2003), and the internal struggle within the elite (Yıldırım, 2017) or cultural policy (Sibel, 2015).

Several case studies have used Gramscian framework to analyze particular groups of movement role in hegemony building such as the Gülen movement (Hendrik, 2009), the trajectory of the MÜSIAD as the Islamists' main business group (Ayhan – Sağiroğlu, 2012), the emergence of the OYAK and the dynamics of Turkish military-civil relations based on various hegemonic projects (Akça, 2016) or the role of market-oriented groups in making a pro-privatization hegemonic discourse (Şahin, 2010).

The Author has shown that Turkish foreign policy conceptualization has a great variety of approach. Nevertheless, the detailed analysis of internal, social-political changes in Turkey itself affecting its diplomacy got limited attention. He argues that Gramscian and Neo-Gramscian approach to analyse the AKP-period's development has relevancy. The scientific literature has already recognized its applicability for the Turkish case.

Concerning the analysis of social transformation and its political affects of foreign policy pursuance Yalvaç proposes a Critical Realist approach arguing that the AKP has started to create its hegemonic depth in the society in Gramscian terms. Nevertheless, he mainly focuses on the theoretical approach and overall picture, and he does not give a distinct analysis of this process, especially on the regional level (Yalvaç, 2012, 2014). The use of (Neo-)Gramscian theory as a possible tool for the conceptualization of Turkish foreign policy appear at other authors, however, it remains marginalized in the literature (Uzgel, 2009). Even Tuğal describing the ascendancy of the Islamist movement to the state power does not analyse the effects of this process in detail on the Turkish foreign policy (Tuğal, 2009).

To analyse the relation between the global and local structure and reveal the dynamics of Turkish foreign policy, the Author argues that Gramscian and Neo-Gramscian approach may provide the adequate explanatory framework. Why to choose Gramsci? Cox and subsequently Gramsci's main contribution to IR theory was a new, systemic level critical theory that moved away from the orthodoxy of state-centric interpretations. Thus, the 'traditional' or 'mainstream' IR theories' applicability for this research is limited.

These theoretical foundations for the methodology of the current work provide a unique opportunity to go beyond the ‘traditional’ IR theories explanatory framework. Neo-realism offers a rather state-level analysis based on the proclaimed self interest of state-actors in a rather chaotic world. According to neo-realist interpretation, the structure is constant: the conflicts are the perpetual part of the world order where the key element of the self-interest is the given state’s survival. In this anarchic, belligerent world the various actors seek for balance of power to ensure their security and subsequent survival.

The main weakness of Realism for the current research is threefold. Firstly its negligence towards intra-state actors, especially towards social movements, civil society does not permit to reveal important factors behind the changes in Turkish foreign policy, and the role of non-state actors in shaping Ankara’s relations with the region. Secondly, Realism does not give enough attention to the change. As it was mentioned, (neo-)realists see the structure a permanent where only the actors may change (new states do emerge, others perish) the system remains the same. This approach does not take into consideration the possibility of change: the future will be always like the past (Cox, 1981, 131). On the contrary, Gramscianism and Neo-Gramscianism argues that the world order change in itself results in conflict. While Gramscianism focuses on rather what is going on within the state borders, Neo-Gramscians intend to understand the structure and explain the inter-state relations as a derivative of the world order. In both theories hegemony occupies a central role.

Historically its stems from the 70s and especially the 80s when Anglo-Saxon IR scholars had to ‘rediscover’ the notion of hegemony and apply for explaining the world order after the relative decline of US power following the fiasco in Vietnam. Hitherto, traditional concept of hegemony – dominance over other states based on military and economic power – was rather banished to the periphery of the discipline.<sup>15</sup> A number of theorists and historians (for instance Robert Gilpin, Robert O. Keohane, Pauly Kennedy) depicted the image of classical hegemonic power – the US and its predecessors (Romsics, 2010).

After the end of the Cold War IR scholars had to trace the contour the new world order that even made the thinking about hegemony more popular. This converged to a realist and liberal synthesis of hegemony, namely the hegemonic stability theory. It

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<sup>15</sup> Certainly, hegemony has a long history in international relation thinking, Thukydides was probably the first one in discribing the notion.

admits that hegemon emerging from the anarchic world order will be able to establish a security and create better prospects for trade and produces goods that benefits every country from. In this approach hegemony was described as something based on material resources (Keohane, 1984).

Historical materialism offers a broader understanding of hegemony. In this case, hegemony derives from social forces creating their own dominance (hegemony) within a state and establishing their ideas projected on a world scale. This process is facilitated by material resources, institutions of the state where a given class has managed to create its own order and it is implemented not by force but by the creation of institutions and norms. It also depicts a very different interpretation of power. Finally, Neorealism focuses on conflicts, wars rather than cooperation something that is always an important element in Ankara's motives towards the Balkans, although dialogue and growing interdependence unravel more precisely the ongoing relations during the last fifteen years.

This feature may suggest that Neo-liberalism could be a better choice. Nevertheless, it does not help to understand the social and political changes in Turkey and its subsequent effects on the change in Turkish foreign policy. Constructivism may probably provide a promising theoretical approach. Indeed, the norms, values and identities occupy a central role in Turkish-Balkans relations. The common history that current discourse built in shapes Ankara's ruling elite's ambitions towards the region. The process of common history's narrative, the Ottoman legacy is constructed shall be observed. This school is deemed to be useful in analysing the speeches and various forms of narratives that are usually constructed against each other in Balkans and Turkey (especially in the Christian-Muslim cleavage, while in Muslim-Muslim relation can be perceived as closer and converging). Nevertheless, it could not provide an overall picture about the very nature of the Turkish foreign policy because constructivism also pays less attention on social forces, internal changes of power.

To use Gramscianism and Neo-Gramscianism raises a number of methodological concerns. Why to choose two theoretical approaches for one dissertation? Does this choice produce confusion and weaken the analytical framework? The Author believes that the application of the chosen theories does not lead to misunderstanding. Firstly, the two theory's ontological assumptions stem from the same *problematique*, and they observe the same phenomenon with similar tools. The main difference between the two approaches is the scope. While Gramsci rather concentrates

to changes within one state (although he admits the applicability of his theory for international relations), Neo-Gramscianism offers rather a world-level analysis.

The fusion of these levels means the main theoretical approach of this dissertation. The Neoliberal word order and its hegemony helped the emergence of Neoliberal state policies that strengthened certain groups. Gramsci argues that the social groups that manage to adopt the fastest the new economic world order will be able to rule the state sooner or later.

‘Even the geographical position of a national State does not precede but follows (logically) structural changes, although it also reacts back upon them to a certain extent (to the extent precisely to which superstructures react upon the structure, politics on economics, etc.). However, international relations react both passively and actively on political relations (of hegemony among the parties). The more the immediate economic life of a nation is subordinated to international relations, the more a particular party will come to represent this situation and to exploit it, with the aim of preventing rival parties gaining the upper hand (Hoare – Smith, 1999, 398).’

Stemming from this statement, a very core question arises. Why were Central-Anatolian (Conservative, Islamist) groups able to acquire (and preserve) the power and slowly occupy the administration while traditional Kemalist elite lost its previous dominance? Present thesis argues that the Islamists were more successful in adapting to the neoliberal world order and enough successful to benefit from the social transformation of the last decades. The Author agrees with Yalvaç who states that the redefinition of state-society relations as well as economic relations along neoliberal and conservative (or Islamist) lines contributed to the change in foreign policy, too (Yalvaç, 2012, 167). Nevertheless, the precise effects of this change on foreign policy need to be researched, analysed and tested – for this occasion, in the case of Balkans.

### 3. Methodology

The research is based on qualitative methodology and the extensive research of primary and secondary sources and their analyses by Gramscian and Neo-Gramscian theoretical framework. The time frame of the research limited the possible use of sources. As it focuses on the AKP's period (more exactly from November 2002 to the implementation of the presidential system after June 2018), it could not use confidential documents, strategies but rely on contemporary, open sources.

This it analyses the speeches and writings of Turkish decision-makers. Ahmet Davutoğlu – who was probably the main actor in shaping Ankara's external relations during the given period – active publishing activities helped to outline the TFP. His academic background and writings, especially his famous volume *Stratejik Derinlik* paved the way to understand his view about the region as advisor, later on as Minister of Foreign Affairs. The speeches of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, as Prime Minister, later as President of the Republic also made a compelling contribution to the thesis. The discourse-analysis reveals the political elite's perception of the Balkans and the way how this image is constructed. Certainly, political statements shall be the object of deep analysis and shall be questioned as various intentions are in their background, however, the construction of an image and its use in public speeches emerges as an orientation point for the researcher.

Turkish state institutions' and civil organisations' publications, statements and news also helped the research. Usually these online sources portrayed the scope and nature of the given organisation's activities. Annual reports of the TİKA, the TDV were the most useful from this respect.

Interrelated with the discourse analysis of political leaders' oral or written statements and speeches, field researches in Turkey and in various Balkans countries also represent a valuable contribution to the work. Meetings and discussions with scholars, journalists, representatives of the administration and politicians represented a useful experience for the work. Obviously the outcome of these meeting varies in a wide range, and invite to a severe analysis and criticism. Nevertheless, the acquired knowledge about the TFP cannot be neglected. These trips also facilitated to use primary and secondary sources written in Turkish language that would not have been possible to find in Hungary.

Official statistical data provided by relevant statistical institutes and governmental institutions were also essential contributions. Statistical data show the change in economic relations, the effects of the various agreements in boosting trade and investment. These highlighted the importance of Balkans for Turkey, at least in economic terms.

Although the thesis focuses on contemporary issues, it could not neglect the past which influences the AKP's domestic and foreign policies greatly. Thus, history books helped to describe the importance of the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman heritage for the current political situation and narratives. Books and articles dealing with the Turkey's history in the 20th century also contributed to the better understanding of the AKP's hegemony project.

Secondary sources were crucial in defining the hypotheses, outlining the research questions and understanding the debate(s) about TFP in the literature review. Furthermore, they also contributed to mapping the TFP's institutional background.

- 1) books
- 2) journal papers
- 3) political analyses
- 4) newspaper articles

The qualitative analysis of a number of primary and secondary sources hopefully may provide adequate tools to justify H1 and H2. The timeframe of the research covers six AKP governments that may provide enough samples for the dissertation. During these six governments the conduct of Turkish foreign policy has changed simultaneously with the emergence of AKP as a hegemon in Turkey. This change also affected Turkey's relations with Balkan states, as Turkish presence has become more visible and the international scientific community also started to focus on Turkish activities. During the last fifteen years, Ankara's diplomacy has produced a great number of events, programmes and foreign policy tools to possess a relatively big sample to analyse.



#### **4. Literature review on the AKP's foreign policy**

This dissertation is aiming to produce a comprehensive explanation of Turkey's foreign policy therefore it cannot avoid revealing the main findings of researchers and scholars about Ankara's external activities. Summarising and evaluating these works shall constitute a rudimentary part of the thesis even if this review is facing obstacles due to the growing size of scientific literature. Much ink has been spilled on trying to understand, describe and even forecast changes in Ankara's external relations. These works culminated in a huge literature whose overall presentation is hampered by its own size. Despite this problem, it is possible to analyse and find the major tendencies of this literature.

This chapter aims at describing the various narratives about Turkish foreign policy under AKP's era by reviewing the most important theories. Although a number of articles, books and papers will be used to explain the AKP's foreign policy in the following chapters, here they are perceived as a part of a narrative. This perception creates a different epistemology where the scientific works are constructed by various discourses. In other terms, this chapter is essential in order to understand how and why the scientific community intended to analyse Ankara's foreign relations. Revealing these main narratives will show that scientific thinking about Turkey-Balkan relations has a rather different epistemology whose analysis provides a perfect opportunity for research. Finally, this part is also indispensable to see the current scientific approaches towards Turkish foreign policy that shall be surpassed in this thesis which aims to offer alternative explanation and tools for understanding the AKP's governments' motives.

The main tenets of the possible conceptualization of Turkish foreign policy literature shall be analysed through two aspects: 1) in which period and 2) what are the main tendencies in describing the country's foreign relations. It shall be underlined that constant debate has been featuring the scientific discourse about Turkish foreign policy during the AKP's era. Although its focus changed from time to time, the main debate was always linked to Turkey's stance towards its Western allies and its opening towards the Middle East, or towards either Asian powers, especially to Russia which can be identified as Turkish Eurasianism. The discourse about this drift in 'traditional' Turkish foreign relations still keeps going. Moreover, the Gezi events<sup>16</sup> - when developments in

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<sup>16</sup> Political crisis stemming from the protests against the construction of a shopping mall in the center of Istanbul, next to the Taksim square at the Gezi park. The protests in May 2013 escalated fast to mass anti-

Turkish domestic politics draw international attention to the country itself - also aggravated the debate that Ankara is turning its back to the West not just in foreign policy but by creating an illiberal democracy or even a new authoritarian regime damaging the Western (democratic) values. The deterioration of the AKP's perception was nourished by its foreign policy manoeuvres that have become increasingly unpredictable during the last few years (it is enough to point out the downing of Russian jet in November 2015, or the splendid rapprochement to Moscow some half year later).

Concerning the timing of the above-mentioned debates, the AKP's foreign policy can be divided into sub-periods. After 2002, during the AKP's first years in power, scholars rather focused on the country's possible EU accession and the community's ability to absorb of related challenges (See more: Rózsa N., 2007). However, early works on Ankara's opening towards the Middle East have appeared, too. Later, due to the slowdown in EU accession talks (that gave an impetus to works explaining the failure, see: Eralp-Torun, 2012) and growing activism in the neighbouring countries pushed scholars towards analysing the 'new' features of Turkish foreign policy. After Ahmet Davutoğlu's nomination to the top of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2009, a showy debate has been launched about the very nature of Ankara's 'real' ambitions. This debate practically resumes the long tradition about the controversy whether 'Turkey is leaving the Western bloc or not.' The Arab Spring in 2011 added a new hue to this debate: if Turkey emerges as a model country for the Arab world. The debate about the applicability of the so-called 'Turkish model' has started to dominate the scientific literature, even if the Arab public or political actors did not considered Turkey as a plausible model. A short while later, when Ankara's initial expectations have failed in Syria and the Assad regime's resiliency and stability has remained intact anticipating a long-lasting war (2012), and even when President Mohamed Morsi was ousted in Egypt (2013) almost eliminating Ankara's favourite political group, the Muslim Brotherhood in the region, scholars began to argue that Turkish foreign policy is in a cul-de-sac. Although most analyses in 2015-2016 stated that Ankara has lost momentum in the Middle East as well as it has lost its friends, even its foreign policy headed to terrible isolation, or even downgraded the country to become a buffer state (Keyman, 2016). The summer of 2016 brought back the shift (Aydıntaşbaş – Kirişçi, 2017). Ankara's rapprochement to Moscow, its autonomous decision to settle the conflict with

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government protests in the major towns of the country due to the disproportionate use of force by the police.

the support of Russia and Iran has verified the questions on Turkey's position towards its Western and (new) Eastern allies and its real orientation.

International academic community offers a great variety of explanations about Turkish foreign policy. In order to conceptualise it, the Author distinguishes three main narratives. Here he would like to underline that more approaches could be determined, however after reviewing a number of works dealing with Ankara's foreign relations he suggested to focus on the following interpretations. Thus Turkey's foreign policy has been addressed through three main approaches:

- 1) Turkish foreign policy is reorienting and it is losing its traditional allies (US and EU)
- 2) The AKP's has created an extraordinary foreign policy
- 3) The AKP's foreign policy is the continuation of previous governments' external ambitions

#### **4.1. Leaving the friends or justified claims for an autonomous foreign policy?**

These questions, or rather responses given by scholars, are usually interlinked. A number of researchers, foreign policy analysts and journalists who see a rupture compared to the previous eras are rather sceptical about Ankara's external aspirations and are prone to spot an 'alienation' between Turkey and the West. Especially around 2009, great variety of articles and analyses have appeared in prestigious Western newspapers and journals like *Le Monde*, *Huffington Post*, *Spiegel* or *Foreign Affairs* to discuss whether the West is losing Ankara or not (Nougayrède, 2009; Babalı, 2011; Zand, 2009; Çağaptay, 2009) showing that there is a flagrant divergence.

Western think-tanks and scholars see a slow but steady downturn in Western-Turkish relations in line with Ankara's turning towards the Middle East, started to question the country's real orientation. A number of policy papers and articles have been published to draw attention to this change. As we can see, these interlinked narratives give a strong normative dimension to the evaluation of Turkish foreign policy. A number of analysts perceive the ongoing changes as a threat or at least unflattering development for Western interests and consider them along with unfavourable illiberal or even authoritarian turn in the AKP's domestic politics as a worrying tendency that shall be

tackled or at least be given the adequate attention (Cohen, 2010), especially after the Gezi events and corruption probes in 2013 (Washington Post, 2014). The events of 2015, the war against the PKK and weakening the pro-Kurdish HDP and the crackdown of Gülenist movement (especially after the coup attempt) also paved the way a new wave of criticism.

The increasing Western distress is rooted in several Turkish foreign policy manoeuvres. Ankara's overture towards the Hamas, the Prime minister's speeches in Davos (2009) followed by the Mavi Marmara incident deteriorating Ankara's relations with Israel and Turkey's cordial ties with Iran infuriated the pro-Israeli civil society elements in the United States (Falk, 2014, 12). The Turkish government rapprochement to Syria (until 2011), the liberal visa-policy towards the Arab states and even the scenic opening towards Africa after 2005 has given the image that a significant change occurred in Ankara. In these years, a great variety of actors changed their attitude towards the Turkish government. These events turned the neo-conservatives and their think-tanks against Ankara even if initially they were supportive to the AKP. The Israel-lobby that preliminary supported Ankara in different issues like counterbalancing the influential Armenian associations and interest groups in the USA (Öktem, 2012, 78) has also become critical towards Turkey.

Ilan Berman, vice-president of the American Foreign Policy Council argued that this 'monumental reorientation' was signed by the Turkish blockade of American troops launching an attack from the country's territory against Iraq, the cooling attitudes towards Europe, the split with Israel and the rapprochement to Syria (Berman, 2010). Four years later, he sees that alliance between the US and Turkey is already over. Berman points out several reasons like the domestic troubles a. k. a. the Gülen-AKP 'civil war' that also involved the United States into the conflict (Fethullah Gülen resides in Pennsylvania), the divergence over Syria and Ankara's attempt to buy Chinese missile defences that made Turkey an uncertain NATO-ally (Ilan Berman, 2014). Heritage Foundation analysis (McNamara – Cohen – Phillips, 2010) is also in line with the above-mentioned opinion, as it states:

'Turkish and U.S. interests in the Balkans, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Persian Gulf have recently diverged. On critical issues, especially energy and the Middle East, Turkey currently stands at odds with the United States.'

American Foreign Policy Council perceives that the growing belligerent rhetoric of the AKP and empty threat to neighbours – that consequently overwrites the 'zero

problems with neighbours' doctrine – without tangible force undermines Ankara's diplomatic influence over Syria and deteriorate the relations with Greece, Cyprus and Izrael (Levinson, 2012). Cornell sees that Ankara's approach to Iran and Sudan after 2008 and the degrading relations with Israel are clear signs of an "axis shift." (Cornell, 2012). Brookings Institute's analyst, Michel A. Reynolds points out that

'Turkey's current foreign policy represents a clear break with the tradition that characterized the republic's foreign policy for nearly eight decades (Reynolds, 2012, iii).'

Bipartisan Policy Center's analysis about Turkish foreign policy, written by two US ambassadors evaluates the US-Turkish relations (Abramowitz – Edelman, 2013) argues that after 2007, Turkish foreign policy has shifted eastward. This change paved the way for growing disagreement with the West. The country's cordial ties with Iran, Syria (before the uprisings) and the Hamas, its sectarian support for the Muslim Brotherhood and breaking off the relations with Israel, the most important US-ally in the region, have damaged the American-Turkish relations. However, they admit that Washington has also been misguiding Ankara over the Syrian conflict leading to the drift between Erdoğan and Assad and they conclude that Washington has to maintain close relations with Turkey in order to keep this important ally that shall be a partner in shaping the Middle East. Others also argue that despite the strategic drift with the West, Washington should 'anchor Turkey firmly in our court' (Steckler – Altman, 2011, 48).

Nonetheless, the conglomerate of Western narratives on Turkey's international position and its government's motives were never homogeneously 'negative' and they also provided a wide range of explanations and interpretations. Certainly, the assumptions on the seriousness of Turkey's drift with its allies also diverge. Many argues that although a real change can be perceived, it does not mean an irreversible process and Washington has to work on keeping and rebuilding good relations with Ankara (Larrabee 2008, 2010b). RAND Corporation analyst, Stephen F. Larrabee argues that despite many critics that the West is losing Turkey or the AKP-led government leaves the country's traditional allies, Turkish foreign policy just seeks to adapt to the Post-Cold War strategic environment which cannot be perceived as a rupture (Larrabee, 2010b). However, he admits in various works that the relation between Washington and Ankara will face challenges, and deteriorated since 2003 when Turkey did not give the permission for US forces to attack Iraq through the country (Larrabee, 2010a). He also states his concerns about degrading US-Turkish military

cooperation and reveals various issues about which the two states' position differ such as Iran, Syria or the Kurdish issue (Larrabee, 2008).

Although other authors also admit the change in Ankara's diplomatic relations, they do not see so much danger in Ankara's transforming diplomacy. Famous columnist, Cengiz Çandar sees the change cannot be attributed to Turkey's departure from its Western partners but rather linked to a systematic change is the inevitable outcome of the end of Cold War and the emergence of new economic actors showing by the emergence of G20 (Çandar, 2009).

Oran Baskin argues that during the 20th century the claim that Turkey changes its alliances has been surfacing from time to time (Baskin, 2012). For instance, Western observers voiced warnings about Turkey turning to the non-aligned movement in the 1970's when the relations between Washington and Ankara chilled down due to the Cyprus crisis. He emphasizes that alarmist statements aroused regularly, even when pro-Western or Pro-American governments were at power in Ankara. He notes that these opinions appeared when Turkish decision-makers attempted to diversify their Euro-Atlanticist position to tackle the perpetually changing international challenges and 'to secure a relative autonomy through regional balances of power, a *sine qua non* policy for any strategic medium power' (Baskin, 2012, xvii). Philip Robins highlights – still prior Davutoğlu's nomination – that Turkish foreign policy under the AKP took a new turn compared to the traditional direction of its Kemalist predecessors, with more emphasis on the Middle East (Robins, 2006). However, he sees the party's new, more balanced foreign policy opening a window to the East and becoming more self-confident as a positive development. According to Robins this change stems from various factors. According to him, Turkey is a 'double gravity state' having strong links simultaneously to Europe and Middle East and the AKP, having two-third mark in the parliament rather represents a Central-Anatolian counter-elite and a wide, conservative population versus the previous Kemalist governments. Without giving too much importance to identity issues, he argues that the then pursuit of foreign policy was the result of a division of labour between Kemalist-led state apparatus and an AKP-led, conservative government (Robins, 2006, 210). Schmid also thinks that despite the new Turkish interest in the Middle-East, Ankara could not turn its back on Europe due to the economic and political interdependence (Schmid, 2011, 2008). Others also believe that the debate about losing Turkey is exaggerated, and they state that Ankara basically follows the West and does not want to cancel its ties with the USA or Europe, it just has

a new approach towards the Middle East (Csicsmann – Rózsa, N., 2013, 74, Kısacık, 2012).

Alessandri deems the ‘drift theory’ as oversimplified explanation of Turkish foreign policy (Alessandri, 2010). He argues that AKP’s foreign policy is in search of identity due to internal and international changes taken place in recent years; nevertheless it does not result in a rupture between Turkey and the West. However, he suggests by analysing the EU accession process and its outcomes that the West and the EU itself also should reconsider what they can offer to Turkey.

Some scholars from the Turkish Diaspora living in the West express their concerns about Turkish diplomacy as well. These studies usually challenge the current Turkish leadership or at least emphasise the disagreements between the West and Ankara. As one of the most influential, US-based scholar on Turkey, Soner Çağaptay has admitted in a number of works, Turkey has gone through a huge transformation during the AKP’s rule. This change has also had an effect on Turkish foreign policy. He outlines the main changes in Turkish foreign policy, such as restructuring the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, more emphasis on economic interests and re-articulating bilateral relations with its neighbours (Çağaptay, 2013, 802). He also sees a shift between previous Turkish-American (Western) relations by claiming that Ankara turns to the Middle East (Çağaptay, 2007). However, according to him Ankara’s opening towards the Arab World and its Eastern neighbours could not eliminate Turkey’s Western traditions. Later, when relations with the Assad regime reached a new turning point and recent partners have become adversaries, it clearly showed that the country needs the West that is an ‘Indispensable Anchor.’ According to him, Turkey’s economic success could not occur without its alignment to his partners. Furthermore, Çağaptay believes that the country has remained tied to the West despite the AKP’s endeavours to overwrite this heritage.

Others think that the Erdoğan-regime during his 3rd term tried to make a more independent and autonomous Turkish foreign policy which led to more diverging opinion about various issues, especially over Syria, with the United States. However, according to him this decoupling is not just the Turkish leadership’s mistake but that of the Obama administration as well. (Balci, 2014).

Turkey’s clash of views with the US over the role Syrian Kurds, especially the PYD also led to tensions between the two NATO allies. After the coup attempt, Ankara’s spectacular rapprochement to Moscow again brought to the limelight the ‘shift

theory'. Several analysts argue that the ongoing conflict with Western states and domestic reasons push Turkey to affiliate with Eastern powers (Yıldırım, 2016). More interestingly, the Turkish Eurasianism got also a growing significance in the scientific community. Although ideology to turn towards the East (Asia) has appeared in the nineties, got more focus during the last 10 years. Some groups of Turkish intellectuals or politicians, like the Kemalist-nationalist *ulusalcılar* or even Maoist groups under the direction of Doğu Perinçek propagated the idea of boosting relations with the Turkic world or, even with Iran, Russia and China (Lin, 2014, Aktürk, 2015, Erşen, 2011, 2013). Seemingly Ankara's deteriorating relations with the West as well as the Arab Middle-East facilitated the establishment of good relations with Moscow. After the compromise in Mid-2016, the two powers could solve the diplomatic and economic crisis after downing the Russian jet. This settlement boosted Western perception about Turkey radical turn in this case not to the Middle East but to Russia.

As it was shown, mainly Anglo-Saxon and US- or Europe-based scholars usually tend to interpret Turkish foreign policy as a break with the previous government's traditional orientation. The optic of their evaluation is the current state of Western-Turkish relations and Ankara's behaviour in the view of Western interests. The changes could be *per se* threatening or at least challenging. Nevertheless, some authors are more permissive towards the country and while they admit that Ankara's foreign policy is rather new, in spite of the obvious offset, it shall be respected. Turkey does not need to choose between these two options: it can establish cordial ties with its Eastern neighbours without leaving the NATO or turning his back on the European Union membership (Paul, 2009).

## **4.2. Qualitative change in foreign policy making?**

There is another camp of scholars, analysts and journalists who also admit the fact of a possible change or rupture, nevertheless, their focus is not set – primarily – to Western-Turkish relations but to the change compared to previous, 'Kemalist' governments. This group has a core composed of pro-government circles who at least to a certain level agree with the AKP. It is composed of Islamist intellectuals and a more and more disappointed group, called Second Republicans (*İkinci Cumhuriyetçiler*).



Within this group one can find the students of Ahmet Davutoğlu (Marmara school). To avoid the mistake of generalisation and oversimplification, it is worth mentioning that one may find other Turkish and Western scholars who are not affiliated with the government at all but also share this approach. They perceive a positive transformation ensuring a more autonomous foreign policy that fits the national interests of the country better, whereas it reflects the geostrategic ‘reality’ of Turkey better as it displays the will of more social groups leading to a ‘more democratic’ foreign policy-making. For them, the change does not mean a break up with the West, just a more self-conscious conduct of external relations. In short, the nature and not the direction of the change, the gravity of Turkish foreign policy is in their focus, and they welcome this development.

The last 15 years were featured by the new, pro-active foreign policy narrative that increasingly focused on Turkey’s neighbourhood. However, despite the emphasis on Islam in foreign policy narrative, the government has no willingness to change its commitment to the West (Ovalı, 2009). Despite various frictions and disagreements with the West and especially with US, Turkey has the willingness to maintain its commitment and strategic partnership with its Western allies (Kılınç, 2010). Yaşar Yakış, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and writer of the AKP’s foreign policy programme in 2001, states that behind every significant change in a state’s foreign policy there lies a change in its main parameters such as population, neighbours, natural resources, religion etc. While no one can talk about such a change concerning Turkey, there is no a real change its commitment towards its Western partners (Yakış, 2010).

Probably the main advocator of this new-style foreign policy was Ahmet Davutoğlu himself. His famous book, published for the first time in 2001, *Strategic Depth (Stratejik derinlik Türkiye’nin uluslararası konumu)* was a less-known academician’s work just prior his rising political career. In his lengthy book, he intended to create a newer geostrategic thinking as well as to (re)position Turkey in the international world order (Davutoğlu, 2001).

Turkey’s new position has both an ideational and a geographical basis. In terms of geography, Turkey occupies a unique space. As a large country in the midst of Afro-Eurasia’s vast landmass, it may be defined as a central country with multiple regional identities that cannot be reduced to one unified character. Like Russia, Germany, Iran, and Egypt, Turkey cannot be explained geographically or culturally by associating it with one single region. Turkey’s diverse regional composition lends it the capability of maneuvering in several regions simultaneously; in this sense, it controls an area of influence in its immediate environs (Davutoğlu, 2008, 78).

Nevertheless, his vision is not unique due to its traditional realist approach. He gives Turkey a rather extraordinary position as the country is located in a very strategic zone, surrounded by basins and highlands. Turkey is not located just the interception of Europe and Asia but it situated close to Africa as well.

According to him, this special position shall also re-frame the country's foreign policy. As a central state, Turkey should open towards its strategic (closer or further) neighbourhood including especially the Middle East,<sup>17</sup> and play an active role in shaping it relations.

Third, our foreign policy will be conducted autonomously. We suffer from a perception that other powers design regional politics and we only perform the roles assigned to us. We need to do away with this psychological sense of inferiority which has permeated in many segments of our society and amongst political elites. Today, we determine our vision, set our objectives, and execute our foreign policy in line with our national priorities. We might succeed or fail in our initiatives, but the crucial point is that we implement our own policies. We do not receive instructions from any other powers, nor are we part of others' grand schemes (Davutoğlu, 2012, 6).

After 2003, when he was appointed to chief foreign policy advisor of the Prime Minister, he got closer to realise his academic, scientific vision in practice. By this time, he rather avoided getting too much publicity and he gave usually only one interview or published an article per year. Nonetheless, he advocated the previous ideas about Turkey's exceptionality and the need for a more pro-active diplomacy focusing on solving the problems with neighbours. As the first approaches towards Syria and other neighbouring countries were taken prior 2007, one can plausibly argue that the AKP has started its 'easternisation' before Davutoğlu took the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The party's victory at the general (early) elections in 2007 granted more social support for the government which tried to balance between its own electorate and the Kemalist establishment. This time EU accession talks were hindered due to the Cyprus issue (Cyprus has frozen some 9 chapters by the end of 2006) which put to a deadlock the country's fast EU accession. Due to the emergence of a new war against the PKK after 2007 Ankara had to spend more energy on the Middle East. In an article published in 2008, Davutoğlu argued that there was an urgent need for the redefinition of Turkey's international position after September 11<sup>th</sup> (Davutoğlu, 2008, 78). According to his concept, geographically Turkey occupies a strategic location, as it is at the intersection

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<sup>17</sup>This narrative in Turkey about the country's central or pivotal position in geopolitical and geostrategic terms is not unique and appeared several decades before Davutoğlu's book. The Army has been placing Turkey as a center of Mackinder and Spykman's Heartland and Rimland, several authors admitted Turkey's location makes the country an indispensable actor between the Balkans and Middle East, or Europe and Asia (see: Egeresi, 2017)

of Africa, Asia and Europe. That puts the country into an extraordinary position. This view breaks with the previous narratives about Turkey that described the country as frontier or a bridge. Furthermore, Davutoğlu also admits that identity contributes to this special status as Turkey incorporated various immigrants from the neighbouring region creating diversity within the country.

The effects of having diverse Caucasian, Balkan, Middle Eastern, Iraqi Turcoman and Anatolian groups, are seen in everyday life in today's Turkey, where miscellaneous cultural elements meet under the umbrella of the Turkish state. Turkey's geography harmonises these components subsequently grants Ankara influence over the neighbouring regions.

For principles of Turkish foreign policy, Davutoğlu defines five distinct elements. First of them is the respect of democratic values and the harmonisation of democracy and security in favour of the first notion. He believes that Turkey has managed to maintain this balance even at times of military intervention in Iraq against the PKK. Although conflicts in the South-eastern part of the country were permanent, the war against the Kurdistan Workers' Party did not hinder Ankara to maintain the civil liberties since 2002. Then scholar Davutoğlu sees Turkish democracy as one of the main soft powers of the country (Davutoğlu, 2008, 80). His second principle, the "zero problem policy towards neighbours" aims at solving the problems with countries in Turkey's environs. The example for the settlement of relations is the rapprochement with Syria taking place during the previous years. Thirdly, developing relations with neighbouring countries and beyond also constitutes an important pillar of this new-designed Turkish foreign policy. Davutoğlu argues that recently Ankara started to establish better relations with neighbouring regions and plays a more active diplomatic role. By using its influence and proactivity, Turkey could contribute to tackling the Shi'a and Sunni antagonism in Iraq, mainly through problem-solving and mediating.

The fourth principle is based on multi-dimensional foreign policy. This states that 'Turkey's relations with other global actors aim to be complementary, not in competition.' He especially refers to the US-Turkey relations, the EU process, Russia and Eurasia. Ankara has to shape its foreign policy by taking into account these relations and strategic considerations.

The fifth principle - rhythmic diplomacy - aims at providing Turkey with an array of diplomatic means to strengthen its international positions. Entering into various regional or international organisations, holding summits and forums on Turkish territory

makes possible to express this leverage and shape international relations more efficiently.

In Davutoğlu's concept the democratic Turkey gets a central position. By building a democratic state respecting human and civil rights helps to achieve the country's foreign ambitions as it ensures legitimacy and has an important normative value. References to the 'normative' features of foreign policy recur in his later works as well.

In a paper published in 2012, Davutoğlu describes Turkish foreign policy as a value-based one aiming to maintain the stability all over the neighbouring regions. Furthermore, this value-based foreign policy pushed Ankara towards to favour popular movements seeking democratic transformation in various Middle-Eastern countries. However, he engrosses a strong message in this paper about the nature of Turkish foreign policy: according to him it shall be independent and based on Turkish (national) interest (Davutoğlu, 2012). Then foreign minister still defines Western-Turkish relations as a base and something that needs to be maintained, nevertheless he refers to the willingness to stand for a more autonomous diplomacy that may lead to further antagonism with Washington, or EU-countries.

The value-based foreign policy has remained a pivotal point in the Foreign Minister's thinking. In another vision paper published right before the Presidential elections in August 2014, he states that 'the core principle of Turkey's diplomatic stance is highlighting and protecting human dignity and struggling for it all around the world' (Davutoğlu, 2014, 14). He also frames four 'main steps' of active diplomacy that shall be pursued that outlines the main focal point of Turkey's international relations. According to him, Turkey's most important strategic relations are held with Europe and the US. He states that 'as a country situated in the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus, instead of regarding Europe as an 'other' world, Turkey considers itself as an inseparable part of European history.' (Davutoğlu, 2014, 15). The second pillar of the country's strategic commitment is linked to the neighbouring countries and regions; as he states: 'Turkey used to be known as a Eurasian state, but for the past five to six years we have been calling ourselves an 'Afro-Eurasian state', because we are at the center of the mainland of all human history.' Accordingly, the third tenet of Turkish diplomacy aims at launching new initiatives in Africa, Latin-America and Asia. Finally, he points out that the active diplomacy's last step to work within various international organisations, primarily the UN (Davutoğlu, 2014, 19).

Summarising Davutoğlu's approach, one can see that the Foreign Minister's vision is very different from the already presented debate. For him, there is no change the country's traditional orientation. It would be impossible to replace European commitment by a new, Middle Eastern or Asian one because Turkey is a European country based on its history, culture and identity. Thus the opening towards the neighbouring regions or even far continents is rather led by a need to give an answer to nowadays' global turmoil. Nonetheless, this active diplomacy is embedded into a strong internal-led process, the restoration of Turkey (Davutoğlu, 2014,19).

Bülent Aras also sees the AKP-period as a new chapter in Turkish foreign policy. In his paper published in 2009 (Aras, 2009) he argues that Turkey has emerged as a new, more active player in the international scene and it has become an active peace-maker in a usually troublesome region, in the Middle East. Sözen states that meanwhile Turkey was 'without a clear strategy in its foreign policy-making' (Sözen, 2010, 104) the AKP 'brought a clear vision, a new direction, a set of principles, and a new strategy for foreign policy.' He defines the Turkish foreign policy as a normative one based on Davutoğlu's principles. Kiliç Buğra Kanat argues (Kiliç Buğra Kanat, 2010) that the AKP government's foreign policy activism means a shift compared to the traditional, Kemalist diplomacy. He especially emphasises two new features of this new era. First of them is the involvement of civil experts, academicians, journalists, researchers into the decision-making process. This development helped the inflow of new ideas and approaches which highly contributed to a more opened and multidimensional policy. The second one is the growing influence of public opinion over the foreign policy. This change has overwritten the highly bureaucratic corporate culture and automatism and opened the way to a better representation of public interest in Turkey's international relations. Kerim Balcı argues that 'foreign policy was unified with domestic policy.' (Balcı, 2010, 39). Other analysts state that despite the increased interections of Turkey in a more accessible Post-Cold war era, its foreign policy has retained an isolationist 'suspicious strain and a decidedly zero-sum approach to security issues', and the Kemalist paradigm has remained dominant in sheping the country's external relations (Park, 2012, 106), while others think Davutoğlu's brought more ethical and normative issues on agenda (Dal, 2015, 427)

Ali Balcı and Nebi Miş also devote importance to the new features of Turkish foreign policy. By analysing Turkey's role in the Alliance of Civilizations (Balcı – Miş, 2008), they conclude that this new initiative is (also) a tangible sign of a new pursuit of

foreign policy. According to the authors, pioneering an international initiative, especially becoming a spokesperson of the Muslim world was an unknown element of Turkish foreign policy until the AKP's era. Ankara's stance and contribution to the Alliance can be perceived as the Middle-Easternisation of Turkey's foreign policy' (Balcı – Miş, 2008, 401).

Others – emphasising the novelty of AKP's foreign policy – point out that the previous hard power and security orientation was replaced (or at least revaluated) by the extensive use of soft power and a more cooperative stance towards neighbours (Oğuzlu, 2007; Altunışık, 2008; Kalın, 2010; Hürsoy, 2011, Demirtaş, 2015). İbrahim Kalın, former chief foreign policy advisor of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, currently Press Secretary of the Presidency has made a huge work in order to propagate the rising soft power as new, modern tool of Turkish foreign policy at the scientific field. He emphasized the novelty of the use of soft power that clearly differentiates the AKP government from the Kemalist establishment. Thank to the country's 'history of democracy (with all the bumps along the way), dynamic civil society sector, sophisticated diplomacy, technology, education, a strong economy and multilateral relations with various political actors' it could become an emerging soft power (Kalın, 2010, 98.). He pointed out that new institutions such as Yunus Emre Cultural Centres following the examples of British Councils or Goethe Institutes or the TİKA's increasing involvement in distance regions clearly signs the activity of Turkey in the international arena (Kalın, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, or see its personal homepage: [ibrahimkalin.com](http://ibrahimkalin.com)).

Some argue that the EU accession process pushing Turkey towards democratisation led to the change. The democratisation made possible for more groups and societal actors to voice their opinion and consequently influence the foreign policy-making, as the democracy-promoter AKP had to reflect on the claims of the population in its foreign policy as well. According to the author, Erdoğan's growing criticism towards Israel and the famous 'one-minute speech' in Davos was a reflection to the public demand (Meltem Müftüler-Baç, 2011, 288). Others think that even the slowdown of the accession process pushed Turkey towards a more eastward foreign policy (Babalı, 2011). Tarık Oğuzlu argues that during the AKP governments Turkish foreign policy has been Middle Easternising (Oğuzlu, 2008). He sees a shift between the previous and the then foreign policy pursuit by stating that Turkish decision-makers have become more pragmatic and rational than emotional towards the European Union and the United States. He explains this development with two events: the EU's decision

to partially suspend the accession talks with Ankara and the American occupation of Iraq in 2003. He believes that the background of the ‘dissociation’ of the country’s foreign policy stems from paradoxically its Europeanisation as Turkey shall be perceived as a European country seeking to adopt a European foreign policy and to solve security problems in a non-European region (Oğuzlu, 2008, 5). He also adds other factors, such as the AKP has put more emphasis on the country’s Islamic and Middle Eastern characteristics and the fact that security situation has been dramatically changed in Turkey’s neighbourhood during the recent decade and the country has become less concerned about its western identity but it acts rather in own interests (Oğuzlu, 2008; Oğuzlu, 2011).

To reveal the main narratives about Turkish foreign policy, the Author shall not neglect the ‘Arab Spring’ and its role in shaping Turkey’s image. After its beginning and the tremendous change it has brought in the Middle East, Ankara’s position was revaluated by the international scientific and political community. Even if this interval lasted approximately for one or perhaps two years and this aspect has become marginalised simultaneously with the plausibility of ‘zero problems with neighbours’ policy, it was probably the main issue in interpreting Turkey’s role, especially in the Middle East. This was the ‘famous’ ‘Turkish model.’ This thesis does not aim at revealing the whole debate about the notion and the applicability of this model, however the author has to put it into the context of changing interpretation of Turkish foreign policy. Firstly, ‘Turkish model’ is not a novelty, as it already appeared in the nineties, suggested by the Bush cabinet. Then, this notion referred to the possible applicability of a democratic model in the newly established Central Asian (Turkic) countries, helped by Ankara (Altunışık, 20011). In 2011, this slogan renewed or re-emerged (Sengupta, 2014), however that time it targeted Middle Eastern countries. Turkey by supporting ‘popular’ movements in these states got huge sympathy. Probably less surprisingly, Western scholars, journalists and politicians also started to support Ankara’s activity and diplomatic efforts (Falk, 2014, 15) to ease and help the democratisation processes in the region. Despite the continuous debate about Turkey’s stance towards its allies and ‘middle easternisation’ of its external relations, the ‘model country’ got positive reflections, especially in two distinct groups, the Islamist parties in the Middle East and in the West, especially in Washington (Kaddorah, 2010). The New York Times argued in February 2011 that the country could be perceived as a model, and the ongoing democratisation process as a road map for Arab countries (Cooper, 2011). Even Erdoğan

appeared on the cover of the Time magazine and a lengthy article was devoted to unravel his role and influence in the Middle East (his popularity was seemingly demonstrated by the success of his journey in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia in September 2011). Many argued that despite the differences and possible challenges in promoting this discourse, Turkey could have a real, positive effect in the launching democratisation process (Dede, 2011), and this optimism was strengthened by Western politicians, too. Certainly, decision-makers in Ankara also preferred this vision.

Nevertheless, a number of scholars expressed their concerns about the applicability of the Turkish model. At least two different understandings prevail in the debate about its notion: firstly, many argue that the model refers to the compatibility of Islam and democracy (so the AKP's experience) while others imagine the long-lasting democratisation process hand in hand with the creation of a modern, secular state (Altunışık 2008; Göksel, 2012).

This interpretation has to face criticism from two sides. Firstly, many pointed out that the democratisation process was not over in the country, and 'democracy alla Turca is still mutating' (The Economist, 06/08/2011) Secondly, some also emphasised the different situation and historical background of the Arab countries making the 'Turkish model' irrelevant in the real context or at least questionable concerning its applicability (Gümüşcü, 2012; Rane, 2012). Moreover, some also raised the question which model Turkey can show: according to them, the secular, Kemalist state legitimacy and identity-building could be a better source of inspiration for Arab countries compared to the AKP's experience (Ünver, 2013) or, in other terms, the Kemalist modernisation is indispensable for the current success of the AKP's model (Göksel, 2012, 103).

A few years after the Arab Spring, due to the lasting war in Syria or the Sisi-led *coup d'état* in Egypt and bloody conflicts in Libya discourses on the applicability of the Turkish model faded away. The changing (geo)political situation favoured the opinion about the sectarian foreign policy and contributed to the decline of positive evaluation of Ankara's foreign ambitions. Furthermore, the events of Gezi in summer 2013 leading to riots spreading all over the country and seriously harming the AKP government's image have questioned the very existence of the Turkish democracy (Kilinç, 2014). These events, followed by corruption probes, wire-tape scandals and restrictions on media freedom convinced many to declare that the 'Turkish model' has reached its end (Balcı, 2013; Taşpınar, 2014).



Although the view about an activist, pro-active Turkish foreign policy did not appear, its positive evaluation has been weakened during recent years when Turkey led itself to isolation due to the unfavourable developments in the Middle East. Support of Russia and Iran that helped the Assad regime to stay in power, the emergence of a strong Kurdish entity in Northern Syria enjoying American and Russian backing curbed Turkey's capacities to influence the Syrian developments. Furthermore, the terrorist attacks against Turkey committed by the ISIS from the beginning of 2015, the arrival of some 3 million refugees brought the Syrian issue to domestic politics. The spillover of the conflict also affected the PKK peace process that was terminated in Mid-2015. The regional isolation emerged when Turkey withdrew some of its ambassadors from neighbouring country, from this point of view the fall of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt by Sissi-led coup in 2013 showed a clear turning point in Ankara's regional ambitions. Confrontations with other regional powers by the end of 2015 (Russia, Iran, Syria, Iraq, Egypt even with the US) convinced more and more analysts to evaluate Davutoğlu's hallmark of 'Zero problems with neighbours' as a daydream that finally led to tensions and destabilization. This isolation pried into the foreign policy of Turkey by a number of authors (see for instance: Stein, 2015; Grigoriadis, 2015; Aydıntaşbaş, 2016). The previously praised Turkish soft power also got more criticism as Turkey started to lose its democratic and pluralistic image by crushing the Gezi protests (Sandıklı, 2014) and had to face diplomatic fiascos in the international level (Angey-Sentuc-Molho, 2015; Benhaïm – Öktem, 2015). Lastly, Davutoğlu forced resignation in May 2016 terminated his era in Turkish foreign policy. Some think that the pro-active approach required from the diplomatic apparatus started to leave of (interview, Istanbul, 2017).

### **4.3. Continuation of the previous governments' foreign policy?**

Another group of authors state that AKP's foreign policy is rather a continuation of previous governments' policy than a radical change. This kind of interpretation can be seen as an academic reflection on the discourse and positioning of the 'new' policy making. It does recognise the AKP's achievement nevertheless does not see much novelty in it. Accordingly, the criticisms are twofold. Firstly, they target the discursive

level, and focus on the rhetoric of the party by stating it has no much novelty. Secondly, some authors argue that the doctrinal inventions of the new diplomacy such as ‘good relations with the neighbourhood’ or ‘active diplomacy’ was already launched by preceding cabinets and foreign policy makers, especially by Turgut Özal and Ismail Cem.

Many state that Davutoğlu’s interpretation of Turkey as an ‘extraordinary country in an ordinary world’ is misleading and indeed he did not invent a new geostrategic thinking but follows a traditional realist approach (Demirtaş, 2014) which is driven by imperialist daydreams to establish dominance in the interception of Eurasia and Africa (Kıvanç, 2015). By revealing various, early papers of the academician-turned-diplomat, some states that Davutoğlu basically leans on Anglo-Saxon and German geostrategic theorists like Mackinder and Haufstater and he argues that the Strategic Depth is a collection of previous articles published in Islamist newspapers and it could not be considered as a revolutionary work as it was publicised by many journalists and scholars (Özkan, 2014). In his harsh criticism, Özkan states that ‘his ideas are pseudoscientific, based on inspiration related to historical destiny rather than rational thought’ (Özkan, 2014, 130). According to him, ‘Davutoğlu disowns the traditional policy of Turkey’ based on the principle to defend its borders inherited from the Ottoman Empire (Özkan, 2014, 126). Özkan also sees many similarities between interwar German strategists’ discourse and Davutoğlu’s. Similar expressions, like lebensraum (hayat alanı) and concepts are used by the academician. He reframes Turkish ‘lebensraum’ through cultural and economic factors expanding it beyond the country’s borders towards the former Ottoman territories. Özkan also sees Davutoğlu’s vision as pan-islamist. However, the foreign minister’s concept differs from the Abdülhamidian and is closer to a more expansionist, German Mittellage concept. This (new) Pan-Islamism is tangible in his Balkans and Middle East policy (Özkan, 2014, 127-128).

Furthermore, many argue that a number of expressions and notions extensively used by Davutoğlu have already appeared in Ismail Cem’s speeches like good relations with the neighbours, opening, cooperation between civilizations (Yeşiltaş–Balcı, 2011, 10). By going beyond the contestation of Davutoğlu’s narrative, a number of scholars believe that there is a de facto continuity between the AKP’s and the previous administrations’ (especially those after the end of Cold War) foreign policy in real terms. The findings of a project interviewing influential foreign policy experts in Turkey

conducted by the think-tank USAK in 2009 have shown that the scientific community in Turkey rather tend not to see huge rupture with the previous era. The most emphasised feature of Ankara's orientation is the stable link to the Western allies and the country's commitment towards the Westernisation and modernisation (Özdamar et al., 2008, 2009). As a whole, according to the scholars, the AKP also follows this basic line even if it intends to redefine the emphases in its foreign relations. Altunışık thinks that there is no other alternative for Turkey, the Turkic or Islamic World, even the 'Ottoman geography' cannot replace the country's commitment to the West (Altunışık, 2010).

In this respect, probably the most parallels are depicted between the AKP and Turgut Özal's period (Özel, 2010; Erhan, 2009, 67; Öniş – Yılmaz, 2009, Keerthi, 2014). Özal initiated the first neoliberal opening for the Turkish economy which could not leave the foreign policy untouched either. He has resumed the Turkish accession process to the European Union (then European Economic Community) in 1987 and also opened towards the neighbouring regions. He visited Mekka as president of Republic which was broadcasted to millions of television viewers in Turkey. He started to develop closer ties with Muslim countries and Ankara was one of the first countries which recognized the state of Palestine (Keerthi, 2014, 215). After the collapse of the Soviet Union which led to the establishment of independent Turkic states in Central Asia, he also launched a very active foreign policy towards them, not just on the discourse level but with tangible tools, like the establishment of international organisations, forums, giving university grants to thousands of students from these countries etc.

Didier Billon draws many similarities between the current and previous Turkish governments' initiatives in his review on Turkish foreign policy. He argues that the previous decades have also seen periods of disagreements and tensions with the West, however, Ankara had no real intention to leave this bloc (Billon, 2010). Jung argues that the AKP follows the Turkish political patterns (Jung, 2011) Alexander Murinson also sees a clear linkage between the era of Özal and the AKP, and the traces of the Erbakan government's multi-dimensional foreign policy in Davutoğlu's geostrategic thinking (Murinson, 2006, 2012). Grigoriadis also argues that Turkey's foreign policy under the AKP is not a novelty. In his comparison of the Davutoğlu doctrine and the previous governments' foreign activism (especially under Özal and Ismail Cem), he states that Özal has already advocated a more assertive and multilateral Turkish foreign policy that the current Turkish leadership basically follows (Grigoriadis, 2014). Others

also emphasise the similar elements of Turkish foreign policy, however they argue that if there is a shift, it occurred during the second AKP-government (Meliha B. Altunışık – Lenore G. Martin 2011).

Researchers who perceive continuity between Özal and the AKP do not consider a determining difference between the discourses of the leaders of the foreign policy. Davutoğlu's main narratives have already appeared in other foreign ministers' discourse thus can be portrayed as clichés (Türkeş, 2016). Ismail Cem, foreign minister between 1997 and 2002 has already announced an 'opening' towards the neighbourhood. Furthermore, successive governments and foreign ministers also started to appease and establish a cooperative atmosphere with the neighbouring countries. Probably the most palpable example of normalising the relations with the neighbourhood and overcoming Turkey's chronic Sèvres-syndrome in the pre-AKP interval was Ismail Cem's rapprochement to Greece. During various visits he managed to handle outstanding disputes and normalized the belligerent relations between Athens and Ankara that almost led to an armed conflict in 1996 due to dispute over the delimitation of the Aegean Sea border. Furthermore, it was Cem who launched an active diplomacy towards the Middle East. By this time with the use of hard power Turkey could force the PKK out of Syria which paved the way for the establishment of cordial ties with Damascus during the next decade. Cem was also conscious of the importance of the peace process, so it was him who appeared as a mediator between Israel and the Palestinians; even Arafat visited Turkey (Özge, 2013, 42-45).

Another sign of the continuity is the EU accession negotiation. Özal applied for full membership to the predecessor of the EU in 1987. Ankara has signed the Customs Union agreement in 1995. After the troublesome years of the military post-modern coup d'État in 1997, 1999 Bülent Ecevit resumed the process in 1999. By this time, at the Helsinki Summit the European Council granted Turkey the candidate for full membership status and simultaneously a rapid legislation effort was made by Ankara in order to boost the accession prospects. After 2002, the new AKP government followed this line and accepted many law and harmonisation packages that the EU awarded by recognising Turkey as a prepared country in 2004. Almost one year later, in October 2005, Turkey could start the accession negotiations and in mid-2006 it was able to close the chapter on Science and Research.

The accession process dominated the first term of AKP that is a clear continuity with the main priority of the Ecevit administration. Nevertheless, the process seemingly

slowed down at the end of 2006 and a number of chapters were frozen hindering the negotiations. The elaboration of the issue is too vast for the current study, that is why the Author just concludes that in spite of the obvious difficulties, and growing anti-EU governmental rhetoric EU accession has remained officially the main foreign policy goal for Ankara. Even after the 2011 general election victory, the third Erdoğan government established the Ministry for EU Affairs by proving its commitment to the project.

Ziya Öniş states that AKP's foreign policy towards the Middle East was driven by security, economy and identity factors (Öniş, 2014) that in parts can be conceptualised as a continuation of previous governments' activities, such as Ismail Cem's rapprochement to Greece in the late 1990's. However, other elements, like rising Conservatism and rediscovery of the Ottoman past also shaped the AKP's stance and foreign policy towards the region. According to Öniş, Turkey has started to behave as an independent regional power with less emphasis on EU preferences (Öniş, 2014, 207). Concerning Turkey's foreign policy towards the Middle East in recent time, since the start of the Arab Spring, he evaluates Turkey's foreign policy rather a growing sectarian one with lots of miscalculations, especially in Syria's case. He also admits that 'foreign policy has become an important tool for the AKP to consolidate and extend its popular support on the domestic front.' According to him, AKP's foreign policy was based on a new kind of nationalism with conservative and religious overtones, yet outward-facing and globalist in its orientation (Öniş, 2014, 214).

#### **4.4. Academic literature on the Turkish foreign policy and the Balkans**

After reviewing the narratives about Turkish foreign policy, it is high time to elaborate the scientific literature's stance on Turkish activism in the Balkans. The Author has to state that the literature focusing on recent Turkish-Balkan relations is rather limited compared to the great number of works dealing with Ankara's relations to the Middle East. In a work aiming to depict the whole range of Turkish foreign policy, this difference has to be addressed. Foreign policy experts – IR and FPA scholars and pundits – usually focus on current issues and try to explain and forecast the possible developments. The change in Turkish diplomacy raised concerns particularly in relation

to the Middle East, as the AKP made new friends from old enemies and *vice versa*. The 'shift' with strategic Western (especially US) interests clashed in that region and not in the Balkans. Furthermore, the importance of the Middle East increased after the Arab Spring and due to the long-lasting Syrian and Iraqi wars and the rise of the Islamic State, the emergence of a strong Kurdish entity it will probably preserve its particular position for the upcoming years as well. Meanwhile the Balkans remained a silent and rather peaceful region with at least a weak EU accession prospect. Nevertheless, the Balkan Peninsula offers an excellent field to analyse a relatively unchanged Turkish foreign policy while the Middle East due to the upheavals and conflicts became a moorland full of ambiguities for (Turkish) decision-makers; the competitive multipolarity of the Middle East made difficult for Ankara to follow a well-articulated foreign policy strategy. That is why to describe Turkish diplomacy in South-East Europe; it will easily allow us to understand the very nature of it and see how and through which tools Ankara builds its leverage.

Furthermore, the limited scientific attention does not mean the lack of interests. During previous years a number of volumes and articles have been published concerning the topic, suggesting that the growing Turkish activism could not be left unnoticed, not just in Turkey but in South-East European countries as well. Especially in 2009, Davutoğlu's famous speech in Sarajevo gave a fresh impetus to understand and evaluate Ankara's ambition towards the region and triggered a discussion about the fairness of its motives. Nonetheless, it could not reach the same international attention as the Middle East in this context because in the Balkans, one may not speak about a drastic change due to the fact that the region's security and political complex has remained roughly intact after the end of the Kosovo war (1999) and although difficulties have emerged such as the recognition of Kosovo's independence (2008) Ankara did not have to change its partners drastically as it happened in the Middle East.

Interestingly, no one in the West raised eyebrows over the changing Turkish foreign policy in the Balkans. Ankara's efforts to achieve peaceful solutions for regional and inter-state problems were rather welcomed by the Western scientific community. The country's endeavours to settle its deteriorated relations with Belgrade, a traditional Russian ally in the Balkans, also did not raise many concerns. Even this was interpreted as evidence that Ankara does not pursue an Islamist policy (Vogel, 2010). Its commitment towards Bosnia's future and the stability of the country got very limited attention in the shadow of the Middle Eastern problems in the West. Moreover, it seems

that Ankara's discourse about a peaceful and stable Balkans has met the intentions of its US and EU partners. Consequently, diplomatic activism due to the converging interests did not lead to new tensions with Washington or Brussels.

The debate about whether the AKP's diplomacy is continuing that of the previous Turkish governments' or not, has already appeared in the literature, however with limited influence. Only a few authors argued that it mainly follows the predecessors' traditions (Türkeş, 2008; Rüma, 2010; 2011). However, the novelty of the growing activism of Ankara's diplomatic efforts was more spectacular. Therefore, frequent diplomatic visits, mediation attempts and the appearance of various Turkish state agencies, like Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency or Yunus Emre Cultural Centres also demonstrated that something has changed compared to the nineties and literally, Ankara is already '*ante portas*.' Davutoğlu's unusual discourse about the prospering Ottoman past when various ethnic and religious groups have managed to live together in peace and the Balkans were one of the main economic centres of Europe has given a new focal point in analysing Turkish ambitions. The Balkans has become the most referred territory in the context of 'Ottoman geography' (*Osmanlı coğrafyası*) an entity that has particular relations to Turkey due to the common history and culture (see Turkish experts thinking about the notion: Özdal et al, 2008, 2009).

Not surprisingly, Neo-Ottomanism has emerged as one of the main approaches when interpreting the regional Turkish activism. In foreign policy, this interpretation emphasises the historical and geographic significance of the region and describes the new diplomatic activities as a neo-imperial foreign policy 'whose legitimacy is rooted in the Ottoman Empire's historic role in the Balkans' (Anastasakis, 2012, 186).

Closely connected to this, the question aroused whether it was beneficial or rather a threat to tackle. References on the Ottoman imperial past have provided ample ammunition to critical views. Even during the nineties when Turkish diplomatic activism has increased, a great number of articles were published in various newspapers in Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia describing this newly found interest as threatening. The media, especially in the above-mentioned countries has been hostile towards Ankara (Gangloff, 2005, 1-2). The new activism under the JDP's rule also paved the way for a debate about Turkey's intentions. Seemingly, this process got a strong normative dimension, and by this time (re)opened the way to the 'Neo-Ottoman hype' (Bechev,

2012b). Nevertheless, many admit that ‘Turkey has to deal with “its” Ottoman heritage’ (Gangloff, 2001, 14).

Probably one of the most discussed books on the subject was written by Darko Tanasković, a Serbian academician and former ambassador to Turkey. In his book entitled *Neoosmanizam – Povratak Turske na Balkan* (‘Neo-Ottomanism – The Return of Turkey to the Balkans’), he argued that the emergence of Ankara as a gradually growing regional power threatens Serbia as the oriental country would like to reinstate its own, previous Empire. According to him, Neo-Ottomanism is ‘an amalgam of Islamism, Turkism, and Ottoman imperialism’ that is not just a foreign policy doctrine but it appears as a paradigm at domestic level as well. Concerning the diplomacy, Tanasković sees the Balkans as a key element in Davutoğlu’s Neo-Ottomanist policy. He believes that the Bosniaks and Albanians constitute the human basis for Ankara’s ambitions in the region. Subsequently Turkey has to support its protégés and shape the balance of power in the region that Belgrade has to pay attention to.

Considering contemporary Turkey as rather a threatening actor that seeks to support Muslims in detriment of Christians has a vast literature. A number of articles were published – shaping the public opinion about Turkey and highlighting the unfavourable effects of Ankara’s rising power in the region. Especially the political leadership of Republika Srpska seemed to be receptive to this narrative, Milorad Dodik, the president of the Serbian entity disseminated his unfavourable opinion about Turkish presence. Not surprisingly, Tanasković’s book was published in Banja Luka, the capital of the Bosnian Serbs.

Srdja Trifković, influential Serbian IR scholar and editor-in-chief also sees a Turkey as a threat (Trifković, 2011). For him, Neo-Ottomanism is a new attempt to create a Green Corridor that a concept with two meanings. Firstly, it refers to a ‘chain of Muslim-dominated polities from Istanbul in the South-East to North-Western Bosnia, a mere 120 miles from Austria.’ This corridor would assure the dominance of Islam over the Balkans and open a door towards Europe. Moreover, the Green Corridor is not just a simple geographic notion but a project itself. He believes:

‘That process entails four key elements: (1) Expanding the area of those communities’ demographic dominance; (2) Establishing and/or expanding various entities under Muslim political control with actual or potential claim to sovereign statehood; (3) Enhancing the dominant community’s Islamic character and identity within those entities, with the parallel decrease of presence and power of non-Muslim groups; and (4) Prompting Muslim communities’ ambitions for ever bolder designs in the future, even at the risk of conflict with their non-Muslim neighbors. Understanding this neo-Ottoman strategic concept par excellence is essential to a comprehensive understanding of the motives, actions,



and emerging expectations of different actors in the Yugoslav wars of 1991-1999 and their aftermath (Trifković, 2011, 90)ʹ.

Interrelated with Ankara’s emerging commitment to the region, Islam also makes advances in Turkey. Trifković thinks that the JDP’s rule contributes to the islamisation of the country as well as the end of Kemalism. In its totality, he sees that Turkey has already turned its back on its Western allies, as it was demonstrated by the downturn of the relations between Tel-Aviv and Ankara. Concerning Turkey’s project towards the Balkans, he argues:

‘Far from enhancing peace and regional stability, neo-Ottoman policies pursued by Ankara continue to encourage seven distinct but interconnected trends centered on the Green Corridor:

(a) Pan-Islamic agitation for the completion of an uninterrupted Transverse by linking its as yet unconnected segments.

(b) Destabilization of Bosnia resulting from constant demands for the erosion of constitutional prerogatives rooted in Dayton, leading to the abolition of the Republika Srpska.

(c) Growing separatism among Muslims in the Raska region of Serbia, manifest in the demand for the establishment of an “autonomous” Sanjak region.

(d) Continuing intensification of greater-Albanian aspirations against Macedonia, Montenegro, Greece, and rump-Serbia.

(e) Further religious radicalization and ethnic redefinition of Muslims in Bulgaria, leading to demands for territorial autonomy in the Rhodope region.

(f) Ongoing spread of Islamic agitation, mainly foreign-financed, through a growing network of mosques, Islamic centers, NGOs and “charities” all along the Route.

(g) Escalation of Turkey’s regional ambitions and Ankara’s quiet encouragement of all of the above trends and phenomena (Trifković, 2011, 93-94).’

Miloš Marković argues that the Turkish-Islam Synthesis gaining momentum in Turkish politics has established the conditions to reconsider the traditional, Kemalist, status quo seeker foreign policy and accordingly opened a way towards a new activism in the Balkans (Marković, 2011). Marković argues by referring to Davutoğlu that Macedonia is the key partner for Turkey in the region. In one hand, as a new ‘powder keg’ the country constitutes a threat to the whole region which increases its importance. Furthermore, it connects the Muslims of the Western Balkans with Turkey, as well as it cuts the Athens-Belgrade axe. This geopolitical location of the Balkan country raises its importance for Ankara that will tend to keep it ‘afloat’.

Turkish scholars express their concerns about the negative effects of Neo-Ottomanist discourse (See Altunışık, 2010) because it is a threatening message to the people living in former Ottoman territories. Türel Yılmaz sees that ‘Discussions about Ottoman geography in this era is ultimately dangerous’ (Yılmaz, 2010, 333). Certainly, the Turkish scientific community is not homogeneous on the issue. Yaşar Yakış does not even consider the Balkans to be a subject of any Ottomanist approach due to the fact that the EU is the gravity point for Balkan countries. He only sees the applicability of

this thinking in the Middle East (Yaşar, 2010, 311). Nevertheless, some Turkish scholars think that Turkey can only play a dominant role in the Balkans among the neighbouring regions (Mandacı, 2009, 377).

Hajrudin Somun, former Bosnian ambassador to Ankara also expressed his criticism about Tanasković's *ouvrage* as he does not agree with Serbian nationalist circles about Turkey's ambitions. He does not consider

'Turkey's current foreign policy as neo-Ottoman nor imperial, but as a very pragmatic and realistic endeavour to secure the ground under its own feet by establishing a peaceful environment around its borders and creating opportunities for its economy to progress (Somun, 2011, 37-38).'

By referring to the benefits of Turkey's presence in the region, authors emphasise the prospering economic relations, growing trade and the substantial inflow of direct investment creating a good base for flourishing the regional relations (Ekinci, 2014, 2017; Dursun-Özkanca, 2016; Nuroğlu et al. 2017). Almost every paper focusing on Ankara's activism in the region devotes attention to this issue. Jeton Mehmeti argues that in Kosovo Turkish capital is mounting and Turkish investors are active. According to him, Turkish companies have undertaken some of the most expensive projects in the country for instance the Pristina International Airport and the construction the highway between Kosovo and Albania (Mehmeti, 2012).

Petrović and Reljić's research, conducted about the economic dimension of Turkish-Balkans relations at the request of SETA, also demonstrated that between 2009 and 2010 Turkey's export increased steadily (Petrović – Reljić, 2011). Nevertheless, other scholars think that the promising economic growth and developing relations should not be exaggerated. Certainly, it could be perceived as a real and palpable change, however, the size of Turkish trade and investment is still limited compared to other countries' share in the Balkans' countries economy, like Germany, Austria, Italy, Greece, or even in some cases, Hungary. Analyses about this issue usually do not devote enough importance or just neglect this aspect of the 'Big picture.' In the related chapter, the Author will highlight the limits of Turkish economic expansion and argues that JDP's governmental rhetoric about the country's commitment decouples from the economic reality revealing the Turkish businessmen's diverging interests and opportunities from the government's willingness or at least discourse. Kenan Esref Rasidagić also argues that although the political visits are frequent and the presence of Turkish state actors is obviously tangible in the country, Turkish capital follows its own

interest and prefers bigger markets compared to a small economy of a country of some four million inhabitants. The share of Balkan states' trade in the Turkish total trade has remained low (Rasidagić, 2013, 189; Türbedar, 2011, 142; Kőszegi, 2012). Bechev argues that Turkish investments are growing in the Balkans. He points out that even if Balkan countries do not acquire too much importance for Turkey, the Balkan countries trade heavily with the middle-size power (Bechev, 2012a, 2012b).

Recently more articles have been published on how EU appears in Turkey's regional policy and how Turkey affects the European Union leverages on the Balkans. Demirtaş proposes the Europeanization as theoretical tool to understand Turkish foreign policy in the Balkans (Demirtaş 2015). She argues that Ankara intends to benefit from its NATO-membership and experiences of EU accession negotiations that granted it the most Europeanized state's position. This comparative advantage among less developed Southeast European countries promoted of *primus inter pares*. To strengthen its position Turkey also has implemented EU/Western institutions such as cultural centers or the development agency in the region which contributed to the flourishing relations with Muslim communities. Through instrumentalization of EU tools and discourse, Ankara tries to boost its influence within the region and even use it for domestic political aims if the Turkish government deems it necessary (Demirtaş, 2015, 137). Although the EU is the gravity point of Balkan countries the apparent slowdown of accession process reduced the integration enthusiasm of Western Balkan countries. In that point, Turkey's activism gained more importance and it appears as a strategic competitor of the EU. Some argues that decline of EU commitment may lead to a strengthening of Ankara in the region, thereby potentially undermining EU efforts (Vračić, 2016, Dursun-Özkanca, 2016).

Another approach is related to the cultural dimension and explains Turkey's involvement through the country's religious identity and its special relations to the Muslim communities living in the Balkans. Thus, Ankara behaves as a protector or 'Big brother' of Muslim people (Anastasakis, 2012, 186, Egeresi 2013, Gangloff, 2001, Öktem 2011). It is legitimised by the interpretation that Turkey as a Muslim country has a better understanding of these small and divided communities. This perception made it possible for Davutoğlu to appear as a mediator in the Sandjak. Thus, Turkish involvement contributes to the stabilisation of the region and can prevent further conflicts as well. Sylvie Gangloff highlighted the Turkish state's efforts to support religious education in the Balkans and strengthen the Muslim communities (Gangloff,

2001). Kerem Öktem conducted extensive field research in the Balkans that was published in a study focusing on the growing Turkish influence over the region and arguing that after a short Wahabi attempt to establish leverage in the Balkans Turkey is getting more room for manoeuvre and intends to create its control over Muslims (Öktem, 2011).

On the other hand, apart from the cultural and religious ties Ankara has to address the interest of several million Balkan immigrants living in the country that has a special affiliation with the region. Especially Turkish politicians mention this aspect (usually during background conversations), that despite its importance was hardly addressed by the literature. Just a few articles were published about the issue. For example, Erhan Türbedar highlights that the immigrants (or descendants of immigrants) constitute a natural lobby in Turkey that is made up of associations, foundations, journalists, academicians, parliamentarians and even ministers. This circumstance explains why Turkish government could not be indifferent towards the Balkans (Türbedar, 2011, 141).

Despite the multidimensional literature dealing with Turkish diplomacy in the Balkans, some shortcomings shall be discussed. First of all, when the literature intends to interpret Ankara's role or activism it usually focuses on the Western Balkans. Although obviously the most dramatic change can be noticed in this context and Turkey possesses the biggest room for manoeuvre in the post-Yugoslav states in the Balkans, other countries, like Bulgaria and Romania also shall not be neglected in a regional analysis. For instance, the latter only appears in economic relations and it is hardly mentioned in other, like cultural or minority issues. Moreover, Turkey and Bulgaria's relation is usually 'marginalised' in the regional analysis, even if it is possible to find similarities with the Western Balkans. Furthermore, the diverging aspects are not elaborated and explained in respect of these two states.<sup>18</sup> Without taking into consideration these countries – despite the common historical background, similar social structure and problems, and in many cases analogous economic situation – it becomes more difficult to understand the engine of Ankara's ambitions towards the region.

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<sup>18</sup>Certainly, the fact that Romania and Bulgaria have entered into the European Union shapes the relations and consequently puts both countries in a different context. However, the main differences are not based deliberately on this aspect, and they follow a 'regional pattern.'

Secondly, IR or FPA literature hardly unfolds the societal dimension of the relations between the Balkans and Turkey. Nonetheless, a number of authors refer to the huge influx of Muslims from the region during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire's rule and later due to regional conflicts, ethnic cleansing and oppression of minority groups. This process led to the emergence of a huge 'immigrant' community; however their effect on politics, especially on foreign policy was less studied. Baklaçioğlu described the foundation of immigrant associations in several volumes and also made extensive researches about the 20<sup>th</sup> century immigration from the Balkans to Turkey. Others rather focused on recent immigration (Parla, 2006, 2007; Parla – Danış - Eder, 2009), particularly from Bulgaria.<sup>19</sup> These researches have shown some aspects of the societal dimension, however to a limited extent. In connection to this, as Rüma admits research on the activities of non-state actors within the Balkan-Turkish relations and their effects on Turkish foreign policy have remained narrow (Rüma, 2010), and it needs further studying (See for further reading Baklaçioğlu, 2006). Türbedar state that Balkan immigrants represent a strong lobby group in Turkey; however, he does not elaborate the details of their leverage (Türbedar, 2011).

Thirdly, the role of the Turkish minority in the Balkans, and its place in Ankara's foreign policy has also got inadequate attention. Only a few number of books intended to describe the relation between Turkey and its kin living in the peninsula, probably the most recent and extensive work is Kader Özlem's volume (Özlem, 2016). Although the Turkish minority constitutes nearly 10 percent of Bulgaria's inhabitants and its political party, the Movement for Right and Freedom possesses a measurable political influence in the country, the AKP's relation to the party or its support for the minority has remained barely studied. Even the situation of the Turkish minority groups in other countries having a more inclusive minority policy did not get many researches during the last decade. Albeit Kosovo and Macedonia had to give more rights to its minorities compared to other neighbouring countries, like Greece or Bulgaria, the situation of these Turkish communities, their political parties and their role in bilateral relations have failed to receive much limelight. Thus, the importance of Turkish minority groups for Ankara, and their effects on foreign policy making shall-be addressed in this thesis.

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<sup>19</sup>Tolay gives an excellent overview about the migration literature in Turkey (See: Tolay, 2012)

# **Constructing hegemony: the AKP's rule in Turkey**

## **1. Emergence of the Islamist counter-hegemonic project**

### **1.1. New hegemonic bloc and the establishment of the Republic**

Probably the most transformative decades of Turkey are dated back some one hundred years ago: the Young Turk takeover which opened the way to the Second Constitutional Era, later the Committee of Union and Progress's adjustment to a single-party government, the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire by the end of the WWI and the emergence of the young Republic of Turkey under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The Young Turk movement whose leaders as counter-hegemonic actors were able to seize the power via force in 1908 and launched a deep modernization process based on the emerging Turkish nationalism. The Young Turks' counter-hegemonic project was based on the rising class of intellectuals, bourgeoisie and new generation of higher ranking soldiers in the military that supported a European (especially French) modernization. Abdülhamit II (1878-1909) was skilful to counter previous attacks against his life/his reign based on the successful co-optation of various tribes, Muslim leaders based on Islamism. This Young Turk revolution was a 'classical' act of war of manoeuvre that managed to (re)introduce a constitutional period and was successful to hinder Abdülhamit's counter coup attempt. Although a new sultan could ascend to Abdülhamit's throne after 1909 and seemingly significant changes did not occur at the top of the country leadership, in reality a new elite sized the power that started to implement a new hegemonic project based on nationalism, especially after the victory of the Committee of Union and Progress at the elections.

However, continuous wars beginning with the conflict between Italy and the Ottoman Empire over Libya, two Balkan wars (1912-13) and the WWI (1914-18) have tired the ruling class and put the whole hegemonic project in risk, especially when great power troops occupied Istanbul and when Greeks started their military campaign by

landing their troops in Izmir (1919). This military collapse following the Armistice of Mudros resulted in the Treaty of Sevres (1920) practically meaning the dissolution of the Empire.

Nevertheless, a young military leader, Kemal Atatürk began his war to defend Anatolia in 1919 which has managed to overwrite the Treaty of Sevres. After finishing the War of Independence (1919-1922) successfully, he managed to sign the more favourable Treaty of Lausanne (1923) which granted more territory and economic freedom of the country. Atatürk emerged as the ultimate triumphant of the chaotic period and he has started the transformation of Turkish society and state based on the Army and emerging pro-Young Turk elite occupying the key positions of administration.

The Early Republican modernisation which was rooted in the Young Turk revolution endeavoured to create a national, secular and modern state. In Gramscian terms, Atatürk's new elite had two options to cement its project and create its own historical bloc: to use state apparatus (especially the Army) as a coercive tool and to make consent by co-opting various groups to the new system and creating an ideology convincing for the rest of the society. The more a new hegemonic project differed from the previous one and lacked legitimacy the more challenge it had to face. Due to the amplitude of changes the 'new' elite has used more coercion, nevertheless it could benefit from a strong military that increased its reputation by winning the War of Independence.

The religious elite lost its position because it was perceived as an obstacle for the modernization. The government has created the Diyanet as directorate for religious affairs. The imams and others responsible for the religious life of the society have become simple state employees. The state has abolished the Caliphate system in 1924, closed religious schools (medrese) and religious courts, later the tekkes, the religious buildings designated for gatherings of tarikats. (Kicsi, 2008). It also banned the religious orders (tarikats) and communities (cemaats). Several new rulings like the new dress code, new alphabet and new cultural policy indirectly also aimed at reducing the role of religiousness within the society and replace it with a state-dominated secularism. Nevertheless, the establishment of Diyanet did not lead to the separation of religious life from state, on the contrary, the state has created a strong surveillance over the population (Vásáry, 2008). Despite these thorough reforms Atatürk had to face a

purely religious revolt only one time, in 1930 when a derviş begun a revolt in the Western Anatolian town, Menemen which was crushed by the Army immediately.

The nation-building had to cope with even greater difficulties. As at least ten percent of the population were Kurds, being in overwhelming majority in the East and resistance to the Turkification, the hegemonic elite was in an arduous situation. What is more, their case was interrelated with the transformation of religious elite: local chiefs as religious sheiks were threatened by the secularism and by the Turkification simultaneously. Probably not surprisingly, whilst Atatürk was at power there was no year without any rebellion in the Kurdish inhabited East. The first and greatest one was launched by Said sheik and after a few weeks of bloody conflicts won by the Turks (1925). Other revolts had lesser effect, like the bloody war in Dersim (today Tunceli) between 1936 and 37, although caused huge loss in life.

The coercive power of the state was used successfully to defend the hegemonic project but the ruling group had to rely on boosting consent as well. The state ideology, the Kemalism (whose principles were articulated in 1937)<sup>20</sup> served as the hegemonic ideology and was propagated to the whole society. In order to establish the (new) Turkey, ruling elit used extensively the education system to disseminate the new, secular and nationalist ideas consequently to create from the religious, Muslim populace a secular Turk.

In the early Republican modernisation, the education eligibility for masses was broadening, a new, Latin alphabet was introduced (1928) broking up with the previous Arabic-base Osmanlı in line with a 'modern' curriculum. New institutions such as Turkish History Institute (1931) and Turkish Language Institute (1932) were established. The state has opened nationwide cultural centres (halk evi and halk odası) to facilitate the dissemination of the new worldview. In the 1930s, historians established the Turkish Historical Thesis emphasizing the importance of the pre-Ottoman era and sidelining the Ottoman dynasty which was viewed as the main culprit of war defeats and cultural backwardness.

To summarise, Atatürkist hegemonic project represented in many aspects a radical rupture with the previous Ottomans-led-hegemony by placing the secularism and

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<sup>20</sup> These principles are the following: Republicanism (cumhuriyetçilik), Populism (halkçılık), Nationalism (milliyetçilik), Secularism (laiklik), Statism (devletçilik), and Reformism (devrimcilik).



nationalism in the heart of the modernisation and strengthening the state and surveillance over society and economy (strong statism).

The introduction of multi-party system in 1950 that was a major step towards the country's democratization and it has given broader options for new counter-hegemonic projects to challenge Kemalist tradition. Nonetheless, strong control actors (veto players) and mechanisms intended to deter and hinder counter-hegemonic projects. The hegemonic rule in Turkey was challenged mainly by the (radical) Left, Islamists and Kurds after 1950 which were usually under state control and met with oppression.

Kurdish (nationalist) movement as a mainly single-issue movement (seeking independence or at least greater autonomy) has had limited chance for success as by definition its programme always alienated the majority of the society (the Turks) while had troubles to gain the support of all Kurdish population (religious Kurds tended to support other movement or parties) and had to face strong coercive power (namely the military).

Leftist movements, especially radical ones seeking to achieve a severe social transformation also had to face the coercive power of state apparatus that later (especially in the 1970s) supported the radical right groups of the civil society to cope with Communist threat. As it will be described later, the 1980 military coup has beheaded and mitigated the leftist movements. Retrospectively, only the Islamist counter-hegemonic project could challenge successfully the Kemalists. The Islamists' road to power was a long and gradual process and has been built on strong social transformation.

## **1.2. Naissance of the Islamist Middle Classes and the rise of Islamist parties**

Turkey has experienced a huge demographic boom after the 70s and a strong urbanization due to the mass immigration from the countryside to the major cities. The country's population which was hardly 45 million people in 1980 has reached some 56.5 million inhabitants in 1990, 68 million in 2000 and some 78 in 2017 (without the Syrian refugees) (TÜRKSTAT). Simultaneously, the population of Istanbul increased

from 2.9 million in 1980 to almost 15 million in 2017, Ankara from 2.2 million to more than 5 million, Bursa has grown from a middle size town of nearly 640 thousand inhabitants to a metropolis of more than 2.5 million, Izmir from 1 million to more than 4 million, other towns faced a sharp rise in numbers such as Konya from 670 thousand to more than 2 million, Gaziantep from 800 thousand to almost 2 million people (TÜRKSTAT). This mass urbanization was carried out by the establishment of shanty-neighbourhoods called ‘gecekondu’ that have become an integral part of the major and smaller towns after the 1970s.

By 1980, the urban population outnumbered those living in rural areas which clearly represented a change in social structure of the country and predicted a political change because of the effect of urbanization on politics (Özcan-Turunç, 2011, 66-67.). Due to this rapid population increase and the transformation of cities, the number of gecekondu inhabitants has surpassed one-third of the total urban population (Erdenir, 2015, 199).

This influx of rural migrants did not change their social status palpably as the newcomers – usually unskilled workers leaving the agricultural sector – have remained at the bottom of the social stratification. More importantly, the urbanization in terms of spreading civic norms and values faced even greater challenges within these rural migrant groups who having less option for healthcare, education and social mobility opted for preserving their original lifestyle and habits and (re)created their fellow village/townsmen (hemşehri) and religious (cemaat) associations (Erdenir, 2015, 2000). This social transformation – or its lack – favoured the emergence of a large, urban conservative and religious electorate that could serve as reservoir of votes first for the left, later for the Islamists.

In the 1970s, it was Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s former party, the CHP that intended to capitalize the mass migration to the cities and focused on social politics under the leadership of Bülent Ecevit who pushed effectively the party toward the Left. This policy awarded the party with electoral successes in that decade, but it could do less in order to achieve a real change for the majority of gecekondu.

This social reality has met the economic neoliberalism of the Turkish elite in the 1980s. Süleyman Demirel’s ambitious “the 24<sup>th</sup> January 1980 Decisions” (24 Ocak Kararları) in 1980 aimed at switching the country to a free market economy. The depositary of this economic policy adjustment was Turgut Özal who has been finance minister by this time. The country applied to World Bank in order to finance the

particular structural change and was awarded one of the largest amounts of credit by this time.

However, the economic program was not welcomed by the society, especially in the Left. Trade unions, leftist groups who had strong mobilization capacity were reluctant. Thus, the political instability of the late 1970s, the constant, bloody conflicts between far right and left, the appearance of Islamist threat after the Iranian revolution the military intervened in 12 September 1980 and overthrew the government. The mass arrests, the closure of political parties and the strengthening of military tutelage in the new 1982 constitution highlighted the coercive power of the state and the readiness of the military elite to act in order to open the country to the world economy.

The economic liberalisation continued with Turgut Özal, who became Prime Minister in 1983. The new government policy intended to create social consent by introducing a conservative, religious (cultural) programme and incorporating capitalism in the social 'common sense.' Özal opened the way towards export substitution and exchange rate depreciation. He enhanced export, privatization, de-regulation and reducing state's influence while weakening trade unions and organized labour. The Turkish export increased sharply from a 2.9 billion USD in 1980 to 12.9 billion USD in 1990. However, the falling living standards led to disturbances in the society and undermined the popularity of Özal's Anavatan Party opening the way to the government and economic crisis in the 1990s.

Thus, the country shifted from import substitution policies to export oriented economic liberalization in the early 1980s that supported the emergence of new capitalist classes and class dynamics have been altered as well. Until this time, the Turkish economy was governed by state centric approach based on centrally shaped investment and development project supported by family conglomerates usually headquartered in Istanbul and mainly focused on the great sea ports like Istanbul, Izmit, Izmir and Adana. Despite the development project, overwhelming majority of the country, and especially Central and Eastern/South-eastern Anatolian regions, have remained mainly rural and existing local economies stayed in frame of small artisanship, commerce and agriculture (Özcan-Turunç, 2011, 65.). Although these SMEs faced huge challenges and competition from the state sponsored family conglomerates and state run companies, they could turn increasingly to affordable financial capital, export markets and new technologies which were impossible earlier (Özcan-Turunç, 2011, 68.). Furthermore, the poor locals also suffered the economic

changes as their social status and mobility seemed to be even greater danger than before.

The emergence of Islamism as a solution for the problems of deprived social classes gained support from the revival of Islamic Brotherhood after the 1950s. Their charity networks and philanthropic activities reached these lower social classes. Also, during the 1990s they were able to successfully expand their social base within the marginalized groups. The Islamist Refah Party's victory (although just with slight majority) in the 1994 municipal elections in Ankara and Istanbul clearly showed the change in internal dynamics.

The triumph of Islamist politicians also gave an opportunity to local Islamist business groups to benefit increasingly from local development infrastructural projects and public procurements. The Refah which in many cases just resurrected the former Leftist discourse about societal justice or 'Just Order' (Adil Düzen) gained sympathy in among the local poor and a number of SMEs.

This neoliberal turn has transformed the society and strengthened the Central-Anatolian business elite during the 1980s and 1990s as well as it contributed to the changes in the political landscape. The emergence of the so called Anatolian Tigers was a prelude of political adjustment; however, every government's aim was to establish investment-friendly conditions in the country. Despite the gradual opening to international markets and accepting a rather export oriented trade policy, these years were troublesome for Turkish economy. Ankara had to cope with several crises in 1994, 1999, 2000 and 2001. The last one particularly damaged the reputation of the government parties and contributed in a great manner to the electoral victory of the AKP in 2002.

Furthermore, the Islamic brotherhoods, like Nurettin, Nakşibendis have formed alliance with the SMEs and being strengthened by local business groups they could even widen their network within the society more effectively. The Fethullah Gülen community – probably the most effective in the 1990s and 2000s – was affiliated with several thousands of firms. The most influential organization of these companies prior to its closure after the 15<sup>th</sup> July Coup attempt was the TUSKON, the biggest business association in Turkey with more than 50 thousand members.

The newly emerged Islamist entrepreneurs aimed to create their own autonomous institutions and lobby groups in order to counterbalance the Kemalist state and the secular business groups and strengthen their position vis-à-vis the state. Central

Anatolian town, such as Konya, Yozgat, Sivas, Kayseri played a crucial role in this endeavour mainly by establishing holdings in these towns and channelling the savings of locals and diasporas living in Western Europe (mainly in Germany). The inadequacies of the state in health, education or general welfare services attracted these groups to exploit the opportunity to fulfil this hiatus and re-allocate resources and social benefits to their affiliated communities by using especially municipal sources (Özcan-Turunç, 2011, 72.).

The economic adjustment also changed the landscape of business groups. Previously the Istanbul-based secular TÜSIAD was the major business association and lobby group and was founded in 1971. The first Islamic business association, the MÜSIAD was founded in 1990 and became the most important Islamist economic representative body. It was connected to an aggressive economic expansionist policy abroad: it opened a number of foreign offices and in the 1990s became a strong supporter of the integration to EU markets, it represented a liberal (at least in the economic sense) shift in the traditional Islamist side and supported the imparting of capitalism in Islamist political circles. As an alternative group to the political centre related TÜSIAD, it also advocated smaller and impartial state, greater integration to world economy and democratization (Keyman-Gümüşçü, 2014, 32).

Thus, the emergence of powerful Islamist business groups and Islamist intelligentsia portrayed the naissance of an Islamist middle class as well. The emergence of this new class represented a new challenge to the secular upper and middle classes. Supported by a growing economic power, the Islamist elements of the society, who were traditionally perceived as the periphery, started their political trajectory to conquer the high echelon of state.

The Islamist political movement's emergence started in the late 1960s and its first three decades was shaped by Necmettin Erbakan coming from the Nakşibendi order. The politician, who had a degree in engineering, announced their political manifesto Milli Görüş (National Vision) in 1969 and created an Islamist political movement with the same name. Next year, he established the first Islamist party in Turkey, called Milli Nizam Partisi. Erbakan was able to create a convincing electoral program for some part of the religious and traditionalist electorate of Central Anatolia, mainly in Konya. This electorate granted him a stable base to organize its party membership, to enter the parliament.

Although subsequent military coups and Constitutional Court's decisions to ban Islamist parties usually put an end to his parties, he was persistent enough to reorganize and re-establish these political formations. In 1972 he founded the National Salvation Party (MSP) after the closure of MNP by the military intervention in 1971. The Junta after the coup of 1980 led by Kenan Evren also banned the party in 1982, and Erbakan had to leave party politics for five years.

In 1987, he returned to politics and founded the Refah Partisi which has become one of the most successful parties in the 1990s. A number of factors facilitated its electoral successes. Firstly, the military junta of the 1980's coup intended to depoliticize society which suffered from perpetual internal conflict between extreme right and left groups in the 1970s. The coup sent thousands to jail and drastically reshaped the political landscape of the country and made an end to the extremely dangerous political polarisation. To handle the Left-Right cleavages, religion has become an important tool to appease the society. The regime introduced compulsory religious education in primary and high schools and supported the construction of mosques.

Another factor also played a role in shaping the perceptions of Islam. Some intellectual groups, especially *Aydınlar Ocağı* (Intellectuals' Society) during the 1970s made palpable efforts to reconcile the Islam and Turkish nationalism. Their so-called Turkish-Islam Synthesis gained support especially in the Right by emphasizing that the Islam is integral part of Turkish identity and the two (Islam and Turkishness) cannot be separated. This new approach re-evaluated the Ottoman past in a positive way (see later).

While the Left was weakened due to the military intervention and governmental oppression, more and more people, especially from the local poor turned towards the Islamist political party. During this period, Necmettin Erbakan's Welfare Party could benefit from the disillusionment of mainstream political parties, especially during the 1990s which were characterised by perpetual government coalition crises and frequent snap elections. Erbakan could mobilize the disenfranchised lower social classes and the Islamist parties emerged as new political forces (Özcan-Turunç, 2011, 69.).

After the electoral victory in 1996, Erbakan was invited by Tansu Çiller to form a government coalition between the RP and DYP. The new alliance between the Islamist and Centre-Right was perceived as a threat by the Turkish Armed Forces to the secular order of the Republic. When Erbakan has become the Prime Minister in 1997, he was soon forced to resign. His party was also closed one year later, in January 1998.

Erbakan founded a new party, the Fazilet that could size some 15 percent of votes at the 1999 election. Nevertheless, the party was also banned by the Constitutional Court in 2001.

The constant closure of Islamist parties has engendered a strong disillusionment in the Islamist movement. Furthermore, the Neo-liberal turn in Turkey also affected the Islamist party politics. Erbakan's anti-capitalist, anti-Western discourse conflicted with the interest of the rising Islamist business circles that preferred political stability, economic freedom, new markets including an acceptable political commitment to the West for economic reasons (Keyman-Gümüşçü, 2014, 32).

These circumstances resulted in a political clash within the old Islamist movement and the secession of a moderate group led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül. This group called yenilikçiler founded in 2001 a new political organization, the Justice and Development Party, the AKP which has become the most influential Turkish political party for the upcoming decades.

## 2. The AKP's hegemony

### 2.1. Electoral success: making electoral hegemony

The AKP's success in November 2002 was probably the most surprising electoral victory in Turkey's history. The party, founded just hardly more than one year before the general election acquired 34 percent of the total votes and entered into the parliament as the largest party gaining almost two-third of the mandates. Only one party, the Republican People's Party could pass the 10 percent electoral threshold. The other parties – even those who formed the previous government, such as the Nationalist Movement Party, the True Path Party or the Homeland Party– failed to gain enough votes and remained under the threshold. In such a favourable situation, the AKP could form a single-party government which was a unique development compared to the 90's multiparty and weak government coalitions.

The upcoming elections stabilized the AKP's position at the top of Turkish party system. Every election held during the scope of this work was won by the party that ensured a majority in the TBMM or at least made it the main party.

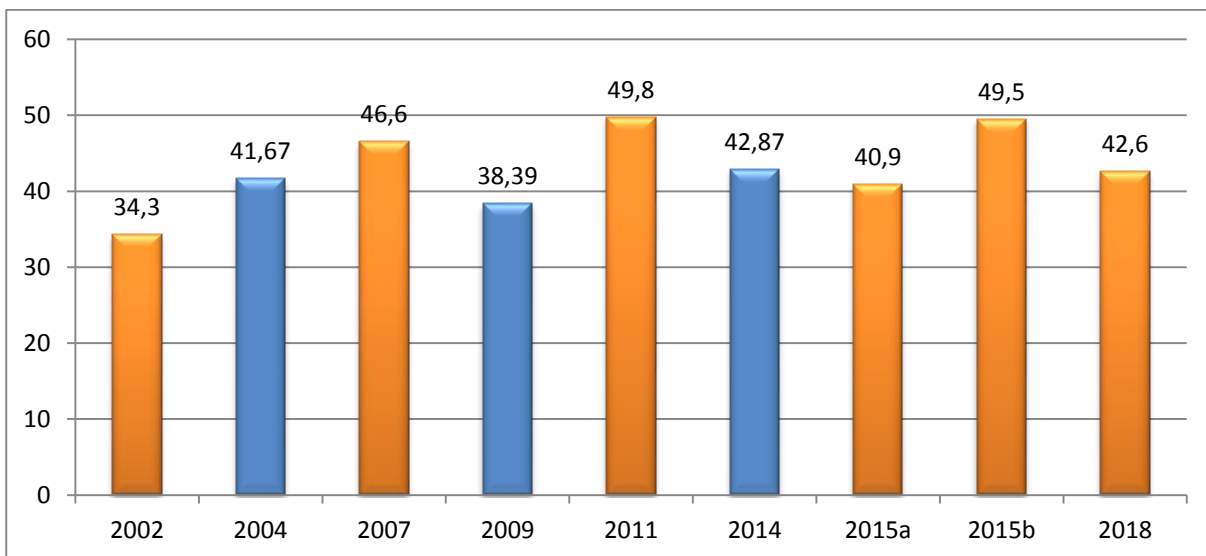


Chart 1. AKP's electoral performance (orange: general elections, blue: municipal elections)

As Chart 1 shows, AKP almost managed to increase its share of votes from 34.6 percent (2002) to 46 percent (2007). Five years later, the party's electoral performance reached almost 50 percent of the total votes. These successful series of victories were altered in June 2015 when the party's support shrunk to 41 percent (meanwhile it preserved its main party position at the parliament). Nevertheless, the election on 1<sup>st</sup>



November 2015 brought the party's support back that passed 49 percent of votes making the AKP enable to form a single-party government, again. The results of the 24 June 2018 elections shows a decline in its electoral performance (it received only 42.6 percent) however, it is still the biggest party in the TBMM with almost 50 percent of mandates.

The local level show similar dynamics. The party usually reached around 40 percent of votes at municipal elections in 2004, 2009 and 2014 that granted the majority of municipalities. For instance, in 2014 AKP won 799 mayoral posts out of 1351 municipality (59%) and acquired 18 out of 30 metropolises (*büyükşehir*) (Resmigazete, 06/05/2014).

Furthermore, the party was able to elect its candidate, Abdullah Gül as President of the Republic in 2007 – after a major political crisis – which ensured that the highest level of political echelon could be in his hand. The victory in presidential election repeated in 2014 in a strongly different situation: that time due to the constitutional changes of 2007 the President was elected by direct votes and the candidate was Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The strong leader's trajectory from the office of Prime Minister to the presidential post strengthened his rule. His partisan and active involvement in politics ensured a multilevel dominance of the party from the municipalities to the presidency.

The emergence of pre-dominant party system is not unique in history, like the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan (1955-1994), Conservatives in the United Kingdom, but it was a rare momentum in the history of Turkey. Similar pattern could be identified during the Democrat Party period (DP) in the 1950s under the leadership of Adnan Menderes which was ended by a successful military coup in 1960 or during the multiple victories of Turgut Özal's ANAP between 1983 and 1991 that practically ended due to Özal's trajectory to the post of President of the Republic. However, these parties or leaders could not keep the power for more than ten years.

The AKP's success can be perceived as a result of a crisis of the then hegemony. It is important to highlight that the party's initial victory in 2002 was rather the result of the failure of the government coalition than the promising programme of a recently resurrected pro-Islamist party. The Ecevit coalition government (1999-2002) represented a compromise between two major centre-right and leftist parties that a normalizing national radical party joined. The three years of coalition government were challenging for Turkey: the earthquake of 1999 damaged Istanbul, killed nearly 30 000 people and made the economy more vulnerable and volatile. Corruption cases during

this period also damaged the popularity of the government parties. These cases alienated the society especially after the financial crises that hit Turkey in 2000-2001. These crises rooted from the weakness of Turkish banking sector and a financial turmoil that started in November 2000 leading to gradual, unsustainable increase of interest rate which culminated in the announcement of the then Prime Minister on 19 February, 2001 that there was a serious political crisis in the country. After Ecevit's unfortunate declaration about the stalemate, investors started to withdraw their money from the country immediately. The Turkish lira devaluated rapidly and in a short while, the real economy was also punished by the financial crisis. The political consequences were evident: majority of the Turkish people suffered from the crisis. Turkish GDP per capita was \$2,941 in 2000 but due to the economic recession it decreased to \$2,123 in 2001 while the recovery was slow and the number could grow just to \$2,584 in 2002 (Kumbaracıbaşı, 2009, 98).

In order to tackle the crisis, the government invited a senior economic expert from the World Bank, Kemal Derviş who made huge efforts to reorganize the economy. His reforms were in line with the neo-liberal economic policies. Firstly, he managed to negotiate a new bail-out package from the IMF and World Bank in exchange for a number of financial and monetary reforms. He strengthened the independence of the Central Bank, imposed more fiscal discipline on the banking system and financial sector and restored the trust of the international investors in Turkey. Privatisation got green lighted after severe debates that finally helped to channel new financial sources to the state budget enlarging the government's room for manoeuvre (Szigetvári, 2013, 24).

The government's measures could not revive the Turkish economy quickly and the snap elections in November 2002 favoured the parties that had no mandate in the TBMM this time thus could not be identified with the unsuccessful and corrupt government parties. At the election, the AKP could benefit especially from the voters of the MHP while the electorate of the two major central-right parties (ANAP and DSP) voted comparatively less to the party (Kumbaracıbaşı, 2009, 111). However, AKP could also rely on the previous Islamist parties' electorate as it gained the RP and the FP' electoral strongholds. To summarize, the central right parties that usually dominated the party system failed to satisfy the electorate's demand to fight corruption, ensure financial stability and decrease the growing economic inequalities.

After the break from the Erbakan-led Islamist group, Erdoğan and Gül managed to create a convincing and credible image of a new party. This new image had two

pillars. Firstly, the AKP recognized that in such circumstances the electorate prefers a 'pure' political group that cannot be associated with corruption. Because of the regular banning of Islamist parties (even its predecessor the Fazilet could not spend much time in the TBMM) the party seemed to be a real alternative compared to the former government's well-established parties. The leadership's choice for symbol also supported this general feeling. The party's symbol – a lighting bulb – portrayed its purity as its acronyms also suggested that it is different compared to its political adversaries. In Turkish, 'Ak' means 'white' that also associated with the 'clean,' anti-corruption stance. Thus the dissatisfaction of the voters with the established parties played a crucial role in the outcome of the election of AKP (Kumbaracıbaşı, 2009, 83).

Secondly, the party also benefited from the pro-European stance of the society and left behind the anti-EU slogans of the Milli Görüş. This adjustment got strong incentive when the Ecevit government revived the dying EU accession talks. In 1999, at the Helsinki summit, Turkey got the applicant status and the government began implementing a number of harmonization packages in line with the Copenhagen criteria. The opinion polls clearly showed that there was strong support for the accession within the society which meant that the EU's transformative power was at its peak during these years. By making a fundamental break with the Erbakan anti-European tradition the AKP positioned itself as the ideological counterpart of Christian Democrat parties declaring the party 'Muslim-Democrat.' While AKP's anti-corruption stance was a key factor in the electoral victory, later, its pro-European turn helped the party to legitimize itself in the Kemalist and anti-Islamist political regime which was under the surveillance of the Kemalist establishment.

Due to these circumstances, the AKP has become the sole winner of the 2002 elections. Almost two years later, the local election in 2004 has demonstrated that the AKP started to create a strong electorate and as Yüksel Taskin argues 'it started to conquer the centre' (Taşkin, 2008). This political transformation of a pro-Islamist political group towards a moderate, centre-right party was a key result of the conquest of the traditionalist and religious stronghold of the country: the central and eastern provinces.

The outcome of the snap elections in 2007 also portrayed a steady rise of the AKP's support. Particular domestic political circumstances helped the party's performance again. As the incumbent president of the republic, Ahmet Necdet Sezer's presidential period approached to its end, the new presidential elections became timely.

The Kemalist groups, especially the Army were suspicious about the AKP's ambitions and many argued that by damaging the secular state they intended to Islamize the society. The election of a new president from the rank of the party – possessing the majority of the seats – could have been the loss of an important veto power for the Kemalists. Prior the nomination of the AKP's candidate, the TSK published a memorandum on its website, declaring that it is ready to defend the country secular order. This move, which has become the famous 'e-memorandum' was the most serious intervention of the Army to the domestic politics. It seemingly backfired, as many deemed that the TSK's action against the legitimate government is a mistake and unlawful intervention in the civil politics.

The general election in 2011 has shown a clear sign of the growing popularity of the AKP: it managed to get almost 50 percent of votes. It acquired the support of the majority of the main cities and managed also solidify its support in South-eastern Anatolia. By this historical outcome, Erdoğan could consolidate his power and launch four party talks about a new constitution replacing the current one.

The June 2015 general election represents a break in the consecutive electoral success of the AKP. The number of the party's votes shrunk from 23 to 19 million. The share of its votes decreased from 49.8 to 40.9 percent which was unprecedented in the party's history. Nevertheless, it received the highest number of votes that made it the biggest parliamentary group with 258 mandates but was insufficient to form a government (requiring at least a slight majority, 276 mandates) subsequently this triumph cannot be declared as clear victory for the party. The AKP's leadership started the coalition negotiations with opposition parties, nevertheless the dialogue was futile: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan hindered any attempts because many of the possible partners were against the implementation of the presidential system. The political deadlock led to a snap election 1<sup>st</sup> November 2015 which ended by the AKP's victory.

The party was able to increase its support after June. By launching the war against various terrorist groups in July 2015, resuming high-scale operations against the PKK within Turkey and Iraq, detaining suspected members of the ISIS and other, leftist extremist groups (like DHKP-C) shifted the focus from economic problems and democratic issues to terrorism and security that the government could handle successfully – at least according to the new millions of AKP's voters.

The early elections on 24 Junes 2018 also brought a victory for the AKP, nevertheless, its share of votes declined again to 42.6 and it could not reach the majority

in the TBMM (295 seats from 600). The introduction of presidential system limited the role of parliament thus the loss of majority was not crucial for domestic politics. Furthermore, due to the cooperation with the nationalist MHP, the AKP can vote its legislative endeavours.

The successive electoral victories were crucial in the success of the hegemonic project because gave the opportunity for the AKP to conquer the different level of power echelon from the majority of the municipalities to the Parliament and the post of President of the Republic. In other terms these victories gave the opportunity, power and the legitimacy to the AKP to fight the Kemalists and cope with new counter-hegemonic projects.

This electoral performance was based on consent and as we will see, on coercion. Due to the strong position and embeddement in the state apparatus, the Kemalist elite representing secular hegemony has remained a major actor and accumulated strong veto power (military, courts) that had enough power to slowdown and threaten the AKP's endeavours. Subsequently the electoral victories, even the most convincing one in term parliamentary mandates could not give the total state authority to the new government party which had to gradually fight for the ultimate primacy in the political society and took risks to hinder the control mechanisms of Kemaist elites. Thus the first decades of AKP representing a wide range of attempts to boost consent and to use coercion represented a rather slow and gradual process of war of position to conquer to whole state apparatus.

## **2.2. War of position**

### **2.2.1. Neoliberalism and economic success**

The AKP came to power after a severe economic recession thus it had more room for manoeuvre to convince the populace to accept deep reforms and economic transformation for a further prosperity. These reforms strengthened the country's neo-liberal turn initiated by Özal, so from this point of view they did not go against the previous governments' policy. Nevertheless, under the AKP, the neoliberal policies reached a new phase. Several factors influenced the new government's commitment to neo-liberalism.

First, stemming from the social transformation, the role of the Islamist capital in the economy has increased and this business interest preferred to support a more neoliberal, market-oriented political party which had the willingness to respond to the needs of these groups. The AKP demonstrated a strong commitment to free-market and economic liberalisation in order to gain the support of these Islamist business groups, especially the endorsement of the MÜSIAD (Keyman-Gümüşçü, 2014, 32).

Second, the country got an impetus after the 2001 crisis. The AKP's policy was based on the reforms initiated in 2002 by Kemal Derviş in line with the IMF's principles and financial help.<sup>21</sup> Going back to Turkey, he started to impart this knowledge and to behave as an apostle in disseminating the centre's hegemonic project.

The key issue is that the group of Islamist politicians accepted and behaved in line with these neo-liberal policies. As Derviş reforms begun to work and the stagnant economy started to grow bringing relative wealth compared to the chaos and decline of 2000/2001, the project could get the support not just of the Islamist middle class but also main Turkish business groups like the TÜSIAD.

By the successful implementation of the neo-liberal reforms, the AKP could co-opt the business groups as well. Despite its critics, especially at the beginning the TÜSIAD also demonstrated a strong support towards the government (Uzgel, 2009, 27). The great holdings and the Anatolian Tigers also found a new ally in the government to cement their economic prosperity. The AKP during the 2000s was particularly successful in privatizing the state-owned companies and attract foreign capital which

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<sup>21</sup> Derviş who was a Turkish economist working for the World Bank and reaching high position can be considered in the neo-gramscian term as an actor of the neo-liberal project who arrived at the international organization from the periphery and has interiorized the principles of the centre.

inflow rocketed after 2005. However, in order to enlarge its base, the party endeavoured to favour the small and medium sized companies. Several acts strengthened their position. For instance, the Public Procurement Law that initially was biased in favour of the big companies was modified several times to help the small and medium size enterprises (Çınar, 2013, 49).

In 2004, the government has founded the Investment Advisory Council (YDK) to improve the country's investment climate and make a common platform for business groups. Along with another platform, founded in 2001 (YOİKK), the YDK has become an important forum where the representatives of the government, the various business groups such as TÜSIAD, MÜSIAD, TOBB and international organizations and groups such as the IMF could meet (Bedirhanoğlu, 2009, 56). This also portrayed the government commitment for neo-liberal principles and its willingness to encourage international investment and trade.

The support of Turkish business groups has also become an incentive in Turkish foreign policy that was worked out in close cooperation with various economic actors, e. g. a number of Turkish business associations (which may appear as autonomous players in shaping bilateral economic relations (Tür, 2011) and wealthy businessmen (several hundred businessmen participate in Turkish presidential or prime ministerial visits) in order to boost foreign trade and pave the way towards Turkish investments (see later). Furthermore, by promoting peace and stability in neighbouring countries, the Turkish government endeavoured to ensure the viable economic relations as well as to create opportunities for investment and trade (Pintér, 2013). The increasing importance of economic relations has become palpable. Kirişçi characterized Turkey as a 'trading state' by referring to this change (Kirişçi, 2009).

Third, the EU also had a major role in boosting the neo-liberal economic policy in the country. The EU accession programme required strong market-economy and competitive enterprises. The new law of privatization also got support from Brussels, thus could be interpreted by the ruling group as some compulsory requirement to achieve a national cause. The penetration of foreign companies into the Turkish market could have not been possible without the drastic change of the country's international image and the AKP's success in implementing harmonization packages and the start of the accession negotiations with the European Union in October 2005.

Turkish economy has gone through structural changes during these years. Traditionally the foreign trade was based on export of agricultural and textile goods, but

the electronics and automobile industry have become the fastest developing sectors. A number of car manufacturers established factories in Turkey (especially in Bursa and Istanbul), like Ford, Renault, Fiat, Hyundai, Toyota, Honda, Opel, Mercedes-Benz, MAN under the Customs Union with the EU. The Customs Union also facilitated the full integration of Turkish automobile industry into the EU market (Szigetvári, 2018, 85-86). In the electronics industry it could not achieve such development, however, strong Turkish brands could appear even in the European markets (Vestel, Beko etc.). However, the export-led economic growth in line with the liberalization of the Turkish market could not change – except for a few years – the fact that the country's balance of payment and trade was usually in deficit.

The financial crisis in 2008-2009 affected Turkey negatively; its economy contracted by 4.9% and Turkish firms had the highest market exit rate in Europe. Similarly, the country experienced the highest unemployment increase (Öniş-Güven, 2011, 589). However, it has recovered fast due to the healthy and strong bank sector (which was reformed earlier due to the 2001 crisis). The tight financial supervision, management and independent monetary policy prevent a fast, credit-led expansion of household consumption, the opposite of what has happened in several other countries, like Hungary (Onur – Watson, 2013, 415-416).

The government's anticyclical policy, even if its stimulus arrived late, also helped to return to fast economic growth: It decreased the tax on consumer durables, launched new infrastructural projects and also increased governmental spending in the energy, transport and healthcare sectors. In line with the expansionary fiscal policy, the monetary policy gave strong support by lowering the interest rate from 16.75% to 7.25% (Szigetvári, 2018, 88).

Subsequently, Turkish economy experienced a tangible growth due to the continuation of the economic policies started by Kemal Derviş and the AKP's commitment to market-economy, neo-liberal economic policy, privatization and the favourable international economic conjuncture. The average per capita income growth was 6% between 2002 and 2006 and also remained high (a little over 3%) between 2007 and 2014 (Acemoglu – Ucer, 2015, 10). When one compares the Turkish economic growth rate of approximately 10 percent in 2011 with the EU average 2 percent, Turkey's path becomes convincing. Even after 2015, when terrorist attacks and foreign policy crisis with Russia provoked a downturn in tourism and political instability, and



the weakening of Turkish lira and the downgrading of Turkey's credit rating hurt the Turkish economy's image, growth has remained around 3 percent.<sup>22</sup>

Despite this economic prosperity, the structural basis of Turkish economic growth has changed significantly after 2007, as the state and not the private sector has become its engine. Government supported giant infrastructural projects, credit-based growth, growing corruption, stagnating productivity and slowing reforms may become a structural barrier for further stability and increasing of GDP. However, the AKP was smart to prevent a major political disillusionment and gained the votes of disfranchised strata by various economic stimuli and political manoeuvres.

The entrenchment of globalisation, inflow of foreign investments and stable economic policy has had direct effect on the population's standard of living. The GDP per capita has increased from 3660 USD in 2002 to 10 800 in 2016. The AKP also paid attention to social programs, even if its policy was used for political reasons and clientelism-building (see later). The government-spending on education and healthcare increased sharply, especially in the less developed provinces and neighbourhoods. Health expenditure raised from 11 percent in 2002 to 17 percent in 2007 while education got 14 percent of the state budget instead of 10 percent in 2002 (Acemoglu – Ucer, 2015, 9).

Due to the stable financing background, the AKP launched major infrastructural projects to boost the investment environment and cater the needs of the socio-economically disadvantaged (Keyman-Gümüşçü, 2014, 32). By building roads, railways (the new Turkish fast-train system), metro lines in the major cities, airports all over the country, the party could strengthen its popularity and show that it could boost work opportunities. The opening of various construction sites emerged as a constant part of campaigns provoking the opposition's accusations that the government uses these kind of occasions as a tool for gaining popularity.

The government has made strong efforts in order to address the housing, education and health care needs of the lower-income groups, especially by supporting the TOKI, the government-related housing agency. The programs of the organizations have transformed a great number of so called *gecekondus* (shanty towns) from poor neighbourhoods to organized and more livable ones. The TOKI enlarged its social

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<sup>22</sup> The TURSKSTAT has changed its methodology of GDP calculating in line with EU calculation methods. The new methodology increased annual GDP growth within 2012 and 2015 from nearly 3 percent to approximately 6% percent.

housing project for middle- and low-income groups to build education and social facilities and to undertake reconstruction activities. As of September 2017, the TOKI has built around 805 thousands housing facilities since its establishment in 1984, (most of them under the AKP government) and more than one thousand schools, around twenty universities, almost three hundred hospitals (TOKI, 2017).

As a result, a larger middle class could emerge, and social mobility has become easier for more people, at least in theory. The economic growth also affected the Turkish inland and larger social strata could benefit from it. The middle class has become larger, poverty and social inequality declined at least at the beginning of AKP era. The Gini coefficient decreased from 42.18 in 2003 to 38.44 in 2007, but it has increased to 41.2 by 2014 (World Bank). Several opinion polls have shown that successful economic policy and economic stability were convincing factors for many voters. According to a 2008 poll, some 85 percent of the AKP-voters justified their votes by the performance of the economy (Acemoglu – Ucer, 2015, 10).

In line with strong economic incentives in electoral successes, a weakening or even declining economy can harm the AKP's support and curtail its political performance. Recent trends in Turkish economy are alarming despite the GDP growth and the highly propagated mega infrastructural projects (new airport, new metro lines in Istanbul, fast train railways system etc.). The vulnerability, stemming from the above mentioned negative balance of payment and trade deficit, has met with increasing domestic political instability and crises since 2013/2015. Although the AKP has been able to hold to power, the internal struggle had a rather negative effect on the foreign perceptions of the country. The Turkish "war on terror" resulted in the destruction of various parts of Southeastern Turkey and a new wave of internal migration that has also raised the number of internally displaced persons by several hundred thousand. The terror attacks in Ankara and Istanbul also harmed the country's image and contributed to the decline of the number of tourists. The downing of Russian Su-24 in November 2015 also worsened the country's economic situation: Moscow's sanctions on Turkish agricultural products, the practical ban on Turkey as a tourist destination and especially the breakdown in construction projects of Turkish companies in Russia put a new burden on the struggling economy. Making the compromise with Vladimir Putin in mid-2016, has played an important role in mending the fences with Russia.

The coup attempt and the following purges also contributed to the declining image of Turkey abroad and the outflow of FDI from the country. The demolition of

Gülenists' economic power, the internal troubles, the weakening rule of law all contributed to the downgrading of the country by the major credit rating agencies short after the coup, giving an alarming sign to the markets. Debates about the manipulation of statistical data by the TURKSTAT also gave the impression that the country is rather in a negative economic spiral.

These changes also affected the YTL. The Turkish currency started to depreciate and the inflation started to increase in line with the growth of unemployment. Thus, it will be crucial for the AKP to handle these economic and financial challenges in the near future if it wants to preserve its electoral support.

### **2.2.2. The role of the EU in hegemony building**

The EU has played a key role in the AKP's hegemonic emergence, chiefly in its first period. In 1999, the Helsinki Summit awarded Turkey the candidate status that created a common pro-EU sentiment in the elite and within the society based on credible promise of accession. Due to this enthusiasm, the Ecevit government made efforts to amend the constitution and implement several harmonization packages. This popularity of EU was strong enough in Turkey to push Recep Tayyip Erdoğan-led Islamists towards a pro-EU turn. The AKP also continued its predecessor harmonization and Europeanization efforts. Between 1999 and 2005 the constitution was changed three times with a strong parliamentary consensus. The Ecevit-government has voted three harmonization packages while after 2002 the AKP managed to accept six packages with the support of the CHP. Important changes proved that Turkish Islamist-Kemalist elite were resolute to launch the negotiations. It was the AKP that annulled the capital punishment<sup>23</sup> from the Turkish legislation and narrowed the infamous Terror Law's scope. More importantly it also could take steps in weakening the TSK's control over the civil governments (however Ecevit has started this process) by limiting the role of the National Security Council and driving out the TSK's representatives from several state institutions such as the Higher Education Council (YÖK) (Kalkan, 2016, 16.) Ankara demonstrated its readiness to tackle even the Cyprus question which was a clear adjustment compared to the previous governments's policy (Ulgen, 2009). The AKP

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<sup>23</sup> The previous government voted in favour of restricting capital punishment in Turkey in summer 2002, nevertheless, it was the AKP that annulled it in every circumstances and from the constitution.

government backed the Annan Plan aiming at the unification of the two territories of the divided island. Unfortunately for Turkey, the Greek Cypriots refused the plan (while majority of Turkish Cypriots voted yes) at the 2004 referendum that terminated the short-term prospects for solution and prevented Ankara to finalise the unification process of the divided island before the accession of Cyprus. After the efforts to fulfil the Copenhagen criteria, the European Commission in 2004 deemed Turkey ready to start the negotiation which was launched in October 2005.

Paradoxically, Turkish enthusiasm has soon been replaced by disillusionment. Several factors contributed to the decline of the accession's credibility. Firstly, signals from the European Union strongest member states have showed that the EU has not full support for Ankara due to various political considerations such as the situation of Turkish Diaspora in Western Europe or the absorption capacity of the EU itself in case of a country of some 75 millions inhabitants wants to join (Rózsa N., 2008). Some member states' special conditionality for Turkey hampered the negotiations even when in case of some chapters the European Commission declared that Ankara fulfilled the required benchmarks thus it was ready to open (Müftüler-Baç - Çiçek, 2017, 185-190.)

It was less surprising that Cyprus became the major obstacle in the accession process. By the end of 2008, the European Commission blocked eight chapters, one year later Cyprus blocked further five chapters (Torun-Eralp, 2012, 87.). The other country that hampered the opening of new chapters was France due to Francois Sarkozy strong opposition of Turkish accession. Due to these circumstances the negotiations advanced slowly as Table 1. shows and consequently Turkish enthusiasm evaporated fast.

<b>Chapters</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
Opened	1	5	4	2	1			1		1	1
Closed	1										
Freezed	8	3		6							
Unfreezed								1		1	1

Table 1. Changes in the status of EU accession negotiation chapters (2006-2016)

(Source: EC)

Nevertheless, the AKP continued making new reforms even if the importance of the EU in this process gradually decreased. The upcoming years have demonstrated that the AKP needed the EU project even if it used a more belligerent rhetoric towards the community. Firstly, the Turkish government could use the reform packages for its self-

help. Due to the relative consensus within the Turkish society over the need of EU accession, the government could justify its packages – especially during its first term – as inevitable compromises and changes that were necessary for the final cause. Secondly, international actors, like the EU itself could defend the government in its struggle against the ‘kemalist’ establishment. Their role was particularly important along with the US in 2007 when the AKP had to face the TSK’s famous e-memorandum that led to a government crisis and snap elections, or in 2008 when the Chief Prosecutor, Abdurrahman Yalçınkaya turned its request to the Constitutional Court to ban the party due to its activities against secularism (Ulgen, 2009). The Constitutional Court finally avoided banning the government party that won the 2007 election, but confiscated the half of its fortune.

Nevertheless, the accession’s de facto significance for the Turkish society declined in the 2010s. The main legislative packages, like the 2010 referendum and constitutional changes were hardly featured by the EU accession agenda, but the need for Turkey’s own democratization without any foreign influence. Although after the 2011 elections, a separate institution, the Ministry of European Union Affairs was established in order to facilitate the accession process, not much palpable efforts have been taken to achieve this goal.

The decline of the EU’s transformative power influenced this change. The global financial crisis hit the Eurozone states severely and the EU lost its enlargement impetus – only Croatia could join during the last 10 years, in July 2013. Simultaneously, Greece’s economic turmoil damaged its image of prosperous stable economic community (Öniş - Kutlay, 2017). While the EU used economic benefits as incentives to strengthen its conditionality on candidate countries its attractiveness after the crisis decreased due to economic downturn, bail-out packages, internal debates, austerity packages resulting in harsh budget and salary cuts (especially in Greece) and mass demonstrations in almost all Mediterranean member states.

In line with crisis management, internal cohesion and solidarity within the EU was also undermined. Subsequently, its conditionality towards external partners has been diminished. Furthermore, the EU’s norms such as democracy, human rights, freedom of press did not find way in certain foreign relations where usually the community sees itself as a normative power that created ambiguities. For example, European powers pragmatic stance to Abdel-Fattah Sissi’s coup in Egypt in 2013 that deeply disturbed Egyptian-Turkish relations as well, still nourished criticism in Turkey.

During the Arab Spring, the EU was less critical towards the authoritarian regimes handling human rights order to keep the economic relations viable and defend its economic interests. By this time, when Turkey's decision-makers portrayed the country as a strong defender of human rights and stressed for international intervention in Syria to save human life, Turkish elite and society could see a growing difference in foreign policy between Brussels and Ankara (Öniş - Kutlay, 2017).

Later on, the EU's inability to tackle the refugee crisis on its own also decreased the Turkish enthusiasm. As the poor management of the challenge showed the acute collective action problems and pushed individual member states to tackle with it alone even further undermining the internal cohesion. All in all, from outside, this problem raised concern about the EU commitment to human rights, value-based foreign policy and its capacities as a successful and strong international actor. Furthermore, the rising xenophobic and Islamophobic rhetoric in the EU also gained much attention in the Anatolian state that further worsened the image of the human rights promoter (Öniş - Kutlay, 2017).

The end of 2015 also showed that the EU is not able to handle a major crisis without external partners: it needed Turkish involvement that drastically changed the balance of powers between the EU and Turkey. Ahmet Davutoğlu's meeting with EU leaders in November 2015 was pressured as a great event in the Turkish media that demonstrated the emerging power of Turkey. The EU-Turkey refugee deal (EU-Turkey Statement) that hampered the unregulated flow of refugees to Greece via Aegean Sea later also served as a pretext for tensions between the AKP leadership and the EU. The unfulfilled visa-liberalisation and the slow reimbursement of EU funds was put on the agenda and the main Turkish foreign policy actors from the President to the Minister of Foreign Affairs criticized the community and threatened to open the border for the masses of Syrian refugees. Albeit these threats have not materialised yet, they highlight that the EU's role in Turkish domestic politics has changed drastically.

Seemingly, the more the AKP has secured its power and weakened its opponents (sometimes even with the EU's support), the more its need for the EU has declined. The Turkish accession process faced huge difficulties because of the opposition of several member-states since the very beginning. Nonetheless, the state of the rule of law and human rights in the country questions the willingness of the Turkish side to the accession. Especially after the 15 July coup attempt on which the perceptions diverge in Brussels and Ankara about, the relations have become frosty. As it was discussed

previously, the EU and several EU countries still contribute to the AKP's success but in a clearly different way compared to the 2000s: the rhetoric has shifted mainly from the image of a democratic partner towards an external threat.

### **2.2.3. Changing identity discourse**

The AKP put a new identity in the heart of his discourse which constituted a strong difference compared to the previous unitary discourse. The Turkish nation-building process launched during Kemal Atatürk's era particularly focused on the assimilation and Turkification of various Muslim groups living in Anatolia for centuries or even being newcomers from the Black Sea zone, from the Balkans or from Caucasus as refugees, like Tatars, Circassians, Abkhaz, Bosniaks, Albanians or even Turks.

The immigration policy<sup>24</sup> was complemented with by other tools to assimilate the immigrant and minority groups of the country. From the very beginning of the early Turkish Republican era massive assimilationist policies were implemented in order to create a modern nation state from Turkey.<sup>25</sup> After Atatürk's death this policy did not change too much. During the conservative Adnan Menderes governments various pogroms were carried out in Istanbul paving the way to the mass emigration of Greek and other Christian communities. Later on, when Kurdish nationalism started to emerge

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<sup>24</sup> Although by this time Ankara was opened the influx of hundreds thousands of immigrants, the legislation and practices showed that migration policy was shaped by a well-defined strategy. In the Early Republican period, authorities preferred the groups having a closer, 'Ottoman' identity. Due to these feature Balkan immigrants were welcomed, especially Turks whose integration because of the common language and ethnicity meant the smallest difficulties. Other Muslim groups from the Balkans, such as Bosniaks, Pomaks, Torbeshes were also preferred because they shared the common cultural values, the same religion and they had no states which could be a threat by supporting any prospective secessionist attempt. Albanians were also accepted with more suspicion, because they possessed with a given state (however, important part of Yugoslav immigrants were Albanians, usually from Kosovo). Other groups from the Caucasus region were usually welcome due to the same reason; however, authorities were more 'attentive' as they were coming from the USSR. Other former Ottoman subjects, despite the fact that they were Muslims, were usually not allowed to install in Turkey. This decision was serving mainly security reasons: Arabs 'created' their own states – even they were not independent – by fighting against Ottoman forces in the WWI. The memory of this bloody intermezzo shaped in a great manner the Turkish leadership perceptions about them. Concerning Kurds, albeit Turkish authorities thought that their assimilation would be an easy task were rather resistance to the Turkification attempts, and they were revolting regularly from Said sheik's rebellion in 1925, until Dersim rebellion (1936-1938). These attempts were oppressed by force and they managed to handle the Kurdish question at least till the beginning of 60's.

<sup>25</sup> During this process national symbols were accepted (national anthem, flag), name of towns and villages were Turkified, and campaigns were launched to boost Turkish speaking among non-Turkish groups. The famous 1934 name law also claimed the Turkification of names, and it prohibited the use of names having non/Turkish ethnic endings such as –os or –ic. Furthermore settlement and immigration policy was accepted to prevent the emergence of immigrants 'ethnic ghettos and also to increase the number and proportion of Turkish elements in the non-Turkish, usually Kurdish territories (Çağaptay, 2003).

in the 60s and 70s Turkish governments oppressed these initiatives as well. The war launched by the PKK in 1984 has given a new phase in Turkish state – minority relations as the Kurdish secessionist or at least nationalist project got strong incentives. This war against the PKK led to the death of tens of thousands, degrading security in South-Eastern Anatolia and the appearance of a strong, nationalized Kurdish constituency.

The official Turkish discourse refused to recognize the presence of other ethnic groups within the country's border (except the Greek, Armenian and Jewish minorities accepted in the Lausanne Treaty, 1923). This state policy was clearly defined in the Turkish constitution of 1982 when in the second paragraph it stated that "The State of Turkey, with its territory and nation, is an indivisible entity. Its language is Turkish."<sup>26</sup> The preamble also argued that Turkishness and secularism are the basis of the Republic of Turkey.<sup>27</sup>

The AKP has reshaped this discourse although the very basis of Turkish nationalism was kept untouched. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan reformed the traditional national rhetoric by recognizing the existence of other (Muslim) communities in Turkey. In his speeches, he often refers to Kurds, Lazs, Circassians, Bosniaks, Albanians and other Muslim minority groups.<sup>28</sup> The change in Erdoğan's speeches is rather the sign for the acceptance of the reality. Despite of the efforts of almost one hundred years of assimilationist policy Turkey could not be considered as a real nation-state, it needed to recognize its multiethnic features. Albeit the most numerous minority group is the Kurds, the governmental rhetoric effected the other, much smaller and better integrated minorities (including immigrants groups, like Albanians and Bosniaks themselves).

Compared to the Kemalist and nationalist governments the AKP admitted the existence of Kurdish and other minority groups and emphasized the need for a more inclusive national identity which is based on the notion of Turkishness as a political notion rather than an ethnicity. The AKP used the Islamist discourse emphasizing the inclusiveness of religion and propagated the importance of Islam which was attractive to the religious Kurdish voters. The AKP's opening towards the minority groups by

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<sup>26</sup> Turkish Constitution, 1982.

<sup>27</sup> That no protection shall be accorded to an activity contrary to Turkish national interests, Turkish existence and the principle of its indivisibility with its State and territory, historical and moral values of Turkishness; the nationalism, principles, reforms and civilizationism of Atatürk and that sacred religious feelings shall absolutely not be involved in state affairs and politics as required by the principle of secularism;

<sup>28</sup> Since 1965 there is no question in census about the ethnicity or mother tongue, nevertheless, it did not changed during JDP's governments, either.



launching radio programmes and later, a Kurdish language channel and emphasizing the importance of minority issues linked this new discourse to the democratisation which proved to be an effective tool to promote its hegemonic project.

#### **2.2.4. Promise of democratization**

Counter-hegemony projects may focus on law and rights to broaden their own social background and co-opt other, less enthusiast communities as well (Hunt, 1990, 315). The AKP has articulated a pro-democracy and human right seeking agenda including constitutional changes based on the Copenhagen criteria as the party's 2002 election programme shows (AKP, 2002).

This agenda got a strong support from the EU (and during the first years from other parties as well) that even boosted the social support of the party. The AKP focusing on democratization could convince the Liberal groups of Turkey to get support for this national cause (Uzgel, 2009; Bedirhanoğlu, 2009). In order to legitimize itself in a politically hostile environment and to survive prospective interventions of various veto players, it used the democratization process to weaken traditional Kemalist elites and to meet with the appeal of the social periphery and business groups (the TÛSIAD called for democratization already in the mid-1990s). The AKP positioned itself at the heart of the long-lasting Turkish democratization, claiming that it had to tackle anti-democratic traditions, the overwhelming power of the military and other threatening groups as well as to realize the political rehabilitation of the deprived lower income social groups. It also pushed for a pro-Islam agenda in form of liberal democratization. Subsequently it could represent the interest of Islamists groups, Nurcus, Gülenists and so on while found the basis for cooperation with Liberal groups (Türkeş, 2016, 192). In a broader context, the AKP also managed to get international support (thus from US and EU) for the political transformation in name of democratization.

Symbolic issues such as headscarf-wearing appeared in the party's rhetoric as an important step towards democratizing the oppressive system that prohibited the existence even a soft form of secularism. This issue ruled the political discourse for years; it provoked a number of manifestations and protests by Kemalist groups and almost led to the banning of the AKP in 2008. The lifting of headscarf-ban in the universities in 2010 and state administration was a clear victory for the party. The education reforms in 2012, reorganizing public education system in favour of imam-

hatip schools and traditionalist, religious curriculum was also related to fulfil the demand of Conservative and religious electorate (making consent) and strengthen the party's own hegemonic project.

The AKP's handling the Kurdish question has been presented as a democratization issue as well; when it has become clear for the party leadership that the PKK cannot be tackled only by military tools - as interventions in Kandil region brought minor effects for the conflict - it turned to a more liberal political solution by launching the famous "Kurdish opening" in 2009 (*Kürt açılımı*) which was transformed into the "Democratic opening" (*Demokratik açılımı*) later in 2010 by unifying the various minority-group oriented openings and starting at the very beginning of 2013 the "peace process" (*Barış süreci*). This change in Turkish state's attitude to the Kurds was a major alteration compared to the previous policy. From the Atatürk era to the 1990s Turkish state denied the Kurdish identity and suppressed the ethnic group, in the 1990s the assimilationist policy remained intact nonetheless several leading groups admitted the existence of the minority (Özdemir – Sarigil, 2015, 180). This change also affected the other minority groups as well. In 2005, Erdoğan in his famous speech in Diyarbakir addressed openly the 'Kurdish problem' stating that 'the problem does not belong to one part of this nation but rather it is the problem of all' (BBC, 12/08/2005). In 2009 and 2010, the AKP launched a number of 'openings' towards the previously oppressed or denied minority groups. Alevi, Roma and Kaferi openings were taking place in this period leading to conferences, workshops and meetings with the participation of AKP politicians. The party communicated these openings as a rupture with the oppressive policies and a further step towards the democratization of the country. What is more, the Kurdish opening was renamed in 2010 as a democratisation process.

Nevertheless, the openings had minor palpable outcome. The Kurdish one mainly focused on settle the PKK issue thus the government wanted them to lay down the weapons. When a small group of PKK militants arrived from Irak to Turkey at Harbur with a promise of amnesty in late 2009, the Turkish public opinion was shocked to see how the Kurdish party (DTP) and its sympathisers hosted the group as national heroes. The fast downturn in AKP public support following the event practically ended the Kurdish opening even if it was never terminated officially. The DTP was banned by the Constitutional Court by the end of 2009.

Despite the valuable effort of the party to give more rights to minority groups, their impact was only a minor one. The AKP's reforms have given radio air time to

Bosniak, Armenian, Kurdish groups, as it was mentioned, in 2009 it launched a new, Kurdish television channel. In 2010, political campaign in Kurdish language was allowed. Kurdish education was also allowed in a limited manner: in 2010, the state opened a Kurdish language department in a university in the south-eastern town of Mardin. Two years later a law introduced elective Kurdish courses in secondary schools, in 2013, education in the mother tongue was allowed in private schools (Özdemir – Sarigil, 2015, 183), and several further reforms were envisaged. On the other side, the government's main aim was to disarm the PKK that is why it entered with secret (in Oslo, in 2009-2010) and later rather open negotiations with the terrorist organisation at the beginning of 2013 by involving Abdullah Öcalan.

The failure of the Kurdish opening highlighted the inability of the AKP to cope with the issue despite its pro-minority, Islam and common history based discourse. The party could co-opt an important segment from the Kurdish society, nevertheless it failed to tackle the Kurdish nationalist constituency and to solve the PKK question. Subsequently it did not address the main ethnopolitical requests of Kurds like broader language education, autonomy etc. that was culminated in the very fast collapse of the Dolmabahçe agreement between Kurdish nationalist groups and the government in the first half of 2015.

### **2.2.5. Conflicts with veto powers**

As it was shown, the AKP follows permanent war rhetoric where the party and its leadership occupy a defensive, central position. As the party is always under attack, it always has to defend itself which is consequently the interest of its electorate. According to this narrative these voters can face oppression or restriction after any failure of the party (Çınar, 2013). Nevertheless, the party had to face strong veto powers<sup>29</sup> and real adversaries that represented a real threat for its leadership in form of party closure initiatives and soft or hard coup attempts. These phenomena also casted doubt on the state of Turkish democracy, and demonstrated its weaknesses.

Although this thesis does not want to give a detailed analysis on civil-military relations in Turkey, it is important to point out that the hegemonic order created by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk between 1923 and 1938 has remained intact. The

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<sup>29</sup> Veto powers are institutions that can hinder the government's endeavours. The main veto powers in the Turkish context were the TSK ( and the National Security Council) and the Constitutional Court.

democratization opened the way to other parties, political life has developed into a moral pluralistic, nonetheless the statist tradition, the Kemalist elite and secular-Kemalist hegemonic cultural policy under the tutelage of various actors.

The main players that possessed serious institutional veto were the Constitutional Court and the Turkish Armed Forces. The first one previously closed down the Islamist parties while the later also forced various governments in the past to resign (lastly against the RP by a postmodern coup in 1997). Nevertheless, other actors could also appear as strong opposition, like the president (Ahmet Necdet Sezer between 2000 and 2007), political parties, universities (academic staff and students), trade unions, business associations, non-governmental organizations, religious sects and movements and mass media (Kumbaracıbaşı, 2009).

This defensive position was extremely dominant during the first years of the AKP rule. The Kemalists considered the party's political manoeuvres as part of an Islamist hidden agenda. As it was mentioned above, the biggest challenges from the Kemalists came in 27 April 2007 when the Army issued a memorandum, penned by the then Chief of General Staff, Yaşar Büyükanıt on its website threatening the government with an intervention in protection of secularism (e-memorandum). The act intended to hinder the election of Abdullah Gül, the AKP's candidate for the presidential position. The declaration led to a political turmoil. The parliament remained inconclusive about Gül's election because the CHP members did not join the session, thus without the presence of the necessary member of deputies it was impossible to elect anybody. In order to tackle the political stalemate, early elections were organized in July 2007 where the AKP could stabilize its electorate. While this time other parties, like the MHP could enter in the parliament and they joined the voting session about the President of the Republic, Abdullah Gül could be elected. Finally the AKP could solve the political crisis by strengthening its position. After a few days of the e-memorandum, a secret meeting took place between the Chief of General Staff and the Prime Minister. Although the *contenu* of the meeting is not public the upcoming weeks portrayed the political triumph of the AKP.

On 14 March 2008, the Chief Prosecutor, Abdurrahman Yalçınkaya turned to the Constitutional Court to ban the AKP. The indictment revealed the party's Islamist policies and accused it of harming the secular tenets of the state clearly defined in the constitution. The issue got national and international attention as despite the frequent banning of parties in Turkey, it was still extraordinary to ban a government. The

Constitutional Court has rapidly concluded the issue (usually the procedure on a party closure took some one year). Five members from eleven voted against the closure thus the required 3/5 majority was not achieved (Sevinç, 2009, 267).

The AKP survived these two major crises, nevertheless the following years led to more sophisticated but coercive politics. The infamous Ergenekon (2008–2013) and later Balyoz (2010-2013) cases were not launched by the government although they were organized and boosted by AKP-allies.

These probes were the tipping point in the secular elite and the AKP's balance of power. The indictments of both cases were based on the theory that there were forces behind the scenes that were committed to the overthrow of the government. According to the Ergenekon indictment, a clandestine ultranationalist group (called Ergenekon) was embedded deeply and secretly in the state structure (deep state or *derin devlet*) and were plotting against the government.

The first Ergenekon trial started in 2008 and in the upcoming years more than one dozen indictments were submitted to the judiciary. During this period several thousands of people were accused claiming that they were part of the clandestine organization. The people who had to face trials came usually from the secular or leftist, nationalist (*ulusalçı*) side. The Turkish public opinion was deeply bifurcated by the cases. Some saw in line with the narrative of the given judiciary that this was a good opportunity to fight against secret groups' non-legitimate manoeuvres against the state. This perception has resonated with some chapters of Turkish history when suspicious groups, plotters intended to gain control over the state by overthrowing the government. The existence of the infamous 'Gladio' as counter-guerrilla organization in Europe also hinted that similar groups could exist in Turkey. Some suspicious affairs, like the famous Susurluk car crash in 1996 whose victims were the Deputy Chief of the Istanbul Police Department, a Member of Parliament and the leader of Grey Wolves highlighted the interlocking of mafia and political circles.

The other, increasingly growing group over time perceived the probes as a tool to weaken the Kemalist and secular groups and silencing the critics over the AKP. The length of detentions, the time inconsistency of the indictments and the great number of charged people nourished this assumption. Despite the detention of several thousand people, just 275 were condemned in 2013.

The Balyoz case had similar features, although it was clearly linked to the military. The affair started with a puzzling package of documents and CDs handed over

to the liberal Taraf newspaper at the beginning of 2010 that turned to the judiciary. This material, especially the three CDs constituted the basis of the probe named after the secret coup plan: Balyoz. According to the digital material, the plan was created at a military seminar in March 2003. The plotters would have thrown the country into chaos by bombarding mosques and attacking a Turkish plane over the Aegean Sea and blaming the incidents on the Greeks. After provoking unrest in the population the military could have intervened and overthrow the government.

The trial started in December 2010 with impressive press and media coverage and active involvement of Taraf that published articles based on the evidences found in mysterious package. The detention of military personel, even retired generals also damaged the prestige of the TSK, however, the military did not do anything to hinder the trial.

In September 2012, a total of 331 military members were convicted; one year later, in October 2013 the Supreme Court of Appeal upheld the convictions of 237 of the accused (Jenkins, 2014). Although the convicts' lawyers have argued that the CDs could not be used as proof because these CDs were created in 2003 but surprisingly the documents containing the plans were written in Microsoft Word 2007, neither the lower court nor the Supreme Court of Appeal did not take into consideration this controversy.

The situation did change several months later, when the Constitutional Court decided in July 2014 to retrial the case. The convicted plotters were acquitted in 2015 based on false evidence (Hurriyetdailynews, 31/03/2015). The case for Ergenekon was similar. In 2016, the Supreme Court of Appeals declared that previous court rulings were mistakes because the Ergenekon Terror Organization's „crimes and hierarchic structure was not exposed” and “its leader was not evident” (Hurriyetdailynews, 21/04/2016); by Spring 2017 every convicted was acquitted.

This 'regime change through law' reveals the slow transformation in the state structure and the weakness of the separation of powers. The AKP made efforts to cut back the military tutelage, especially with the support of the European Union. The judiciary and legislation played a central role in it. The government implemented this project via three main tools: 1) changing the military related legislation, 2) delegitimizing the military's intervention in civilian politics, 3) punishing the military's endeavours to meddle in domestic politics (Esen-Gümüşçü, 2016).

It lowered the role of the National Security Council (MGK) which was a strong supervisory institution over the civilian government. After some amendments, civilians got the legal opportunity to be appointed as secretary general of the MGK. (2004) and transform the board to an advisory institution. To decrease the MGK's power, it lost its supervisory role over the High Education Board (YÖK), the unlimited access to any public agency; the MGK's meetings were attenuated (Sarigil, 2012, 11-12).

The AKP eliminated the State Security Courts (2004), in 2006 it reduced the right of military courts to prosecute civilians in peacetime. The constitutional amendments passed after the referendum victory in 2010 continued to limit the military's juridical separation. It allowed civilian courts to try officials in case of crimes against state security, constitution and also decreased the military courts' jurisdiction to the 'military service and military duties' (Sarigil, 2012, 11-12). To summarize, these changes contributed to the change of balance of power in Turkish domestic politics. The decline of the military and Kemalist's elite power opened the way towards cementing the AKP's hegemony.

## **2.3. Moment of hegemony**

### **2.3.1. Cementing the AKP's power**

Although hegemony refers on a stable situation, but in reality it is recreated by ruling elites and challenged by counter movements on daily basis. In case of Turkey, AKP's hegemonic project was challenged not just by other parties, political groups but in a limited manner, by the state administration as well. Thus, the party's surprising electoral victory in 2002 did not lead subsequently to a total hegemony over the state structure, even if it granted prospects to create one. The AKP's weak position was tested in two main cases, the TSK's e-memorandum and the Constitutional Court's decision about its closure.

The AKP could survive these challenges and boosting its social support had a convincing electoral victory in 2011 with almost 50 percent of votes. The upcoming years until mid-2013 can be perceived as a clear moment of hegemony when the veto powers were weakened and transformed/reshaped in a pro-AKP way. After two parliamentary cycles in power, the party could occupy the higher echelons of state administration and judiciary. Abdurhaman Yalçınkaya's term ended in 2011 as Chief Prosecutor, and Abdullah Gül appointed Hasan Erbil who did not opened any new cases against the party. Other state institutions whose leaders were appointed by Ahmet Necdet Sezer got new, pro-AKP figures. Like in case of state apparatus responsible for religious affairs (Diyanet), where Mehmet Görmez had replaced Ali Bardakoğlu who intended to keep the institution responsible for the execution of works concerning religious affairs far from daily politics (Cornell, 2015).

By this time the conquest of the judiciary and the civilianization of the military could be also finished. In the separation of powers, the independence of judiciary is a key element that creates a strong control over the government intensions. Nonetheless, its independence was always questioned in Turkey, as the Kemalist establishment used it and it could rely on such powerful actors like the Constitutional Court of the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK). Furthermore military court also served as a basis for the autonomy of the military.

The 2010 constitutional referendum was crucial in adjusting the top of the judiciary system. The lower echelon of the judiciary was rather dominated by pro-



government supporters while the higher courts could be considered as Kemalist strongholds (Jenkins, 2014). The amendments increased the membership of the Constitutional Court and the HSYK. The Constitutional Court's member was raised from 11 to 17 and in order to make their appointment more democratic, the TBMM and the President could elect the members (previously only the President appointed them).

The HSYK's membership increased from 7 to 22 regular members and 12 substitutes and the selection also became more pluralistic: Supreme Court of Appeals and the Council of State would not be the only responsible for the selection of 11 members but the President as well while 11 members would be elected by the country all 13 000 judges.

The AKP has ensured that these adjustments could serve its interests because the new positions were filled by its own candidate thus the referendum merely smoothed the path to political reshaping of these institutions (Jenkins, 2014). The gradual weakening of the TSK's position also reached a new stage after 2011. The above mentioned criminal cases have lessened the social trust in the military. Furthermore, they resulted in the early resignation of the Chief of general Staff Işık Koşaner along with the army, air and navy force heads in July 2011. Despite his effort to "defend" his military officers, the arrests have continued that pushed him to resign as protest at the jailing, after just one year at office. The next Head of Armed Forces, Necdet Özel had a closer relation with the government. The Prime Minister's position compared to the previous times has become stronger.

Thus, after the 2010 referendum and the June 2011 elections, no real challenger has remained on the political field for the AKP. Due to its successful economic policy it could boost consent nationwide, however, the party has made huge efforts to cement its power in the local politics and lower echelon of the society. The alliance between AKP and the conservative, religious electorate seemed to strong be pillar of the party's hegemony. As Cihan Tuğal pointed out that for Islamists, their 'engagement changed face during AKP rule. So did the pious person's relationship with and perception of the state. Due to the AKP's empowerment, religious activists and pious people felt more in tune with the state, they even felt like they were a part of the state' (Tuğal, 2009,158). The emergence of the conservative leaders, like Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül at the national level made it possible for the pious voters to identify with the state enhancing the role of political society in establishing consent (Tuğal, 2009,159).

Probably the AKP's main method of co-optation was the party itself and local party politics. Firstly, the AKP have become from a minor party to the most influential political organization of the country possessing more than 9 million members (Table 1). By having this huge membership, it could open local branches in every corner of the country, and it cemented a relatively stable electorate. It has more members than the other parties altogether that facilitated for the party to create its electoral hegemony,' as almost every second votes should have come from its own party members. This also highlights the strong interaction between the AKP and the society.

Party name	Number of members, 2017 (Person)	Proportion of the votes (November 2015 elections, %)
Justice and Development Party (AKP)	9 368 917	39
Republican People's Party (CHP)	1 198 194	10
National Action Party (MHP)	494 490	7,6
People's Democratic Party (HDP)	34 478	0,7

Table 2. Turkish Political party membership and their proportion of votes (Source:

Yargıtay)

Secondly, the AKP was also successful in creating local support by establishing a distribution process for in-kind benefits. This policy was the updated version of the Refah Municipalities' social programmes. During the AKP's period these programmes have been implemented at national level, financed by state funds and administered by province governors and sub-governors (Çınar, 2013, 50). The availability of these in-kind helps such as coal in winter depends on the will of the government so it became a 'charity' without legal entitlement. Election periods create an opportunity for the AKP to influence these programmes by providing greater benefits and create more solidarity with the poor subsequently gaining more votes even from the losers of the neoliberal policies. These charity policies constitute an important source of the party's popular appeal (Çınar, 2013,51).

Conditional Cash Transfer programme also constitute a part to influence the voters' behaviour. The first programme was launched in February 2002 in six districts with the support of World Bank loan. Later, the then AKP government decided to maintain and enlarge the programme whose nationwide implementation started in 2004. By the end of 2011 some 2,9 million children were enrolled in it, the budget of the CCT reached some 400 million USD (Aytaç, 2014, 1218).

As the programme's implementation is carried out by governors and sub-governors appointed by the state, they have the opportunity to increase the number of recipients in electoral districts where the incumbent party faces an ideologically close challenger. Aytaç's researches prove that the administration made efforts to direct resources to these districts. Even scandal occurred when Tunceli's governor was accused by electoral manipulation prior the 2009 local elections because he used these funds to reinforce the AKP's reputation. The government party defended him in this scandal, and he later was able to continue his career in an other, more populous and richer province (Aytaç, 2014).

### **2.3.2. Ottomanalgia**

Political elites have a relative flexibility to shape national identity by manipulating the national memory through the hegemonic history education, state institutions (such as history institutions) and pro-government media. By creating a national memory that is shared by the majority of the population may produce consent that can serve as a pillar of hegemonic project. Politicians tend to rely on the existing majority views on memory politics (Bakiner, 2013), however, political elite can turn their back to the accepted view and replace it with a new one by skilfully using history. The 'use' of Ottoman past gained political momentum in Turkey and has become an important element of AKP's hegemonic project.

In Turkey, one shall distinguish various interpretations of the Ottoman Empire that stems from the different reading of the past. However, these readings are interconnected and various images of the Ottoman Empire exist: '(1) the Ottoman Empire as the cradle or apex of civilization; (2) the image of the Ottoman Empire as an Islamic Empire; and (3) the image of the Ottoman Empire as a liberal, multicultural empire (Czajka-Wastnidge, 2015, 2).'

The identity of the newly-founded Republic of Turkey was based on negation of the earlier, Ottoman period. Some historians, such as Muhettin (Bergin) – one of the depositaries of the new identity making – advocated the rejection of the Ottoman history from the new history-writing. He stated that the Empire was a repressive, non-Turkish state (Boyar, 2007).

Although the criticism from the academic level perpetuated, the popular history books and many times poems glorified the Ottoman past (or at least some part of it) that altered the society's possible negative views about the previous regime (Boyar, 2007). The rehabilitation of the Ottoman past was a slow and long process in Turkey. During Atatürk's era the new regime identified itself as the opposite of the past represented by the Ottomans. Some influential historians, like Köprülüzade Mehmed Fuad and Ahmed Refik have made attempts to unify Ottoman history with Turkish history. The gradual reintegration of the Ottoman past got a new level when at the second congress on Turkish history, Atatürk foster daughter Afet İnan made a step to Turkify the Ottoman era and set in the Turkish History Thesis (Boyar, 2007, 18.).

Despite the efforts of some historians to appease the Turkish history with that period on the 1930s, anti-Ottoman view has remained determinant. The harsh dismissal of the imperial past was a clear sign of the early Republican elite's identity-making that later evolved in the Secularist-Kemalist groups affiliation with the pre-Ottoman and Atatürk era compared to the emerging Religious-Islamist elites that rather had pro-Ottoman views (Zenzirci, 2014). The regime that abolished the Sultanate and the Caliphate has intended to modernize in a forced top-down manner the society. Its legitimacy stemmed from the pre-imperial time as the Turks Central Asian roots were emphasized, especially after creating the tenets of Turkish history in the 30s. This era rather identified the Ottomans with the dynasty – symbol of backwardness and the depository of bigotry that contributed to the decline of the empire making it the infamous 'Sick man of Europe' – while it emphasized the glory of Turkish soldiers and people during the previous centuries.

The use and meaning of the term 'Ottoman' has changed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Danforth, 2014b). While nowadays common popular products, like the famous Karagöz are remembered as part of Ottoman folklore, in the 1930s it was labelled as a Turkish game. The Ottoman Army was rather perceived as Turkish Army and in the official discourse; the old Ottoman architectural heritage has become Turkish one in the Atatürk period.

A positive interpretation of the Ottoman past has gained momentum after the end of one-party system. The 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Constantinople's conquest has served as a unique pretext to start a debate about the role of the Ottoman dynasty. Although Fatih sultan, the famous conqueror of Istanbul was rather presented as a Turk, the efforts to emphasize its multicultural features and tolerance towards Christian religious

minority shaped the public perceptions about Ottoman tolerance. Thus, the celebrations contributed to the re-evaluation of the past facilitating the gradual rehabilitation of the term ‘Ottoman.’

Some intellectuals, as the poet Yahya Kemal have promoted the idea of Ottomanism, the importance of the Ottoman heritage re-evaluation. After 1950, a number of associations have been established like Fethi Derneği, İstanbul Fethi Derneği, İstanbul Enstitüsü or later on Yahya Kemal Enstitüsü (Çetinsaya, 2003, 365.).

This revival was also influenced by the emergence of a conservative-religious centric party, the Democratic Party (DP). The religion and the positive interpretation of Ottoman past have appeared in the DP’s campaigns as a tool to mobilize. This development also favoured the reconceptualization of the past. Main conservative-nationalist intellectuals like Banarlı argued that for a ‘Great Turkey’ it was needed to use the Ottoman Turkishness (*Osmanlı Türklüğünü*). Although the Ottomans’ rehabilitation was rather a nationalist-conservative project, in the late 60s the far-right also incorporated the idea. From this point of view, Dündar Taşer’s role was crucial in making the Ottomanism consistent with the Ülkücü movement. According to him, the road to the Türk-İslam Sentezi passed through the Ottoman idea. Other representatives of Ülkücü movement, like Erol Güngör, Seyyid Ahmed Arvasi and Nevzal Kösoğlu also admitted the importance of Ottomans in Turkish history (Çetinsaya, 2003).

The gradual rehabilitation of Ottoman past was also advocated by pious Muslim groups and Islamists circles, especially by religious orders (tarikat). They have played a key role in the revival of the Ottomanism in sense of imperial, historical and cultural heritage. One of the most influential promoters was the prominent poet and thinker, Necip Fazıl Kısakürek. The rifai Sufi order also provided the ‘Ottomanist revival’ with some thinkers like Münevver Ayaşlı, Samiha Ayverdi, Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi, Erol Güngör and Nihad Sami Banarlı (Ongur, 2015, 420). The reconciliation of Ottomanism with Islamism helped the Islamists to enrich their opposition in ideological terms, to form a new, Conservative identity and to find a useful discursive tool to sheltering these groups against the secular state’s pressure and control (Ongur, 2015, 420).

Nevertheless, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman past has become a useful tool for political actors to legitimise and justify their domestic and foreign policy endeavours. The gradual discovery of the Ottoman Empire in Turkish foreign policy discourse has begun in the 1970s. In the 1990s, not just Turgut Özal but Süleyman Demirel, Tansu Çiller and İsmail Cem referred positively to the Ottoman

Empire and the Ottoman past (Yanık, 2016). After the Cold-War, even a new group of intellectuals has appeared. The so-called Neo-Ottomanists advertised the slogan ‘make peace with history and geography’ (*‘Tarihle ve coğrafyayla barışmak’*) admitting that Turkey should not leave behind its Ottoman past that may grant more political manouver in foreign policy relations.

In these decades, state and non-state actors have recognized the importance of the Ottoman past and started to instrumentalize it in order to support their respective political causes. The references to the empire became frequent in the 1990s, but despite some efforts that were discussed in earlier chapters, nostalgia to the Ottoman past could not get strong state support in a Kemalist regime that was based on Western modernism and secularism.

After 2002, it has changed. During the AKP era Ottomanism has received a much broader dimension. As Ongur highlights, the society itself assumed the pivotal role in promulgating Ottoman images. The gradual appearance of Ottoman past and the rehabilitation of the Empire had a long history and several groups of intellectuals supported the process in the 1950-2000. Nevertheless, the AKP governments played a central role in strengthening the Ottomanostalgia.<sup>30</sup> By bringing the Ottoman past back the Kemalist modernisation project got a new challenge as *per definitionem* Ottomanism contradicts to the Republican era. Current Ottomanism is based on perception of continuity between Ottoman and Turkish history, questioning of the compatibility between Western and Turkish moralities, acknowledgement of the Turkic identity in addition to its Ottoman and Islamic identities, and nostalgia for Istanbul (Ongur, 2016).

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<sup>30</sup> It is important to emphasize that Ottomanostalgia does not mean a simple reference to the Ottoman past but rather a broader use of Turkish history especially the periods having an Islam connotation. It practically means that not just Ottomans but Seljuks also get more limelight in the national cultural policy.

### 2.3.3. Making Neo-Ottomanist cultural policy

The AKP's hegemonic project strongly relies on memory politics that distinguish themselves from the Kemalist regime by promoting different reading and emphasis of history. Although the emergence of Turkish-Islamic synthesis during the 1970s and its official victory in history books after the 1980 coup d'état paved the way towards a new approach to the Ottoman Empire and the unprecedented popularity of the Empire reflects to the changes in the society and the political elite.

After 2002, conservative, pious part of the society that was oppressed or neglected by the Kemalist elite could turn towards a famous, Ottoman past openly. In line with this quest for the golden age of Turkish history, economic growth created a strong and prosperous state that in many views the current stage has resembled to the previous greatness. The AKP's elite also relied on this image and what more started to support it. Thus, the majority view has met with the new elite's perception what was unified, consumed into the new hegemonic project. Thus Turkish Islamists met with a growing need for a glorified past that could be easily absorbed for the AKP's goal. The party that had to convince its religious electorate about their right choice at the elections, among others could use the image of the pre-secular Empire whose leader was the ruler of the Islam World.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, by revitalizing, reinstating the Ottoman 'grandeur' could also be convincing for Turkish nationalists.

Subsequently, the key element in the AKP's Neo-Ottoman hegemonic project is to emphasize and interlink the Islam, conservative values and moral with the Ottoman past and making the 'Ottomanness' contemporary. The various state mechanism of memory transmission met with a popular appeal and non-state actors' endeavours. Thus, contemporary Neo-Ottomanism is based on a number of tenets.

- 1) Change of vocabulary to the previous time. AKP politicians frequently use Ottoman expressions in their speeches, especially in case of Ahmet Davutoğlu. Furthermore, Erdoğan's identification with Ottoman Sultans also appeared. Albeit the Turkish President has never positioned himself as a sultan, pro-Erdoğan circles frequently refer to him as a sultan. By mentioning with the great sultan of Turkey, like Fatih Sultan Mehmet he is placed in a context where he is

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<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, Turkish state tradition and the Turkish-Islamist synthesis reinforces the image of the Sultan rather than the Caliph.

interpreted as the political follower of the Ottoman dynasty who seeks to make Turkey great again.

- 2) Ottomanist cultural symbols' instrumentalisation in political discourse and architectural representation as a tool of *Kulturkampf*. The architecture became an expression of power for the AKP. Beyond the leading AKP politicians' vocabulary, symbols referring to the Ottoman heritage got increasing importance in political representation. Probably the most famous example of this change is the symbol of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan presidency, the building of the Aksaray. The Turkish 'White House' which has been built in the Atatürk forest in Ankara (Atatürk Orman Çiftçiliği) occupy a vast territory and with its size (more than one thousand rooms) demonstrates the emerging power of Turkey. It does not just represent the political occupation of a *lieu de mémoire*, but its structure and ornaments having an Ottoman style refers to a symbolic transformation in the representation of power.

Probably the case of Gezi park portrays the most tangible example of the *Kulturkampf* of the AKP era. The original plan to reshape the Gezi park – a small park next to the historical Taksim square, at the heart of Istanbul – was based on demolishing the site and building a shopping mall and apartment complex designed as an Ottoman-era barrack. The project was turned down due to the mass protests all over the country that lead one of the greatest crisis of the party in 2013. Concerning this neighbourhood of the Istanbul, in 2017, a mosque started to be built next to the Taksim square.

Other clear example is the changing of election songs: for the 2017 referendum the pro-AKP campaign among several Erdoğan-focused songs has used the Ottoman Army's marching songs openly advertising an Ottoman cultural product as the AKP's symbols. The 'no' (CHP) campaign has chosen as its main term the Izmir marşı, a song dedicated to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

- 3) In line with the growing importance of the Ottoman symbols, more and more steps were taken in order to weaken the Atatürkist cultural – especially built – heritage. It is palpable in case of Ankara whose downtown was mainly constructed during the early republican era. Many buildings remaining from that period have been demolished in favour of new construction projects. The case of Atatürk's Marmara köşkü (Marmara Kiosk) in the Atatürk Orman Çiftçiliği



(Atatürk Forest Farm) it has been destroyed during the construction of the Aksaray, the Presidential Complex (Diken, 18/05/2018)

- 4) Neo-Ottomanist heritage policy. Archeological preservation projects constitute an important part of identity politics. They contribute to shape the nation's perception about its own history as well as perception about its neighbours. Countries intend to boost their cultural leverage even through the international institutions, see the lobby activities at the UNESCO World Heritage. Thus, heritage politics during the AKP have become determining in redefining Turkish history and the stance of the Republic to its Ottoman past.

Turkish restoration policy got a fresh impetus during the AKP. The sites of Ottoman heritage get greater attention than before. Old town of Eskişehir, Ankara, Gaziantep were restored or renovated. In a broader context, the national development agency, the TİKA started to revitalize Ottoman legacy in the neighbourhood (see later).

- 5) Increasing success of TV series and the emergence of 'Ottomannes' in popular culture. Probably the most visible part of the revival of attendance towards the Ottoman past is the Golden Age of TV series related to the Empire. The 2000s have brought an unprecedented success for Turkish soap operas makers, because these products have become popular not just in Turkey but in its neighbourhood as well. The Turkish television series industry's export was 10 thousand USD in 2004 while in 2016 it reached the 350 million USD (İtohaber, 17/10/2016). The 85 film makers produce around 50-70 new series per year, however, like in the USA, around 50 percent of them are terminated before the season due to the competition (Deloitte, 2014).

This success is based on a number of factors like length of the episodes (that is around 120-150 minutes in Turkey, much longer than in Hungary) favouring the advertisement, Turkish state support, the professionalization of the sector and the cultural proximity in the neighbouring region.

The skyrocketing number of Turkish TV series offers a wide range of themes. As of October 2016 around 130 series are aired in Turkish TV channels. Some 10 percent of these series are related to the Ottoman era.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Like Filinta (2014- ), Diriliş: Ertuğrul (2014- ), Bir zamanlar Osmanlı: Kiyam (2012), Osmanlı Tokadı (2013-2014), Muhteşem Yüzyıl (2011-2014), Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem (2015 - ), Elveda Rumeli (2007-2009), Osmanlı'da Derin Devlet (2013), Fatih (2013), Çırağan Baskını (2014), Son Yaz Balkanlar 1912

- 6) Although the proportion of these series is not that high as one can expect, some of them are usually among the most viewed series. The *Muhteşem Yüzlü* was the most profitable series in 2013. The importance of these series is boosted by the inclusion of political actors. For instance, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his wife visited the *Diriliş* cast sending a message that he favoured the Ottoman past (Sofuoğlu, 2017).
- 7) Academic ‘opening’ towards the Ottomans: history books, conferences, researches etc. Academic circles also admit the importance of the imperial past as 13 out of 163 Turkish universities (all of them was opened after 2002) bear openly Ottomanist references in its name (Ongur, 2016).
- 8) Changing in holidays. Although Turkey’s national holidays are fixed and mainly based on secular events related to Atatürk’s era and the War of Independence while some religious holidays, like Kurban bayramı are also represented. However, the AKP has made efforts to strengthen festivals, holidays related to the Ottoman past, too. As it was mentioned before, the anniversary of the conquest of Istanbul has given an impetus to the thinking about Ottoman past. The Islamist political movement extensively used this occasion in the 1990s (which was supported by the mayor of Istanbul who was Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in this time) as a counter-hegemonic event, while after 2002 it has become a national cause. The political emphasis has been reduced during the 2000s and the event started to become a real festival with pro-Ottoman emphasis (Sibel, 2015). Along with the series focusing of the splendid Ottoman past, a film was also produced about the conquest of the former Byzantine capital with strong references on Mohamed and Islam. The AKP used other occasions, like the Mehmet Akif Ersoy anniversary to promote Ottoman and Islamist cause. The famous poet – writer of the Turkish anthem – was interpreted in 2010 as an Ottoman figure who represented the multiculturalism of the Empire (Koyuncu, 2014, 110-130).

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(2012), *Paydaht: Abdülhamid* (2017 - ), *Seddülbahir 32 Saat* (2015), *Hürrem sultan* (2003), *Vatanım Sensin* (2016-), *Yunus Emre "Aşkın Yolculuğu"* (2015), *Harem* (2012-2013), *Kurt Seyit ve Şura* (2014), *Yasak* (2014), *Kırık Kanatlar* (2005-2007) series.

Many argue that the Ottomanalgia and the references to Ottoman past are boosted by the society. For instance, historical soap operas cannot be so successful without such a great popular interest. Nevertheless, existing grass-root interest got strong incentives from the state. The government plays a central role in the Ottomanist revival. AKP politicians are pivotal in advocating the Ottoman linguistical terms, references in their discourse which subsequently instrumentalizes the Ottomanness for their purpose. National agencies are central in realizing the reconstruction the Ottoman space by for the purpose of the cultural policy. By choosing the state representation as Ottomanist, the state itself admits its gravity toward a cultural policy which is based the revival of Ottoman heritage interlinked with and Islamic view. This Neo-Ottoman hegemonic project intends to boost consent in the whole society, convincing for the pious and nationalist groups, and even for the Kurds who can identify the Ottoman Empire as a multicultural state which respected or at least accepted the identity of various ethnic and religious groups.

## **2.4.Moment of crisis**

### **2.4.1. Challenges of the hegemonic order**

The AKP's dominant position and relative peaceful hegemony had to face a number of new challenges that required the increasing use of coercive power of the society. The first challenge arrived in late May 2013 when handful protesters have clashed with police in heart of Istanbul, in the Gezi Park, next to the famous Taksim square. The initial cause was the first move to eliminate the small Gezi Park in order to build a new shopping center by restoring the former Ottoman-style military barrack which has been demolished in early Republican era.

The police's violent action generated nation-wide protests where hundred thousand people, especially youth manifested against the transformation of the park and later against the government. The clashes between the protesters and the police went violent hundreds of people were injured and eleven were killed during the riots. The centre of the demonstrations was Istanbul, the Taksim square and Gezi park, but other cities, like Ankara, Izmir also gave place to similar protests. The participants communicated via social media, through twitter and facebook that enable them to swiftly organize the resistance and cope with riot police more effectively. It also granted them an advantageous position to disseminate their ideas on bigger platform subsequently these events could reach higher national and international echo.

The Turkish government's reaction was severe. The police used tear gas and armed vehicle to clear the park and its surroundings and after several clashes the police managed to retake the Gezi Park in middle of June. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan labelled the protesters as looters (çapulcu) which also fuelled the anxiety. After end of the month the violent demonstration were vanished but social tension remained and peaceful protests were organized for the upcoming weeks and months.

The event got major media focus, not just in Turkey but all around the world, and the police's violent actions raised concerns and criticism in the EU. The several hundred thousand people who joined the event came from Leftist radical groups as field research showed. Thus the social background of the protests was thinner than presented by major Western media. Nevertheless the Gezi events have highlighted the political dissatisfaction within Turkey and questioned the democratic features of the AKP's rule. The need for coercive use of state power has demonstrated the deficiencies of the

hegemonic process. Although the government handled the Gezi protests relatively easily, it harmed the AKP's reputation, especially abroad.

Probably the last chapter of the AKP's endeavours to create hegemony and face with its political adversaries was the already mentioned internal conflict between the government and the Gülen movement which started a couple of months after the Gezi events. The movement has emerged as one of the most successful Islamist religious movement in Turkey which decided to take more political role instead. Fethullah Gülen Islamist preacher started to create his own community in the 1970s in Izmir and by advocating a peaceful and opened interpretation of Islam based on dialogue and tolerance stemming from the Nurcu movement (see more: Kicsi, 2008). He was able to gain support and create a strong movement. He was also successful in convincing a number of emerging SME's and by establishing the financial background, he was keen to promote the importance of high quality education. By doing this, he could foster a chain of prestigious educational institution in Turkey from the crèches to a dozen universities and establish the most renowned high-schools whose students usually topped the university entrance exams' scores (Hendrik, 2009).

Along with the educational achievements, the Gülen movement also created its own media conglomerate with its own television channels (Samanyolu, Odatv) and a number of newspapers like the Zaman which has become the most read newspaper in Turkey.

The Gülen movement established schools, universities all over the world and due to its reconciliatory and moderate Islamic thinking he could find supporters among Western countries which were usually welcoming toward a Muslim group promoting dialogue between different religious groups and emphasizing the peaceful nature of Islam. Thus, the Gülen movement's associations, educational institutions could create a strong network abroad and serve as a useful tool of soft power of Turkey.

The intentions of the movement's leadership to enter into politics or play a role in Turkish domestic politics was revealed in 1999 by a secret tape which recorded an internal session when Fethullah Gülen was talking about the need of infiltration to the administration and judiciary. The unveiled tape has scandalized the public and outraged the Kemalist elites. Before being detained, Gülen has moved to the US, to Pennsylvania where he waited for the end of the trial launched against him (the case was dropped a couple of years later when the AKP came to power).

Although the AKP's core came from different Islamist political movement, like Milli Görüş, and intended to create good relations with religious Islamist movements, like Nurcu and Nakşibendi, it could not neglect the most influential (chiefly in terms of economy and media) Islamist group as well. The party, especially during the first years welcomed the educated people who were considered as loyal cadres in the war of position against Kemalist establishment. The coalition between the AKP and Gülen movement was realized in media, financial support and political support as the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases has shown that they contributed to the debilitation of Kemalists and intimidation of many opponents and critical voices (Yeşil, 2016). After the trials, from the Kemalist side has not remained any real challenger for the AKP, and the previous alliance between the party and powerful Islamist religious movement ended. That is why these probes were crucial in weakening and deterring secular and left-wing foes and it decreased the pressure of Kemalist and Leftist groups on the government. They also harmed the image of the previously unreachable and unpunishable TSK.

The clash of views over given issues, like Mavi Marmara incidents in 2010 or the government handling the Kurdish issue by involving the PKK in the peace process already predicted that a major conflict was to come. The aggressive actions of the police in the Gezi park events that aggravated the crisis and triggered large-scale demonstration and clashes in the whole country was also linked to the movement in the pro-government media. The AKP's attempt to close the Gülen high-schools in autumn 2013 has failed but clearly signed the prelude of an open conflict which finally started at the end of the year. The rupture between the two allies has become obvious.

In 17 December 2013 some prosecutors (like Zekeriya Öz who was one of the former prominent prosecutor of Ergenekon case) launched three corruption operations<sup>33</sup> that led to the detention of some 50 businessmen, public service employees, pro-government figures and some politicians, like the sons of Zafer Çağlayan (Minister of Energy) Erdoğan Bayraktar (Minister of Environment and Urbanization) and Muammer Güler's ones. What is more, in a probe the son of the Prime Minister, Bilal Erdoğan's name also appeared (Egeresi, 2014).

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<sup>33</sup> One of the cases was opened because of Turkey's illegal trade with Iran bypassing the US embargo where the state-owned Halk Bank, Süleyman Aslan and an Iranian businessman, Reza Zarrab have been playing a central role; the second was opened against the Oğuz Bayraktar, the chairman of the TOKİ and the third one was linked to Mustafa Demir, mayor of Istanbul central district, Fatih.

The surprisingly mass and coordinated detentions led to a government crisis which pushed Erdoğan to restructure the cabinet by replacing four ministers by new faces. Nevertheless, the government immediately began to accuse the movement which was called as ‘Parallel State’ (*Paralel Devlet*) that it launched an attack against a government; thus the movement has been securitized and the original issue (high rank corruption) were switched to a domestic political conflict. Some two months later, prior the 2015 March local elections, a new tape scandal has reached the public. This tape targeted Prime Minister Erdoğan and his son Bilal Erdoğan. However, the party leadership was able to tackle this crisis, the Prime Minister actively participated in the election campaign and his charisma contributed to the AKP’s success. According to the polls, he managed to strengthen his endorsement among the AKP supporters.

The deep crisis affected the state administration which represented an internal threat to the government and the Prime Minister’s entourage. The AKP’s response was coercive, again. It targeted Gülen Movement’s conglomerations and state institutions along with a harsh anti-Gülen campaign in the pro-government media while the Gülenist press has become publicly critical towards the AKP leadership. Purification has started in state administration resulting in the dismissal or relocation of several thousands of policeman, judges, prosecutors etc. The corruption cases were taken away from the original prosecutors (they later fled the country) and closed.

The government started to replace the management of various Gülenist conglomerates and holding by state appointed trustees. The case of Koza-Ipek holding clearly showed this adjustment: just with a few days before the elections of 1 November 2015 the Gülenist press belonging to the holding has become pro-AKP after the new trustees have been appointed. The Asya Bank’s management was also removed and a board of trustees took over the bank. The nationwide newspaper, the Zaman’s case led to even greater tensions: in April 2016 Turkish police had to assault the headquarter of the Gülenist newspaper in order to forcefully replace the editorial board.

The 15 July coup attempt which was perpetuated by the Gülen movement according to the government and majority of Turks, practically put an end to the conflict. The TBMM announced state of emergency (OHAL) almost immediately and granted the government almost unlimited power (the OHAL could be extended according to the legislation and the AKP since July 2015 every time has used this opportunity). The mass detentions begun the day after the failed coup: the purge against the Gülen movement membership not only affected the state but the private sector.

According to the Turkey purge, some 50 thousand people was arrested, 90 thousand detained and more than 150 thousand persons were fired (turkeypurge.com).

The educational institutions related to the movement were closed almost immediately: one dozens universities, several thousand primary and high-school. The movement has lost the remnant of its economic and media assets, as the TUSKON was dissolved and a number of companies were confiscated. As of spring of 2017 some 900 firms were nationalised. The Gülen media had to face the same fate. The Zaman was closed as well as the still existing pro-Gülen press.

The anti-Gülen war passed the country borders as the Turkish government has asked all countries having Gülen associations or school in their territory to close them down. Only few a states replied favourably and acted in line of the request of Ankara. The European Union member states or the main NATO ally, the US have refused to close these institutions which generated tensions between Ankara and them. Washington's reluctance to extradite Fethullah Gülen to Turkish authorities to bring him home for a trial also foreshadowed the two states' stressful relations. The AKP mobilized its foreign branches, the UEDT organized mass anti-Gülen and pro-AKP protest all over Europe and the government created – still prior the attempt – the Maarif Vakfı which aims to acquire and manage the (former) gülenist schools abroad.

The large-scale detentions have turned to witch-hunt according to many, and some has pointed out that in several cases it was used against non-gülenist groups, like in the case of the Kemalist-secular opposition Cumhuriyet newspaper. The dismissal of university personnel during 2016-17 also nourished speculations that the government uses the OHAL and detentions as a pretext to weaken every political opponents and to intimidate critical segment of the political sphere.

#### **2.4.2. Successful crisis management and growing authoritarianism**

Similarly to other political parties in power, the AKP took advantage of its growing leverage on state institutions, media ownership to direct the public attention to issues preferable for the government, however, the use of this advantage with coercive measures increased after mid-2013.



The AKP's agenda-setting emerged as a useful tool to prevent opposition groups from gaining momentum and to strengthen the party's omnipotent image. The credibility to act and solve problems is not the unique to the AKP, however, the party was remarkably successful in shaping national agenda and coping with gargantuan problems. Furthermore, due to the continuous threat of coups, party closure and internal-external (real or imagined) adversaries, the AKP created a perpetual war rhetoric. Under these above mentioned threats, its electorate had no other option but to join forces and if it wanted to defend its only parliamentary representative. This menace emerged from every part of the Kemalist system, even from its main political party, the CHP. Particularly the militaristic and 'uncivilized' manifestation of the CHP's anti-Islamization that condemned the headscarf-wearing women that attended state ceremonies with their husbands received attention (Çınar, 2013, 43). In 2007, when the case of the presidential election led to political crisis, CHP also organized protests, the so-called Cumhuriyet mitingleri (Republican meeting) – large manifestation in order defend the secular state – that were seen as threat by the Conservative voters.

Although the AKP put efforts to enlarge its electorate, especially among the Kurds and other minority groups, to create a more inclusive national identity it also used polarization and social ruptures, cleavages for its own interest. Thus polarization in daily Turkish politics has gained momentum and the society has become increasingly bifurcated. The government has a big role in boosting the situation which in order to keep its electorate and mobilize voters has turned towards more belligerent rhetoric and cultural/historical divisions. As Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has revealed in one of his famous statements: "In this country there is a segregation of Black Turks and White Turks. Your brother Tayyip belongs to the Black Turks." (Acemoglu – Ucer, 2015, 19).

The AKP was also successful in political crisis management and shape national discourse by finding new enemies or simply alienating the political challengers. The handling of Gezi protests of 2013 was a clear manifestation of this practice when Erdoğan called the young protesters vagabonds (capulçu) who drank alcohol in mosques and attacked a woman because she was wearing a headscarf. This political manoeuvre repeated itself at the end of 2013 when corruption cases were launched by the so-called Parallel state (Paralel Devlet) namely the Gülen movement.

However, the more power the AKP has gained the more it has become majoritarian, or even authoritarian. While the democratization process was one of the

main slogans of the AKP and it could represent the transformation credibly to the world during its first decade at power, after the Gezi event, its pro-EU and pro-democratic image begun declining and losing momentum. Simultaneously authoritarian tendencies, such as unfair campaigns, gained ground increasingly even if the electoral process (voting day) has remained basically intact and lawful.<sup>34</sup> As a whole, increasing political violence, political pressure on dissent, censorship in the media and mass detentions (especially) after the coup attempt evolved the Turkish political system from a tutelary democracy to a less democratic one. The growing authoritarian features of Turkey led to entitle its regime as illiberal, defective or majoritarian democracy or even competitive authoritarian regime after 2011 (Esen-Gümüşçü, 2016 1583). In this system the elections remain free and continue to function as the main pillar of democratic competition of various parties – thus legitimizing the current power –, but the competition between these political actors becomes unreal or even unfair. By creating its own hegemonic bloc, AKP could acquire the control over the media abridging the opposition parties' access to voters and weakening their campaigns. During the 2015 campaigns or even more recently, in 2017 referendum campaign the AKP got significantly more air time and favourable content in the television and radio channels. The AKP benefited from the state media which intended to broadcast the President or the Prime Minister's election rallies rather than the opposition leaders' ones. Erdoğan during the run-up of 2014 presidential election got exclusive support by state television channels which aired the opening ceremony of various state assets (OSCE, 2014).

Moreover, through partisan distribution of state resources the government also has taken advantage in the campaign and curtailed the prospect of opposition for electoral victory. A number of cases have shown that opposition party rallies during the 2015 campaign were hindered by the AKP-led municipalities or by the police (OSCE, 2015). Media freedom has been also diminished in Turkey – despite the positive beginnings after 2002, the situations started to deteriorate after 2009 (Chart 2)

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<sup>34</sup> The rightfulness of the elections is also under question after the 2017 referendum when the Electoral Commission changed the rules of counting unsealed votes just a few hours before the end of voting.

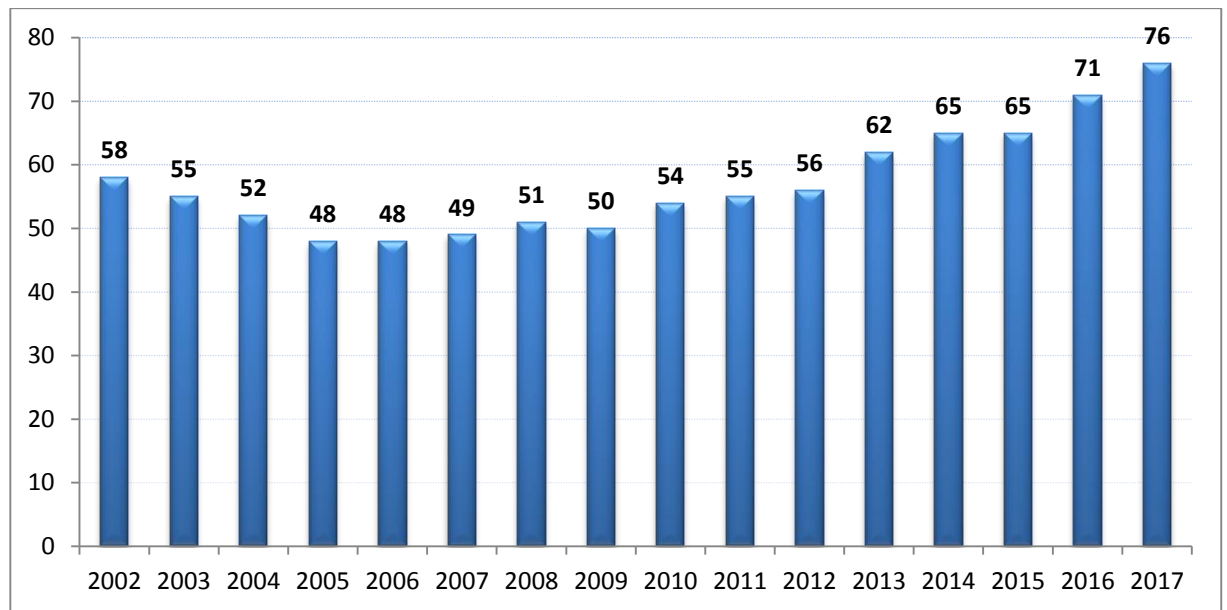


Chart 2. Media Freedom in Turkey (Source: Freedom House)

Furthermore, the failed coup attempt of 15 July 2016 has given an opportunity to make a major transformation in the military-civil relations. The mass detention of generals and admirals following the coup attempt (some 40 percent of the military leadership was detained or dismissed). These high rank military personnel were replaced by promotion of lower ranks, so seemingly the military could handle this change, nonetheless the competency of this fast-tracking officers can raise questions (Haugom, 2016). One may claim that this purge within the military eliminated the possible threat for coup attempt from hardliner Kemalists or any surviving Gülenist groups.

The attempt also gave to opportunity to broaden the civilian oversight and decrease the independency of the military. According to the new legislation, the Chief of Staff is appointed by the president. The Chief of Staff and the General Staff was transferred from the Prime Minister's office to the Presidency while the commanders of Sea-, Air and Land-forces have become subordinated to the Ministry of National Defence. Furthermore, the President and the Prime Minister got the right to directly command these commanders.

The Supreme Military Council (YAŞ) – board responsible for promotion of military personnel – got new civilian members: above the already member Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, the Minister of Justice, Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Interior and their deputies gained membership.

Along with the mass detentions and restructuring the chain of command the military education went through changes. Military high schools were closed and military academies were transferred to the new National Defence University which is subjected to the Ministry of Defence like the military facilities. Above these changes, the military has lost the Gendarmerie and the Coast Guard which have been transferred to the Ministry of Interior.

Due to these changes, the TSK was severely restructured and the civilian control, especially the Ministry of Defence's position was strengthened. Hulusi Akar the Chief of Staff managed to preserve Erdoğan's support and he kept his power and later he was promoted to Minister of Defence. By curbing its independency and boosting governmental oversight the TSK's pacification project by the AKP can be perceived successful. At least for now, this major Kemalist veto player has been subjected to the civilian government which position has never been such strong compared to the previous ones after the transition to multi-party system.

The 17 December corruption cases also opened the way toward the deeper politization of the judiciary as the government angrily started to boost its surveillance over top institutions, predominantly over the HSYK. The previous reforms were reversed in a limited manner. In new law at the beginning of 2014, the Minister of Justice gained strong control over the HSYK and the authorisation to initiate investigations against the members which was perceived by many as a tool for intimidation (Daloğlu, 2014). Although the Constitutional Court annulled this adjustment, it has given enough time for the AKP to tackle the political and institutional crisis of the corruptions scandals and begin the cleaning of the judiciary from the Gülenist members. In October 2014 the outcome of the HYSK members' elections were taking place in a highly politicised climate and finally brought the victory of the AKP. Some 8 out of 10 people elected by the vote of the country's prosecutors and judges could be considered as pro-government, and along with other state actors (like the President) appointed people, the government could rely on 15 members granting a comfortable majority in the board.

The purge of the top courts from the Gülenists reached its new *étap* after the coup attempt when two members of the Constitutional Court were detained (AA, 16/07/2016). Moreover, like the military, the whole judiciary system had to face a severe detention and dismissal after 15 July. This purge cleansed the Gülen followers from its ranks, however it also undermined the independency of the institution.

### **2.4.3. Towards Caesarism?**

The administrative or judicial ‘coup attempt’ in 2013-14 in form of corruption cases, later the military coup attempt in 15 July 2016 highlighted the troubles of the AKP hegemonic project. However, the most surprising feature of these challenges that it can be evaluated as internal power struggle within the same Islamist historical bloc that preliminarily aimed to loosen later to eliminate the Kemalist, particularly the military leverage. As it was showed, the party and the movement cooperated closely in this issue, and the AKP granted the opportunity to the Gülenist to seize a great number of positions in state administration, judiciary, law enforcement and even in the military. This power struggle over the control of state can be conceptualized as Gramsci’s Caesarism. According to him, caesarism appears when the stalemate between the rival groups results in the emergence of a strong leader (like Caesar or Napoleon). Similar scenario may occur when the power struggle and stalemate is restricted to the dominant group. Theory suggests that in case of such a harsh and palpable power struggle more coercive practices may emerge. Thus governmental reactions in Turkey such as the introduction and extension of OHAL, detentions and arrests could be perceived as the implementation of state coercion. Furthermore, theses moments give a unique opportunity toward the fast emergence of a strong leader who can handle the crisis; however in case of Turkey the struggle did not result in a new leadership but the empowering of the current one.

What can be detected in Turkey after the 15 July attempt is the strengthening of man’s position and step towards one-man-rule (even detriment of many who occupied leading position in the party).<sup>35</sup> Since the 15 July, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan could accumulate more power that he has managed to do during the previous 14 years.

The strong leader discourse has been strengthened after Mid-2016 and the President has appeared in the pro-government media as the saviour of the country. The mass pro-democracy manifestations after the failed coup attempt also reinforced this image, and according to the polls, his popularity increased slightly in the post-coup attempt era, at least for a short while. The internal and external threats, the successful

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<sup>35</sup> Changes in party leadership, (forced) resignations in autumn 2017 even in case of Ankara and Istanbul whose mayors were in power for decades and accumulated symbolic powers as well.

battles against the terrorist groups have made necessary a strong leader who could handle them – at least in theory. Erdoğan took advantage of these developments.

The key element and presumably the last momentum in the AKP's and Erdoğan's hegemony building was the 16 April 2017 referendum victory (and the process was finished after the 24 June 2018 pre-election when the new system was implemented). The referendum which was won by a slight majority (some 51.4 percent against 48.5) gave a green light for the common AKP-MHP constitutional amendments that introduced the presidential system in Turkey. Although the majority of the modifications would be implemented after the 3 November 2019 elections one may state that the process to cement the AKP and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's power has reached its final stage. Shortly after the referendum, Erdoğan has become party member<sup>36</sup> and in May he has been elected the chairman of his party, again (AA, 21/05/2017).

The constitutional amendments granted strong power to the president. The 18 measures affecting nearly 80 articles introduced the presidential system, reshaped the judiciary. The prime ministry's institution has been abolished and subsumed to the president which had had before only symbolic power and had to represent the whole nation. Thus, the new president does not have to be impartial any more: the adjustments repealed the article prohibiting his party membership. The president got the authorisation to issue decrees, however, these cannot overwrite the laws and cannot contradict to fundamental and civil rights expressed in the constitution.

Thus parliament can limit the president's room for manoeuvre, if it votes with simple majority against the will of the head of state. Nevertheless, the new election system – presidential and general election are held in every five years, in the same day – will favorize the strongest party and strongest candidate which would be in the foreseeable future, the AKP and its presidential candidate. In this case, the party would be able to secure an absolute majority in the parliament and having its party leader at the presidential palace. In this case, the one-man rule seems to be more likely as the party possibly would not oppose its own leader and head of state.

The amendments have curtailed the parliamentary scrutiny over the executive. Deputies can only submit written questions to the ministers or vice-presidents but not the president. The impeachment process has also become more difficult. The parliament

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<sup>36</sup> He had to resign from this post when he was elected to the President of the Republic in August 2014.

needs 3/5 to vote about launching an investigation; if it is done, a 15-member commission appointed by various parties has to write a report. This report can only be submitted to the supreme court, if 2/3 majority of the commission members support it. In other terms, it is unlikely that the AKP being in majority would enhance a politically sensitive report. If it cannot reach a majority in the elections, probably it will be able to block the submission.

Concerning the judiciary, presidential oversight has been strengthened by the amendments. The number of HSYK's members was reduced from 22 to 13. Four members will be appointed by the president, while seven by the parliament. The remaining two persons will be the Minister of Justice and his deputy who are practically appointed by the president. The Constitutional Court's membership was also decreased from 17 to 15 and 12 of them will be appointed by the president. The AKP having a strong majority in the parliament, the president can create a partisan top-ranking judiciary.

The case of constitutional amendment also showed the changes in internal power struggle and the transformation of AKP's hegemonic project. The AKP had to cooperate with the MHP thus co-opting the radical nationalist party in Turkey's domestic power structure. Without the MHP's help, it could not receive enough support in the parliament neither enough votes in the referendum. Thus co-optation of previously opposition groups after purging the Gülenist from state administration was a necessary act to strengthen the party's social support. This turn in power politics was not restricted only to the MHP camps.

## **2.5. Limits of AKP's hegemony**

### **2.5.1. Societal features and electoral geography**

The previous chapter have presented the construction of AKP's hegemony. Its politics to co-opt and to make social consent resulted in an electoral hegemony. This hegemony is maintained even with increasingly authoritarian tools such as unfair campaign condition or even by limited election manipulations. Nevertheless, the AKP's electoral performance clearly showed the successfulness of its politics of consent (and coercion) but also highlighted its limits. The success of its hegemony was tangible: the most important change compared to the 1990s' election patterns after 2002 was the decline of protest voting. While the pre-AKP decade was characterised by weak governments, growing anti-system sentiments and mistrust that strengthened high election volatility based on high percentage of protest votes (Kumbaracıbaşı, 2009, 108), one can see the contrary during the AKP's era.

The election results showed that the AKP usually could acquire some 35-50 percent of votes while the other parties could not represent a real challenge. Only three other parties have managed to regularly pass the 10 percent electoral threshold (in 2002, only one). As it was shown, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's party could occupy the centre-right, conservative, pious electoral niche of the former DP, AP, ANAP etc. The Islamist political movement, which was a strong political player in the 1990s, after the break up between the yenilikciler and the Erbakan loyal Aksakallı group, weakened the core, more radical Islamist groups electoral support. Despite the foundation of a new, pro-Erbakan Islamist party, the Saadet Partisi in 2001, radical Islamists could not enter the parliament again as their electoral performance usually remained around five percent, too far from passing the threshold. The only exemption is the 2018 election: due to the electoral alliance with the secular CHP it could get one mandates in the TBMM. As a whole, it is safe to say that the AKP was a successful actor in co-opting and moderating some part of the radical Islamist groups (Tuğal, 2009).



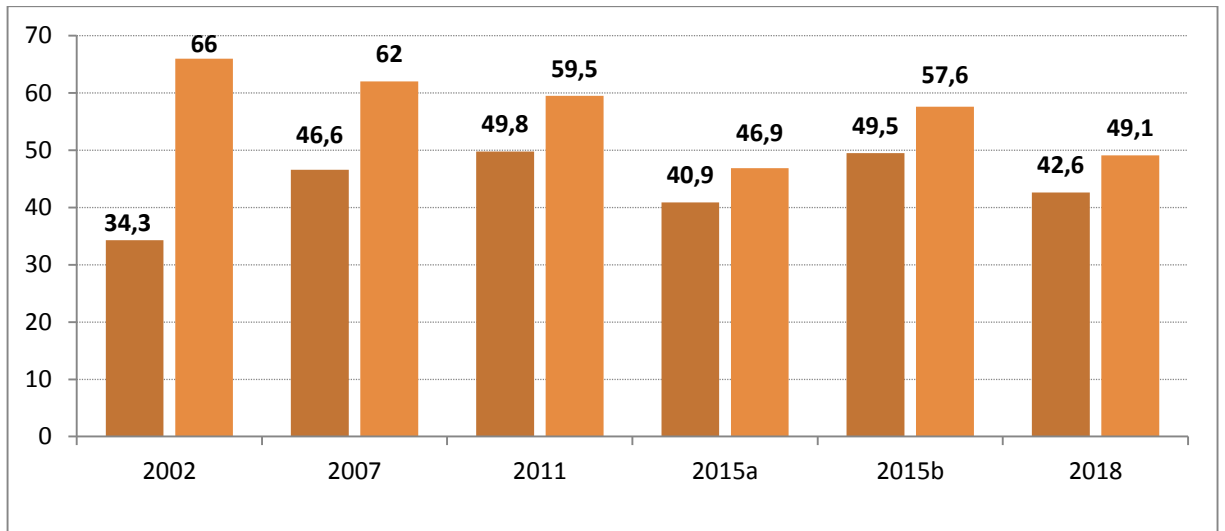


Chart 3. AKP's electoral performance and its share of parliamentary mandates (%)  
(Source: Turkish Electoral Committee)

Nevertheless, as Chart 3. shows, despite its electoral performance, the elections usually led to the AK's decreasing parliamentary representation. In 2002, the party could have almost two-third of the mandates while in June 2015, it could not size the simple majority in the 550-seat TBMM. In November, it could gain 317 mandates, however, it was short of 13 deputies to size adequate majority for constitutional changes. This forced the party to find political allies. Finally, a minor opposition group, the MHP was eager to ally with the government party. The elections of June 2018 led to a new decline in votes for the party.

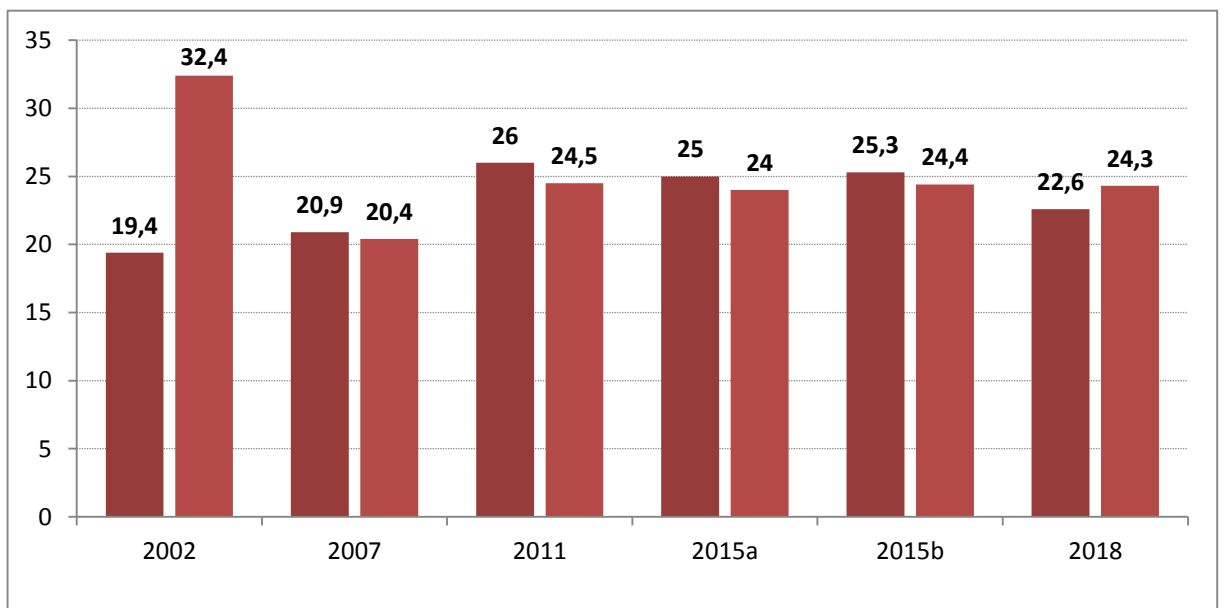


Chart 4. CHP's electoral performance and its share of parliamentary mandates (%)  
(Source: Turkish electoral Committee)

The main opposition party, the CHP usually remained between 25-30 percentages of votes, representing the support of the mainly Kemalists and Leftist electorate (Chart 4).

Geographically the Western part of the country, the most urbanised regions, such as the Aegean littoral, represents its main constituency. Other important feature of the CHP is that its core electorate is based on Alevis and in a limited manner, to the descendants of Balkan immigrants living in Western Turkey. Its relative weakness in the main cities such as Istanbul and Ankara highlight the characteristics of the previous decade's urbanization process in Turkey: the mass influx of rural people to the major settlements did not mean that they would embrace Kemalism. Instead, they rather favoured conservative and religious values, making them a strong constituency for the AKP. Furthermore, the failure of the CHP to open to local poor and create a real and convincing leftist program hindered the party to enlarge its electorate in these areas. It positioned itself as the only defender of the secular principles, accused the AKP of making attempts to weaken the Kemalism and implement its own Islamist agenda. This was a useful tool to mobilize its electorate, but prevented the political group to open towards non-secular, non-Alevi electorate and by that leaving the vast majority of voters to the AKP.

The traditionally second biggest opposition group, the MHP whose electorate is dispersed almost all over the country, also had limited room for manoeuvre against the AKP. Although the distance of party program, party values are the smallest compared to the government party in the Turkish political landscape, because its radical, nationalist program which has embraced the Islamist ideas some decades ago under Alpaslan Türkeş's leadership, it could not size much protest votes from the AKP's electorate. That is why the MHP's range of votes varied between 11-16 per cent which was not enough to form a government (Chart 5).

The alliance with the AKP and internal power struggles within the party leadership led to defection of some prominent figures led by Meral Akşener. She established a new party called İYİ Parti<sup>37</sup> in October 2017 and entered in the parliamentary and presidential elections in June 2018. The party intended to gather the anti-Erdoğan protest votes from the Right (Akşener also run for the presidential post). Despite the efforts, it could not challenge the AKP or the MHP, but at least could enter in the TBMM with 10 percent of votes.

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<sup>37</sup> İyi means good in Turkish.

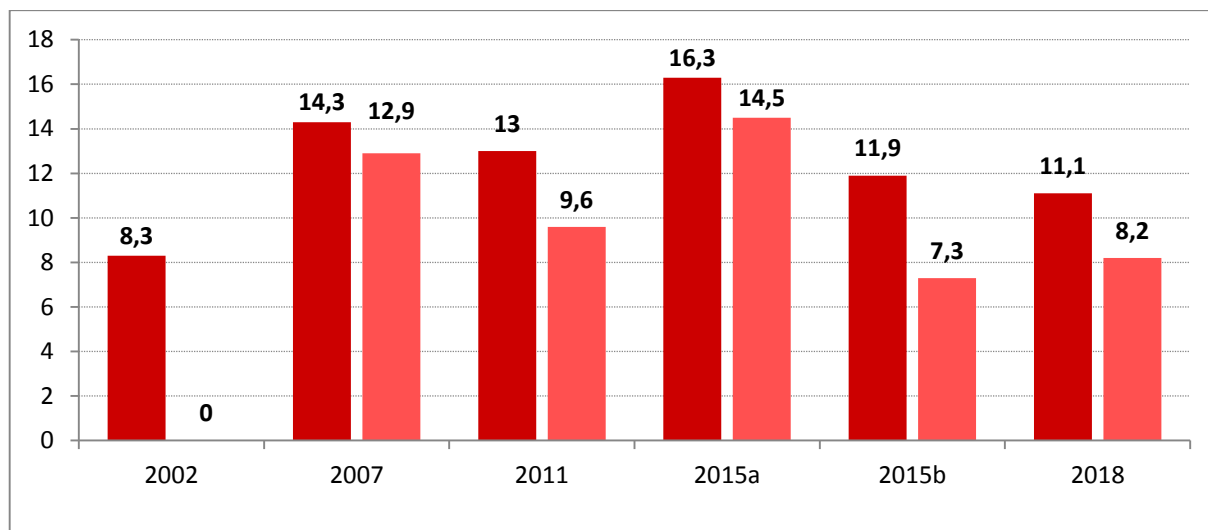


Chart 5. MHP's electoral performance and its share of parliamentary mandates (%)  
(Source: Turkish Electoral Committee)

The third opposition group, the Kurdish political movement and its parties also face strong limitations. Although the majority of the constituency is based on nationalist Kurdish voters and some liberal parts of Turkish society, it was difficult even for them to pass the high electoral threshold.

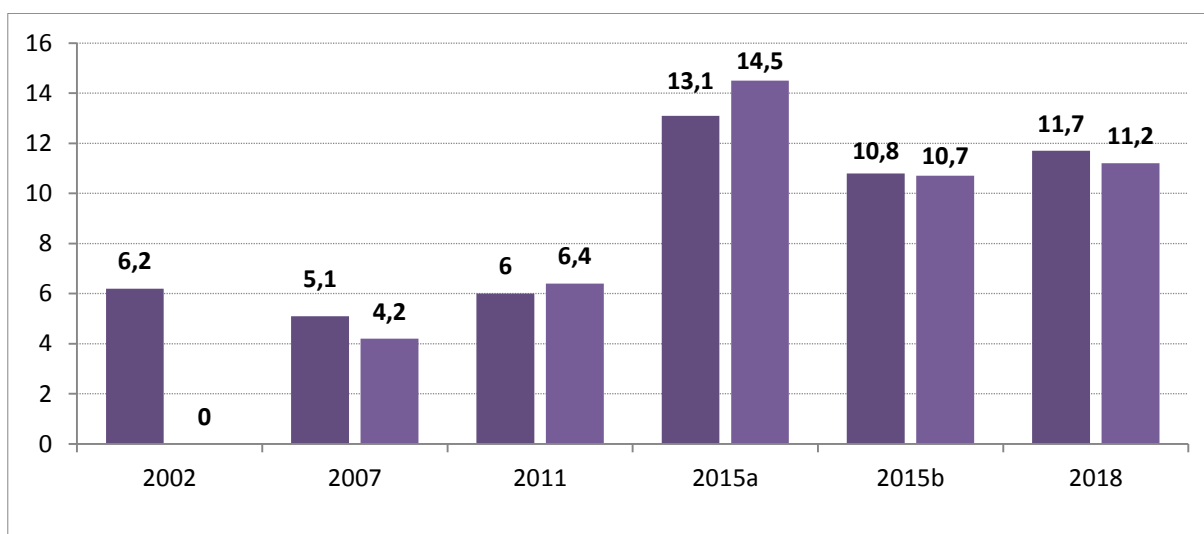


Chart 6. Kurdish parties' electoral performance and their share of parliamentary mandates (percentage of votes for independent candidates in 2007 and 2011).

In 2002, the DEHAP getting 6.22 percent could not get into the parliament, in 2007, the DTP managed to form a parliamentary fraction by handful of independent candidates. In 2011, the BDP could hardly outnumber the DTP's 2007 results. The HDP was successful enough to enter the TBMM as a sole party gaining 13 per cent in June 2015 and repeating this move in November 2015 by having 11 per cent of votes (Chart 6).

The gradual advancement of Kurdish political movement that positions itself at the Leftist side and says that it is an all-Turkey party, do not represent a real option for overwhelming majority of the AKP's voters. Although by the co-presidency of Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, it was able to acquire more votes from the Kurdish electorate in the East in 2015, recent developments such as the anti-PKK war and mass detention of party members including the party leaders strongly weakened its prospect to get into the parliament in 2019.

Turkey's electoral landscape seems to be stable: the AKP occupying the centre predominates the party system while other groups – Kemalists, Leftists, nationalists and nationalist Kurds have their own parties with relatively solid constituency. However, the internal struggle between the AKP and Gülen movement, the coup attempt affected the political power relations. After purging the state administration from Gülenists, the AKP needed to re-evaluate its relations with opposition groups. Several of them, like the secular-nationalist group, called *ulusalcı* was rehabilitated after the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases and got new state positions for support. The MHP has allied with the AKP in order to gain more power in state administration and prospectively high positions after 2019 elections. This change reveals that despite having strong electoral support, the AKP's hegemonic project cannot neglect other groups. As Hunt argues, the hegemonic force has to make compromises with subaltern groups and incorporate their interests in the hegemony to boost consent (Hunt, 1990). Thus, the AKP will probably pay more attention on nationalist and secular groups and will put more emphasis – at least rhetorically – on Atatürk and national will.

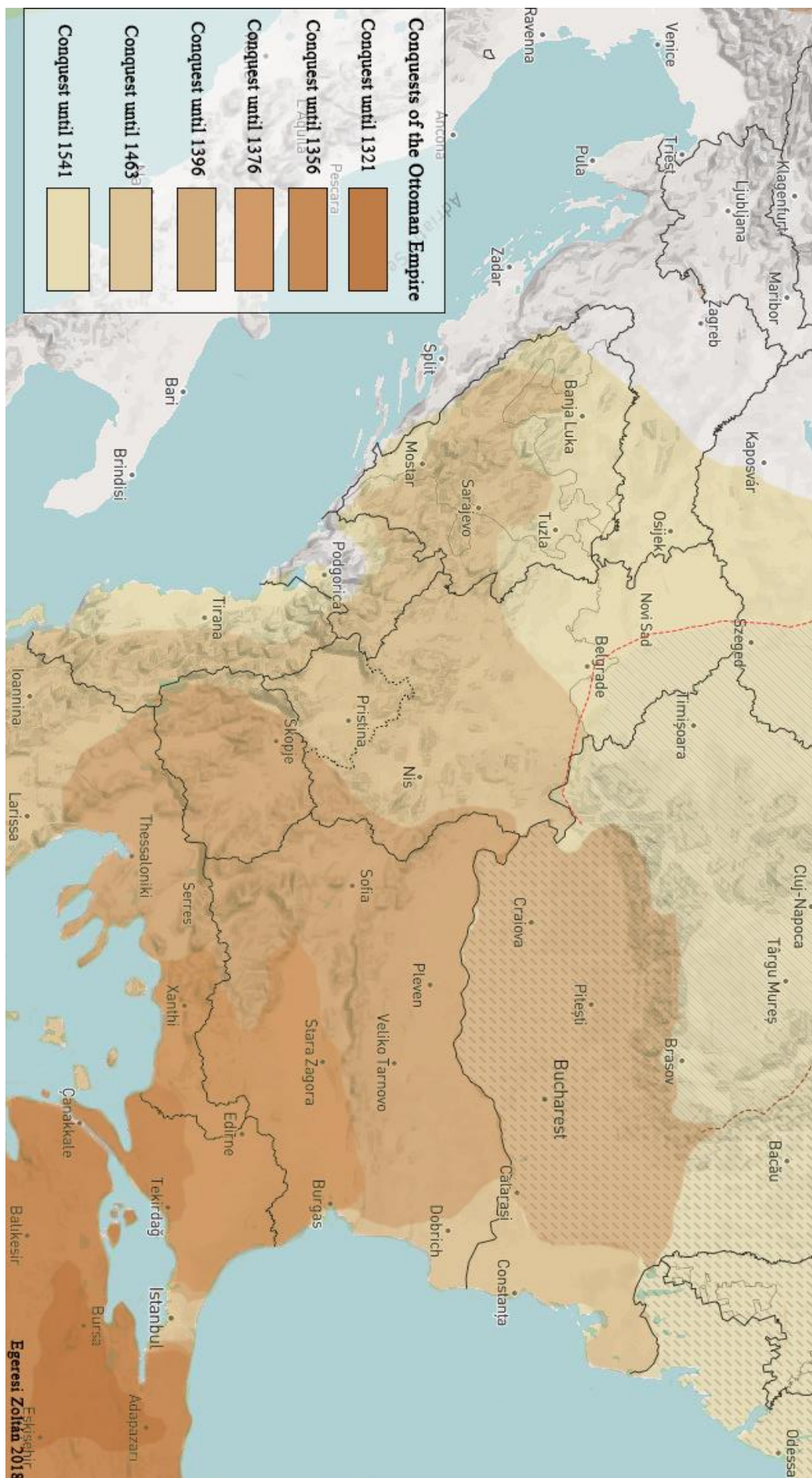
# Turkish foreign policy in the Balkans

## 1. Decomposing the Balkans

### 1.1. Ottoman heritage and kin in the Balkans

The process of the Balkans' conquest by Ottomans lasted more than 150 years from the occupation of Gallipoli (1354) to the successful siege of Belgrade (1521). The gradual conquest of Macedonia (1371), Bulgaria (1392), Serbia (1458), Kosovo (1454), Bosnia (1463) and Albania (1475), including the eastern parts of Croatia and central Hungary (1526/1541) brought major changes in the region. Without going into details, the following centuries under Ottoman rule had a deep impact on the region in several aspects. The Empire granted the longest political unity that the region had experienced. Even its name, the 'Balkans' originated during Ottoman rule (Map 1.)

Maria Todorova distinguishes between (legacy as) continuity and perception. She argues that continuity means the survival of the characteristic of an entity at the time of collapse, while perception can be defined as *"the articulation and rearticulation of how the entity is thought about at different times by different individuals or groups"* (Todorova, 2009, 198). First, the 400-550 years spent in a common state created a mutually shared heritage for the people living together as a base for 'continuity'. Not only did Muslim Turks learn Slavic words, but a great number of Turkish (Ottoman) words were incorporated into Slavic or Albanian languages. Furthermore, the Ottoman legacy still persists in the forms of the regional cuisine, music, demography, shared history and even has an effect on state- and nation-building processes through the legacy of faith-based communities, the *millet* system. As Todorova summarises: "The Balkans are the Ottoman legacy" (Todorova, 2009, 162).



Map 1. Ottoman conquest of the Balkans

In contrast, the Balkan nations have a different stance to this common past. Late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century works stated that the Turks brought destruction to the conquered lands, without the capacity of building anything of value due to the lack of civilisation. The most influential historian of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ranke used the proverb that ‘Where the Sultan’s horse-hoof treads, grass never grows again’ which frequently appeared later in articles and books about the Ottoman Empire (Boyar, 2007, 93-94). This image of Ottoman oppression in line with the destruction and backwardness that hindered Bulgarians, Serbs, Greeks and other people in the peninsula from reaching a higher level of development was often repeated in the West and in the Balkans as well. Moreover, it has become part of the national identity that the Ottoman period constituted an era of destruction and bloodshed without any meaningful progress, which led these countries to slip into oblivion.

The forced Islamisation of Christians has been accepted as the dominant theory in the historiography of these countries, however, recent studies have pointed out that forced conversion was not a common practice in the Ottoman Empire (except for *devşirme*) and that Islamisation itself was a rather complex social process (Merdjanova, 2013, 2). Probably not surprisingly, Muslim people and Turks have different perspectives about the shared history. For Turks, the Balkans played a significant role in the creation of a victim mentality. The textbooks and articles about the loss of the Balkans and the Danube, the images of the devastating wars and flight of Muslims, the rape of women contributed to cementing this victimisation into the national identity (Boyar, 2007, 142).

Second, the long-lasting Ottoman centuries made possible the emergence of a ‘constructed’ Ottoman heritage. The Empire needed well-built infrastructure for its wars against the Habsburgs and a professional administration to rule the conquered territories. They constructed a huge number of bridges, caravanserais, roads and fountains in order to make transportation and travel easier and faster. Later on, clock towers became a symbol of modernisation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, like in Anatolia. Ottomans also paid attention to the needs of the growing Muslim population, thus they erected mosques which were usually demolished by the secessionist Christian countries. The loss of the built Ottoman legacy was devastating in certain countries even if the majority was Muslim, such as in Albania where before 1945 there were 1,667 Ottoman mosques, while only around 50 could survive the communist era due to the regime’s aggressive atheism (Kılıç, 2010, 5).

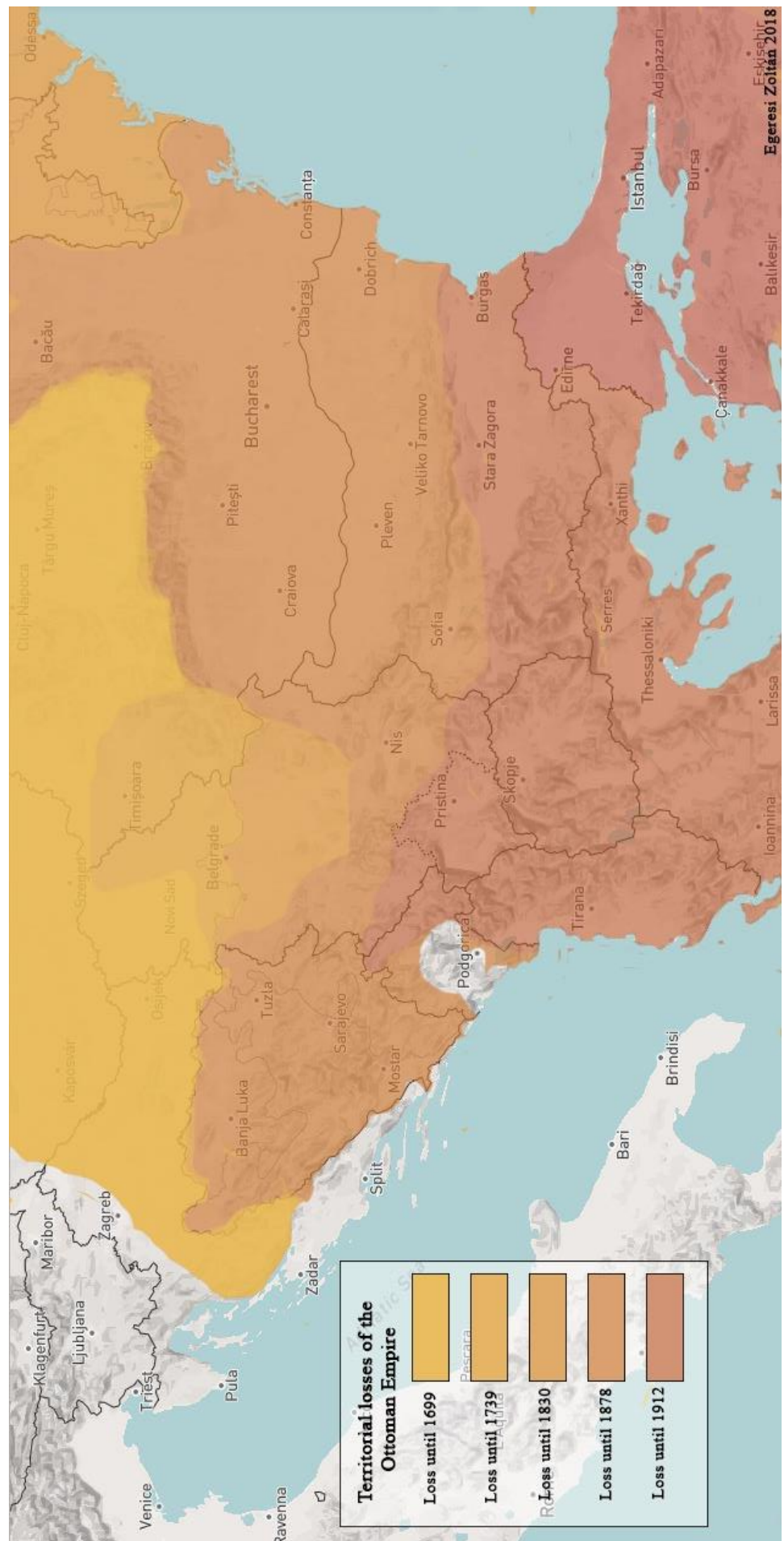
## **Muslim communities**

Muslim people are the most important remnants of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans. Due to the settlement of Muslim populations and Christians' conversion to Islam, the Muslim faith became almost omnipresent in the Ottoman-conquered regions. Its spread was gradual. Ottomans – following the Byzantine Empire's population transfer policy – installed Turkic tribes and groups (e. g. *yörük*) en mass to strategic parts of the Balkans, like in the Edirne region and in northwestern Bulgaria during the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries. In Bosnia, one part of the Slavic population converted to Islam by the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, while in Albania this was a long-lasting process, with mass conversion taking place mainly in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (see more: Noel, 1999).

Muslims became a privileged group of the population, as until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century they were the Sultans' only subjects who had the right (obligation) to complete military service. Furthermore – especially following the first successful liberation wars of Christians during the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – they were preferentially employed in the state administration (Ortaylı, 2004). Finally, Muslims (and especially Turks) were an integral part of town culture as they usually represented a significant proportion of the urban population.

The successive territorial losses of the Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century changed this situation. Concerning the Balkans, the first quasi-independent state was created by Serbs; it was followed by Greeks (1821-1831). Internal rebellions in Herzegovina and Bulgaria triggered the Russo-Ottoman War (1877-1878) which paved the way to the foundation of the Bulgarian Principality as an almost independent entity in 1878, and Bosnia and Herzegovina's occupation by Austria-Hungary. Seven years later, Bulgaria seized Eastern Rumelia. During the Balkan War (1912-1913), the entire Ottoman presence in the peninsula was essentially eradicated. By that time, the Empire had lost Albania, Macedonia and western Thrace (Map 2).



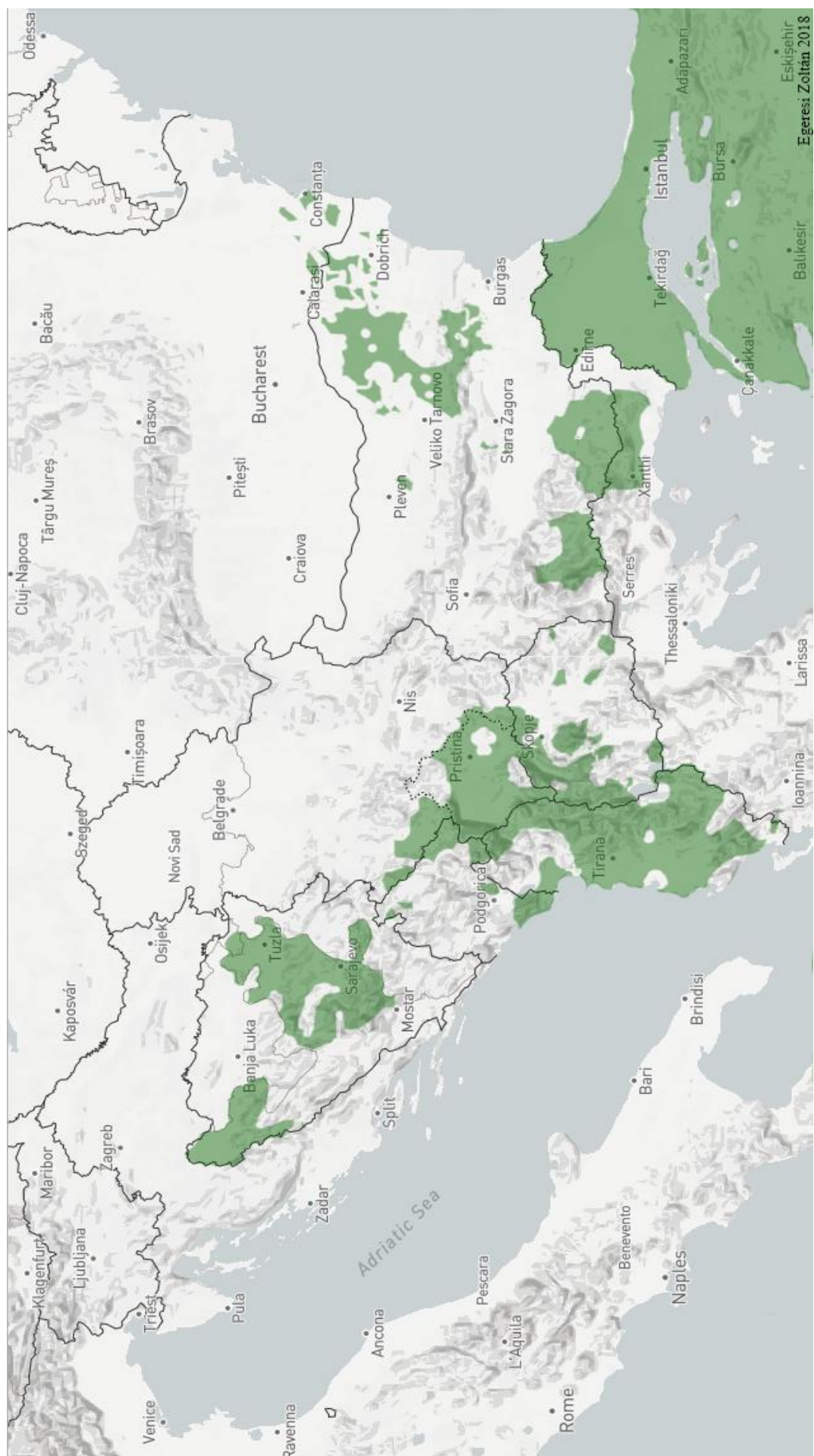


Map 2. Territorial losses of the Ottoman

Rebellions followed by mutual massacres between Christians and Muslims, clashes and killings of regular armies and irregular troops resulted in huge losses. During these wars, Muslims were expelled and massacred, reducing their number. After becoming rather second-class citizens of new Christian-led states (even if weak minority protection clauses were included in the treaties), their emigration towards the shrinking Ottoman Empire's territories continued. The general perception by that time about the fate of Muslim population was that they would vanish sooner or later, due to their immigration or assimilation, consequently their 'presence' was perceived as being rather temporary.

During the 20th century, the Muslim population usually had to face oppressions, assimilationist or dissimilationist policies including (forced) population exchanges and sometimes even massacres. Although these were more tangible at times and in some cases less marked, they contributed to the declining share of Muslims in the total population of the Balkans. Whereas according to estimates this figure could reach up to 30-40 percent in the 19th century, nowadays they constitute only 16-20 percent of the roughly 49 million inhabitants of the region (Map 3).

Various factors contributed to the decline of their number. The first aspects were ethnic cleansing and mass killings. Ethnic cleansing during the territorial losses of the Ottoman Empire occurred frequently. The rebellion of Bulgaria and the Russo-Ottoman War was accompanied by battles and atrocities committed by both the Russian and Ottoman armies, and gave an impetus to mass migration, mainly the exodus of Muslims towards the remaining parts of the Empire. Numerous authors argue that the wars and influx of refugees to the Empire contributed to a significant population restructuring in the peninsula. During these years some 500,000 people left their homeland and settled in the remaining territories of the Ottoman Empire (McCarthy, 1999, 37-91). Until 1879, around 380,000 people fled just to Istanbul (Ipek, 1999, 108), and by the beginning of 1890s the immigrants' number surpassed 760,000 (Kayapınar, 2012, 374). The two Balkan Wars (1912-1913) stimulated a new wave of migration from the Muslim-inhabited areas toward the new borders of Ottoman Empire, which had lost an enormous part of its territories on the Balkans. By that time other hundreds of thousands of people were forced to move to western Anatolia. In a few years, they had to escape a war again, when the Greek army launched its offensive from Smyrna/Izmir toward the inner territories of Anatolia (McCarthy, 1999, 339).



Map 3. Muslim population in the Balkans

Ethnic cleansing and massacres also happened during World War II, especially in the former Yugoslavia, where after the Axis Powers' invasion an internal war started between various groups (e. g. chetniks and communist partisans, while in Croatia the Ustasha regime contributed to the deaths of several hundreds of thousands of people). Although these clashes, killings did not target a particular religious group such as the Muslims, they also suffered heavy casualties between 1941 and 1945. The second substantial wave of ethnic cleansing was linked to the post-Cold War period. The dissolution of Yugoslavia culminated in new wars in Bosnia (1992-1995) and in Kosovo (1999)<sup>38</sup>, and was accompanied by massacres like the mass killings in Srebrenica in 1995. These armed conflicts also resulted in huge mass emigrations towards various western European countries and towards Turkey itself.

Second, even in peacetime various governments intended to reduce the share of the Muslim minority by 'sending' them to Turkey. For instance, after signing the Treaty of Lausanne and proclaiming the Republic of Turkey (1923), the new state had to face a huge loss of population, lack of manpower and, closely related to this, economic difficulties. The Greek-Turkish population exchange also aggravated the situation because in exchange for the more than 1.5 million Greeks (Orthodox) who left, only around 600,000 Turks (Muslim) arrived from Greece. Later on, Ankara signed treaties with Balkan states such as Bulgaria (1925) and Romania (1934), accompanied by the benevolent immigration from Yugoslavia which made it possible to settle around 410,000 Turks (Düman, 2009), Bosnians and Albanians in Anatolia.<sup>39</sup> During the communist era, forced emigrations (e.g. Bulgarian Turks' exodus in 1989) contributed to decline of the Muslim population there. After the regime change, emigration remained a threatening phenomenon; while during the 1990s Turkey was also a feasible destination, the EU accession (or the start of EU accession negotiations) directed the overwhelming majority of Muslims from Balkan states towards the core EU countries.

The third main change concerning the situation of Muslim populations in the Balkans was their nation-building process and the formulation of their ethnic identity. This process varies according to each ethnic group. However, it is important to review

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<sup>38</sup> In Kosovo, the UCK's formation in 1996 started an internal armed struggle for the independence of the autonomous region from the shrinking Yugoslav state. Their activities culminated in armed conflicts with the Serbs, and even massacres occurred in 1998. However, these killings influenced the internal community and NATO to bring an end to this internal conflict by bombing Serbia and pushing it to withdraw its army from Kosovo.

<sup>39</sup> At that time the Turkish Great Assembly accepted two settlement laws in order to ease the resettlement of various ethnic groups and the Turkification of Anatolia. These also contributed to the settlement of different nomadic groups (e.g. *yürüks*).

this change because it is a determining factor for the current Turkish foreign policy's opportunities. As this topic is covered by a vast literature, here the author will make just an attempt to summarise and highlight the main trends and steps of this process.

The nation-building process among Muslim people did not start at the same time. In the case of Bosniaks, the evolution of nation formation was strengthened by Austria-Hungary, especially by the statesman Béni Kállay. For Albanians, it started from the third quarter of 19<sup>th</sup> century as a response to the Russian threat, which gave rise to the famous League of Prizren. The League was a short-lived attempt, and Albanian nationalism had to wait two decades for its revival. In line with this alienation of Ottomans from their European territories, Muslims in the Balkans began finding other reference points of self-identification. Albanian Muslims claimed that they were autochthonous in their lands, where they would have to remain even after the loss of Ottoman authority (Boyar, 2007).

Finally, several small and dispersed groups like torbeshes in Macedonia or Pomaks in Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey were not strong enough to create national identity. The Pomaks whose number (several hundred of thousands) could have served as a basis for nation-building process in theory, the geographical and political divisions (they are living in three countries) did not permit to create a political entity (they are in majority only some distinct, small area). They were weak to resist to the assimilationist policies of Turkey, and were highly integrated in the Bulgarian national concept based on the common language.

Country	Numbers	Share of total population (%)	Status (majority, minority, diaspora, etc.)
<b>Kosovo*</b>	1,600,000	92	Absolute majority
<b>Albania</b>	1,640,000	58	Absolute majority
<b>Bosnia</b>	1,850,000	49	Relative majority
<b>Macedonia</b>	700,000	33	Large Minority
<b>Montenegro</b>	110,000	17	Significant minority
<b>Bulgaria</b>	900,000	8-14	Significant minority
<b>Serbia</b>	220,000	3	Significant minority
<b>Greece (Western Thrace)</b>	130,000	1	Minority
<b>Croatia</b>	50,000	1.5	Minority
<b>Romania</b>	50,000	0.5	Minority

\*without Northern Kosovo

Table 3. Approximate size of Muslim minorities in southeast Europe, by country  
Source: Öktem (2010), censuses

The Table 3 shows that the Muslim population is heterogeneous in its size, share and legal status. Around 7 million people are Muslims which represent approximately 14 percent of the total population of the region. These factors vary from state to state, as Muslims are the main state constituent communities in Kosovo and in Albania, whereas they are important not-in-majority groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, enjoying special rights granting them privileged status in the administration. The third country group is composed of Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia and Romania, where Muslims are only a minority. In these countries their percentage varies between nearly 10 percent and just 0.5 percent.

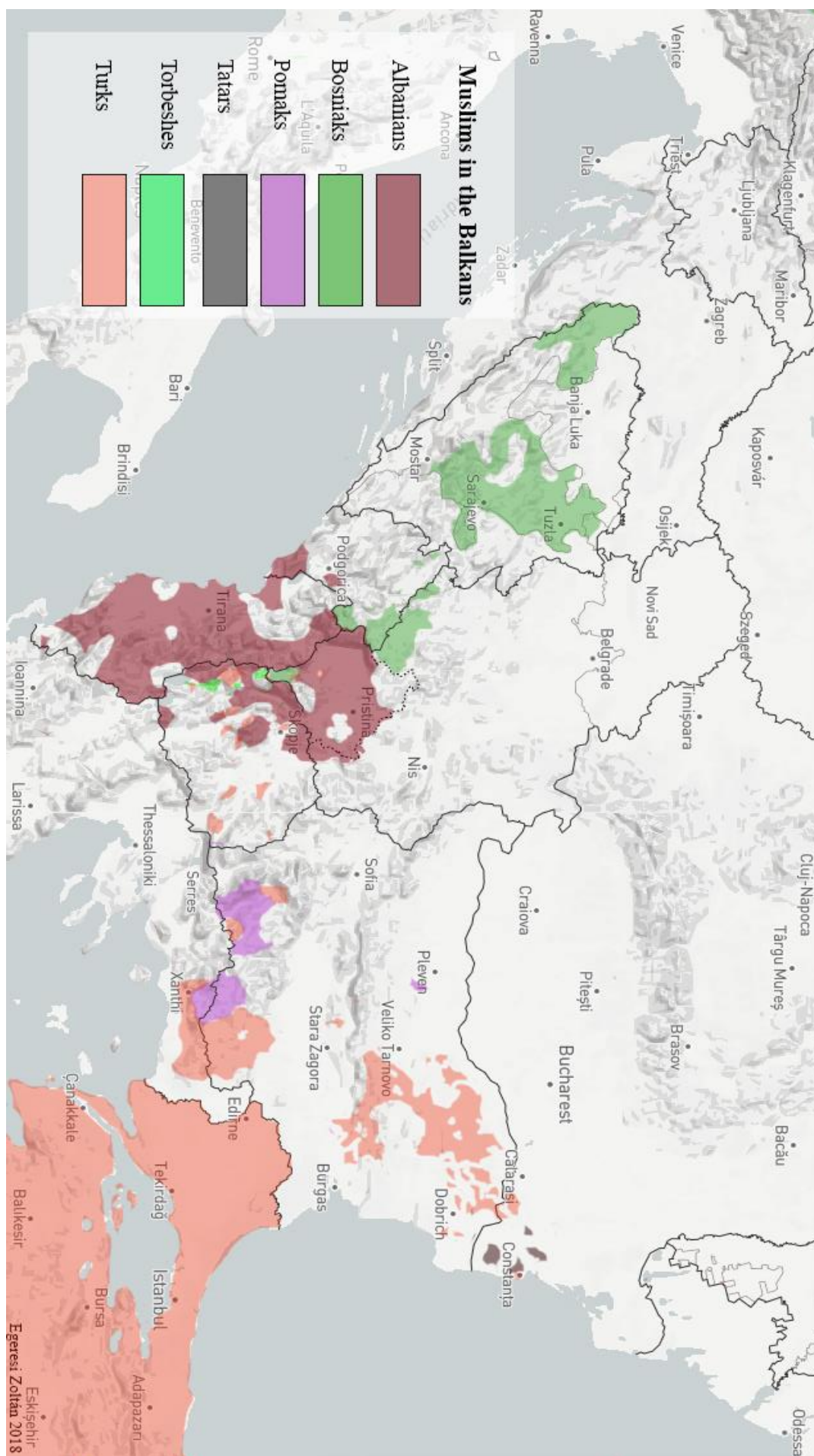
Group	Presence in countries	Number	Share (Muslims) %
<b>Albanians (Muslims)</b>	Albania	1,640,000	52
	Kosovo	1,600,000	
	Macedonia	550,000	
	Serbia	35,000	
	Montenegro	23,000	
<b>Slavic speakers</b>	Bosniaks		32
	Bosnia-Herzegovina	1,850,000	
	Serbia (Sandjak)	145,000	
	Montenegro (Sandjak)	47,000	
	Kosovo	27,000	
	Macedonia	20,000	
	Goranis		
	Kosovo	10,000	
	Serbia	8,000	
	Torbeshes		
	Macedonia	10,000	
	Pomaks		
	Bulgaria	130-70,000	
	Greece	60,000	
	Slavic Muslims		
<b>Turks (Tatars)</b>	Serbia	22,000	12
	Montenegro	24,000	
	Montenegrians		
	Montenegro	12,000	
	Bulgaria	590 -700,000	
<b>Romas</b>	Greece	70,000	3
	Macedonia	70,000	
	Kosovo	18,000	
	Romania	25,000	
	Romania	20,000	
	Especially in Bulgaria, Serbia and Macedonia	200,000	

Table 2. Approximate number of Muslim minorities in southeast Europe, by linguistic group. Source: Öktem, censuses



According to their ethnicity, as the subsequent table presents, Muslims also do not constitute a homogenous group. Most of them are Albanians, whose group is followed by Slavic speakers, especially by Bosniaks, although small but important groups could be distinguished within Slavs such as Pomaks and Torbeshes. The third largest groups are the Turks who constitute the largest ethnic minority in Bulgaria; nevertheless, they only inhabit Macedonia and Kosovo sparsely, where their numbers do not reach 100,000 or even 5 percent of the total population. The last Muslim group is constituted of Romas who are spread all over the region. Due to ontological problems, it is methodologically difficult to define the correct size of the Roma ethnic group in these countries. Consequently, their numbers are usually based on estimates especially in cases where the number of people avoiding answering questions about their ethnicity and religion was high, such as in Bulgaria.

Although they are all Muslims, their social status is not homogenous either (Map 4.). Romas are usually in the periphery of society, even where Muslim Romas live among other Muslims such as Turks or Albanians. As a contrary example, Turkish was perceived during the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a sign of ‘town culture’ that made the language and Turkish speakers’ status remain high or prestigious in several countries or regions such as Kosovo and Macedonia, especially among Muslims. Other groups, like Albanians in Kosovo, are the main and leading ethnic communities.



Map 4. Muslim communities in the Balkan



After the withdrawal of the Empire, organisations representing local Muslims were institutionalised and became independent from the Ottoman centre (Merdjanova, 2013, 11). Depending on their share within the population, Muslim communities managed to acquire a certain level of religious autonomy. Their status was challenged to a great degree during the communist era, as Balkan states usually applied forced secularisation policies to weaken religious identity instead of ethnic ones. For instance, in Bulgaria in the early 1950s the state demonstrated great support for Turkish identity by allowing and aiding ethnic associations and campaigning against ‘backward’ religious customs and traditions. Albania went the furthest in anti-religious policies by banning all ‘religions’ (1967) and declaring the country an atheist state (1976).

The collapse of communism created a very different situation for the ruling elites: they had to find a way to integrate Muslim communities where they were in a minority or to re-organise state-religion relations (organisations, foundations/charities, property issues, etc.) in a democratic manner. The intra- (Serbia, Bulgaria) and inter-community debates, internal struggles for power (Montenegro), in line with the persistent Islamophobia and constant lack of financial or material resources, created fertile ground for Turkey to appear as a protector of its kin.

### **Evlad-i Fatihan: The Turkish minority in the Balkans**

The Turkish minority experienced a similar history to other Muslim groups: it lost its privileged status with the collapse of the Empire and the community had to face mass emigration waves towards Turkey, facilitated by bilateral agreements or simply just forced exodus. These unfavourable, dissimilationist policies reduced their numbers in every country, but despite the difficulties, the Turkish minority still constitutes an important element of the Balkans’ social fabric. Geographically, Turks live in the ‘neighbouring’ regions of Istanbul: in Kircaeli in South Bulgaria, in the Rodope (Bulgaria, Greece) and in Macedonia and Kosovo, usually in the mountainous and peripheral regions such as Centar Zupa (Macedonia) or Prizren/Mamuşa in Kosovo. They live in greater number in the distinct, but strategically important region of northeast Bulgaria called Deliorman, where Ottoman sultans settled Turks in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Later on, Turks and Tatars were settled in Dobrudja, which became part of Romania in 1878.

Within the greater Muslim community Turks represent some 10-12 percent. They constitute a measurable minority in four Balkan states such as Bulgaria, Macedonia, Kosovo and Romania (in the later one, Turkic-language speaking Tatars also live in greater numbers). According to the official census their number is also in decline following the pattern of the majority population of these countries. The only exemption is Kosovo, where the Turks' number and share increased in the last census; this change is probably linked to the growing social status of Turks and the emerging importance of Turkey. Nevertheless, they remained marginal groups (Table 5). Turks accounted for almost 4 percent of the population of Macedonia and around 8.8 percent of Bulgaria, where they are a strong minority.

<b>Bulgaria (year of census)</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>Total</b>	8,487,317	7,932,984	7,364,570
<b>Turks</b>	822,252	746,664	588,318
<b>Share (%)</b>	9.69%	9.41%	8.80%
<b>Macedonia (year of census)</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>2002</b>
<b>Total</b>	1,964,285	2,063,964	2,022,547
<b>Turks</b>	78,880	78,019	77,959
<b>Share (%)</b>	4.02%	3.78%	3.85%
<b>Kosovo (year of census)</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>Total</b>	1,956,196	2,100,000	1,739,825
<b>Turks</b>	10,445	8,400	18,738
<b>Share (%)</b>	0.53%	0.40%	1.08%
<b>Romania (year of census)</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>Total</b>	22,810,035	21,680,974	20,121,641
<b>Turks</b>	27,578	32,098	27,698
<b>Share</b>	0.12%	0.15%	0.14%
<b>Tatars</b>	22,754	23,935	20,282
<b>Share (%)</b>	0.10%	0.11%	0.10%

Table 5. Number of ethnic Turks in southeast Europe. (Sources: national censuses)

Thanks to their numbers, they are also represented in politics. They have political parties in every country and they are usually present in the parliament, too. In some cases, like in Romania, special political representation status was granted by one minority seat for the tiny Turkish community (and another one for the seemingly small Tatar minority). Elsewhere, like in Bulgaria even ethnic or faith-based political parties

are banned, and the ‘constitutional nationalism’ forced the Turks to create their ‘liberal’ political party, the Movement for Rights and Freedom (Poulton, 1997).

	Status	Main laws	Education	Political parties	Elections
<b>Bulgaria</b>	Unrecognised as minority	Council of Europe Minority Protection Agreement	primary and high school optional language	MRF, DOST	Present
<b>Kosovo</b>	Officially declared minority (mandate guaranteed for elections)	Constitution, Council of Europe Minority Protection Agreement	Turkish primary and high schools	KDTP, KDP	Present
<b>Macedonia</b>	Officially declared minority	Ohrid Agreement, Council of Europe Minority Protection Agreement	Turkish primary and high schools	THP, TDP	Present
<b>Romania</b>	Officially declared minority (mandate guaranteed for elections)	Constitution, Council of Europe Minority Protection Agreement	Turkish primary and high schools	RDTB	Present

Table 6. Status of Turkish minority groups in southeast Europe

Their minority status, privileges and rights vary according to the given state’s legislation (Table 6.). Although the EU accession process strengthened pro-minority legislation, Balkan states have usually granted only limited rights for their minorities. In the case of Bulgaria – having strong anti-Turkish sentiments and witnessing ethnic tension in the late 1980s and early 1990s – the Turks enjoy only limited rights in education. The situation is better in the other countries. In Romania, the constitution emphasises the importance of minorities and the protection of minority rights. For those living in Macedonia, the Ohrid Agreement gives a special status. In Kosovo, where the constitution and minority protection legislation was closely monitored by the international community, the rights awarded to minority groups are quite generous, even if local Turkish intelligentsia complain about infringements of the minority’s rights and their alleged oppression.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Complaints and dissatisfaction date back to the Yugoslav era when Turks were supported by Serbs in order to weaken and counterbalance the Albanian national movement.

## 1.2 The Balkans ‘in’ Turkey

As it was already mentioned, the immigration from the Balkans was usually welcomed by Ankara. The immigration policy of the early republican era facilitated the arrival of former Ottoman (Muslim) subjects (Çağaptay, 2003, 612) while Christian Turks – Gagauzs – were not welcomed in Turkey. Demonstrating the perceptions of the time, the Turkish embassy in Sofia sent a report to the government about the migration to Turkey of the Pomaks, the Turks and the Gypsies who had been ‘accommodating to Turkishness’. According to the report, it would be a national mistake not to accept these people because if they were to stay in Bulgaria, they would increasingly be accommodating to ‘Bulgarianness’, leading to the loss of these populations (Boyar, 2007, 138). These thousands of people who had arrived at that time to Turkey were easily integrated/assimilated into the Turkish society.

A new wave of emigration towards Turkey occurred in the communist era. Albeit during that period Ankara intended to change its immigration policy and to preserve the Turkish communities (and other Muslim groups ready to immigrate) in their homelands, it had to permit the new exodus due to the pressure of Balkans states and the deterioration of the situation of the Turkish minority as well. At the beginning of that *époque*, various settlement agreements guaranteed the emigration of the Turkish minority toward their kin-state. One of the most remarkable pacts was the agreement with Yugoslavia signed in 1954 which made the immigration of about 200,000 people to Turkey (and a significant Albanian influx to the Macedonian Republic of Yugoslavia, changing the ethnic proportions of the member state) possible. The various treaties enabling the free movement to Turkey (*serbest göç*) and the family reunification (Bulgaria, 1967-77) also contributed to the growing number of immigrants in western Turkey.

The most significant exodus of this period was the so-called ‘big excursion’ during the summer of 1989, when around 350,000 Bulgarian Turks left their homes to settle in Turkey, fearing the growing Bulgarian oppression and possible bloody clashes with the authorities. Due to the fall of the communist regime by the end of the year and the starting transition in Bulgaria, around a third of these people, especially the unqualified workers (Petkova, 2002, 53), returned to their homes. Albeit the Turkish state had no official settlement policy at that time, it attempted to place the newcomers

on the eastern part of Anatolia – without palpable results, as the immigrants preferred to settle in the western cities where they usually had relatives.

The transition period in southeast Europe opened a new chapter in the history of migrations. The political cause of migration was replaced by rather economic reasons: a significant part of the newcomers arrived in the hope that they could find a job and escape from the unemployment and economic crisis which hit the Bulgarian Turks hardest. This tendency was strengthened by the decision of the Turkish authorities to ease the visa conditions. Furthermore, a new group of immigrants, namely refugees appeared after the war broke out in Yugoslavia. These people usually arrived from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia.

Although the emigration towards Turkey was most apparent during the last century leading to the emergence of a millions-strong community, not everyone having a personal tie to the Balkans has an active relation with the region – immigrants and their descendants usually have some kind of emotional link, especially the preservation of familial consciousness about the roots of the grandmother or grandfather who left the region many decades ago and not more. In addition to these sentimental relations, the new waves of immigration, particularly after 1945, created the basis for the emergence of a new phenomenon: the appearance of immigrants' associations (*göçmen dernekler*) aiming to transform these emotional ties to self-help and pressure groups based on the common history, culture and language.

The first associations began to form around the 1950s. The first, more permanent organisation was founded by Turks coming from Greece's eastern regions, the so-called Western Thrace, which could preserve its Turkish population despite the population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1922-23. That is why these immigrants are referred to as 'Western Thracians' (*Batı Trakyalı*). The influx of thousands of Turks from Kosovo and Macedonia also paved the way for the foundation of new associations, such as the Vardarlılar (later Rumeli) Türkleri Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği (Turkish Culture and Solidarity Associations of Vardarlı (Rumeli) Turks), in 1950. The third group of *göçmen dernekler* was created during the forced assimilation campaign in Bulgaria, which caused huge protests in Turkey. Their membership was usually recruited from the Bulgarian Turks, who received new 'reinforcements' from the settlement of thousands of Turks during the 'big excursion' in the western part of the country. The constant (partly economic) emigration from various parts of the Balkans made it possible to create new associations or to enlarge the scope of an existing one.

The growth in the number of '*göçmen dernekler*' from the middle of the 1980s coincided with the boom of the similar '*hemşehri*' organisations. The institution of *hemşehri* ('hometown organisation') refers to an association comprising of a group of people who settled from a given – usually – village or small town to the same district (mahalle) of a city; the common territorial origin, tradition, history and similar experiences facilitated the creation of closer and more institutional links between people coming from the same place. Because of the skyrocketing demographic growth of Turkey during the 1980s and 1990s after the war against the PKK in its eastern parts, mass immigration took place toward the more convenient urban agglomerations which at least in theory offered employment and a better standard of living.<sup>41</sup> The policy of the state after the coup of 1980 created a need for such organisations as well, by dissolving trade unions and banning political parties (Toumarkine – Hersant, 2005).

These associations provided a network and helped their members to integrate into their new neighbourhood; it also provided financial aid in times of crisis (Aktaş–Aka–Demir, 2008, 5). After a while, some of them started to outgrow the frameworks of a simple, cultural self-aid organisation by allocating some political and economic leverage to the local level. Although the government was usually suspicious towards them, and intended to obstruct their activities, the institution of '*hemşehri*' had become an integral part of Turkish life.

The case of immigrant associations represented a different issue and because of the state's suspicious approach toward *hemşehri* organisations they intended to distinguish themselves from the above-mentioned organisations, despite the similarities (Toumarkine – Hersant, 2005). Due to the fact that they were formed by ethnic Turks or Ottoman-Muslims originating from a different country, which they had to leave because of the discriminations and atrocities, they received a more favourable judgement from the authorities (Toumarkine – Hersant, 2005, 23). The most important difference between a simple *hemşehri* and *göçmen* organisation is that the most important and influential entities of the second group were recognised as having public utility (*kamuya yararlı dernek*), which meant that they can benefit from state subsidies while the others

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<sup>41</sup> During that time (1980-2000) the population of Istanbul increased from 2.8 million to 11 million inhabitants; in Ankara from around 2 million to 3.7 million, and in Izmir from around 1 million to 2.3 million. Anatolian towns also experienced significant changes. In Bursa the number of inhabitants rose from 400 thousand to more than 1 million; in Konya, we can see similar numbers.

can only receive aid from municipalities.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, they managed to reach the nationalist wing of Turkish politics, which provided them (especially during the 1980s) with a defence against dissolutions and positive discrimination in the eyes of the state. After the coup in 1980 they were entitled to be part of the ‘national cause’ (*milli dava*) which also guaranteed some state aid – despite the fact that these associations did not belong to the state administration (Toumarkine – Hersant, 2005, 23).

Moreover, some of the leaders of these associations managed to become political entrepreneurs by creating a well-organised entity from the growing membership, benefiting from a constant supply from the Balkans. One can observe this process through the example of the Bal-Göç. The Association of Culture and Solidarity of Balkan Turks (Balkan Türkler Dayanışma ve Kültür Derneği – Bal-Göç) was founded in 1985 by a small group of immigrants (nine people altogether) from Bulgaria (Balgoc.org.tr). The chairman at the time, Mümin Gençoğlu, born in Kircaeli, and a well-known businessman in Bursa, started to expand the association by creating new branches all around Bursa (in the city and in the district as well). A year later they already had a branch (*şube*) in Adapazar, and later in Inegöl. Benefiting from the influx of immigrants during the ‘big excursion’, a third of whom finally settled in Bursa,<sup>43</sup> the Bal-Göç managed to open new branches in Çanakkale, Orhangazi and Düzce.

In parallel to the assimilation campaign in Bulgaria, other groups were founded to protest against the oppression of the Turkish minority in the neighbouring countries. In Izmit, a few months after the protest of 15 people at the beginning of 1985, Hüsmet Erdoğan established Kocaeli Balkan Türkler Dayanışma ve Kültür Derneği. The next organisational step was the creation of the Balkan Türkleri Göçmen ve Mülteci Federasyonu (B.T.G.M.F.) in 1987 from the existing Bal-Göç associations. The Bursa Bal-Göç provided the leader of the Federation because its membership outnumbered its counterparts’ by exceeding 25,000. During the 1990s, the Bal-Göç Federasyonu was enriched by new branches and new groups. In 1991 Adem Süsler, together with 13 other immigrants, founded the Balkanlılar Dayanışma ve Kültür Derneği (BAL-DER) in Istanbul (Balkanlilar.org).

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<sup>42</sup> The following associations possess the ‘public utility’ title out of 406 associations: Bal-Göç Bursa, Izmir, Kocaeli, Batı Trakya Türkleri ve Yardımlaşma Derneği (Istanbul), Makedonya Göçmenleri Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği, Bosna Sancak Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneği (Istanbul), Bulgaristan Türkleri Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği (Istanbul); see the list on the homepage of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

<sup>43</sup> Nowadays it represents around 50 thousand people.

The emerging role of the Bal-Göç was demonstrated when its chairman, Mümin Gençoğlu was awarded a seat in the TBMM after 1991. After his death (1993), the association did not cease to function. ‘Inheriting’ the post at the top, Gençoğlu’s son, Turhan Gençoğlu continued the work of his father by enlarging the organisations. In 2005 the leadership of Bal-Göç reached a new level as five various federations of immigrants from the Balkans established the Balkan Rumeli Göçmenleri Konfederasyonu. By 2011, the Confederation was made up of 9 federations<sup>44</sup> and 143 associations (BRGF Booklet, 2011, 2), and nowadays the Bal-Göç provides the main pillar of this organisation.<sup>45</sup>

They have settled in large communities in some districts of Istanbul and partially in Bursa. People coming from the same regions and towns, like other hemşehri organisations in Turkey, started to organise their local branches too. We can see similar patterns between the history of Bal-Göç and BTTDD (Hersant, 2005).

The growing number of göçmen associations and their branches has paved the way for their growing importance in local politics. As they possess a disciplined membership which constitutes an essential part of a district, they managed to become an important actor in elections. The political parties of cities having numerous göçmen associations intended to establish good relations with them, and vice versa. During the past two decades a mutually beneficial cooperation emerged between them.

Political parties started to put the leaders of these associations, or people having good relations with the dernekler (and usually of Balkan origin) on their voting list. This mutual aid helped to establish good relations with the ‘notables’ of these associations who sometimes managed to become a member of local elites, even EPs in Ankara.

In order to compensate the support of such associations, the municipality usually tries to support their activities. As it is prohibited for them to give direct financial

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<sup>44</sup> The federations are the followings: Akdeniz Balkan Türkleri Federasyonu (Adana), Balkan Göçmen ve Mülteci Dernekleri Federasyonu (Bursa), Balkan Türkleri Federasyonu (Edirne), Dış Türkler ve Akraba Toplulukları Kültür Eğitim, Sağlık ve Spor Federasyonu (Sakarya), Eskişehir Muhacir Dernekleri Federasyonu (Eskişehir), Rumeli Balkan Federasyonu (İstanbul), Ege Balkan Rumeli Dernekleri Federasyonu (İzmir), İzmir Balkan Dernekleri Federasyonu (İzmir), Ege Balkan Türkleri Federasyonu. (BRGF Booklet, 2011).

<sup>45</sup> Another well-known organisation is Batı Trakya Türkleri Dayanışma Derneği (Solidarity Association of Turks of Western Thrace - BTTDD) which has offices in western Europe as well, especially in Germany and Belgium (Jeanne, 2005). In Brussels they managed to establish good relations with MEPs and EU institutions in order to defend the interests of Turks living in Greece, and to give voice to the troubles of this community and its fight for rights. This lobby activity is vital in Germany, too. Although the Turks of Greece have groups in western Europe, they have settled in immense numbers in the Marmara region of Turkey, especially after the beginning of the Greek civil war (1947-1949) during which the BTTDD was founded (1946).



donations to these associations, they prefer to give them material aid. This support can vary from providing a lecture hall for a conference organised by the organisation, supporting cultural events such as picnics or festivals, or providing buses for electoral tourism in Balkan countries. In Izmit, the municipality established a Cultural Centre of Balkans upon the request of local immigrant association (Bal-Türk, 2011, 43). Furthermore, the various cultural happenings supported by the local elites helped to maintain the identity of the immigrated communities and strengthen their sense of 'Balkan history.' At these events, the presence of traditional folklore groups of these communities and guest dancing groups from the Balkans demonstrates Turkishness and the regional identity of these communities at the same time.

This background mainly contributed to the prospering cultural life of these göçmen associations. Furthermore, these organisations intended to provide aid for their membership, or newcomer immigrants in order to solve their problems with the authorities (citizenship, social aid, social security, etc.) and to ease their integration into the Turkish society.

Nurcan-Özgür Baklacioğlu identifies two main groups among the associations. Immigrants coming from the Western Balkans – thus usually having Bosniak, Albanian, Kosovar, Torbeshi ethnic backgrounds – have founded Rumeli associations, while others (usually Turks) arriving from Bulgaria and Romania have established Balkan organisations (Baklacioğlu, 2007, 78). This distinction corresponds to the different identities that they have. The first group rather identifies itself in line with a broader historical space and emphasises the historical legacy. In their case, the link (usually) to Turkey was 'Ottomanness', the shared cultural and religious heritage. The path of integration to the Turkish society followed the emphasis on this common legacy and the acceptance of loyalty towards the state, even if the local identities (Sandjak, Prizren, Kosovo, etc.) have survived over time. Strikingly, for instance the Bosniak associations protested against the introduction of Bosniak language radio programmes in 2005, stating that they should be considered part of the nation and they do not seek any minority status. For Bulgarian Turks, the case was different: coming from a highly secularised milieu and giving their 'Turkish' identity, the emphasis on common language and ethnic identity gained more ground than shared (Ottoman) history.

These differences appear on the agenda of these associations: the so-called Rumeli groups are more active in propagating the Ottoman heritage of the Balkans. By

doing this, these organisations contribute to the daily practice of neo-Ottoman cultural practices focusing on ‘Ottomanness’ closely linked to Islam and the past.

### **1.3. Portraying the Balkans – the region in the AKP’s rhetoric**

In this chapter the author makes an attempt to analyse the discourse of Turkish foreign policy leaders about the Balkans. By doing this, he intends to portray how the region is described in their speeches, which are its features and what kind of policy is articulated.

Probably the most famous speech is Ahmet Davutoğlu’s lecture held in Sarajevo 16 October 2009. He addressed to his audience at Sarajevo, among his very first journeys to the region as a state representative (Davutoğlu, 2009). The regularly quoted speech he gave an overall overview about his concept about the region, about its position in space and time, and he also revealed his thought about the special Turkish interests.

He underlined that there are three main characteristics of the Balkans. First of them, that the region is a ‘geopolitical buffer zone’ between Europe, Asia and Africa. Secondly and thirdly, Balkans is a geo-economic and cultural meeting point as well. It interconnects people, cultures, and economies which grants for it a special situation. Following this stream of thought he offered a rather unusual approach to define the Balkans’ position:

‘Because of this, when we speak of the Balkans, we say it’s the periphery of Europe. But is the Balkans really a periphery? No. It is the heartland of Africa-Eurasia (Davutoğlu, 2009).’

However, he linked this central position to the apogee of the Ottoman Empire. As he states:

‘During the Ottoman times, in the 16th century, the Balkans was at the centre of world politics. That was the golden age of the Balkans. This is a historical fact. Who created world policy in the 16th century? Your ancestors! They weren’t all Turks. Some were of Albanian origin, others were Greek converts. Mehmet-pasha Sokolović is a good example. Were it not for the Ottoman Empire, he would have been a poor Serb peasant with a small farm or whatever, because they didn’t have developed farming in this part of the world then. Thanks to the Ottoman state, he became a leader in world politics. Ottoman history is Balkans history, in which the Balkans held special importance in the history of the world (Davutoğlu, 2009).’

According to him, the most emblematic remnants of this era, was Sarajevo which has been a

‘a miniature of Ottoman heritage. If you don't understand Sarajevo, you cannot understand Ottoman history. Sarajevo is the prototype of Ottoman civilization, the template for Balkans ascendant (Davutoğlu, 2009).’

The foreign minister thought that this region having the above mentioned geostrategic, geo-economic and geocultural features, it cannot be a centre but a victim of external forces, too. The remedy for the instabilities and problems would be the ‘reunification’ of the region. In his vision, he describes a stronger and more cooperative Balkans which can put back again from a peripheral position to the centre.

‘It all depends on which part of history you look to. From the 15th to the 20th century, the history of the Balkans was a history of success. We can have this success again. Through reestablishing ownership in the region, through reestablishing multicultural coexistence, and through establishing a new economic zone (Davutoğlu, 2009).’

As he emphasized, the region’s past could be a key to find patterns to follow in order to (re)establish prosperity. Reflecting to the three main characteristics of the Balkans, he put these features and the Ottoman heritage as key elements for the future, as he stated:

‘We desire a new Balkans, based on political values, economic interdependence and cultural harmony. That was the Ottoman Balkans. We will restore this Balkans. People call this ‘neo-Ottoman’. I don't point to the Ottoman state as a foreign policy issue. I emphasize the Ottoman heritage. The Ottoman era in the Balkans is a success story. Now it needs to come back...(Davutoğlu, 2009)’

As the main keeper of the Ottoman heritage, Turkey has had a special status for Balkans:

‘Turkey is partly a Balkans country, partly a Caucasus country, and partly a Middle Eastern country. There are more Bosnians living in Turkey than in Bosnia! There are more Albanians in Turkey than in Albania, more Chechens than in Chechnya, more Abkhaz than in Abkhazia. Why? Because of the Ottoman heritage. For all these different nations in the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East, Turkey is a safe haven, their homeland. You are welcome! Anatolia belongs to you, our brothers and sisters! And we are confident that Sarajevo belongs to us! If you wish to come, come! But we want you to be secure here, as owners of Sarajevo and Bosnia-Herzegovina. What is happening in Bosnia is our responsibility (Davutoğlu, 2009).’

For Davutoğlu, Turkey’s special mission – an active, security-seeking foreign policy – was legitimized and justified by three tenets. Firstly, the common historical-cultural heritage provided Ankara with an explanation why to it had has to be concerned by the regional issues. Turkey appeared as a securer and inheritor of the Ottoman heritage what it was own responsibility to take care of. Secondly, the acceptance of the existence of Bosniak, Albanian or Chechen communities within the border of Turkey – which was a break from the traditional nation-state approach perceiving the country as a

clearly Turkish state – explained that political elites needed to reflect to the cultural and historical affiliations of millions of these people. Turkey, as the last shelter of Balkan and Caucasus Muslims had to be aware of its own responsibility and behave as a Kin-state towards these related communities. And thirdly, he added to these arguments a rather normative one: Turkey's involvement into the regional affairs ('reintegration') should have been accepted and respected because Ankara did everything in order to make safer this point of the world and assure the security and peace.

In his speech, he clearly rejected the 'Neo-Ottomanism' which expression, he believed, jeopardized this reintegration as it could be threatening by having a territorial expansion connotation. The foreign minister stated that Turkey did have not the willingness to redraw the Balkans's countries' borders, rather the opposite; it intended to boost political cooperation, economic prosperity and peaceful cultural exchange.

To evaluate his speech it is important to note that it was well targeted to the audience. Why is it so important to emphasize the Ottoman heritage? Why it is so important to deal with the several times mentioned Ottoman heritage if it is already in the Balkans and survived hundred years? One can say that people living in the Balkans might recognize the great cultural value of these monuments, traditions and they should take care of them without having any support of another country. Here the importance derives from the people, especially from Balkans Muslims. In Davutoğlu's view the Ottoman period was a constituent interval for these communities as they are the remnants, heritage of the Ottoman era. This assumption may be particularly valid in case of Bosnia and Bosniaks. For them, one of the most important identity constituent elements is their religion, Islam. Their conversion took place during the 15-16<sup>th</sup> century under Ottoman rule, so for them by emphasizing the so-called heritage the scholar-diplomat grabs their attention by focusing their identity. The message is clear: as their identity is strengthened by their religion and history, they will be more cooperative and responsive to Turkey.

In order to understand the deeper geostrategic thinking in the background of the lecture, it is compulsory to show the foreign policy's main source, Ahmet Davutoğlu's famous book *Strategic Depth* where he determined the Balkans' position in the Turkish foreign policy and Ankara's strategic interests in the region. When he elaborated in 2001 the main focus points of the Balkans, he laid particular stress on two countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. According to him:

‘Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo which directly concern Turkey, are in this conflict zone [previous wars like Yugoslav war – author], and they are situated with great extent in this geopolitical vacuum zone and the cleavage line of geocultural confrontation area. The two consisting base axis of Balkans’ geopolitics are Drava-Sava axis whose centre is Bosnia and Herzegovina situated between Croatia and Serbia, and Morava-Vardar axis with the centre in Kosovo, located between Serbia, Macedonia, Bulgaria and partially Greece (Davutoğlu, 2001, 291).’

By revealing the Post Cold War developments in the region he stated that three main global structural conflicts contributed to the outbreak of wars in Bosnia and Kosovo, as 1) the conflict between the United States and Europe/Germany, 2) disagreement between the three country groups: United Kingdom/France, Germany and Russia, and 3) the transfer of this antagonism to level of international law and organizations. Davutoğlu stated that Germany and other Western European powers by contributing to the dissolution of Yugoslavia asserted their influence over Eastern Europe and the Balkans (Davutoğlu, 2001, 294). The above mentioned antagonism was handled by the Dayton agreement and the previously realized military campaign in Croatia granted for Germany to path to Adriatic Sea and for the United States to legitimize its presence in the region (Davutoğlu, 2001, 295). He evaluated the Dayton Agreement as not a real solution of the problem just a postponing of the crisis. Concerning Kosovo’s issue in 1999, he believed that it stemmed from the change of balance of power in the Middle East and the Balkans. For this time, he distinguished two main blocs, an alliance between the United Kingdom, France and Russia against the bloc of United States and Germany. The conflict ended by the strengthened position of the US due to the NATO’s involvement and the establishment of KFOR.

Nevertheless, he did not miss to reveal the Balkans own equilibrium either. As focusing to intraregional balance of power he believes that Slovenia and Croatia – similarly to Austria and Hungary – will approach to Germany and Italy. Serbia establishes closer ties with Russia and Greece. As a reaction for this process Albania and Macedonia make attempts in order to control it. Romania, taking advantage from the Danube, it has a role of bridge between Central Europe and the Black Sea. In this matrix, Turkey was preliminarily unprepared to tackle these crises. Due to these challenges, it also needed to face its own history and to stay close to intraregional balance of power (Davutoğlu, 2001, 301). Davutoğlu pointed out that the most crucial point for the peace in the Balkans was Macedonia which had difficulties with its neighbours and with its Albanian minority which constituted measurable proportion of the population.

As the international rivalries shaped the future of the region, internal antagonisms also emerged and (traditional) Serbian-Greek alliance that Bulgaria may join due to the presence of Turkish minority in the country may form an axis in the Balkans. In this case a Bosniak-Albanian-Turkish alliance may emerge to counterbalance the above mentioned bloc. Romania and Serbia because of their Hungarian minorities may create an alliance to tackle the Hungarian movements (Davutoğlu, 2001, 302). As he concludes the Drava-Sava line is a Bosniak-Croat-Serb geocultural conflict zone, and the Morava-Vardar line give place for Albanian-Serbia-Macedonian geocultural conflicts which could lead to prospective ethnic tensions and conflicts (Davutoğlu, 2001, 303).

According to him, comparing Turkey's current position to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century's one, a clear decline could be remarked. Other powers, such as Germany and Russia managed to keep their influence tangible in the region: Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia stayed close to Germany, while Serbs closely cooperated with Russian interests. Remaining countries, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece depending on their interests intended to join these groups. The United States, which emerged as a third actor in the region needed to rely on Bosniaks and Albanians – people who could not be integrated into Slavic-Orthodox, or Catholic axis – in order to assure its own position in the Balkans and maintain the internal balance of power. Turkey had to cooperate with the US in order to accomplish its own goals in the region.

He argued that Turkey have to tackle the negative, anti-Osman and anti-Turkish image created by Greece and Serbia. Davutoğlu stated that 'Turkey, especially in the Balkans, has to create new balance and harmony between internal political culture and foreign policy (Davutoğlu, 2001, 316).' By claiming a new balance, he referred to the need to create an image of a moderate Islam on one hand, and to support Muslims and to restore the Ottoman heritage (Davutoğlu, 2001, 316). When he elaborated the elements of this policy, he distinguished five main pillars. Firstly, he emphasized the importance of the historical heritage being in the peninsula: '...there were two groups which supported traditional Ottoman-Turkish Balkan policy: Bosniaks and Albanians (Davutoğlu, 2001, 316).' According to him, due to their conversion to Islam and their above mentioned support, their fate was linked to the Ottoman Empire:

'When Ottomans were strong, these people gained big influence in the Balkans in name of Ottomans, while when the Ottomans were weakening and [the Empire] collapsed they were affected by the greatest knocks (Davutoğlu, 2001, 316).'

Davutoğlu argued that biggest gain for Turkey was that after the Cold War these two people have managed to create in their own countries a new political system which was closer to their cultural past than the previous one had been. He has given even greater importance for these countries.

‘Bosnia and Herzegovina is still Turkey’s political, economic and cultural advanced outpost reaching the interior of Central Europe. Albania is as for the barometer of Turkey’s Balkans policy. A Turkey which does not support Albania to provide stability and security in the Balkans, it has no opportunity to possess a permanent influence in the region [Davutoğlu, 2001, 317].’

At this point he compared Albania to Azerbaijan concerning the two countries impact for Adriatic and Caspian Sea, respectively. He argued that these people were the most important means for Turkey to influence the Balkans, as he highlighted:

‘The belt starting from Northwest, with the Bihac–Central-Bosnia–Eastern-Bosnia–Sandjak–Kosovo–Albania–Macedonia–Kırcaali–Western-Thrace’s line reaching Eastern-Thrace is characterized as Turkey’s in terms of Balkans geopolitical and geocultural life vein (Davutoğlu, 2001, 317).’

Certainly, the Yugoslav war caused huge number military and civilian casualties. Massacres done by Serbs in Eastern Bosnia and in Sandjak also contributed to the depopulation of Muslim inhabited regions. All in all, these killings and ethnic cleansing cut the aforementioned line.

Reflecting to strategic thinking, he put Kosovo’s position to the strategic centre of this zone: it interconnected the Bosnia-Sandjak axis with the Macedonia-Albania axis. Davutoğlu concluded that helping these communities to live in this ‘belt zone’ by providing them security, conserving their cultural treasure, strengthening their economic and social infrastructure and establishing communication between them would grant a strong position for Turkey in time of peace and conflict over the region (Davutoğlu, 2001, 318).

Secondly, he underlined the interregional dependency (*bölgelerarası bağımlılık*) as an important pillar of foreign policy. According to him, the fact that Turkey reaches the Caucasus, Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, it yielded the country a huge strategic advantage compared to other countries of Balkans. Having a flexible and multi-dimensional diplomacy, Turkey became able to benefit from its unique geopolitical position.

Thirdly, he pointed out that Turkey had to closely follow the intraregional balance and used a flexible diplomacy to adapt to it (Davutoğlu, 2001, 319). He outlined three country groups following concentric circles gravitating to Kosovo. The first group was composed from Albania, Kosovo (by this time, still part of Serbia) and Macedonia.

The second one was constituted from Greece, Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey. The third grouping referred to the neighboring countries which were able to influence the intraregional dynamics and intervene into regional issues: Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary and Romania. Dealing with the challenge affecting these groups, he revealed that *'The first group's most sensitive point is the relation between Macedonia and Albania.'* In this circumstances Turkey needed to improve the bilateral relations and also seek to influence Macedonia in order to grant the most possible citizenship rights for Albanian minority (Davutoğlu, 2001, 20). Concerning the second grouping, *'...the most basic aim to prevent Bulgaria to create with a Serbian and Greek alliance an anti-Turkey regional alliance'* (Davutoğlu, 2001, 320). According to him, in order to tackle the third group, Turkey needed to increase the level of contact and needed to establish better communication, especially with Romania due to economic reasons, and in a prospective crisis, it needed to keep opened the traffic and trade on the Danube.

Fourthly, he emphasized the importance of common and own projects and organisations such as Balkan Summit and Southeast European Platform. Furthermore, he suggested that in order to preserve the region's cultural heritage (especially the Ottoman-Turkish heritage, hit the most during conflicts) to establish a 'Balkan UNESCO' as well (Davutoğlu, 2001, 321).

Fifthly, he pointed out the 'global strategic tools' such as NATO or Islam Conference Organisation could be helpful for Turkey in order to boost its influence all around the region. According to him, Turkey may bring to the Islam Conference Organisation its problems in the Balkans but not as Islam-Ottoman issue but rather an Islamic World problem (Davutoğlu, 2001, 321).

Davutoğlu described the international dynamics through a realist approach. According to this opinion, the traditional balance of power and great powers' rivalry have determined the development of the last decade(s). From this point of view, Balkans was rather defenceless and passive beholder of these events and it is considered as a victim of external forces. Turkey seeking to influence these conflicts was rather a weak actor with limited efficiency. It had to re-evaluate its position, although for the prospective future, as Davutoğlu notes Ankara shall focus more on its identity and cultural heritage to determine its interests and opportunities in the region.

In his book, he presented Turkey's foreign policy by emphasizing the importance to regional balance of power which may be perceived as a rather defensive



and status quo seeking foreign policy. In this respect, the academic scholar does follow the traditional Turkish foreign policy goals in the Balkans.

Nevertheless, the tenets varied. He did not refer just on countries but on communities, too. He hinted on Muslims, but usually on Bosniaks and Albanians. He determined a 'belt' of strategic importance from Bihać to Eastern Thrace, which was an axis of various Muslim people like Bosniaks in Bosnia, Bosniaks living in the Sandjak, Muslim Albanians in Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia, and he also mentioned Turks. However, he followed the realist approach and he rather focused on two countries, Bosnia and Albania (and partly on Kosovo, because by this time the republic was not independent), as they were the geostrategic centres of the region. The tools to 'legitimize' Turkey's interest towards these two countries were the religion, the common history and culture (Ottoman heritage).

Davutoğlu referred several times to minority issues, especially Bosniaks (Sandjak) and Albanians (Kosovo and Macedonia) but he did not mention Turkish minority (or other Muslim groups such as Torbeshes or Pomaks) just twice. A weak reference to them was Kırcaali, traditionally the only Turkish inhabited county in South Bulgaria where Turks were in majority. The lack of reference to them also made a hiatus for the geostrategical division of the Balkans, as Davutoğlu did not mention the historically important North-South 'axis' from the Danube to Istanbul, coming from Dobrudja passing by Northeast Bulgaria and reaching Eastern Thrace through Edirne. The absence of this axis was also problematic because early Turkish settlement policies were focused on the installation of Turkic tribes in these regions, especially in Deliorman in order to assure the stability at the Danube zone and the terrestrial connection between Ruse/Varna and Edirne/Istanbul. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Tatar and other Muslim refugees from the Black Sea region also were settled in great number in Dobrudja and Eastern Bulgaria as well.

The negligence of the Turkish minority and the emphasis on the importance of other Muslim groups especially Bosniaks and Albanians places the Turkish kin policy on a much broader base. According to his book, although the preservation of minorities (so Turkish groups as well) was a key factor in order to preserve the peace in the region itself, but he extended the culturally-historically relevant kin communities' definition from a given ethnic one to a broader religious one. That was why not just Turks but Albanians and Bosniaks could have been considered as 'brothers and sisters.'

Davutoğlu has referred in several speeches to this kinship. For instance, at the end of August 2011, Davutoğlu made his Eid prayer in Sarajevo. By this time, he met with with Mustafa Cerić the then Chief Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bakir Izetbegović. After visiting the tomb of Aliya Izetbegović, he stated:

‘I am very happy to celebrate with my Bosniak brothers. Allah renders this celebration as a delight opportunity for Turkey, for brothers being in Turkey, for all brothers being in Bosnia and the Balkans, for Islamic world.’ Later he added ‘in our tradition, we celebrate together with our family. Me too, I came to Sarajevo as to my house with my family to celebrate. [...] Bosniaks are our family (Davutoğlu, 2011a).’

Also in 2011, during his visit in Mamuşa, Kosovo he emphasized again the brotherhood and kinship:

Kosovo is our homeland like our own homeland. People of Mamuşa are our own family. You are like our Anatolia’s own children in our heart. [...] Kosovo looks like a state of 3 years, but for us, it is a 622 old state (Davutoğlu, 2011b).

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also made references to kinship in several speeches, as he used often the „brother” expression. However, in his famous speeches he usually used this kinship for the communities of a broader geographical area, not just to the Balkans but for the Middle East as well. After the AKP’s landslide parliamentary election victory in 2011, he stated:

‘Believe me, Sarajevo won today as much as Istanbul, Beirut won as much as Izmir, Damascus won as much as Ankara, Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin, the West Bank, Jerusalem won as much as Diyarbakir (Erdoğan, 2011).’

After getting the most votes in the local election 30 March 2014, he also reflected to the related communities in a similar manner:

‘I wholeheartedly greet our 81 provinces as well as sister and friendly capitals and cities of the world from Ankara, from the AK Party headquarters. I’ve just addressed via teleconference thousands of people who gathered in Skopje Square. They were sharing the joy you have here in freezing weather. I first want to express my absolute gratitude to my God for such a victory and a meaningful result. I thank my friends and brothers all over the world who prayed for our victory. I thank my brothers in Palestine who saw our victory as their victory. I thank my brothers in Egypt who are struggling for democracy and who understand our struggle very well. I thank my brothers in the Balkans, in Bosnia, in Macedonia, in Kosovo and in all cities in Europe who celebrate our victory with the same joy we have here. I thank my suffering brothers in Syria who pray for our victory although in a great pain, facing starvation and under bombs and bullets (Erdoğan, 2014).’

During the above mentioned teleconference he referred again the brotherhood being between Turkey and Macedonia (Albanians, Macedonians and Turks). In October 2013, he also used this concept in a speech being held in Prizren, Kosovo: ‘We all belong to a common history, common culture, common civilization; we are the people who are brethren of that structure. Do not forget, Turkey is Kosovo, Kosovo is Turkey!’

(Erdogan, 2013). Stating that 'Turkey is Kosovo, Kosovo is Turkey!' led to a minor international scandal, the Serbian leadership in that case has reacted sensitively. Tomislav Nikolić, Serbian president of republic harshly condemned the speech.

While Turkish opinion leaders take part in identity making by their discourse, they also explained Turkey's involvement into regional issues by reminding to the security aspects. Davutoğlu's famous Sarajevo speech was already an example for that, but in other lectures he also revealed this aspect.

In a lecture, at the Institute of International and European Affairs, to emphasize the importance of Bosnia for Turkey, he said:

'If there is a crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina, when there was crisis, for many people in the centre of Europe it was important, but for Turks all the Bosnian turned their face to Istanbul and to Ankara and said: Help us! and thousands of them came us refugees to Turkey. Aliya Izetbegović the first thing he did, he called our president and our people. Whenever there is a crisis in the Balkans we have a refugee camp in at Edirne which is a barometer. If you want to understand how things are going to Balkans look at the refugee camp. Because if there is a crisis in Bosnia all of the people staying there are Bosniaks, if there is in Kosovo, all of them are Albanians, in Macedonia all are Macedonians. Why? Because in Turkey we have more Bosniaks than in Bosnia, more Albanians than in Albania... (Davutoğlu, 2010)'

Erdoğan also emphasized the importance of peace and stability, for instance in a speech held in Sarajevo, 2010, he stated: 'Without providing peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there can be no peace and stability in the Balkans (Today Zaman, 07/04/2010).'

In 2011, Davutoğlu summarised the main tenets of Turkish foreign policy towards the region:

Being herself a Balkan country, Turkey is committed to being a force for peace, stability and welfare in our common neighborhood. We are pursuing a foreign policy fashioned around the vision of averting crisis, developing a sense of ownership of regional problems, promoting dialogue and mutual confidence, and giving everyone a stake in cooperating with each other. I must add that regional cooperation and partnership schemes also serve as potent vehicles in achieving these goals. They help us transcend borders, build a larger sense of belonging and create a more secure area of interaction (Davutoğlu, 2010b).

To conclude, Turkish leadership looks at the Balkans as a region having strong Ottoman legacy and based on the shared history, culture and religion (Islam). The statement about belonging the Muslim inhabited territories highlights the mentality and the vision how the region is perceived in Ankara. This constituting legacy triggers the Turkish activities to defend it especially the Muslims who have no international protector. Simoultaneously, decision-makers believe that their country makes the region more stable, balanced and by strengthening the cooperation between various Balkan states may enforce peace and economic prosperity.

## **2. Co-opting the Kin: Neo-Ottomanist features of the foreign policy**

### **2.1. Main patterns in Turkish foreign policy in the Balkans until 2002**

The loss of enormous parts of its territory in the Balkan Peninsula by the end of the first Balkan War (1912) caused a huge tragedy for the Ottoman elite and intellectuals. Symbolising the last chapter of a century-long decline, the Empire had to give up millions of Muslim subjects as well as nearly the whole Balkans, considered as core territories for over five hundred years. The immediate consequence of the territorial changes resulted in mass immigration of Muslims into the Ottoman Empire, to Anatolia.<sup>46</sup> Simultaneously, this change particularly affected the Young Turks because the movement's strongholds laid in the Balkans, and the majority of their members originated from the region. Thessaloniki or Selanik, the birthplace of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, also hosted the first conference of the Committee of Union and Progress after the successful coup d'état in 1908. Basically, the Balkans represented the reformist part of the Empire.

Ottoman intellectuals perceived the disastrous Balkan Wars (especially the first one, in 1912-1913) as a humiliation. Small Balkan countries were able to quickly overcome the Ottoman army and even threaten Istanbul. Furthermore, these states were recently the periphery of an immense empire: it was even more frustrating for the Ottomans that they had not been defeated by Great Powers but rather by minor states (Boyar, 2007, 78.). As Yusuf Akçura, a leading intellectual wrote about the war: 'We were driven out by our former shepherds and servants' (Boyar, 2007, 79).

The new Turkish Republic founded on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire accepted the status quo in the Balkans. The acceptance of that policy was facilitated by various treaties concluded with Balkan states. Additionally, Turkey and the Balkans states' willingness resulted in various settlement agreements supporting the immigration of hundreds of thousands of Turks, Albanians and Bosniaks into Turkey.<sup>47</sup> Ankara wanted to recover from the huge loss of population after the long-running and exhausting wars

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<sup>46</sup> This immigration created the base of a huge immigrant community in Turkey. See more about the demographic consequences of these wars: McCarthy, 1996; Turan, 1998; Ağanoğlu, 2001.

<sup>47</sup> The number of immigrants between the two World Wars varies between 410-450 thousand. See more: Duman, 2009.

(1911-1923) by accommodating Muslim immigrants (see later) from the peninsula while Balkan countries attempted to create homogenous nation-states.

However, Turkish embassies keenly followed the southeast European states' attempts to convert Muslims after the retreat. For Ankara, maintaining a Turkish cultural presence in the region was an important goal that had to be supported by providing funds. Due to this cultural heritage, Islam also played a major role as a cornerstone of Turkish culture and the main obstacle to assimilation in the new Balkan states. Even Yaşar Nabi, a prominent writer in the early republican period who strongly propagated the need for a secular state recognised that religion was the core element of the resistance against the assimilation policies (Boyar, 2007, 139).

From the very beginning, Ankara wanted to maintain peace in the Balkans, a behaviour which differed from that of other losers of World War I in the region such as Bulgaria. In spite of articulating a revisionist policy in order to regain the lost territories, Turkey endeavoured to establish close relations with the neighbouring countries. Turkish diplomats made efforts to mend fences with the other states and create a new image of a Turkey that was committed to creating a coalition of like-minded states rather than revive the Ottoman domination (Balkas, 2005, 444).

The emergence of Mussolini's Italy as a threat to the region between the two World Wars also facilitated the rapprochement of the Balkan countries and mobilised the Turkish foreign policy's forces (Oran, 2010, 151, Balkas, 2005, 444-447). Even the idea of the 'Balkan entente' could appear in the Turkish diplomacy for the first time, as Hüseyin Ragıp Baydur, a diplomat, presented the issue to the Romanian foreign minister in 1926 (Balkas, 2005, 444). The fact that Atatürk's Turkey became the engine of that project was rooted mainly in the security dimension: the Lausanne Treaty created a demilitarised zone in western Thrace and in the Straits region, which made the defence of the western border extremely difficult (Türkeş, 1994, 130).

Due to the similar security considerations in the shadow of a more and more irredentist and aggressive Italy, Greece and Turkey engaged one another to create a close cooperation and to dismiss the prospective mutual threats.<sup>48</sup> Ankara wanted to extend this process and it made various attempts to ensure the existing *status quo* by involving the other countries of the peninsula. Thanks to these efforts, in February 1934

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<sup>48</sup> In 1930 Greek Prime Minister Venizelos signed a Treaty of Friendship, Arbitration and Conciliation which was followed by various visits from both sides. In 1933 the two countries signed an Entente Cordiale.

Greece, Yugoslavia, Romania and Turkey signed the Balkan Pact, which included the suspension of territorial claims and the strengthening of the current order in the peninsula against Bulgaria and Italy (Türkeş, 1994, 139).

Despite the initiative's original aim, the Pact could not create a stable regional defence system because some countries such as Bulgaria refused to join the group. In 1937, Yugoslavia unilaterally signed a treaty of amity with Bulgaria and Italy, thereby irritating Greece and sowing distrust within the alliance; Turkey made some attempts to appease the members without any major success (Degerli, 2009, 144). A few years after the ceremonial signing, the Balkan Pact fell apart due to the Italian and German invasions. Greece and Yugoslavia were easily occupied in 1941, while Albania fell already in 1939. Turkey was able to avoid direct involvement in World War II (at least until 1945 when it became clear that the US-USSR-led coalition would win), and it had to balance between the Axis and the Allied Powers.

During these decades, successive Turkish governments intended to influence the domestic public opinion about Balkan countries in line with their foreign policy interests. For example, due to the rapprochement with Greece in the 1930s, the number of anti-Greek articles decreased in Turkish newspapers (especially compared to the 1920s), while anti-Bulgarian statements and allegations of the oppression of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria remained high on the agenda. Later, when the circumstances changed, Turkish decision-makers decided to ban some critical writings: in 1937, upon the request of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Halil Yaver's book entitled *Nereye Gidiyorsun Türkiye?* (Turkey, Where are You Going?) was banned based on the claim that it contained derogatory statements against the current ally, Yugoslavia. On another occasion in 1943, an anti-Bulgarian book, *Bulgarya'daki 1,300,000 Türk* (1,300,000 Turks in Bulgaria) was also prohibited from circulation (Boyar, 2007, 83).

After 1945, Ankara had to face the polarisation of world politics and the emergence of the Iron Curtain. The possible Soviet threats concerning the eastern provinces and the status of the Straits pushed Turkey into the Western bloc. By creating closer ties with the West, accepting the Marshall aid (1947) and joining NATO (1952), Turkey became a trusted ally of the US, especially in the period of the Menderes governments (1950-1960).

Concerning the Balkans, Ankara had to react to the emergence of the bloc-system in the peninsula which overwrote the previous Balkan balance of power and decreased the room for manoeuvre. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Balkan Pact was the only palpable attempt

to create a local 'bloc' to counter-balance the possible Soviet expansion – the security dimension of which is obvious from the Turkish point of view. The signing of this Pact occurred due to the Soviet-Yugoslav confrontation of the time and the friendly relations between Turkey and Greece. Furthermore, the Turkish-Yugoslav rapprochement was followed by the signature of a settlement law making possible the immigration of some 150,000 people to Turkey. However, the Pact ended just a short while later. Stalin had died in March 1953, which created a new political atmosphere for Tito's Yugoslavia trying to approach Moscow. The Cyprus-problem after 1955 led to a deterioration of relations between Athens and Ankara, which made further cooperation impossible (Uzgal, 2010a, 626).

From the second half of the 1950s onwards, Turkey had even more limited room for manoeuvre in the peninsula. Nevertheless, in the mid-1960s Turkey turned again to the Balkans in order to balance Greece's influence and gain the neighbour countries' support for the Cyprus issue. In 1965, only the highly isolated Albania responded to this attempt by voting in favour of Turkey in the UN General Assembly on the Cyprus question. During the following years, Turkey intended to create closer relations with Romania, Yugoslavia and, albeit with less success, with Bulgaria (Uzgal, 2010a, 627).

The problem of minority issues and growing nationalism emerged again in the 1980s which forced Ankara to act. The relative peace of the region was disturbed by the forced assimilation policy of the Zhivkov regime in Bulgaria which was based 1) on acquiring legitimacy for the communist system despite facing growing economic difficulties; and 2) the possible threat posed by the Turkish minority in the eyes of the Bulgarian leadership, who considered the Turks as the 'fifth column' of Ankara. The 'revival campaign' took place during the winter of 1984-85 when hundreds of thousands of Turks' names were changed from Muslim to Bulgarian ones. This process, which officially ended with the total Bulgarisation of the country, galvanised mass Turkish resistance and armed clashes in the Turkish-inhabited regions (especially in southern Bulgaria). Ankara protested at various international forums against the assimilation policy of Sofia in 1984-85, but with minimal impact. Finally Ankara had no other choice but to follow the previous policy to 'solve the minority problems' by accepting huge numbers of immigrants as in 1950-51, or during the 1970s.

In 1989, when Turkish protests and clashes started to spread again in the country, Zhivkov decided to permit the Turks to leave the country. After his famous radio speech, in which he stated that Turks could leave the country if Turkey opened its

borders,<sup>49</sup> 325-350,000 Turks left the country between May and August. By the end of the summer, Ankara closed its borders in order to avoid the looming humanitarian catastrophe because of its difficulties to provide accommodation and food for the immigrants.

The collapse of the communist system in 1989-1990 created a new situation in the region. This change was followed by two general trends, namely increasing nationalism and economic downturn in every country of the region. The end of the Cold War also created a relative power vacuum as the Soviet Union ceased to exist, and the European Union (or the new Germany) was not ready to fill this vacuum (the Yugoslavian War clearly demonstrated the weakness of the Union). Furthermore, the United States did not have a special interest in the Balkans.

The transition of post-communist countries to a democratic and capitalist system created the opportunity for Turkey to be involved in the Balkans again. Cycles of continuity can be perceived in Turkish diplomacy towards the region during the post-communist era. Three separate cycles can be distinguished between 1990-1998, 1999-2002 and 2003-2008, respectively (see: Türkeş, 2008). These cycles were linked to an active leader in the Turkish foreign policy who intended to open towards the Balkan countries. These attempts were disturbed by wars or change in the internal politics which prevented Ankara from upholding its (growing) involvement. Whenever the conditions for a new activist foreign policy were suitable, Turkey started to become more active in Balkan politics and economies.

The first 'cycle' was linked to the dawn of the new era. Turgut Özal, the popular Turkish president of that time announced the slogan of 'Adriyatik'ten Çin Seddi'ne' (From the Adriatic to the Chinese Wall) which briefly summarised the new engagement of Turkish foreign policy around the globe.<sup>50</sup> During that period new treaties were signed between Balkan states (Bulgaria, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, etc.) and Turkey. The security aspect was of course not lacking among the reasons for these agreements, especially in the case of Bulgaria (Türkeş, 2002, 194). The military and security agreements dominated the beginning of the period. Ankara signed military agreement with Bulgaria boosting the security of eastern Thrace and the Straits. Ankara

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<sup>49</sup> This statement was euphemistic because of the fact that Bulgarian citizens were not to permitted to leave the country to Turkey. That is why the Turkish Prime Minister, Turgut Özal stated that his country's borders were always open.

<sup>50</sup> Other famous slogans, such as '*Turkey cannot be prisoner of the Misak-i Milli (National Pact) borders*' also highlight this change in the Turkish foreign policy and the willingness to benefit from the changes of geostrategic circumstances.



also entered in military cooperation with Albania by signing. Turkey also did not hesitate to sign these agreements with the newly independent Western Balkan countries. (Uzgal, 2001, 50-55).

In line with these agreements, Turkey also intended to assure the stability in the Balkans, especially after the collapse of Yugoslavia. Although at the very beginning of the conflict, Ankara supported the integrity of the country (Uzgal, 2010b, 823), later it had to reconsider its stance and began to favour dissolution. In 1992, at the Helsinki Summit of the CSCE, the then Prime Minister, Süleyman Demiral attempted to convince the Central Asian Turkic Republics and Azerbaijan to support the Bosnian government and also negotiated with President Bush to launch a military intervention (Hale, 2013, 203). Later in 1992, Ankara even proposed an ‘Action Plan’ for the UN Security Council to solve the conflict. In the case of Bosnia, Turkey constantly insisted on the necessity of multilateral intervention (Türkeş, 2008, 11), and Ankara made efforts to draw international attention to the situation of Bosniaks (Hale, 2013, 202), while it also provided arms to Bosnians in the last phase of the war. Within the framework of the UN special forces (UNPROFOR), it sent 1,500 troops to the peacekeeping forces as well as contributed to the training of Bosnian officers with the prospect of strengthening regional stability (Uzgal, 2001, 53).

This commitment to multilateral intervention did not prevent the Turkish political circles, especially the Islamist and ultra-nationalist parties, from playing the ‘Bosniak card’. Public opinion favoured the Muslim population and considered the war and massacres in Bosnia as the same plight that occurred in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in the Balkans with Muslims (Hale, 2013, 202). During the Yugoslavian conflict – at least rhetorically – Turkish leaders declared that Bosnia would not be a ‘new Andalusia’ and they ‘used’ the issue in domestic affairs to gain popularity, e. g. Tansu Çiller visited Bosnia during his electoral campaign. Turkish public opinion was shocked by the Srebrenica massacre against Bosniaks by Serbian forces in July 1995.

Despite these wise diplomatic efforts, from the beginning of Turgut Özal’s presidency until the mid-1990s Turkish foreign policy was interpreted as neo-Ottomanist, with the intention of reinstating Turkish leverage throughout the region (in former Ottoman territories) and even to create a “green belt” based on Muslim countries (or countries having sizable Muslim populations). This belt would have consisted of Bosnia (the Bosnian-Croatian Federation), Albania, Macedonia and Turkey – and in order to link these states it needed the Sandjaks of Serbia and Kosovo as well.

Ismail Cem, foreign minister (1997-2002) intended to disperse these suspicions and create closer relations with other countries influencing the region, especially with Greece. By using a more flexible diplomacy (a recurring expression in Davutoğlu's vocabulary) and rapprochement with the neighbours, he managed to undertake spectacular achievements on the rugged way towards accession to the European Union.

Apart from the new wave of rapprochement, Turkey retained its policy towards the crisis in the region. Like his predecessors during the first years of the 1990s, Ismail Cem also intended to prevent the escalation of wars or crises through international cooperation. After the famous collapse of Ponzi scheme in Albania (1997), he also sent troops for peacekeeping. Similarly to the Bosniak case at the beginning of the Kosovo crisis, the Turkish leadership avoided openly expressing its commitment. It even saw this as a dangerous precedent for further disintegration in the Balkans, especially in Macedonia (Hale, 2013, 204). Later it became active due to the changes of Turkish public opinion and the willingness to become involved in the final settlement (Gangloff, 2004). In that case too, the most important aim for Ankara was to ensure the security of the region. Ismail Cem visited Belgrade in March 1998, while Süleyman Demirel, the President of Turkey also emphasised the necessity of peace between Albanians and Serbs. The Turkish involvement in the conflict also resulted in sending F-16 fighters for the operation. Around 8,000 refugees were hosted by the country and it also sent material aid for those fleeing Albania. After July 1999, Ankara once again sent some 1,000 troops to Kosovo as part of the KFOR peacekeeping mission.

## **2.2. Foreign policy of co-option**

After analysing the AKP's leadership discourse about the Balkans, it can be concluded that the region is usually referred as part of an Ottoman legacy where Turkey has a duty to defend its heritage including Muslim people and the common history; the proximity and strong cultural/identity ties compelled the country to play a more active role in shaping the fate of southeast Europe.

For this reason, it is more surprising that in the AKP's rhetoric, the so-called religious kin became more important compared to the ethnic kin, even if in some cases Turkish parties or their politicians eventually received strong support from Ankara. The case of Bosniaks and Bosnia highlight this feature of the AKP's policy. Although Bosnia's importance for Turkey and especially for the religious communities increased during the 1992-1995 war and Ankara tried to play an active role in supporting the religious kin, AKP put even more emphasis on this state and started to actively use this in domestic political discourse.

As Ahmet Davutoğlu suggested in the book entitled 'Strategic Depth', Turkey started to increasingly focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina and also on Kosovo and Macedonia, especially after 2009. The frequent visits to these countries and the regular references in domestic discourse to the historical sites located in these states, as well as diplomatic support in regional and international issues, coined the AKP's activism in the Balkans at the political level, while economic cooperation was also brought into the agenda (see later).

Turkey was among the first states that recognised Kosovo's independence in February 2008, and later signed a number of agreements with the new country. Turkish diplomatic support was also demonstrated in the case of Macedonia, which could count on Ankara even during the 1990s to counterbalance Athens (Turkey is the only NATO member state which recognises FYROM as Macedonia).

Turkish commitment to its kin is clearly visible in the case of Bosnia. Davutoğlu launched the 'Friends of Bosnia' group in 2010 and established a trilateral mechanism between Turkey-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Serbia which aimed to strengthen the cooperation between the three states and solve several problems. One of the foreign minister's main successes was the declaration about Srebrenica. When Croatia initiated

its own trilateral mechanism, Turkey was ready to join and boost good relations between Zagreb and Sarajevo.<sup>51</sup>

The foreign minister's trilateral mechanism initiated in October 2009 has grown from simple meetings of foreign ministers to presidential and economic summits encompassing substantial political and economic dimensions. After his nomination to the ministerial post, Davutoğlu made enormous efforts to launch the mechanism. Before reaching the presidential level (summit in April 2010), he met his Serbian and Bosnian counterparts five times (see Table 7.). His efforts to revitalise the diplomatic relations were successful: Belgrade presented an agreement to Bosnia and Herzegovina's ambassador, while the Serbian National Assembly passed the resolution condemning the Srebrenica massacre as a 'crime.' The rapprochement between these countries was also galvanised by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's prime ministerial visit to Belgrade, the first in 23 years (Pavlović, 2016, 20).

<b>Date of Summit</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Participants</b>
10/10/2009	Istanbul	foreign ministers
08/11/2009	Ankara	foreign ministers
14/12/2009	Sarajevo	foreign ministers
15/01/2010	Belgrade	foreign ministers
09/02/2010	Ankara	foreign ministers
24/04/2010	Istanbul	presidential/foreign ministers summit
26/04/2011	Karadjordjevo	presidential summit
11/04/2013		economic ministers
14-15/05/2013	Ankara	integration into EU structures, cooperation
24/09/2013	New York	foreign ministers
23/09/2014	New York	foreign ministers
18/08/2015		economy ministers
19/10/2015	Belgrade	Trilateral Trade Committees
23/09/2016	New York	meeting on the margin of the UN General Assembly
21/09/2016	New York	meeting on the margin of the UN General Assembly
26/10/2016	Istanbul	trade committee
06/12/2017	Belgrade	foreign minister level
29/01/2018	Belgrade	regional cooperation and investment

Table 7. Turkey-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Serbia trilateral consultation mechanism's summits (2009-2018) Source: own research, MFA

<sup>51</sup> Seven meetings were organised within the framework of Croatia-Bosnia-Herzegovina-Turkey trilateral mechanism. As it was initiated by Croatia, the summits between foreign ministers ceased after its accession to the EU in 2013.

The first presidential trilateral consultation was held in Istanbul on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2010 with the participation of head of states of Turkey, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and the respective foreign ministers. The Istanbul Declaration adopted after the summit underlined the importance of cooperation and its enlargement toward new fields such as economy, environmental protection, etc., while the leaders also agreed to participate in the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration event of the Srebrenica massacre.

The summits were useful forums to entrust political cooperation between these countries even if it has remained fragile. Furthermore, the trilateral mechanism has been enlarged to the economic field as well (see later), that offered palpable and mutually beneficial economic cooperation for the three sides.

The short history of the trilateral mechanism demonstrated the difficulties and the weaknesses of the initiative. Political and diplomatic frictions between the three participatory states overshadowed the summits, especially at the presidential level. The first crisis emerged after the election of the head of the nationalist party, President Tomislav Nikolić of Serbia in March 2012. His statement about the ‘crime’ in Srebrenica caused mistrust in Sarajevo for Bosniaks, while Erdoğan’s statement about his promise to Aliya Izetbegović to protect Bosnia and Herzegovina also sowed discord among Serbs and Croats. All in all, the summit had to be postponed, officially due to Nikolić’s overbooked schedule (Pavlović, 2016, 27).

The next crisis occurred after Erdoğan’s famous statement in Kosovo that ‘Turkey is Kosovo, and Kosovo is Turkey’ on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2013. In reciprocity, Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić cancelled his participation in the next trilateral meeting, and in the upcoming years the mechanism missed several high-level summits.

In 2014, the common Turkish-Bosnian naval military exercise in Neum (a Bosnian port) was cancelled due to the pressure of Croatian and Serbian deputies because they perceived the participation of the Turkish ship Mehmed Mustafa Sokollu as a sign of a threatening neo-Ottomanist manoeuvre (later Ankara withdrew from the exercise). Linked to this incident, anti-Turkish sentiments were further heightened by some news as well, such as in 2014 when various websites published a statement attributed to Erdoğan saying that "100 million Turks will defend the Bosniaks if anybody touches them" and that "Turkish warships will sail into Neum". The reaction of the Bosnian Serb Milorad Dodik, President of Republika Srpska, was harsh and he condemned the Turkish president’s words as "a plain and brutal attack of the top

official of the Republic of Turkey against the peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina". Later on he visited Belgrade in order to meet with the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Turkish ambassadors delegated to Sarajevo and Belgrade assured the politicians that the news was false (Balkan.eu, 15/07/2014). The issue was settled, but it highlighted the prevailing anti-Turkish sentiments in the region, especially in Republika Srpska.

Furthermore, structural problems also weaken the effectiveness of the mechanism. Republika Srpska is seemingly excluded from the cooperation. Only one high-level summit (in Karadjordjevo in 2012) was held in presence of the presidential trio of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Later on, only Bosnian politician Bakir Izetbegović participated in the summits. His constant participation also raised eyebrows in Republika Srpska where the Turkish initiative was usually perceived as a threatening act, and even Belgrade was criticised by Banja Luka for entering into this kind of partnership with Turkey.

The existing mistrust was fuelled further by the statements of the Turkish leadership. Erdoğan emphasised several times that Aliya Izetbegović asked him to protect Bosniaks after his death. Even if this conversation's authenticity can be questioned, its use to send a strong political message to the Turkish electorate is obvious. Furthermore, the Turkish president's good relationship with Aliya Izetbegović's son, Bakir Izetbegović demonstrates the two leaders' politically beneficial cooperation which alienates the Serbian side even if Ankara emphasises its commitment to the integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. To evaluate the mechanism, one can see that Turkey rather uses it to strengthen Bosnia and Herzegovina's regional role and support the Bosniak side in the domestic politics.

The kin-state mentality towards the religious kin also prevails in the support towards Muslim communities. As Table 6. shows, depending on their share and number within the total population, the Muslim communities possess various educational, religious rights and organisational structures. Turkey was ready to help these communities even during the 1990s, nevertheless the AKP intended to strengthen this support and increase its activism. A palpable test for Turkey's power projection is its involvement in the internal dispute between Serbia's two muftis and its mediation between Muammer Zukorlić and Adem Zilkić. Although Davutoğlu was enthusiastic about the project, he was not able to settle the internal power struggle over the leadership of Muslims in Serbia. His efforts and several visits to the Sandjak proved

futile, and even Erdoğan's historical trip to the region could not solve the issue (Balkaninsight, 17/10/2011). This political intervention occurred upon the request of the then Serbian President, Boris Tadić and it was not an adventurous Turkish diplomatic act.

The security dimension has remained an important aspect in Ankara's relations with the Balkans. During the AKP's era, the region could avoid major wars, even if some clashes occurred during the given period, especially in Kosovo in 2004. The end of wartime hostilities led to the decrease of peacekeeping troops in the region (in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina); nevertheless, Turkey intended to keep its share high among international troops. This occurred in line with its commitment to the region, but in the given context, it shall be perceived as a soft power tool to send a strong message to the relevant states that Turkey is ready to defend them.

Turkey's activities in the region relied on multilateralism as well. Regional organisations, like the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) or the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) have become useful forums to boost the country's positive image and its commitment to regional cooperation. Turkey held its term of chairmanship-in-office between June 2009 and June 2010 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10/05/2018).

Turkish foreign policy advocating regional stability, security and cooperation also pushed towards stronger economic cooperation. The trilateral consultation mechanism launched by Davutoğlu in 2009-2010 rapidly took on an economic dimension. The first trilateral meeting with the participation of economic and trade ministers was organised on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2013. The participants agreed to adopt a Declaration on economic and trade cooperation and a Protocol on the establishment of the Trilateral Trade Committee (Pavlović, 2016, 21). The first trilateral business forum was held under the presidential summit in 2013. A fair for Turkish products in Sarajevo is held annually since 2003 (Pavlović, 2016, 23).

One may argue that Davutoğlu's role in forging a more identity-based and active regional foreign policy was important, but after his resignation and the 'realistic' turn in Turkish foreign policy, Ankara's stance towards the region changed. One could actually argue the opposite: the main pillars of Turkey's diplomatic relations and initiatives have not changed since May 2016. The trilateral mechanisms function well, the foreign policy institutions operate according the previous policies (see later) and Turkey keeps 'protecting' its kin.

### 2.3. Institutions of co-option

Over the past thirty years Turkey has created a diversified institutional background for power projection and established valuable ‘soft power’ capacities. This institutional framework during the AKP era was implemented, and even highly propagated, in the case of the Balkans; institution such as the TİKA or Yunus Emre Cultural Centres have become Turkey’s ‘trademark’ in the region, thereby boosting Ankara position.

As in the literature review and the introductory overview about Turkish foreign policy, it was already addressed these institutions’ role in global foreign policy making; here there will be analysed their role in the Balkan context. As the main argument of the thesis, that the AKP’s foreign policy is the projection of its domestic hegemonic project based on a cultural policy focusing on neo-Ottomanist features, the activities of the institutions will be studied to identify the elements of this cultural policy elaborated in previous chapters.

Figure 1 shows the TFP institutional background (until summer of 2018). While traditional diplomatic activities are carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is important to emphasise that there is a permanent increase in foreign policy related institutions during the AKP era. Furthermore, not only state institutions take part in shaping the country’s foreign relations. The parliament is an important decision-making institution (it decides about international intervention, ratify international treaties etc.) and in form of interparliamentary committees and friendship groups the members establish direct links with other countries decision-makers.

Turkish local administration can be also active in boosting foreign policy relation by organizing events at the governorate or city level. In close cooperation with civil society and state incentives, town are important part in strengthening intercommunity cooperation, especially by establishing twin city programmes.

Despite the activities of civil society, NGOs, faith based religious movements and so on, the main actor in the field of foreign policy making are the Office of President of the Republic and the Office of Prime Minister (after the June 2018 elections the later one was annulled). The most important foreign-policy related agencies and institutions (TİKA, Diyanet, AFAD etc.) are subordinated.



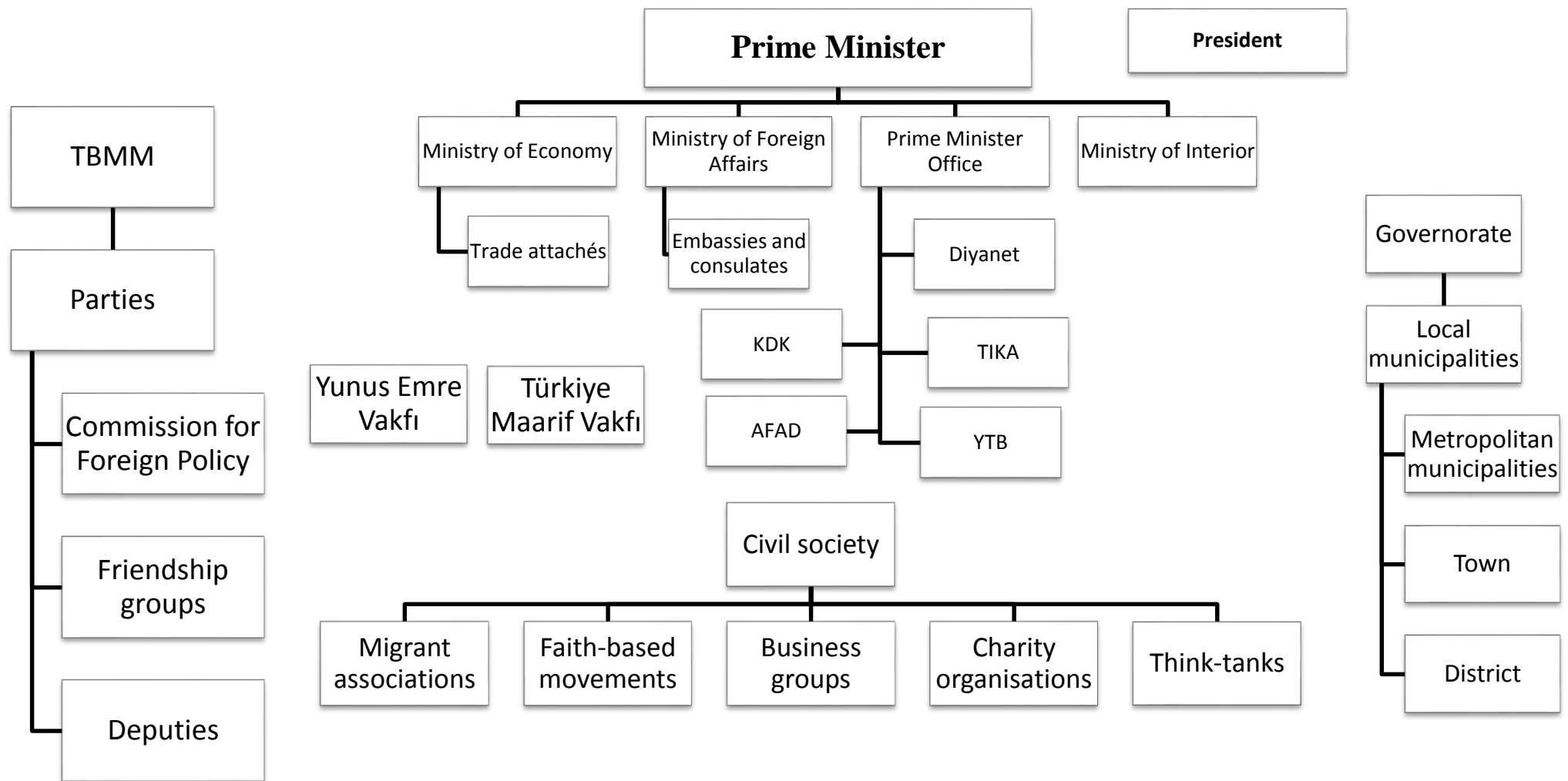


Figure 1. The institutions and actors of Turkish foreign policy making

### **Turkish development assistance and its depositary: The TİKA**

Probably the most well-known Turkish foreign policy institution is the Presidency of Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA) which was founded under Turgut Özal as a subordinate institution of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 1992. Its primary aim was to boost relations with the newly independent Turkic Republics, so its activities mainly focused on the Caucasus and Central Asia. The élan towards these new countries had a great impact on Turkish foreign policy in the first half of the 1990s; however, due to domestic political crises and the growing EU orientation after 1999, Ankara changed its orientation.

In 2002 (before the AKP's election victory), it was relocated under the Prime Ministry's Office, and promoted from the status of agency to presidency in 2011. Simultaneously, the TİKA has become one of the main sources of Turkish official development assistance (ODA). In line with the economic performance of the country and its ambitious foreign policy agenda, Ankara has started to pursue a more enthusiastic development assistance programme, claiming that it would like to position itself among the most important donor countries. Consequently the TİKA enlarged its scope in terms of both its tools and fields of activities.

According to OECD data, Turkish ODA amounted to 26 million US dollars (USD) in 2003 (constant prices). It has been gradually increasing and in 2005 it has reached 532 million USD, in 2008 735 million USD, then in 2009, it decreased to 665 million USD, probably due to the global financial crisis. After this lurch, the ODA's growth received a fresh impetus. In 2010 it was 920 million USD. After the beginning of the Arab Spring, it started to boom. Turkish ODA reached 2,422 million USD in 2012, and it increased to 3,502 million USD by the end of 2014. This huge rise in development assistance was mainly linked to the civil war in Syria. As reported by official OECD data, the amount that the country received skyrocketed during the previous years. In 2012 Syria received 40 percent of total Turkish ODA (around 1,000 million USD), while its share reached approximately 65 percent of Turkish ODA (2,291 million USD) by 2014 (OECD).

Nowadays, Turkey's development assistance has become a symbol of the country's commitment to an active foreign policy. The ODA's share in national GNI has reached some 0.7 percent in 2016, which has made the country one of the biggest

contributors during last years. Even if Ankara spends the overwhelming majority of this money on Syria, the efforts are spectacular from a medium-sized, developing country.

During the AKP period, the Balkans had a special role in the distribution of development assistance funds. The region was usually the recipient of some 5-10 percent of Turkish ODA (without Syria).

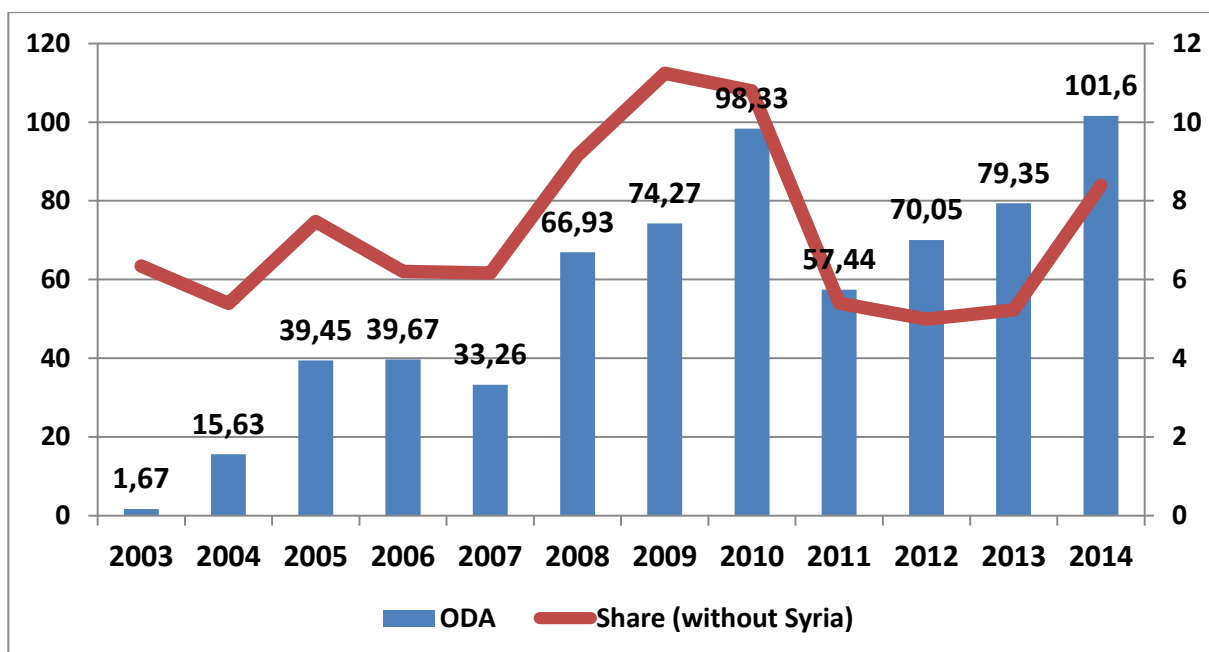


Chart 7. Turkey's ODA towards the Balkans (million USD) and its share in the total Turkish ODA without Syria (%). Source: OECD

The amount of ODA in the Balkans decreased sharply in 2011, which can be explained by the redirection of sources towards the Middle East. Although it increased in the upcoming years, nevertheless it could reach the 2010 levels only in 2014.

Considering the ODA flows at a country level, Turkey always favoured other countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, or Egypt<sup>52</sup> and Syria after the Arab Spring, which received even more assistance than the entire Balkans during that period. Nevertheless, some Balkan countries were among the top 10 largest ODA recipient countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2008 (10<sup>th</sup> rank), in 2009 (5<sup>th</sup> rank), in 2010 (7<sup>th</sup> rank), in 2012 (10<sup>th</sup>), Kosovo in 2010 (10<sup>th</sup>) or Macedonia in 2010 (4<sup>th</sup>).

Meanwhile the TİKA's share was some 20 percent in 2009 in the distribution of development assistance. The Turkish ODA is usually concentrated in Asia (the Turkic Republics, Afghanistan and increasingly in the Middle East) but the Balkans usually get

<sup>52</sup> Until Sissi's coup d'état, Turkey supported Egypt with a great amount of ODA (some 500 million USD in 2012 and 2013; which dropped to only 5 million USD by 2014).

the second biggest aid in a regional comparison. The agency's offices were opened gradually in Albania (1996), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2008), Croatia (2016), Montenegro (2007), Kosovo (2005), Macedonia (2006), Romania (2005) and Serbia (1992/2009).

Country	Albania	BiH	Croatia	Monten.	Kosovo	Macedonia	Romania	Serbia
Projects	435	845	35	306	580	840	135	225

Table 8. The TİKA's projects by country in southeast Europe (Source: TİKA, 2018)

According to the TİKA's statistics, the institution has realised 3,401 projects in the Balkans between 1992 and 2017 (Table 8). Based on the nominal distribution of them, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia were the two main beneficiaries of the TİKA's activities, together accounting for some 50 percent of the projects. Around 17 percent of the projects targeted Kosovo, while Albania (13%), Montenegro (9%) and Serbia (6%) had comparatively fewer projects. The proportion of Romania and Croatia is almost negligible (TİKA, Balkanlar, 2018).

While the different time periods since the opening of the TİKA offices could substantially affect the number of projects, the annual distribution can give a more precise overview about their activities. According to the average annual distribution of projects, Bosnia and Herzegovina shows the biggest activity with almost 94 realised projects each year, in other terms, nearly one third of all the TİKA's projects in the Balkans focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina. The second 'most active' office was in Macedonia (76 projects/year), while Kosovo only ranked third with 48 projects annually. Interestingly, Croatia was the fourth most active with 35 projects (TİKA, Balkanlar, 2018).

In the region, the TİKA typically focuses on education by providing Turkish language courses, and financing the restoration/construction of schools. The support of the institution varies in a large spectrum. At the cultural level, it can provide Turkish regional programmes, like in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2005 (TİKA Faaliyet Raporu 2005), or support for Turkish teaching and cultural events. Turkish aid is also provided for equipment in hospitals, schools and cultural centres. While the Balkans usually receives 20-30 percent of the TİKA's total development assistance expenditures, the aid is not distributed equally. The TİKA generally focuses on Muslim-inhabited regions in the peninsula such as Bosnia, Albania or Kosovo. Mainly Christian

countries, like Croatia, Romania or Bulgaria commonly receive less aid than the others, which can also be explained by their accession to EU which promotes them to a more developed level. However, in religiously mixed countries (except for Macedonia) the institution is rather active in the Muslim-inhabited territories, as in Bosnia and Herzegovina where the majority of the projects are concentrated in the Bosnian-Croatian Federation. The example of Serbia shows a similar pattern: though the TİKA is also active in Voivodina, most projects are realised in the Bosniak-inhabited Sandjak region. This region is Serbia's most underdeveloped area, facing high unemployment and further economic difficulties – the TİKA's help seems to be particularly important and beneficial there.

Another particular element of the Turkish ODA in the Balkans is the successive renovation of Ottoman buildings – bridges, mosques or fountains, and so on. This activity can be considered as a tool to bring the Ottoman past closer for the (usually) Muslim people as their ancestors converted to Islam during the imperial era. These renovation projects received public attention even in Turkey, because the state television sometimes reports on the opening ceremonies (with the participation of Turkish and local pop groups) of a restored bridge or mosque. These events as bridge-making projects play an important role in shaping the local public opinion especially in Bosnia, which is considered by Turks as the 'little brother.' The TİKA, becoming the means for supporting the Muslims in the Balkans (Demirtaş 2010: 73), also presents itself as the main supporter of Turkish minorities by providing them with financial recourses for cultural activities or the publishing of local Turkish newspapers. Beyond the 'history-building' initiatives, the organisation contributes to deepening the role of religion and religious (state) organisations. For instance, the construction of the Islamic Cultural Centre and Selimija (the largest Muslim religious complex in the country) was completed by the TİKA in 2014. Thus, its activities not only help the survival of the Ottoman heritage, but also that of the Islamic presence in the region as well.

### **Cultural dimension through a neo-Ottoman prism: Yunus Emre Institute**

Under the AKP, Turkey's cultural diplomacy and soft power capacities have been expanded. Similarly to other countries' cultural centres (e. g. Germany's Goethe Institutes, France's Institut Français) the AKP government established their Turkish counterpart. The Yunus Emre Foundation was established to promote Turkish culture

and maintain the cultural links with the Turkish Diaspora (Kaya, 2011) as well as to strengthen the Turkish cultural presence to those sharing the same heritage (*‘akraba topluluklar’*). The Balkans received a special interest in the process of establishing the network of cultural centres. The first YEI abroad was opened in Sarajevo, and currently it is one of the biggest Yunus Emre cultural centres in the world. During the following years an impressive number of centres have launched their activities: Tirana (2009), Skopje (2010), Fojnica (2011), Pristina (2011), Prizren (2011), Bucharest (2011), Constanța (2011), Shkoder (2012), Peja (2012), Podgorica (2014), Belgrade (2015) and Zagreb (2016).

The activities of YEI in the Balkans cover the ‘usual’ tasks of a cultural centre, such as providing language courses, books, journals to make the audience more familiar with the Turkish civilisation, and organising various events. These institutions are becoming the centres of teaching Turkish in abroad; the implementation of Türkçe Yetenek Sınavı (Turkish Sufficiency Exam) has given them the opportunity to issue official Turkish language certificates – a task previously belonging to the TÖMER. The Institute has created a Turkology project by supporting various Turkology departments all around the world, providing them with books (with the cooperation of Ziraat Bank) and other equipment.

Concerning the cultural activities of the institutes, one may conclude that the representation of Turkish culture focuses on promoting traditional cultural elements. Beyond the language courses, YTB offers ebru courses (traditional paper marbling), in some cases ney courses (Turkish music instrument). The events portraying Turkish culture rather emphasise traditions such as coffee culture, Turkish wedding customs, etc., while programmes about contemporary Turkish culture are promoted to a lesser degree.

### **Co-option through education: YTB and TMV**

Another relatively new institution, subordinated to the Prime Minister’s Office, is the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı – YTB) which aims to 1) preserve the ties with the Turkish diaspora and maintain its cultural/identity-based engagement with the ‘motherland,’ 2) coordinate the activities of foreign students who come to Turkey to study, 3) support cultural and social events of Turkic people, Turkish minorities and other ‘related people,’ mainly Balkan Muslims, like Albanians and Bosniaks.

For regions in the Balkans which do not possess a significant Turkish diaspora, the above-mentioned last two pillars are more important. The Turkish state has been advocating an ambitious programme to provide scholarships to the ‘related communities’ to pursue their studies in Turkey since the fall of the Soviet Union. However, this policy’s dynamics have changed during the last nearly thirty years: Ankara concentrated rather on the Turkic republics in the 1990s, while after 2000 one can see a global opening towards other regions as well. Turkey’s intention to become one of the leading education hubs was demonstrated by the increase of the international students’ numbers. During the AKP era, the number of foreign students was multiplied almost sevenfold and it increased from 15 thousand to nearly 102 thousand. The country is going global, which is represented by the growing share of African countries’ students.

Country	2002/03	2004/05	2006/07	2008/09	2012/13	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Albania	520	532	545	499	507	748	858	955
BiH	352	462	494	516	430	390	415	464
Bulgaria	948	1,111	1,169	1,147	1,263	894	832	1,853
Croatia	12	12	15	10	19	25	27	23
Kosovo	-	-	-	-	735	1,139	1,235	1,255
Macedonia	275	292	309	307	535	720	748	860
Montenegro	-	-	-	22	150	146	180	209
Romania	38	44	56	61	66	115	121	150
Serbia*	-	188	239	180	217	540	569	662
Balkans total	2,145	2,641	2,827	2,742	3,922	4,717	4,985	6,431
Balkan share	14.3%	17.9%	17.8%	15.1%	9.1%	7.0%	6.0%	6.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	15,017	14,794	15,893	18,158	43,251	67,838	83,068	101,877

\* Serbia and Montenegro until the 2006/2007 academic year

Table 9. Number of foreign students studying at Turkish universities Source: ÖSYM, YÖK

In the case of the Balkans, this increase was only threefold (from 2,145 students to 6,431), highlighting a clear decline in the share of the region in total student numbers: it decreased from 14-18 percent to only 6 percent (Table 9). This slower dynamic does not mean that the Balkan countries would have lost their importance for Ankara. Instead, it shows that Turkey is making greater efforts to incorporate other continents and regions in its educational scope, while for the Balkans, Turkey’s relevance did not change drastically during the last 15 years.

What is more important in this respect is that Ankara does not see the provided scholarships as a simple tool of brain-drain, but a useful means to build an international network of pro-Turkey people. As the diaspora strategy of the economic organisation of DEİK points out: the more time people spend in Turkey and become more familiar with Turkish culture, the more responsive and positively inclined they will be towards the country when they return and can support it in many aspects. Thus, the emerging proximity diaspora (*Yakınlık Diasporası*) will be crucial for the realisation of Turkey's foreign policy and economic goals. There are two paths to build a pro-Turkey community abroad: 1) to invite young people to the country and provide them with quality and modern education which can be successfully used when they return to their country of origin, or 2) to establish Turkey-related schools (and from this respect, cultural institutions) which can also educate gifted students at high-standard educational institutions abroad, in host countries. The YTB is the main tool for the first initiative, while the Türkiye Maarif Vakfı serves the second option.

In 2012, YTB launched the Turkish Scholarship programme (*Türkiye Burslari*) as a result of the unification of other state actors' scholarship programmes. Thus, the organisation has become the main institution dealing with foreign students. Every year, it provides several thousand scholarships under a variety of forms: from undergraduate level to post-doctoral research grants, depending on the length and the field of study, possible applicants can choose among a great number of opportunities. For students coming from the Balkans the YTB has created a special scholarship for the region called 'Balkans Undergraduate Scholarship' (*Balkanlar Lisans Bursu*). This is available for the citizens of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia and Greece.

As it was already mentioned, the Presidency seeks to strengthen the ties between the related communities and Turkey. However, the YTB's activities reflect the multifaceted identity of Turkey that Davutoğlu was referring to. In other terms, people who immigrated in great numbers to Turkey (nourishing its Balkans or Caucasus-based identity) and were integrated into Turkish society are perceived as related communities. Consequently, Balkan Muslims and Caucasian Muslims who were welcome during the late Ottoman and Republican era are part of the YTB's scope, alongside the linguistically related 'Turkic people' from Central Asia.

The activities of the institution clearly follow this line. It supports a great number of events to bring together the Balkan Muslim and Turkish state representatives.



Furthermore, the institution is also involved in making contacts with migrant associations as they have meetings (e. g. Bal-Göç) (Baltürk 2011) where the associations can present their problems and claims through this official channel.

The Presidency's official monthly paper (+90 or Artı 90)<sup>53</sup> also follows these lines. The paper portrays the YTB's scope of operations and various narratives that allude to a theme important to these communities. In these stories three topics appear repeatedly: discrimination in Europe, assimilation and adoption, as well as the Ottoman Empire (Öktem, 2014, 16). The majority of articles focuses on western Europe (the situation and problems of the Turkish diaspora), while other regions and communities receive less attention.

The Ottoman Empire and the Ottoman past emerge as sources of pride and common heritage that link Balkan Muslims, Turks, Caucasus Muslims, etc. This forges the various communities together, creating a sense of nostalgia for the former empire, in line with the representation of neo-Ottomanism in Turkey itself as well.

Ankara has established a new organisation recently in order to strengthen the state's educational presence abroad. The so-called Türkiye Maarif Vakfı (Turkey Maarif Foundation – TMV) was founded weeks before the 15<sup>th</sup> July coup attempt. Officially, its mission simply places an emphasis on 'raising good people based on the Anatolian knowledge'.

In fact, it aims to take over Gülenist institutions and run them as a Turkish state educational body in line with the principles determined by Ankara. Thus, Maarif Vakfı has emerged a key actor in combatting the Gülenist movement abroad. By April 2018, the organisation had begun its operations in a total of 70 countries. It has gained control over 76 Gülenist schools (mainly in Africa) and opened 29 others in ten countries. After nearly two years of operation, it provides education to some 10 thousand students (AA, 12/04/2018).

Although Gülenist schools were not taken over and Turkey's endeavours to close them in southeast Europe failed, Maarif Vakfı opted for establishing a parallel system, thus buying existing schools and transforming them 'into educational bridges'. By building up a competitive educational network all around the world, Ankara aims to weaken the Gülenist influence and present an alternative to the local elites.

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<sup>53</sup> +90 is Turkey's international calling code.

In the Balkans, Maarif Vakfi's presence is still in an embryonic phase, even if negotiations are ongoing and it has already managed to open some schools. It is currently operating in five countries. The negotiations with state authorities paved the way to start education in several places in the 2017-18 academic year. In Albania, MV has signed a protocol with the Canada Technical Institute for provide university programmes, while negotiations are ongoing with other universities as well (such as New York University, Luarasi University). In Macedonia, the Woodrow Wilson School has been bought by the Foundation which will provide Albanian language education until the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, which will be replaced by English until the end of high school studies. According to the curriculum, the students will also learn Turkish (Türkiyegazetesi 15/04/2018). The Foundation managed to operate one primary school in Prizren and one in Pristina, Kosovo. In the case of Bosnia, TMV has signed an agreement with the Islamic Union to rent a campus where it plans to open a kindergarten, primary school and high school by the beginning of the 2018-19 academic year (AA, 30/11/2017).

Turkey's endeavours to establish a (secular) educational system abroad were launched with domestic considerations in mind. The novelty of this state policy will bear its fruits over the decades to come. However, this expansion of Turkey may have a long-lasting effect on the Balkans. Although the majority of pupils and students look to western Europe for further studies, the Turkish presence can help raise several generations of pro-Turkey people in the region. Even people who have pursued their studies in Anatolia or have learnt Turkish strengthen Turkey's leverage.

### **The Diyanet and religious diplomacy**

The Diyanet is Turkey's state apparatus to control and manage religion in the country. Established in 1924 as an institution belonging to the Prime Minister, its main task was to instrumentalise religion as part of the ongoing hegemonic project. As religion started to become a mobilising force in elections after the death of Atatürk, the Diyanet's status started to increase in importance. In 1975, the Turkey Diyanet Foundation (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, TDV) was founded in order to finance various Diyanet-linked projects in Turkey and abroad, too. Consequently, the TDV's donations made possible the realisation of various projects, such as building mosques, providing education and other services which could not be covered by the Diyanet's budget directly. Later, the TDV

was awarded tax-exempt status and in 2005 the AKP government placed it on the list of institutions that do not need any permission to collect money (TDV, Hakkımızda, 2018). By now, the TDV has become the most important institution to build religion-affiliated infrastructure in Turkey and abroad as well. Between its foundation and 2016, it constructed 3,603 mosques, 419 mescits, financed 2,582 Qur'an courses and five educational centres in Turkey, while abroad it has built more than one hundred mosques in 25 countries. Only in 2016 it completed the construction of 14 mosques in the Crimea, in Belorussia, in Palestine (9 mosques), in the Philippines, in Japan and in Haiti (TDV Faaliyet Raporu, 2016, 30). In 1978, 18 Turkish consulates of religious services (*Din Hizmetleri Müşvarlığı*) were created and 21 attachés for religious services (*Din Hizmetleri Ataşeliği*) were sent to embassies in Europe, the United States and Australia.

The Diyanet's importance is growing. This phenomenon became particularly apparent especially after the 1980 coup when the junta demonstrated strong support for the Turkish-Islam synthesis, as well as for building a great number of mosques and putting courses about religion in the secular curriculum. After 2002, the Diyanet emerged as one of the tools to express the AKP's hegemonic project at home and abroad as well. In the domain of TFP, the internationalisation of the institution has gained momentum in line with domestic political considerations. Recently this feature has appeared increasingly on the international stage in the form of combatting the Gülenist movement.

After the Cold War, every Turkish government used the Diyanet as a tool for a more active foreign policy in Central Asia and the Balkans, which marked a crucial change compared to the previous policy when the institution had to focus only on Turkish citizens (abroad). Despite the lack of detailed statistics on the number of Turkish citizens, the Diyanet pursues a variety of activities based on kin (religious) relations in the Balkans. Albeit the Ottoman Empire's gradual territorial losses have left Muslim communities alone and they were reorganised independently from the Turkish state, the Diyanet expressed its commitment to supporting them after the Cold War, and the local leaders also articulated their need for Turkey's help (AIS rapor, 1995).

In 1995, the institution launched the Eurasian Islamic Council (*Avrasya İslam Şurası*) whose agenda is set by the Diyanet (Öztürk, 2016, 23), aiming to bring together the religious leaders from Central Asia to the Balkans. Until 2018, the Diyanet

organised nine meetings,<sup>54</sup> while it had seven regional events in Bulgaria (2007), Montenegro (2008), Romania (2009), Kosovo (2010), Macedonia (2011), Albania (2013) and in Turkey (Edirne, 2015) with the participation of respective Balkan countries ([avrasyaislamsurasi.diyagnet.gov.tr](http://avrasyaislamsurasi.diyagnet.gov.tr), 07/06/2018).

These events gave the opportunity for the Diyanet's leaders to deepen the institutional ties with their counterparts and strengthen Turkey's relations with them. The invitees can reveal their needs and ask for financial and material support; even their participation is financed by the Diyanet. The most prominent figures of Islam institutions in the Balkans are regular visitors of these forums. Participants in the past have included the likes of Mustafa Ceriç, the (former) Chief Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Süleyman Recebi, the (former) Head of the Islam Union of Macedonia, Muammer Zukorlić, the (former) Chief Mufti of the Islamic Community, Sabri Koçi, the (former) Chief Mufti of Albania, or Mustafa Hacı, the (former) Chief Mufti of Bulgaria. Apart from the Diyanet representatives, Turkish politicians, ministers, even prime ministers and presidents (Necmettin Erbakan and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan) also appear(ed) in the events showing the highly political side of these forums.

The meetings' agenda is also determined by the host institution which means Turkey-related topics are well represented in the events. The declarations resonate with Turkish domestic issues; this was very clear in 2016 when it condemned the coup attempt and supported the fight against the FETÖ (Gülenist movement) (AIS/SONUÇ BİLDİRGESİ/14/10/2016).

The Diyanet-appointed religious affairs attachés and religious coordinators (the former are not part of the embassy staff, such as consultants, and their salary is paid by the TDV) and even extra staff is sent for religious occasions (Solberg, 2007). Through this institutional background, its activities cover a large spectrum:

- 1) Religious services: The Diyanet's attachés for religious services deal with the religious needs of Turkish citizens, however, they are active among the Turkish and Muslim (minority) groups. In Kosovo, for instance, they are responsible for religious activities in the Turkish-inhabited Mamuşa village (Kılıç, 2009, 17). For Ramadan the Diyanet also sends extra religious personnel to the region. The number of persons varies depending on the

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<sup>54</sup> In chronological order: 1995 in Istanbul, 1996 in Istanbul, 1998 in Ankara, 2000 in Sarajevo, 2002 in Gazimağusa, as well as the 2005, 2009, 2012 and 2016 events, all held in Istanbul.

community's needs and size, but in the case of Bulgaria, between 1993 and 2008 a total of 227 people were sent (Kılıç, 2009, 15).

- 2) Education: The institution also supports religious education in Turkey from Qu'ran courses to imam-hatip school education and even university or PhD studies. The permanent staff also take part in selecting and sending students for theological studies to Turkey in cooperation with YÖK (Solberg, 2007).
- 3) Restoration activities: Restoration projects also belong to its portfolio. TDV has restored several mosques of national (Turkish) importance, like the Kırık Camii or the I. Murat Hüdavendigâr Türbesi mosques (Kemal Hakkı Kılıç, 2009, 18).
- 4) Construction: Its activities also include the construction of new mosques, usually in cooperation with a Turkish town. In Bosnia, until the end of 2017, the Diyanet built several mosques (e.g. in Gorajde, Olovo). The largest construction project is the Namazgah mosque in Tirana (TDV, 2/11/2017). Furthermore, the Diyanet also took part in cooperation with the TİKA in building and providing academic support for the Faculty of Theology at the University of Tirana (Kılıç, 2010, 5).
- 5) Publishing services: Tens of thousands of religious books and prayer calendars (printed in the given language) were distributed in the Balkan countries. In the case of Bulgaria, the Diyanet sent 250 thousand religious books (mostly the Qu'rāns) between 1993 and 2009 (Kılıç, 2009, 16).
- 6) Twin city cooperation: Furthermore, it is involved in providing material support and circumcision tours, even restoration services in close cooperation with Turkish cities.
- 7) Mutual visits: There are mutual visits between the Diyanet and the respective countries' religious leadership. Probably the most frequent visits have occurred between Turkey and Bulgaria: between 1992 and 2009 19

delegations arrived from Turkey (Kılıç, 2009, 16). The participation of local leaders at the AIŞ is also supported by the Diyanet.

- 8) Miscellaneous: Other activities usually cover support for pilgrimages to Mecca, Islamic holidays, further material aid, or providing ‘iftar dinners’ (TDV, 18/06/2016).

In Bulgaria, the Muslim denomination is administered by the Supreme Muslim Council and the Chief Muftiate. It has around 1,500 mosques and masjids, and employs some 1,000 imams. The main problem with the state is the lack of appropriate financial support. In 2016 the Chief Muftiate was given 360,000 LEV (around 180,000 EUR) and half of this sum was earmarked for the renovation of old mosques while the Orthodox Church received 3 million LEV (some 1.5 million EUR), the Catholic church 50,000 LEV (25,000 EUR) and for the Jewish community a further 50,000 LEV was awarded. This subsidy is not sufficient for the running of institutions and schools, which thereby offered an opportunity (or created a need) for increasing international support. After the foundation of High Islam Institute in Sofia in 1989, its leaders applied for financial help to various international organisations without success. Finally the Diyanet expressed its readiness for support; after 1993 it started to send personnel to the Institute (Dünyabizim, 27/01/2017) and after 1998 when the two states concluded an agreement, it started to finance the Islamic religious education of the country by maintaining the High Islam Institute and three higher education institutions (in Ruse, Sumen and Momchilgrad). It keeps sending teachers to them. Every year, the graduates can apply for Turkish institutions to continue their studies. The Diyanet even provides the most talented students with short-term courses in Turkey (Kılıç, 2009, 15).

Beyond the religious attaché based in the embassy, 15 imams (2017) work in the country. By its help, Turkey contributed to maintaining Islamic education in line with the Bulgarian authorities to prevent possible radicalisation among Muslims and decrease the potential Wahabbist influence within the community. Moreover, the Diyanet condemned the attack against mosques and Muslims in Bulgaria, like the event at Jumaya mosque in 2014.

In Romania, the Islamic faith is recognised as one of the 18 religious denominations. The community’s main organ, the Muftiate can receive material state support for maintaining mosques and other buildings, however, it is more occasional,

which means that it must ultimately rely on its own and international sources. Thus, Turkey and the Turkish businessmen's groups play a major role in financing the community's activities. Ankara appeared as a depositary of Hanafi Islam and started to support the local community. In 2006, a protocol was signed between the Muftiate and the Diyanet in order to officially channel the Turkish support.

The re-opening of the Muslim Seminar at the Kemal Atatürk National College (Kemal Atatürk Ulusal Koleji) in Medgidia (Dobrudja) was one of the most influential events for the Islamic community. This is the only Islamic theological institution in the country. The Diyanet signed a protocol about the maintenance of the school in 1995. A new agreement was signed in 2006 aiming to provide religious personnel and imams, as well as to support the training of local personnel from Romania in Turkey (Cupcea, 2018, 294-295).

The Muslim Community of Albania had to reconstitute itself after decades of prohibition in 1991 (Merdjanova, 2013, 40). It runs 7 imam-hatip high schools and one university called Bedër that provides theological studies (Jazexhi, 2015). In Albania the Diyanet does not run theological education institutions, however, it competes with the Gülenist movement, which is well-embedded in the Albanian religious structure and runs the Bedër University. Furthermore, the Diyanet – via TDV – is building the largest mosque in the country in the very centre of Tirana.

The Islamic communities of former Yugoslavia show different patterns. The small number of the Turkish minority and the relatively better position curtailed the Diyanet's leverage, however, the lack of adequate financial revenues, and the need for political support provide fertile ground for broadening its activities in the Western Balkans. The Diyanet (TDV) contributed to the construction of mosques and the various communities could always count on the Diyanet's aid. Nevertheless, intra- and inter-community debates offered a good opportunity to mediate between the factions. The Sandjak and its mufti, Muammer Zukorlić's quarrel with the chief mufti of Serbia led to the establishment to the 'Turkish initiative'. The Turkish mediation only had minor success, but the Diyanet started to pay the salary of imams who left the two Islamic Unions (one led by Zukorlić, one led by Zilkić).

The appearance of secular Turkey as a protector – or rather – manager of Muslims in the region was usually welcomed. Nevertheless, the increasing effect of domestic political issues like the conflict with the Gülenist movement overshadows its secular image and the Turkey-sent imams' blatant political rhetoric raises concerns for

state authorities. After the 15<sup>th</sup> July coup attempt, its task was to weaken the position of Gülenist movement in the region as well. The Diyanet's activities show the Turkish state's commitment to strengthening the religious life of Muslim communities. Its financial and material support is usually welcomed by these communities, however, the direct interference in their internal affairs garners less sympathy. Turkish diplomacy, with the involvement of the Diyanet, has tried to solve the crises between the two Muslim communities of Serbia without success. It could only bear fruit in Bulgaria where after years of domestic conflicts and debates, the bifurcated Islamic community was unified under Mustafa Hacı.

### **Media (Anadolu Ajansı and TRT)**

Turkish media outlets are also present in the Balkans and they not only provide news about the region but also organise (or co-organise) various events through which they actively participate in shaping the perceptions about Turkey in southeast Europe and vice versa.

The national news agency, the Anadolu Ajansı (AA) aims to become one of the leading news agencies all over the globe. Particular efforts were made to achieve this goal such as providing news coverage in foreign languages, in the most widely spoken languages like English, French, etc. The Bosnian language was also incorporated into the AA agenda.

Turgut Özal initiated the establishment of an international Turkish channel concentrating on the Central Asian republics: in 1992 they founded the TRT Avrasya channels. Under the AKP major changes have taken place. In 2009, TRT Avrasya was renamed TRT-TÜRK while a new channel entitled TRT Avaz which provides programmes with Azeri, Kazah, Kyrgyz, etc. subtitles was established. Nowadays TRT has 14 TV channels while it has three international radios as well. Furthermore it also runs a webpage which provides news in over 40 languages that cover the Balkans as well. The Diyanet television channel (Diyanet TV) also broadcasts various programmes about religion in the Balkans, the situation of Muslim communities and the Diyanet's activities.

Several television programmes were prepared to portray the region. An example is the Balkan Ekspresi (Balkan Express) in 2010 which was a train tour of 22 towns in the region (including Greece and Hungary) broadcasted by the TRT in cooperation with



the Turkish national railway company (Haberler, 29/06/2010). TRT usually works in cooperation with the TİKA, Turkish Airlines and other institutions. Sometimes it organises programmes in Balkan countries, like in 2012 in Skopje, where a concert with participants from various Balkan countries was broadcasted (Haber7, 02/09/2012).

The issue of the Balkan wars and forced emigration also appeared regularly on TV programmes. The *Balkanlar ve göç* (Balkans and migration, 2005) was a series devoted to various waves of migration from the peninsula to Anatolia between the late 18<sup>th</sup> century until the beginning of the 1990s. In 2012, for the anniversary of the Balkan Wars (1912-13), a series was broadcasted entitled ‘Son Yaz Balkanlar 1912’ (Last Summer in the Balkans, 1912) portraying the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The year of 2012 was dedicated to the wars and the forced migration for the scientific community as well: a great number of conferences took place in Turkey and the Balkans, while papers and books were also published for the occasion.

Not surprisingly, several programmes devoted to Srebrenica were also put on air: *Mavi keleşin izinde* or a new TV series about the life and struggle of Aliya İzetbegović. The TRT also transmits the annual commemorations about Srebrenica, not just in Bosnia and Herzegovina but in the Balkans and Turkey as well.

Finally, the author has to note the effect of Turkish telenovellas/soap operas. As it was already mentioned that these series are produced by private companies, their importance in boosting Turkey’s image is quite impressive. These series depicting the developing country (and usually Istanbul) and showing a roughly similar culture to the people have become increasingly popular. Various TV channels have bought several series which started to dominate the airwaves after 2008.

These institutions’ activities are proof of Turkey’s presence and influence in the region. The TİKA logos and descriptions about its projects can be found everywhere in the Western Balkans, even in the most remote, Muslim-inhabited areas. Yunus Emre Cultural Centres provide language education and cultural programmes for hundreds of students all over the region. The growing prestige and usefulness of the Turkish language can be detected by the relatively stable number of Turks in these countries, despite the natural assimilation process.

By boosting Turkey’s positive image and creating strong links of ‘friendship’, ‘brotherhood’ and ‘trust’ between the communities, Ankara can gain momentum in its diplomatic relations and contribute to the daily nation- and identity-building process of these people, influencing their development in a more Turkey-friendly way.

Like in memorial politics, Turkey makes strong efforts to keep the memory of Srebrenica alive and to establish an inter-ethnic faith-based solidarity. Turkish state television, TRT regularly broadcasts commemorations about the event, not just in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey, but also about other Balkan countries as well. The TİKA has created a Srebrenica Museum in the centre of Sarajevo to support the preservation of the memory of the mass killing in the town. Although the massacre is interpreted as an attack against Muslims, the context, such as the killing of Bosniaks, also highlights the devastation of the Ottoman legacy.

Furthermore, these projects are presented in Turkey as well. The opening ceremonies of key Ottoman restoration projects, noteworthy cultural events appear in the Turkish media and sometimes are even broadcasted by TRT. The news and broadcasting send strong messages to the Turkish audience at home: the government is ready to defend its kin and takes care of them and the remaining Ottoman heritage. The participation of Mehteran to the opening ceremony of the renovated bridge in Mostar or Konjic in Bosnia and Herzegovina embodies the sentiment that the Ottoman Empire is back, however, for ordinary Turkish television viewers this act is a commemoration about shared history and traditions. The Turkish political leadership was also present at these events in 2004 (Mostar) and 2009 (Konjic). In the case of Mostar, five Turkish ministers took part in the ceremony (NTV, 23/07/2004). Certainly, the same image can disturb the Christian population whose nation-building process was built on the fight against the Ottoman Empire, thus it can trigger an almost opposite reaction compared to that of the Turkish audience.

Beyond the strong media coverage of the TİKA, YEE and other cultural activities, the Turkish state supports actively the organised trips for Turkish students to visit the famous places in the Balkans, the 'lieu de mémoires' of the Ottomans.

Turkish tourists who visit Western Balkan countries in great numbers can also see the signs of the TİKA and other institutions' work, thus it strengthens the perceptions about the government's commitment to preserve the common Ottoman heritage. This message is particularly important for those who perceive themselves as descendants of Balkan immigrants or refugees.

The Turkish diplomacy and use of soft power capabilities had tangible achievements. The perceptions about Turkey started to improve in the region. According to Gallup's opinion poll in 2006, 67.1% of the people in Kosovo, 71.3% in Macedonia, 56.3% in Albania and 50.9% in the Bosnian-Croatian Federation perceived

Turks as ‘friends’. Five years later, in 2011, this proportion was even higher. In Kosovo (without Kosovska Mitrovica) 94.7%, in the Bosnian-Croatian Federation 66.7%, in Albania 69.2% and in Macedonia 70.3% of the people stated that they consider the Turks as friends. Taking into consideration the high percentage of Muslim people in these Western Balkan countries, these results are not a surprise. Nevertheless, similar changes could be detected in case of non-Muslim countries (or those having a tiny Muslim minority) as well. Even in case of Republika Srpska where the friendly perception was only 8.2% in 2006, it increased to 33.8% in 2011. In Montenegro, it rose from 25.7% to 30.4%, in Croatia from 24% to 33.5%, while in Serbia it decreased from 21.1% to 17.4% (Egeresi, 2013, 54).

Unfortunately there is no available survey about public perceptions concerning Turkey and Turkish presence in southeast Europe from recent years, and especially after the coup attempt. The lack of comparable data makes it difficult to outline the developments since 2011. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that the country’s image has changed due to its domestic political dynamics. Firstly, the Gezi protests in the middle of 2013 deteriorated Erdoğan’s image. Furthermore the conflict between the AKP and the Gülenist movement (later FETÖ) over hegemony and the growing authoritarianism in the country weakened Turkey’s democratic credentials. In line with the internal troubles, the failure of the TFP in Syria and its realignment also decreased its soft power as a potent middle power. The manifestations of Turkish domestic politics in diplomatic relations abroad also nourished the debate about Turkey’s role in the region. Its direct campaign against well-established Gülenist networks, schools and foundations has created a dilemma for the political elite regarding whether to cooperate with Ankara and risk internal and Western criticism, or to resist and comply with the Western community’s standards. Some countries preferred to support Turkey while others were more reluctant; but the debate about Turkey’s interference in internal politics gained ground. In light of the ‘traditional’ debate about neo-Ottomanism (in the interpretation of Turkey’s expansionist, pro-Islam foreign policy) which was rather unwelcome in Christian circles, especially in the eyes of Bosnian Serbs, a more direct and interventionist Turkey appears more threatening to many people.

## **2.4. Societal actors and hegemony: relations with TFP**

Without going into details about the role of societal actors, civil society in foreign policy making, and their role within the hegemony building, this sub-chapter aims at revealing the most relevant societal actors' links to the hegemonic project and their contribution to Turkish foreign policy in the Balkan context. Three main actors are identified partly based on previous chapters: the immigrant associations whose links are close to the country of origin as many of the members are dual citizens. The second important group in this respect is the Turkish cities themselves. These two groups are interconnected, as the associations can directly influence the local government politics and take part via municipal institutional frameworks in shaping foreign relations, thus 'local diplomacy.' And finally, the faith-based movements' (*tarikatlara*) role should be addressed too, which are an integral part of Turkish society. Furthermore, they have a strong presence abroad as well, especially the Gülenist movement which has become a terrorist organisation in the eyes of the Turkish authorities. Nevertheless, it has established a strong network and institutional background in southeast Europe, which is difficult to dismantle from Ankara. Finally, the role of business associations in foreign policy making shall be revealed as well, however, this issue will be closely analysed in the next chapter focusing on the economy.

### **Dernekler: influencing the Balkans and local government**

The migrant organisations with well-established networks in Turkey, unifying at least a measurable part of immigrants and subsequently influencing local politics, and to a lesser degree, national politics, have direct and indirect leverage towards relations with southeast Europe. The direct relations can be identified as trans-border activities based on the dual citizens (dual electorate) and their personal affiliations with their home (village, town or region), which does not only mean personal attachments but occasionally strong family ties. Through direct cultural, educational, etc. cooperation, they contribute vigorously to intra-regional relations.

Beyond the vibrant trans-border relations, these associations can influence Turkish foreign policy at the state level, usually indirectly. Via parliamentary deputies, inter-state visits and lobbying they are (albeit minuscule) parts of Turkish foreign policy

making. Furthermore by their highly visible social and cultural activities in Turkey itself, they can contribute to national agenda-setting (e.g. consider the protests during the Kosovo war, etc.).

### **A) Trans-border relations**

Migrant associations have direct leverage over Balkan countries through political participation by virtue of their dual citizen membership. The dual citizens can participate in elections in the country of origin; a greater number of active citizens correspond to greater involvement in domestic politics of the sending country. This feature of trans-border relations is rather typical for ‘Balkan’ associations and especially in the case of Bulgarian Turks whose number is measurable in the Bulgarian elections. They appear as strong backers of Turkish minority parties whose electoral performance correlates strongly with the size of the Turkish minority.

The collapse of communism in southeast Europe facilitated the formation of Turkish minority parties. Except for Bulgaria, the small size of Turkish minorities in Balkan countries did not permit their parties to become more than minor actors in politics. They can also benefit from the legislation of some countries where the minority parliamentary mandates are usually guaranteed by a constitution (Romania, Kosovo). In Bulgaria, where the percentage of Turks varies between 6-9%, the Turkish political party, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (*Hak ve Özgürlükler Hareketi* in Turkish; *Dvizenie za Prava i Svobodi* in Bulgarian) enjoys a greater room for manoeuvre. Additionally, it has remained the most stable political party in Bulgarian politics since its foundation (4<sup>th</sup> January 1990), being part of a government coalition three times (2001-2005, 2005-2009 and 2013-2014).

From the very beginning, the MRF’s leadership intended to create friendly relations with the immigrant associations in Turkey. The Bal-Göç was the main partner in this process, thanks to the size of its membership. By means of the Kasim Dal’s work to establish more links with Turkey, from the end of the 1990s other associations were also linked to the HÖH. These associations supported deepening the relations because of cultural and political considerations. The common history and relatives remaining in Bulgaria facilitated this process, but the willingness to solve pragmatic issues, like the pension question with Bulgaria also played an important role in the cooperation.

The membership of these organisations sought to receive their pensions accrued for their work before 1989, denied by the Bulgarian state. In order to solve this problem, they worked on establishing good relations with the Bulgarian government. For example when in 1997 the newly elected Prime Minister, Ivan Kostov decided to approach Turkey by creating good economic and political relations, he visited Bursa and stated that he would solve the pension problem – the immigrant community holding Bulgarian flags demonstrated its expectations (Gangloff, 2000, 306).

Sadly, the promise was not kept, therefore the upset associations had to find other partners – and the most logical solution was the MRF. To emphasise the cooperation, the Bal-Göç and other organisations started to join in a higher level of the electoral campaign. The MRF – having the strong support of associations – created a deliberate identity policy based on the memories of the assimilation campaign (1984-1985) and the clashes in 1989 between Turks and Bulgarian authorities. The organised policy of '*lieux de mémoire*' was added to this process: the commemorations of the clashes' casualties became the convening venues for election programmes and a source of legitimacy for the MRF (whose interpretation of the events can be summarised along the lines of: 'If we are not in the parliament these events can happen again').

The göçmen dernekler also joined these events because the loss was common; lots of immigrants lost their relatives at that time, and it also demonstrated the cooperation amongst the community – both in Bulgaria and in Turkey. Moreover, the legislation and the special status also facilitated the emergence of closer cooperation. The immigrants of the 'big excursion', as was already mentioned, received Turkish citizenship by preserving their Bulgarian one, and thereby becoming dual citizens. A vast amount of inhabitants benefited from this status (compulsory military service in Bulgaria rather than in Turkey, etc.).

By being dual citizens, the Bulgarian Turks living in Turkey became extremely important for the MRF to mobilise and secure their votes for the parliamentary and local elections. This phenomenon emerged most visibly during the 2001 parliamentary elections. Although the Bulgarian legislation permitted voting for citizens living abroad, the small number of voting stations abroad and the difficulties of going back to Bulgaria decreased the number of Turks taking part in the elections. Their number converged to a few thousand during the 1990s. Nevertheless, the small participation rate changed in 2001 when 38,000 votes were cast for the MRF in Turkey. Accounting for a significant share of a total of 340,395 votes, the mobilisation of Turks from Bulgaria in Turkey

granted the party around 3 parliamentary mandates out of 21. Moreover, a large number of voters were transferred from Turkey to Bulgaria in order to strengthen the electorate of the party, especially in the most important constituencies.<sup>55</sup> Since there are no detailed statistics about the number of voters coming by buses from Turkey, it is difficult to estimate, but they should be between ten and twenty thousand. Furthermore, the deputies of these associations managed to convince the authorities to grant residence permits for the illegal immigrants from Bulgaria (mostly Turks) in the hope that they would participate in the Bulgarian parliamentary elections and vote for the MRF (Parla – Kaslı, 2009).

This strategy became a standard practice during the upcoming elections. In 2005, the party received 39,858 votes in Turkey (and gained 3 seats than in the last parliamentary elections), and around twenty thousand people passed the border to vote (Dayıoğlu, 2005, 452). Four years later, in 2009 the votes of Turkish dual citizens in Turkey increased to 93,903 – almost double the previous results which awarded them 5 more mandates (Özgür-Baklacioğlu, 2012, 477). Although the Bulgarian courts later decreased this number by 18,400 votes, claiming that they were secured by a voting fraud, the achievement still seems spectacular. Moreover, we can add some thousands of voters voting in Bulgaria, coming by bus from Turkey. The electoral system was changed for the 2009 elections, and the purely proportional system was replaced by a mixed one, where 31 seats of 240 are distributed by the first-past-the-post method. The MRF was especially successful in acquiring these mandates: they received 5 of them.

The involvement of various göçmen dernekler in these election results is obvious. The mobilisation of dual citizens played a great role in this process in which the immigrant associations had influence. In order to help this process, the MRF intended to create and maintain close relations with these organisations, which finally contributed to a parallel campaign in Turkey prior the general elections. The visits of MRF leaders always become more frequent before elections (and vice versa), whereas the demonstration of cooperation and unity represents an important part of the campaigns. After mobilising some parts of the possible electorate, the associations also help to send them to their destinations in Bulgaria – this is based on the cooperation of

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<sup>55</sup> The example of Kircaeli shows the importance of this feature. The town is a centre of the only district of Bulgaria where Turks constitute the majority of the population. Nevertheless, they are in minority in Kircaeli, so in the case of a possible cooperation between Bulgarian parties, the leadership of the city can change to the detriment of the MRF, as it happened during the municipal elections in 1999 when the nominee of the Bulgarian Union of Democratic Forces defeated the incumbent mayor, who was the candidate of the MRF.

local elites' members. The municipalities provide buses for the organisations along with non-financial support for other social activities.

Year	2001	2005	2009	2013	2014	2017MRF
<b>Seats</b>	21	34	37	36	38	26
<b>Votes (share) %</b>	7.4	12.8	14	11.31	14.8	8.99
<b>Votes</b>	340,395	467,400	592,381	400,466	487,134	315,976
<b>Votes from abroad</b>	39,000	44,000	93,903	54,353	59,938	22,000 (approx.)

Table 10. MRF's electoral performance (Source: Bulgarian Electoral Commission)

These bus trips, mutually beneficial for every actor, create unique opportunities for immigrants living in Turkey to return for a short while to meet relatives and visit the places of their childhood. This factor is far from negligible from the point of view of the election results: at the 2005 election, the Bal-Göç sent 10,000 voters to Bulgaria (Balkan, 2005). The cooperation between the leaders of the Turkish minority living in Balkan countries and immigrants' associations present in Turkey is not limited to the Turks of Bulgaria. We can see similar patterns in the recent history of other groups. During the 2000s the levels of activity of other immigrant communities also increased. The Batı Trakyalılar sent thousands of voters to the elections in Greece. For the elections in Kosovo, the Kosova Rumeli Derneği (Kosovar Rumelian Association) organised a trip to the country for around one thousand people (Timturk, 2010). It is of course clear that the 'electoral tourism' of small associations, backed by relatively small communities, had a less palpable impact on elections. Turkish representation in the Kosovar parliament is rather the result of international requirements and constitutional guarantees than the great number of the Turkish minority turning up to participate in elections. However, this kind of mobilisation contributes to the success of the minority groups and strengthens the feeling of belonging to a wider community.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup>This process, emerging during the last decade, has attracted the attention of local authorities and public opinion as well. This raised problems especially in Bulgaria, where the Turkish votes from abroad represent a significant supply for a Turkish party – and are therefore usually regarded with suspicion. The problem of electoral tourism became a campaign topic with the emergence of the Bulgarian radical right-wing party called Ataka (Attack) in 2005. Volen Siderov, the leader of the party, regularly called for the restriction of the votes of dual citizen Turks living in Turkey. At the beginning of 2007, prior to the European parliamentary elections, they managed to amend the electoral code. Due to support from other right-wing parties (even one coalition partner of the MRF supported the amendment), the Bulgarian Parliament accepted a law requiring 3 months permanent residence in Bulgaria or EU member states from Bulgarian citizens. Infuriating the Turkish minority by the law, the Bulgarian parties managed to prevent the possible victory of a Turkish party at the elections by wiping out 185,000 voters from the electoral register (Bg-Turk, 05/04/2007). This act was repeated in 2012, before the local elections, as the



## **B) Leverage on the administration: state and local level**

The migrant associations contribute to shaping Turkish foreign policy towards the region via several means. It is safe to say that despite their activities at a local level, their leverage on a national level, particularly in the field of foreign policy making is minimal. For instance, the association leader Mumin Gençoğlu spoke about the defence of the Turkish minority in the Balkans only twice during his two-year-long mandate in the 1990s (Yenigün, 2004, 519). His son as a leader of the Confederation had numerous meetings with high-level leaders (Bülent Arınç etc.), but it would be hard to say that they have transformed the Turkish foreign policy toward the Balkans. Beyond this direct involvement the associations address parliamentary deputies elected from their electoral district. For instance via inter-parliamentary friendship groups these deputies can also get into contact with their counterparts and even represent these associations' agenda in foreign travels and in the parliamentary debates.

Otherwise the leaders of the main associations tend to become members of (prime) ministerial or presidential visiting groups in the neighbouring countries, and they have the right to speak to the Greek or Bulgarian prime minister about their problems and ask for some form of resolution (Yeşilbahçe, 2011, 299). Furthermore, they also have the opportunities to have regular meetings with various Turkish institutions which also play an important role in Turkish foreign policy making such as the TİKA or YTB (YTB, 2012).

The immigrant organisations also become influential actors after the clash within the leadership of MRF in Bulgaria. Enjoying the support and friendship of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Kasim Dal, the vice president of the party split from Ahmet Doğan in 2011. After experiencing a growing popularity as a possible new leader, Kasim Dal tried to convince the immigrant organisations to support him. As he was the main contact person of the MRF toward Turkey, and he contributed substantially to the influx of Turkish capital into Turkish-inhabited regions in Bulgaria, he could expect a palpable support from these organisations. Even so, only one of them, Bul-Türk decided to side with him, while the others, including the most influential Bal-Göç, continued to favour the 'traditional' leadership. Seeing that this happened despite the fact that Turkish Prime

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government managed to pass a similar law, requiring longer residence (see more about the legislation: OSCE and Venice Commission joint opinion, 2011).

For the 2017 March election, the number of ballot boxes was decreased in Turkey. Previously Bulgarian citizens in Turkey could vote at 140 electoral venues, however, before the election this number was cut back to 35 (Özlem, 31/03/2017).

Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan openly supported Dal against Doğan, demonstrates the autonomy of these associations from the Turkish (state) foreign relations (Kircaalihaber, 2012).

Although the political aspect has an overwhelming priority in the relations of Turkish immigrants and minority groups, the cultural side of these links also needs to be presented as a multi-level tie. As it was pointed out earlier, these associations have greater leverage over the municipalities which can directly finance and support their activities in the Balkans. These relations not only facilitate the ‘electoral trips’, but the realisation of a broad spectrum of events too. The associations can take part in mutual local-level visits and via twin city relations they can indirectly contribute to shaping bilateral relations. At various historical conferences and festivals they invite both local (immigrant) and foreign (from the Turkish or other minority group) participants to perform together. Furthermore, they play an important role in maintaining Turkish/Ottoman traditions in the Balkans and in Turkey as well (Baklacioğlu, 2007, 105). They support the community remaining in the country of origin to preserve its identity by sending books and organising cultural events. For the public in Turkey, their publications, newspapers portray the region of origin, the cultural and historical heritage and even the current political issues. The Balkan Sentezi newspaper is particularly active in politics (Baklacioğlu, 2007, 106)

These associations are able to shape Turkish public opinion for their cause; historically, Bal-Göç associations are successful in disseminating information regarding the current status of the Turkish minority group in Bulgaria. The various protests during the war in Bosnia (1992-1995) and ethnic conflict in Kosovo (1998-1999) led by Rumeli organisations showcased their visibility and importance.

### **Twin city programmes**

Another important part of the cultural and diplomatic aspects is the emerging importance of twin town relations between towns in Turkey and the Balkans. This phenomenon is not new; the earliest twin town agreements were signed during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in western Europe. After World War II, these relations started to rise steadily and spread all over the continent. This process received a great impetus from the European Communities in 1989, when it started to support them in line with

the concept of bringing people closer to the concept of uniting Europe. After the collapse of communist regimes the number of twin towns swelled with participants coming from Central and Eastern Europe.

Various factors can lead to signing such an agreement, but it is usually based on historical, cultural and geographical (proximity) aspects. For example some cities, suffering heavy losses during World War II signed an agreement by commemorating the casualties, or in order to demonstrate their rapprochement. Searching for 'exotic' partners can also influence a town's leadership to choose a twin with less common characteristics. Finally, cities or districts where a substantial share of inhabitants originated from another region or town can be inclined to create a common historical memory as a bridge between two localities. The mass deportations and population exchanges after World War II paved the way towards this type of cooperation in Central Europe; we can see this phenomenon in the case of Hungarian towns, which lost significant parts of their German inhabitants, a historical event which later motivated them to establish cooperation with towns in Germany.

The twin town relations between Turkish and Balkan towns usually follow this historical-demographic pattern. In the case of Bulgaria, there is a correlation between the proportion of Turkish inhabitants in a given town and twinning programmes with Turkish towns – usually having a stabile immigrant community. But the opposite also holds true: a higher proportion of immigrants from a Balkan country increases the probability of establishing relations with Balkan towns.

We can see this phenomenon in the case of various towns. For example, Kircaali, a major Turkish-Bulgarian town has concluded agreements with Tekirdağ and Gasiosmanpaşa (a district of Bursa) and other towns with a Turkish community in Greece, e.g. Komotini. The main districts possessing a great number of immigrants in Istanbul or in Izmir have also already established some relations of this kind.

The next stage for cooperation between towns was the establishment of municipality associations. In Turkey there are several organisations for this purpose, like the Union of Turkish World Municipalities (Türk Dünyası Belediyeler Birliği – TDBB) which was founded in 2003. Although the TDBB is usually based on Turkish cooperation, and the overwhelming majority of its membership is from Azerbaijan, Turkey and Central Asian countries, Balkan municipalities with negligible Turkish communities also joined the organisation. Moreover, the Balkans is considered in the

activities of the Union as a part of the ‘Turkish world’, as they organise various events, conferences about the region.

It is difficult to say that the establishment of these relations is related only to the lobbying of göçmen associations. It should be considered as a tool of the municipality to enlarge its electoral base and demonstrate its readiness to strengthen the local identity. As many of the mayors possess Balkan ancestors (or some of them were born in the peninsula), to find a partner town in the Balkans means creating a bridge through history and culture to the roots – as well as it means the same for some groups of inhabitants in the given town. Certainly this link is reinforced by the immigrants’ organisations as well.

This phenomenon is highly noticeable in the case of Bursa. The mayor, Recep Altepe (AKP; elected in 2009, re-elected in 2014 and remaining in office until the end of 2017), who also has family ties to the Balkans, intended to transform the city’s image as the example of good relations between Turkey and the region. As he stated in 2012 during a meeting of BALKANSIAD (Balkan Sosyal İktisadi ve Akademik İşbirliği Derneği – Balkans Social Economic and Academic Cooperation Association) organised with the participation of two AKP deputies (Mustafa Öztürk and Mustafa Kemal Şerbetçioğlu) and Turhan Gençoğlu among others, that

‘Due to the investments realised by Bursa, the city has become a bridge between Turkey and the Balkans. Contrary to the previous periods, the meetings that we participate in are full of Turkish flags. A huge sympathy towards Bursa and Turkey has emerged in every corner of the Balkans. [...] From here, I would like to thank our civil society organisations and our businessmen for their support for our work (Yeni Safak, 2012).’

The activities of twin town programmes are plentiful. Apart from the mutual visits followed by cultural folklore groups’ performances, these relations also pave the way for financial cooperation such as the renovation of mosques, establishing parks, playgrounds<sup>57</sup> and so on. This also can ease getting aid from Turkish state actors, like the TİKA.

Bursa, one of the best examples of cities intending to boost economic-cultural cooperation with the Balkans, has a great variety of activities, investments in the Balkan peninsula. The leadership of the city enjoyed good relations with the Movement for Rights and Freedom (Bursa Municipality, 2012). Furthermore, Bursa’s leadership follows the state foreign policy’s tenets towards the Balkans. The city, in close cooperation with the TİKA, supports schooling (Cuba) in the region, and encourages the

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<sup>57</sup> See the example of Kircaali, in Bulgaria.

restoration of various Ottoman buildings, mosques (Sinan Pasa Cami in Kacanik – Albania, Gazi Baba türbesi, Rifai Dergahi in Skopje and so on), and organises religious happenings often in close cooperation with the Diyanet such as *sünnet şöleni* (banquet of circumcision) in order to emphasise the cooperation of Muslim communities within the region. In cooperation with various religious NGOs, it also launched the Continuous Cooperation and Communication Project with the Balkans (Balkanlarla Sürekli İşbirliği ve Temas Projesi) which aimed to organise events, bring together various actors and NGOs, provide a forum for networking and establish the basis for further cooperation (balkanisbirligi.org 2018).

Due to the active Balkan presence, and relative wealth of Bursa, it has also attracted the attention of Balkan states. The most noteworthy evidence of these developments is the growing interest of Macedonian or Kosovar diplomatic activity towards the city. For instance, in May 2012, a conference about the investment opportunities was held in the city by the cooperation of the Embassy of Kosovo and the Bursa Commerce and Industry Organisation (Bursa Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası) in order to promote Kosovo as a destination for Turkish investments, which highlights the importance of Turkish local actors in bilateral relations.

Although internal reasons are oftentimes grounds for establishing sister city relations (associations' lobbying, historical ties, etc.), the Turkish state also pushed to strengthen these links. Ahmet Davutoğlu supported giving more room for manoeuvre for the Turkish cities. In 2011, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed an agreement with the Municipality of Istanbul about cooperation in areas such as education, foreign relations, diplomatic events in Istanbul and marketing activities abroad. Under this framework, the Ministry organised several seminars for the municipality personnel (Demirtaş 2016, 159). Kadir Topbaş, the incumbent mayor of Istanbul was given an award for his activities in foreign policy making as the leader of the biggest city in Turkey at the ambassadors' conference in 2011, which clearly highlights the emerging importance of cities for the Turkish foreign policy makers.

Another, but also important aspect of Turkish-Balkan twin city programmes is the cooperation of various congregations. The local muftis in Turkish towns and those from the Balkans can contact each other via the Diyanet and support the construction and renovation of mosques, participate in religious holiday celebrations and send financial and material support. Under this kind of cooperation the Muslim congregations organise the 'circumcision tours' and the mutual visits of local muftis –

who can visit other Turkish state-related or non-governmental charity organisations in the hosting country. These programmes are supported by the Diyanet because whereas building a new mosque (abroad) is legally prohibited for the Diyanet and the TİKA, they can nevertheless assist twin city programmes (Öktem, 2012, 44-45.). The “Twin Town programme” (*Kardeş Şehirler Projesi*) conducted by the Diyanet and TDV has led to the establishment of ties with 209 towns in 95 countries. For the year of 2015-16, TDV has supported these projects with almost 110,400 EUR (TDV Faaliyet Raporu, 2016, 32).

The vigorous relations between cities also contribute to the realisation of the governmental agenda. The AKP’s rhetoric about common history, cultural heritage and mutual belonging (like Erdoğan speech about Kosovo in Prizren, in 2013) are also present in the mayors’ discourse as well. The aim to present Turkey as a provider of stability whose historical obligation is to defend its cultural heritage (and thereby the Muslim (and Turkish) kin in the region) received strong support from the municipalities. Their activities, as the author has already portrayed, are in line with the state’s endeavours and institutions. They support the renovation of mosques and other old Ottoman buildings, they take part in religious activities like circumcision tours, Ramadan activities and they organise events regularly with participants from the region concerning the common history and Ottoman legacy, the role of Islam in the Balkans, along with publishing and various marketing projects. The commemoration of Srebrenica is also part of the annual schedule of several municipalities. These projects and events are usually realised with the financial support of the state institutions (the TİKA, the Diyanet, etc.) which arrange their activities not just in parallel but in some cases complementary to the state’s actions (for instance, the TİKA cannot build new mosques, however, the Diyanet can already contribute via municipal cooperation to the construction of new places of worship). Last, but not least, municipalities can be also active in boosting economic relations by organising events, supporting business associations and investment opportunities.

By doing this, they have become strong public diplomacy promoters, especially the municipalities with close relations to the Balkans, like Bursa, whose former AKP mayor was a driving force behind these programmes. This kind of ‘local diplomacy’ diversifies the tools of foreign policy making and their activities are easily put in the ‘national’ hegemonic framework, especially in the cultural field, which was demonstrated by the cultural activities of twin town and other municipality level cooperation.

## **Faith-based social networks and charity organisations**

Sufi Islam has been an integral part of the Ottoman world for centuries leading to the establishment of the religious brotherhoods called *tarikats* that have accumulated a strong social base throughout centuries. In the Balkans, these movements were active in spreading Islam in the newly conquered areas. The Naqshbandi became dominant in Bosnia and Bulgaria, while the Khalwati order had greater influence in Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia. The Bektashis gained momentum from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and became popular in Albania and Macedonia. The territorial losses of the Ottoman Empire weakened their position; the communist regimes pursued a rather belligerent policy by outlawing (Bulgaria, Albania) or proscribing (Yugoslavia) them (Merdjanova, 2013, 6). After surviving the Cold War, these religious movements were reborn, even if they play a less important role than previously. Probably the strongest among them is the Bektashi order, whose followers are numerous in Albania's southern territories.

The *tarikats* had a 'luckier' history in Turkey, even if the state's efforts towards secularisation had a negative effect on them and in 1925, they were banned by Atatürk. Surviving decades of the early republican period, they were legalised by the Democrat Party in 1950, which wanted to acquire the support of the religious electorate. In response to the challenges in the secular state, the *tarikats* emerged from a smaller, exclusive brotherhood to a network of loosely organised communities (*cemaat*), essentially faith-based social networks that could maintain and even strengthen their position and became well-embedded into the Turkish society (Solberg, 2007). As a network of several hundred thousand or even million people, they possess political and economic leverage. Without going into details, it is enough to point out that the most prominent one, the Nakshibendi movement played a role in the emergence of an Islamist political movement (*Milli Görüş*) and the establishment of other religious movements, like Nurcu, *Işıkçı*, *Menzil*, the Erenköy community, alongside the Süleymancı and Gülenist movement.

Several neo-Sufi communities appeared in the Balkans after the end of communism. Basically, they strive to build close relations with religious institutions and rather focus on religious education by providing various courses, translating their leaders' or founders' works into local languages, and in some cases, in cooperation with Turkish state actors to build/renovate/finance local religious schools, mosques.

Naturally, their activities are in line with the Turkish Sunni-Hanafi traditions similar to the Islam in the Balkans, which make their endeavours more acceptable for local authorities who sometimes consider them as allies to prevent the emergence of Wahabbi leverage.

Turkish charity organisations are active in the Balkans, too. The most prominent ones were established during the 1990s and they maintain close ties with the Islamic movements and faith-based religious networks. The associations and foundations have given a safe opportunity for these networks and pious Muslims to channel their voluntary and ritual alms, donations for higher purposes. They were quick to enter the international level in the 1990s; the various Balkan wars (the conflict in Bosnia in 1992-1995, in Kosovo 1998-1999 and in Macedonia in 2001) enhanced their profile in parallel with a growing focus on the region and its co-religionists from Turkish society (Solberg, 2007).

The establishment of the Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsanı Yardım Vakfı – İHH) was directly influenced by the events in Bosnia. It was established by Milli Görüş in 1995, and it distributed aid to war victims and refugees in Bosnia; it was the sole Turkish charity organisation that entered the country during the conflict. It also participated in helping locals and refugees during the war in Kosovo. After the end of war activities, it also kept ‘spiritually’ supporting the Balkan Muslims by providing them with religious books and publications in the following years. Although it focuses more on war zones in Africa and the Middle East, and it is one of the biggest supporters of Syrian refugees in Turkey and IDPs in Idlib, they pursue projects in the Balkan region too.

Despite its engagement in other parts of the world, it is the most active Turkish charity organisation in the Balkans. In 2017, in cooperation with Ministry of Sport and Education, the İHH undertook a motorbike tour (MotoBosna) from Istanbul to Srebrenica in order to commemorate the anniversary of the massacre (İHH, 14/06/2017). The convoy later joined the 15<sup>th</sup> July commemorations in Turkey. The organisation distributed some 10,000 aid packages among 4,500 people in 2017 for Ramadan (İHH, 29/05/2017). It also organised drug prevention workshops with local authorities, NGOs and Turkish institutions, like YEE in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia (Sandzak) (İHH, 29/04/2017). The organisation also took part in catastrophe management after severe flooding in BiH, Albania and Macedonia during the previous years. It contributed to the construction of



new mosques in Albania in several places like Tush (2014), Grude Fushe (2015), in Bosnia and Herzegovina Gorazde (2014). Other associations, like the AYDER, a charity organisation founded in 2005 and close to the İHH, also have minor activities in the Balkans.

The Cansuyu Aid and Solidarity Association (Cansuyu Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği) was established as a pro-Saadet organisation in 2005 in response to the earthquake in Pakistan (Solberg, 2007). In the following years, Cansuyu provided aid packages and organised iftars in Kosovo and Macedonia, however, recently it rather focuses on the Middle East and Africa. Nevertheless, it continues to provide aid (*kurban*) during religious holidays in the Muslim-inhabited regions in the peninsula.

Deniz Feneri is probably one of the more well-known Turkish charity organisations, which was founded in 1998. It has close links to the AKP. It was awarded the right to collect donations without further state authorisation (Deniz Feneri, Hakkımızda, 018). The organisation usually provides *kurban* for religious events and sends material aid to several thousand poor families, however, the Balkans play a lesser role in its work compared to the Middle East or Africa in this respect. In 2007, it sent clothes and tools for the Haxhi Sheh Shamia school's dormitories in Albania. In the same year, it constructed a faculty building for a university in Mostar (Deniz Feneri, Balkanlar, 2018).

Faith-based communities also created foundations that have become active in the Balkans. One of most important organisations is the Aziz Mahmut Hüdayi Foundation which was established by the Erenköy community in 1985 aiming to provide support for religious, educational activities and aid for people in need. Beyond its programmes and schools in Turkey, the Foundation has become active abroad as well, in the Balkans and in Africa as well in line with the Turkish state policy. By now, it operates four faculties, 6 high schools, 20 imam hatip schools, 23 Qur'an courses, one imam institute, two research centres, 14 cultural centres, 56 dormitories and 12 day-care centres globally (Hudayvakfi, Eğitim hizmetleri, 06/01/2018).

Aziz Mahmut Hüdayi Foundation started its local activities during the Kosovo war by distributing aid to the locals. After the conflict, Istanbul International Brotherhood and Solidarity Association, which belong to the community, opened a permanent office in Pristina. It follows the 'traditional' activities of other religious movements like providing Qur'an courses and opening dormitories in close cooperation with local religious authorities. It managed to launch a Hafz course in 2005 in Gjakova.

Since its foundation some 30 people have become hafiz (2018, 55) and they reopened a medrese (Büyük medrese) in 2006 as well (Solberg, 2007). In Giljan, they constructed the Ali Yakup Efendi dormitory (TimeBalkan, 04/12/2016).<sup>58</sup> They run two dormitories for boys in Prishtina and Prizren respectively, while they opened Rabia Hatun Hifz course and they have a female student dormitory under construction in Prizren. They have built a mosque in Viti (Medine mosque) (2017, 13).

The community became active in the early 2000s in Albania and Macedonia as well. In Skhodra, the community started to support the Haxhi Sheh Shamia madrasa in 2000 via the Istanbul Foundation (Shoqata Istanbul). Due to the support, the institution started to grow: it has separate education for girls and boys and offers dormitory accommodation. In 2014 they opened a kindergarten, in 2015 a primary school, while two years later they established a cultural centre. The prestigious school offers high-quality education and its students tend to achieve good results at school competitions. In line with the modern facility, the school has around 1,100 students, which makes it one of the biggest pre-university educational institutions in a country of less than 3 million people. Moreover, it is able to pay the best teachers, who can earn 30% more than in other local schools (TRT, 24/01/2018).

These recent projects were carried out with the support of Turkish state institutions and Üsküdar municipality (Üsküdar is the district of Istanbul where the Erenköy community was founded). The TİKA provided computers and other tools to enhance education capacities and recently it also contributed to the construction of primary schools. Even Recep Tayyip Erdoğan participated in the opening ceremony via videoconference (TİKA, 2016).<sup>59</sup> They also financed the construction of mosques, for instance the Haxhi Sheh Shamia Mosque in Albania and contributed to the renovation of Hamidiye Medrese in cooperation with Deniz Feneri and Kadinana Mosque in Stip (Ali, 2018, 305).

The prestigious Nurcu community only has a few representatives in the Western Balkan countries, and they are not as influential (Solberg, 2007), nevertheless, their presence is growing. One of its foundations, the Hayrat Vakfi provides aid during Ramadan. (hayratvakfi.org, 2018). In cooperation with the Hayrat Derneği (Hayrat Association), which was founded in 2013 for charity works, in 2017 it was awarded the

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<sup>58</sup> Ali Yakup Cenkçiler was born in Giljan and became a prominent theological scholar in Fatih, Istanbul.

<sup>59</sup> The President's participation at this type of event is not unprecedented, he often takes part at similar occasions.

right to collect donations without state permission. It takes part in humanitarian activities in Syria and other parts of the world (Hayrat Yardım, 2018, Tarihçemiz).

The Hayrat Vakfı, which is one of the engines of the Osmanlı education in Turkey – its activities are underpinned by a protocol signed with the Ministry of Education as well – offers Osmanlı courses in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo), in Kosovo (Prizren and Pristina) and in Macedonia (Skopje and Tetovo) through its local branches (*Hayrât Balkan İlim, Kültür ve San'at Vakfı*), in cooperation with the Yunus Emre Institute (TimeBalkan, 03/11/2017).

The Süleymancı movement (whose founder, Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan was born in Bulgaria) have much stronger positions in the region. The community seeks to teach local Muslims about the Turkish Sunni-Hanafi tradition and it is opposed to the spread of Wahabbi Islam. Consequently they are active in religious education and provide Qur'an courses and run several dormitories where the students receive a strict religious education (Solberg, 2007).

The community's institutions are run by various foundations and NGOs whose projects cover 'traditional' areas such as supporting religious holidays (providing kurban), organising events, conferences, providing scholarships, publishing and translation activities. Among these pro-Süleymancı associations the more prominent in the Balkans are the Balkan Education and Culture Association (Balkanlar Eğitim ve Kültür Derneği) and the International Development and Union Association (Uluslararası Kalkınma ve İşbirliği Derneği).

The Süleymancı entered into Albania in 1996 and they opened around ten dormitories in the country. In the early 2000s they appeared in Macedonia, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, where they established dormitories (Solberg, 2007).

The Gülenist movement is the most influential faith-based network in the Balkans. It was established as a neo-Nurcu movement and emerged over the decades as an influential transnational quasi-political network with massive educational assets not only in Turkey but all over the world. At its peak, it operated around 300 schools in its country of origin and more than 1,000 in as many as 160 countries, including 120 charter schools in the US (Watmough – Öztürk, 2018b, 34-37.)

Although other Turkish religious movements have networks abroad, they mainly focus on the Turkish diaspora groups without forging strong links to the host countries' authorities, or in other cases they remain active only in the religious field and work together almost exclusively with the Muslim authorities. The Gülenist movement,

however, implemented a different strategy based on adaptability to the host country's customs and sensibilities (Balçı, 2014). Compared to other networks, the movement did not push a religious agenda; its religious background usually remained hidden from view; for instance, it did not enter into public debates about the representability of Islam in public spheres despite the issue's importance in western Europe. Furthermore, they rather intended to build close ties with Christian and Jewish groups in the West, emphasising the importance of the dialogue between religions and the need for mutual respect, thus their adaptability proved fruitful. As Balçı points out: "Host countries welcomed the Gülenist community because it offers institutions and services that benefit local populations without attaching religious strings" (Balçı, 2014).

In order to build a network abroad, the movement usually followed the same model in every country: after sending some members from Turkey, who managed to establish a local umbrella organisation – usually a foundation – in the host country, they opened various levels of educational institutions, regularly primary and high schools, and in several cases, even universities. At the beginning, these institutions received financial support from the community in Turkey, until they became financially self-sustainable. Donations were crucial for expansion, and later these financial contributions were paid back through various means to the medium or larger-sized businesses and contributors (e. g. they could become suppliers of schools, etc.) (Watmough – Öztürk, 2018b, 41-42).

It is important to stress that these educational institutions function as international schools providing English-language curriculums, and they are for-profit organisations demanding fees from the majority of their students (even if they usually grant scholarships in some cases). According to this business model, these institutions intend to provide a competitive and state-of-the-art knowledge (in languages and sciences) within a secular curriculum. As their operation has to be approved by the host state, they have to comply with the domestic regulations of the given country where they reside. They are open to everyone, not just Turkish expatriates; moreover, to avoid any conflict with the authorities about religion, they do not implement any religious agenda. As prestigious secular schools, they can appear as a possible choice for secular or non-Muslim students while they also give the chance for Turkish migrants to advance in integration into the host society while receiving valuable knowledge. While these schools enjoy the support of local and state politicians and authorities, they emerge as

social mediators (Balci, 2014) between the immigrant minority and the local majority through homogenising education.

To strengthen the good relations and boost their positive image, Gülenist foundations or umbrella organisations intend to create good social relations with the host communities (not just at the state, but at the local level as well, especially with the municipalities where their schools and colleges are located), which was a major component in their success. These institutions regularly organise cultural events. Their programmes vary depending on the host country's context, but they are usually related to Islam. Gülen himself appeared as a person advocating the dialogue between civilisations and religions, and emphasised the peaceful nature of Islam, so the movement benefitted from generally positive perceptions even in non-Muslim countries. Naturally, these programmes also give impressions about Turkey and the Turkish Islamic traditions because the members coming from the country portray their own cultural heritage and context.

After the end of Cold War, it was the Gülenist movement among the social actors that was able to exploit the collapse of communist regimes in the East and also create a strong presence in the West the most successfully. Gülenist organisations were even more popular in Central Asia than Turkish state initiatives and could establish a strong network of schools and universities. In Africa, the movement was the first to open Turkish schools and a real engine in promoting Turkish political and economic interests on the continent. The Gülenist business organisation TUSKON, which opened offices all around the world, supported the expansion the Sub-Sahara Africa by convening business forums and conferences, usually with the support and participation of Turkish state authorities. During the last twenty or thirty years, the movement established strong relations with the host societies, and contributed to 'elite' formation, especially in Central Asia, where tens of thousands of students graduated from the Gülenist schools. Although the majority of the students do not create or preserve close ties to the organisation, the possibility of networking is tremendous, especially if former students enter into political or administrative careers.

So, the movement could emerge as a useful tool of Turkish soft power. Turkish diplomacy tried to benefit from the Gülenist network, their knowledge and good relations with the host country's administration. The movement's contribution to promoting Turkishness and Turkish culture all around the world resonated well back in Turkey as well. The famous Turkish Language Olympiad demonstrated at home that

Turkish language education is advancing abroad and the importance of the country is growing not just in Central Asia, but in Africa as well.

Not surprisingly, the Gülenist movement also appeared in the Balkans. Like in Central Asia, the collapse of communist regimes and the transition to democracy paved the way towards the region in the early 1990s. The first schools were established in Albania and Bulgaria (1993), while gradually they gained ground in Macedonia (1996), in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1997) and Kosovo (2000) (Öktem, 2012). Although they are seemingly more focused on Muslim-inhabited states, their activities in Romania highlight their willingness to go beyond the Muslim communities and deliver a more inclusive educational programme.

Gülenists were welcomed by these countries who perceived them as an adequate partner to re-organise or (re-)establish Islam and Islamic education and religious life in a democratic context. The movement's attempts were very successful in Albania, where the state had to rebuild its relations with the Islam almost from its very foundations. The medreses established after the early 1990s by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were facing serious financial difficulties when their founders stopped the support; the Muslim community turned to the Gülenists who were already operating in the country and had established a good reputation. Thus, the movement took over the first school in 1995; in 1998 they acquired the medrese of Kavajë. When the Katari Foundation gave up the medrese in Tirana, the Gülenist movement seized it. In 2010, the movement reconstructed the medrese and a mosque (built in the Arab style) in Korça. The movement entered into the realm of religious education rather as an exception (Öktem, 2012, 50). Similar endeavours took place in Bulgaria, where the Gülenist network started its activities in religious schools; nevertheless, these institutions were placed under the custody of the Turkish state in 1998 after an agreement between Sofia and Ankara.

The movement's representatives, coming from a secular state and promoting a moderate, dialogue-seeking approach were convincing for state authorities to deter and prevent the possible spread of radical Islam, and the emergence of Wahabbism among Muslim groups. Thus, the movement established a strong institutional background over the past 20-25 years. It has opened a foundation in almost every Balkan country and took part in the educational system by establishing schools and even universities. The Table 11 shows the movement's penetration in the region.

Country	Foundations	University	High school	Primary school	Kindergarten	Language centre	Other	Student numbers			
Albania	Fondacioni Gülistan Tirana, 1993	Bedër Tirana, 2011	Mehmet Akif Ersoy College (for boys) Tirana, 1993		Mehmet Akif Ersoy kindergarten, Tirana, 2006		Medreses: Liria, Elbasan	6,500			
			MAEC (for girls) Tirana				Hafiz Ali Korça				
			Hasan Riza Pasha College, 2001	X	x	Meridian course centre Qendër Kursesh Meridian, Tirana	Kavajë				
			Turgut Özal High School Tirana	X	x		H. Mahmud Dashi, Tirana				
	Turgut Özal High School Durres	X	x	Vexhi Buharaja, Berat							
Total	Turgut Özal Educatoin Instituion (Joint Stock Company), 2001	Epoka University Tirana, 2007/2012	Memorial International School of Tirana	X	x		Korçës, Korçë				
			2	6	4	5	1	5 medreses			
			BiH	Bosna Sema	International Burch University, Sarajevo, 2008	Richmond Park International School, Sarajevo, 1997	X	x		Fidan tourist agency	2,800
						Richmond Park College, Sarajevo, 2005				Hikmet publication	
						Richmond Park International School, Tuzla, 2003	X	x			
Richmond Park International School, Zenica, 2009	X	x									
Total	1	5	Richmond Park International School, Bihać, 1997 (former Una Sana College (Unsko-Sanski Koledz)	X	x						
				International primary school, Mostar, 2013							
			5	5	4						
Bulgaria			Drujba High School, Sofia, 1999	X	x	Language Centre	Zaman newspaper	1,100			
			Drujba High School, Plovdiv, 2005	X							
Total			2	2	1	1					

Croatia						Sjajna zvijezda edukativni centar, 2008	200	
Total						1		
Kosovo	Fondacioni Atmosfera 2004	Mehmet Akif Ersoy College Pristina 2000 → moved to Lipjan in 2010		X	x		2,500	
		MEAC, Prizren, 2006						
		MEAC, Gjakova, 2010		X	x			
				International School of Pristina, 2002		x		
		Hasan Nahi High School Pristina, 2013						
Total		YLLKA, Prizren, 2010						
Macedonia	Tolerance and Safak Foundations	3		2	3			
		YKC Skopje Avtokomanda High School		YKC primary school		Evar Tourist Agency	2,000	
		YKC Skopje Butel High School						Zaman newspaper
		YKC Gostivar						
		YKC Struga		X				
Total Montenegro	YKC Strumica							
	YKC Tetova Bölgesel lisesi							
	6		2					
	Romania	Lumina	Lumina – The University of South-East Europe, Bucharest, 2010		International School of Bucharest, 1996	X	x	2,200
			Școală Spectrum București 2003	x				
Liceul International de Informatica, Constanța, 1994								
Liceul International de Informatica, București, 1995								
			Școală Spectrum Constanța 2003					



		Școală Internațională Spectrum, Cluj, 2010	x		
		Școală Internațională Spectrum, Iași, 2010	x		
		Școală Internațională Spectrum, Ploiești, 2010			
		Școală Internațională Spectrum, Colentina, 2016			
	Liceul Teoretic International de Informatica, Colentina 2016	X	x		Lumina Wolves – Clubul de Baschet (Pallady campus) Școala de fotbal Lucian Sanmartean (Pallady) Sport clubs
		International School of Oradea, 2017	x		
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Serbia</b>		Bejza primary school		Bejza education centre	80
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>	

Table 11. Gülenist organisations and educational institutions in southeast Europe

Gülenist schools have become popular in these countries, as they appeared relatively early after the regime change with an offer of good English education for affordable prices for the middle class or even for the elites. Several thousand students were enrolled in these institutions; some of them later on went to Turkey for further studies. Although the majority of the students were not involved in the movements' activities, Gülenists could find supporters among the elites. In what is probably the most famous case, the President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci enrolled his son in the Yahya Kemal School.

The Turkish state did not hinder the emergence of Gülenist network in the region. Although from a distance, Turkish authorities could work together with movement in boosting Turkey's image. This was even easier in the 2000s when the AKP and the Gülenist movement cooperated for years. The case of the two Turkish universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina clearly showed that the cleavages never disappeared between the various Turkish factions. Although the Gülen-linked Burch University and the AKP-affiliated International University of Sarajevo are located across from one another, in a pleasant neighbourhood of Sarajevo, they never entered into cooperation with each other (Öktem, 2010).

After the corruption scandals in 2013-14, the existing cleavages soured into deep ruptures. The AKP's hegemonic building process seeks to weaken or eliminate its internal adversaries, and this trend has appeared on the international level too. The coup attempt accelerated the conflict. The Turkish state representatives placed the closure of the Gülenist institutions on the agenda and asked Balkan countries to extradite Gülenist sympathisers.

Ankara has voiced the need to combat the movement at a presidential level; the Turkish diplomatic apparatus started to campaign against the Gülenist network and influence in order for the host state's administration to hand over Gülenists, close the movement's schools and associations and cut or at least weaken its financial sources. All institutions having offices abroad are involved in the conflict. The Diyanet started to gather information about Gülenist foundations, schools, media outlets and individuals. This kind of intelligence activity was not restricted to the Balkans but the religious authority conducted them in Europe and Central Asia as well. Moreover, it also started to campaign against the network in line with the priorities of Turkish diplomacy.

The successes of purges outside the borders showcase the leverage of Turkey and the current status of relations with other states. The majority of the countries did not

comply with Turkish demands. The institutions were not closed, nevertheless some people were extradited. Bulgarian authorities opened investigations against a dozen organisations allegedly having links to the movement. In August 2016, they also handed over Abdullah Büyük, a prominent Turkish businessman who fled the country in 2015 and requested asylum, without the official extradition request of Turkey and despite the ruling of two Bulgarian courts about his deportation. Other seven alleged Gülenist supporters were deported to Turkey in October 2016 (Balkan insight/31/05/2018).

Another country cooperating with Turkey in this issue was Kosovo, which detained a teacher – Uğur Toksoy – in October 2017, however, the prosecutor later withdrew his request citing lack of evidence. In contrast, Pristina extradited six Gülenists – among them the director-general of Gülenist schools in the country - to Turkey. These people were employed in the movement's schools in March 2018. After the six Turkish nationals were sent back to Turkey, the Prime Minister, Ramush Haradinaj sacked the Minister of Interior and intelligence chief saying that the event occurred without his knowledge. The authorities argued that the extradited teachers had no valid residence permit; however, Kosovo's Ministry of Internal Affairs clarified that it had revoked the residence permits of those arrested (Balkan Insight, 29/03/2018).

Other extraditions from the regions are rather sporadic. Albania announced its intention to deport one suspect in 2017, namely Muhammed Yasir Aydoğmuş and his family, based on the international arrest warrant issued by Ankara. He was captured when he intended to enter into Italy from Durrës. Nevertheless, there is no news about his extradition to Ankara since his arrest at the time of writing.

Despite the pressure coming from Turkey, some countries in the Balkans, like Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia are considered as 'safe' for the movement's members (Hurriyetdailynews, 15/08/2016). In Albania, the government only took one direct decision against the community's schools, thus prohibiting these institutions from showing Turkish flags and other symbols (Exit, 01/05/2018).

Nevertheless, the situation can change dramatically for the movement as Turkey keeps pressuring its local partners to extradite its members and close their schools and associations. After the coup, many Turkish parents stopped sending their children to Gülenist schools, which consequently had to rely more on local and international students. In the wake of all these difficulties, the majority of these organisations continued to provide Turkish-language education. Nevertheless, the fear is apparent. In Bosnia the Sema Foundation that runs the Gülenist schools was sold first to an

American organisation, and was later given to a British foundation which is also linked to the movement. Right now, these educational institutions use the British flag under the name of Richmond Park Schools.

To conclude, the Turkish society has its own links with the Balkans. It possesses various tools to maintain the inter-regional relations and even to shape or at least influence state politics. Although the migrant associations' leverage on Turkish foreign policy is very limited, there is a common interest between state representatives and civil society leaders to cooperate. By inviting some of these leaders to official visits, undertaking consultations with them, or supporting their programmes, the authorities show their co-option into the hegemonic bloc. This happens mainly at a local level (sometimes strengthened by ministerial visits) where the AKP mayor works together with them in order to win votes and gain support from a minor, but very well-organised group.

The interregional cooperation between twin cities also underpins the co-optive nature of relations: Turkish local authorities, municipalities and muftiates all follow the policy and the rhetoric of the centre. By doing so, they also become part of the hegemony-building process, not just at home, but increasingly abroad, even in the cultural field.

The coup d'état attempt and the government reaction has showed the deep struggle over hegemony in Turkey. The purge against the Gülenist movement/FETÖ was successful and dismantled its economic, educational and social tenets in Turkey, however, the conflict did not end at the state border but rather spread to the international stage. This import of Turkey's internal debates presented a dilemma for southeast European states. Basically, the Balkan countries made attempts to stay neutral in this struggle, however, in some cases, like Bulgaria and Kosovo, they have struck a compromise with Ankara. Nevertheless, this internal conflict and the political developments in Turkey itself eroded its leverage.

## **2.5. Local allies: the co-option in practice**

The Turkish activities led to finding local allies who have become promoters of the AKP's vision in the region. Even Davutoğlu's own charisma and network served as a useful tool in this respect. In Macedonia, a group of Muslim intellectuals led by Adnan Ismaili (a close friend of Davutoğlu) founded a publishing house (Logos A) which printed the translation of various works of Turkish and Islamist thinkers. Davutoğlu's Bosniak students from Kuala Lumpur are also employed in the state administration of Bosnia (Öktem, 2012, 26).

Local, pro-Turkey charity organisations can also be found in the region. In Albania, the most important among them is the ALSAR. It is led by Mehdi Gurra, who graduated from a Turkish university, has close relations to Turkish governmental institutions and charity organisations. Its leader usually participates in high-level meetings where even the Turkish president is present. The ALSAR pursues the 'traditional' pro-Islam charity activities such as providing Qur'an courses and other religious education, participating in the renovation or construction of mosques, providing aid packages for the poor and orphans, or supporting cultural activities. The former is a clear example how the AKP's hegemony is constructed abroad. The local leadership acts together with Turkish institutions and organisations in the realisation of projects which are in line with the hegemonic project, thus strengthening and co-opting the co-religious community in the Balkans, and boosting the leverage of Hanafi Islam and the legacy of the Ottoman past. As it was already mentioned, Mehmet Akif Ersoy emerged as a leading historical figure of 'Ottomanness.' Not surprisingly, the ALSAR has organised a conference about him as well in 2016 with the participation of the AKP's Minister of Education, Nabi Avcı (Haberler, 11/03/2016).

A good example of intra-institutional cooperation was the new mosque of Tush in Albania. The project was realised thanks to the common work of ASFAR-İHH-TİKA and Konya municipality between 2012 and 2014. Importantly, the mosque was built in the Ottoman style. The collaboration also opened the doors of the first hifz school in the country (İHH, 06/12/2014).

At a political level, two groups were more receptive to the AKP. They can be perceived as 'natural' allies, but their leverage is limited. Firstly, the Turkish parties, as local representatives of the Turkish minority which receive support through the network

of state institutions like the TİKA or the Diyanet. One (sometimes two) Turkish parties usually manage to enter the parliament, even where the community is small like in Kosovo, Macedonia or Romania. Despite their small number, this is facilitated by the minority-friendly domestic legislation of the given country, the domestic political landscape, and probably also to the role of Turkey (even if the “Ankara factor” is hardly measurable, it is fair to think that even a small community can enjoy greater room for manoeuvre if it has a strong and influential supporter in the international arena). Mahir Yaçılar, President of the Kosovo Democratic Turkish Party (KDTP) served as Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning between 2007 and 2011, and in 2011 he became Minister of Administration and except for a short interlude he could secure his ministerial post. In Macedonia, where Turkish parties are always present in the parliament, Furkan Çako, a member of the Turkish Democratic Party was appointed minister without portfolio by Prime Minister Nicola Gruevski.

Country name/Parties	Election years					
<b>Bulgaria (240 seats)</b>	2001	2005	2009	2013	2014	2017
Movement for Rights and Freedoms (HÖH) (1991)	21	34	37	36	38	26
Democrats for Responsibility, Solidarity and Tolerance (DOST) (2016)						
Other parties <sup>60</sup>						
<b>Macedonia (120-140 seats)</b>	2002	2006	2008	2011	2014	2016
Democratic Party of Turks in Macedonia (TDP) (1990/1992)	2	2	1	1	1	1
Party for the Movement of the Turks in Macedonia (THP)	1				1	1
Movement for National Unity of Turks (TMBH) (before 2008)				1		
<b>Kosovo (120 seats)</b>	2001	2004	2007	2010	2014	2017
Kosovo Democratic Turkish Party KDTP (2001)	3	3	3	3	2	2
Kosovo Turkish Union Party (KTBP) (2010)						
Kosovo Turkish Justice Party (KTAP) (2013)						
<b>Romania (334-329 seats, Chamber of Deputies)</b>	2004	2008	2012	2016		
Democratic Turkish Union of Romania (RDTB) (1990)	1	1	1	1		

Table 12. Turkish minority's political parties in southeast Europe

By contrast, it is difficult to see the direct benefit from these appointments. Lobbying usually happens behind closed doors. Only a few examples showed the

<sup>60</sup> People's Party "Freedom and Dignity" HŞHP (2012), Party for Democracy and Justice (DAP) (1993), Movement of the Democratic Wing (DKH) (2003).

palpable support of the Turkish parties. For instance, the Movement for Rights and Freedom voted against the law declaring that there was an Armenian genocide. This issue was brought to the parliament by the right-wing radical party ATAKA in 2007 (Novinite, 25/04/2007).

But even the fight against the Gülenist movement/FETÖ did not receive the expected assistance. Critics were publicly against the Turkish political leadership in Kosovo because of its failure to cancel its relations with the movement and the lack of harsh actions (Yeniakit, 28/12/2016).

However, the Turkish parties are not unanimously pro-AKP in the region. The MRF, which is the strongest Turkish political movement boasting a respectable electorate in Bulgaria (and even in Turkey) does need Ankara's support at all. There was a personal animosity between its long-standing leader Ahmet Doğan and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The MRF and the AKP are opposites ideologically, too. The MRF is a liberal (one could argue left-wing) party which sits in the ALDE group in the European Parliament. As many Turks in Bulgaria, the party leadership is secular. Furthermore, the MRF is well-embedded into the Bulgarian political elite and has good relations with Russia. This led to internal clashes when the then president of the party, Lütfi Mestan expressed a strongly pro-Turkey stance when it downed a Su-24 jet which entered into its airspace on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2015. Mestan was removed from his position, demonstrating that the real leadership is still in the hands of the founder of the party, Ahmet Doğan, who was not co-opted by Turkey. Shortly after the political fiasco, Mestan started to organise a new party with Ankara's support. His new political organisation, Democrats for Responsibility, Solidarity and Tolerance or DOST (which means 'friend' in Turkish) was founded in 2016 and participated in the general elections in March 2017. However it fell short of entering the parliament while the MRF could maintain the majority of Turkish votes and stay in the legislation.

The emergence of a strongly pro-Ankara Turkish party clearly highlights the internal divisions in the Turkish minority leadership. Ankara has demonstrated its support to Mestan: at the DOST's founding conference many Turks participated from Turkey, such as Fatma Betül Kaya, the deputy chairperson of the AKP at the time, the deputy chairman of the MHP Semih Yalçın and the Turkish ambassador to Sofia, Süleyman Gökçe (Balkan Insight, 12/04/2016). Later, Turkish Minister of Labour Mehmet Müezzinoğlu called Bulgarian Turks to vote for the DOST in the 2017 general

elections, which was also a sign of open political support from the AKP (Novinite, 06/03/2017).

According to the Bulgarian Prosecutor-General, an independent NGO called Batu Platform Association working in the mainly Turkish minority-inhabited Kircaali illegally supported the DOST's campaign. Allegedly the organisation received some 100,000 EUR in a transfer via a Turkish bank to buy food packages and later distribute among the DOST's members and activists (Balkaneu, 20/10/2017). Furthermore Turkey's support infuriated the nationalist Bulgarian parties who called the DOST a 'Trojan horse' of Ankara.

Certainly, Mestan's party was not the only attempt from Ankara to launch a counter-hegemony project against the MRF. Kasim Dal, who was also a prominent figure of the party, founded a new organisation which received even less votes than the DOST. Until now, the DOST has posed the greatest threat to the MRF, but despite Ankara's support it could not convince the majority of Bulgarian Turkish voters. It received strong support from the Bulgarian voters living in Turkey which meant that the AKP's support was influential for this electorate (Çelikdönmez, 2017).

Concerning the Turkish political organisations, the AKP's local branch has to be mentioned. The so-called Union of European Turkish Democrats (UETD), which was established in Germany as foreign affiliate of the party in 2004, has created local branches all over Europe where a measurable Turkish (citizen) community was available. For the Balkans, the number of Turkish citizens is small, it varies around 25-30 thousand altogether. Its most important political dimension – the number of voters – is also negligible compared to Western Europe. The number of voters enlisted for the 2018 elections was 1,350 in Albania, only 2,462 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1,667 voters in Kosovo, 2,517 in Macedonia, 571 in Serbia, and 6,819 in Romania, whereas Bulgaria had the highest number of possible voters with 7,602 registered people (Turkish Electoral Committee, 2018). Among these countries UETD owns local branches only in two countries, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia.

Naturally, its main focus is on Germany where more than half a million Turkish voters live, however, it appeared in smaller communities as well. It aims to promote the AKP in the diaspora, thus it organises meetings, conferences and intends to boost pro-AKP sentiments in the electorate. Usually during the campaign periods in Turkey, the local branches host Turkish ministers, or even the prime minister or the president of the Republic. Due to the location of the community, the centre of gravity is in western



Europe, mainly in Germany, in the Netherlands and in Austria. Nevertheless, the gradual deterioration of the relations between these countries and Ankara, in parallel with an erosion of the public image of the Turkish regime, has led to diplomatic crises over campaigning in these countries before the 2017 constitutional referendum. By this time these three countries prohibited the campaign of Turkish ministers and even the president's participation in these activities. This rule has been kept, thus for the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2018 general elections the AKP's leadership chose another country as the site of its largest campaign meeting for the diaspora, namely Sarajevo. The event received major media coverage, highlighting Bosnia's importance in the AKP's narrative.

Other political allies can be parties and communities that have more affiliation with religion. In the mostly secular context in southeast Europe, the list is tiny. As "Muslim" heritage and identity suffered huge losses during the communist era, the revival of Islam after 1989 did not reach high levels in the region despite the endeavours of various Gulf actors, the Diyanet and Turkish faith-based religious networks. Religiosity declined and identity politics were rather based on secular national identity than on religion. This is especially true for Albanians, whose nation-building process focused on language rather than faith. For Turks in Bulgaria, their identity was shaped by strong secular Turkish nationalism between the two World Wars and an anti-religious communist modernisation. Among Albanian communities, the more religious groups are more positive to the AKP, nevertheless, its influence remained questionable.

Seemingly the most influential political partner of the AKP is the SDA in Bosnia. The Bosniak nation-building process, especially its recent chapters have given more importance to Islam. The war in Bosnia, which was interpreted by many as a clash of civilizations, strengthened this feature. Moreover, the Dayton Agreement (1995) codified 'nationalism' as an integral part of the state system, a nationalism that emerged along religious divisions. The SDA, as the 'owner' of the heritage of Alija Izetbegović, has become a good partner for the AKP. In particular, its leader, Bakir Izetbegović is always present at Erdoğan's visits and has close relations with him. The benefits beyond the political marketing could be detected during the clash with the Gülenists. The party's member, Kaplan condemned the movement's activities in the country. Due to the SDA's strong presence in the Federal Assembly, and the influence of Izetbegović, any similar declarations threaten the Gülenists' positions. Nevertheless, the bottle is half-empty: despite the good relations the SDA had no real willingness or real power to chase the movement from the country.

A more recently founded political party in Macedonia also hit the headlines. The Movement BESA was created by Bilal Kasami and Zeqirija Ibrahim, Chief Editor of Shenja magazine in 2014 as an anti-establishment party seeking justice, freedom and the fight against corruption. The party scored a surprise victory in the December 2017 elections in Macedonia, when it received some 5 percent of votes. However, despite its success and challenge to the 'established' Albanian parties, the BESA entered weathered an internal crisis at the beginning of 2018. Since its establishment it was associated by its political adversaries as a pro-Turkey and pro-Erdoğan party getting support from Turkey. The party leadership denied Ankara's support (Balkan Insight, 24/10/2014).

The work of the Turkish institutions and faith-based religious networks achieved success in many ways. It is fair to say that both co-optation via socialisation and education (in Turkey or at home in Turkish schools) as well as financial incentives have led to the emergence of a growing pro-Turkey, pro-Islam elite, especially in the Western Balkans. By creating local associations, foundations, or even political movements, this elite contributes to the strengthening of Turkey's position in the region. Despite their emerging number, these pro-Turkey groups could not ensure enough influence to conquer the most important political positions in the countries and they have remained rather marginal, even if they can show noteworthy results in their respective fields.

The great difficulty for the projection of the AKP's hegemonic project in the Balkans is that the social context is vastly different in southeast Europe, and there are comparatively fewer groups that can identify themselves with the AKP's neo-Ottoman identity politics emphasising the role of Islam. Nevertheless, their number is growing, but in the current political situation in the Balkans, no major changes are expected in the upcoming years.

Moreover, the slow advance of Turkey-related groups suffered a backlash after the 15<sup>th</sup> July coup attempt. The effect of the domestic conflict between the AKP and the Gülenist movement damaged Turkey's positions abroad and led to a deepening internal division of Turks, or pro-Turkey people in the Balkans.

### **3. Turkey`s economic relations with the Balkans**

#### **3.1. The role of economy in Turkish foreign policy**

This chapter intends to reveal the economic principles of Turkey`s foreign policy. In line with the internal, neoliberal transformation of Turkey, its diplomacy also got new impetus towards stronger representation and protection of Turkish economic interests. As shown in earlier chapters, the literature has already touched this topic. Kemal Kirişçi argued that Turkey is a trading state aiming to boost economic relations to gain new markets for trade and investment. Others also emphasized that the economic considerations serve as a base for Turkish activism (Pintér, 2013, Szigetvári, 2018). The country`s economic opening to Africa was also described mainly as an economic-driven phenomenon. Pundits even pointed out the role of Turkish business interests in sending military troops to the struggling Somalia.

Under the AKP era, Turkey has become the 17<sup>th</sup> biggest economy in the World (in 2016) thus member of G20. It also pushed forward an ambitious agenda by including economic goals in the ‘Turkey 2023’ aims, such as becoming one of the 10 biggest economy, reaching its total GDP 2 trillion dollars and 25 000 dollars GDP/Capita, an employment rate higher than 50% and unemployment rate below 5%, reaching an export of 500 million dollar per year and constituting the World`s total trade 1.45 percent instead of 1.2 in 2012. (Republic of Turkey Export Strategy).

In order to achieve its goals in the envisioned Export Strategy, eight sub strategies have been identified in eight areas such as 1) Culture, 2) Education, 3) IT, 4) Transportation, 5) Logistics 6) Tourism 7) Healthcare, 8) Construction export strategy. Nearly one hundred state institutions are involved in the realization of these strategies; some of them, like the Yunus Emre Institute, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the TIKA and so on were already mentioned in the previous chapters. Interlocking the foreign policy institutions with economic goals clearly highlights the increasing neo-liberal features of the Turkish foreign policy.

Economic interests have always played a role in AKP`s commitment to the EU accession – at least in the first years in power –, and until today economic considerations are important in maintaining the EU accession negotiations despite the fact that currently they are stalled. The launch of the accession negotiations in 2005 had

a strong effect on Turkish economy: the incoming FDI started to rise sharply mainly due to investments of European companies. The EU-Turkey Customs Union also had a positive effect on the Turkish economy, nevertheless its partiality (it is not implemented in every sector) and other deficiencies (Free trade agreement signed by EU are not applied automatically on Turkey) compel Ankara to seek the updating and improvement of the agreement (EC/Impact Assessment/21/12/2016).

As a whole, EU candidacy and accession talks were important for international investors to believe Turkey's dedication to market economy and rule of law . On the other hand, the perceptions about the weakening of these principles after 2013/2015 contributed to the emerging difficulties facing the country (devaluating lira, rising inflation and unemployment rate).

Nevertheless after 2002, the AKP was always insisting on boosting economic relations. The importance of economic incentives in Turkey's foreign policy could be detected by the rocketing number of free trade agreements. While the country has 24 agreements, 17 of them were signed during the AKP.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore new dialogue institutions have been established. The so-called High-level Strategic Councils (Yüksek Düzeyli Stratejik İşbirliği Konseyi) serve as the highest-level forum for Turkish and foreign decision makers and businessmen to find common interest and sign investment supporting agreements. The first council has been established with Brazil in 2006. Until the end of 2017, Turkey has created 20 councils and in 2010 it also created a High-level Strategic Council with the involvement of four countries: Turkey, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. During the last more than a decade, 537 agreements were concluded at these council meetings (Çavuşoğlu, 2018, 7).

The export oriented policy required the country to boost its investment promoting and foreign trade supporting institutions. In 2006, the Investment Support and Promotion Agency of Turkey (ISPAT) was founded subordinated to the Prime Minister's Office. The originally small institute of 30 staff members doubled its size after 2010 (ISPAT, 2018).

Sectoral and geographical incentives were also introduced during the AKP era. Firstly, it continued to maintain all 19 Free Zones (established during the 1990s and aiming to attract foreign investors by providing special regulatory treatment) and it also implemented a new investment incentive regime in 2012 (Ekonomi Bakanlığı, 2018) in

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<sup>61</sup> The first one was signed in 1991 with the EFTA while the remaining 23 agreements were usually bilateral.

order to direct investors towards the less developed regions and simultaneously facilitate the arrival of new technologies.

The Turkish Eximbank, which has been established in 1987, has supported Turkish foreign trade by 22 billion dollars in 2016 which covered some 23 percent of the total amount of the country's trade. In order to facilitate the situation of Turkish companies, it opened new offices in major cities of the country; in 2017, it established offices in Denizli, Bursa, Adana, Konya, Kasyeri and more in Istanbul (Türk Eximbank: Hakkimizda, 2018).

In 2011, after restructuring the foreign trade support institutions, the Ministry of Economy has become the main depository of trade, but it also works on boosting investment opportunities. The Ministry possesses a network of more than 200 economic attachés employed at the Turkish embassies and consulates in a number of countries – in such a circumstance the increase of foreign missions played a crucial role in boosting economic relations all around the world. Nevertheless, the attaché system is just one pillar in promoting Turkish investment and trade. The Ministry organizes and supports various events, sometimes in close cooperation with other institutions and business associations. In some cases it also sponsors companies to join foreign exhibitions, to make market analysis and gives them information about the prospective markets in terms of legislation etc. Through the Turquality project it helps enterprises to create their own brand etc. (Ekonomi Bakanlığı, İhracat destekleri, 2018)

Furthermore, it has established diverse, business supporting regimes in order to help Turkish enterprises to enter foreign markets. It has to be emphasized that this promotion activity is realized with the cooperation of business associations which constitute an important part of Turkish economic policy.

Other important feature of Turkey's economy and trade policy stems from the leverage of business associations. As we have already mentioned, a number of them, like TÜSIAD, MÜSIAD, TUSKON or TOBB have been being a strong actor not just in shaping the economic policy but influencing domestic politics as well. They had been usually established much before the AKP came to power, however, the party got strong support, especially in the early 2000s from them to push forward liberalizing the country's economic policy.

The main, government related establishment, the DEİK was initiated by Turgut Özal who wanted an institution which represents and accumulates the interests of various business groups. Although the DEİK is a state organization, it serves as the main

business association promoting foreign investment opportunities for Turkish companies (Özcan-Turunç, 2011).

The Turkish government supports Turkish companies at highest level via mainly four incentives:

- 1) Business delegations. Usually a number of businessmen, sometime even several hundreds of them escort the President of the Republic or the Prime Minister at the official trips. These visits give the opportunity to the business groups to find partners in the destination country, simultaneously getting political support from top Turkish officials.
- 2) Business forums. The economic forums initiated by various business associations play an efficient role in boosting relations. The former ally, the TUSKON was especially active in this field and was a major actor in shaping the Africa policy. Its business forum in 2005 got governmental support, when Abdullah Gül participated in the event thus demonstrating the support of the state. In the same year, the government decided to focus on Africa by declaring it the “Year of Africa.” As a consequence, the number of Turkish embassies and consulates in the region has skyrocketed.
- 3) Strategy making. Major business associations, but especially the Turkish Exporters Assembly, the TİM plays an influential role in shaping and creating Turkey’s foreign economy policy. The TİM initiated the current foreign trade strategy of the country, and participated along with other association in its preparation. It was the TİM who managed to gain governmental support to launch Turkey’s main business branding project, the TURQUALITY in the mid-2010s and the ‘Turkey: Discover the potential campaign’ that has become the official slogan campaign for TURQUALITY project. The DEİK added the issue of Diaspora strategy to the agenda pointing out the economic incentives in Diaspora politics. Its sub institution established to represent business interests of the Diaspora, the DTİK seeks to strengthen the relations of Turkish businessmen living home and abroad.
- 4) Business promotion. The Ministry of Economy in line with the TİM established the chain of Turkish Trade Centers (TTM) which main goal is to represent and host small and medium sized Turkish companies abroad. The selected firms got financial support to establish their office/showroom/depo abroad, more exactly in a given business centre rent

by TİM. Thus, the TİM serve as a supportive hub for the related Turkish companies.

Thus, these incentives have facilitated the economic ‘success story’ of Turkey. During the AKP, the country’s average yearly GDP growth was between 3 and 7 percent. The total GDP has increased from USD 238.428 Billion in 2002 to USD 863.712 Billion in 2016 in current prices. The change in GDP/capita followed the same trend: USD 9 330 in 2002 while it rose to USD 25 247; the PPP GDP/Capita USD 3660 to 10 862. To put into comparison: for the same period, in case of Hungary, these values were USD 14 549 USD to USD 26 700 USD and USD 6 665 USD 12 820, respectively (World Bank, 2018).

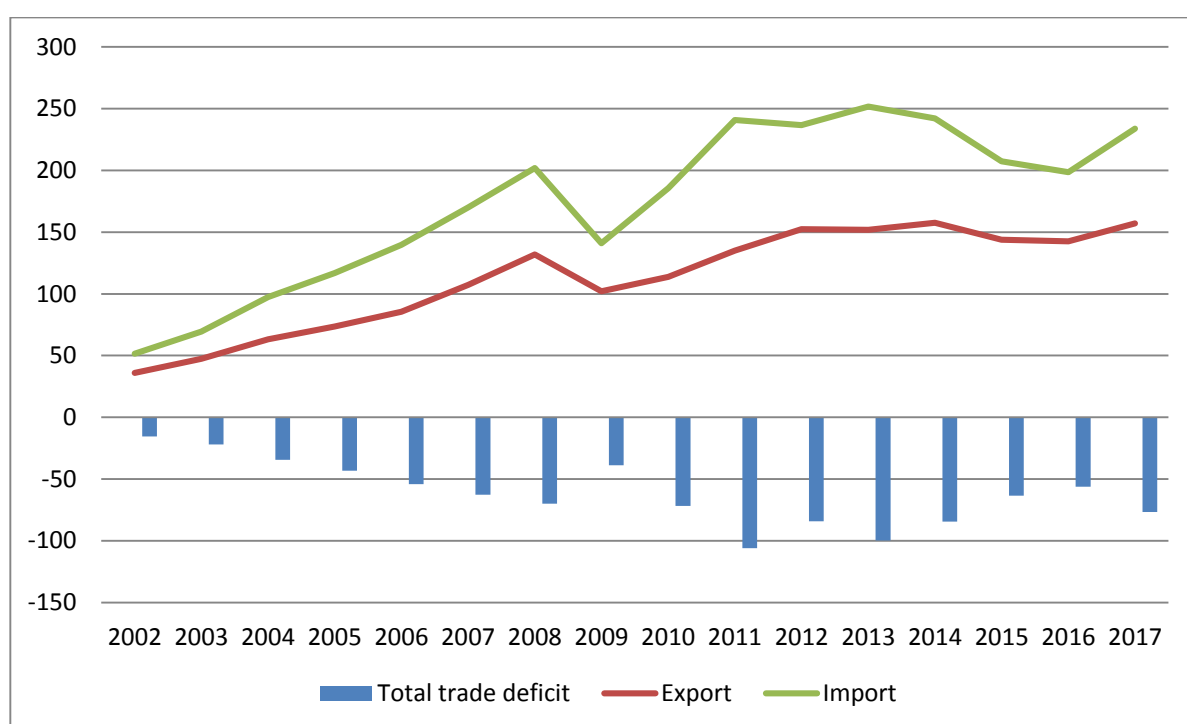


Chart 6. The evoluion of Turkey’s export and import during the AKP era, Billion USD  
(Source: TÜRSKTAT)

The volume of foreign trade of Turkey also increased during the AKP era (Chart 6.). In 2002, its export was 36 Billion USD while its import was only 51.5 Billion USD. Fifteen years later, in 2017 its export reached 157 Billion USD and the country’s import increased to almost 234 Billion USD (TURKSTAT). As the chart shows, this increase was not linear, and the financial crisis of 2008-2009 led to a strong downturn, however, the country could recover relatively fast. As the chart shows, during this time Turkey had to face a growing trade deficit. This deficit is mainly based on the country’s reliance on crude oil and gas as well as high value-added manufactured products, especially

from Western Europe. The trade deficit also makes Turkey's balance of payment negative giving vulnerability to the economy. Despite the AKP's commitment to the export-oriented economic policy, Ankara was not able to handle the deficit; even the country's integration in the world economy increased its imports rather than the export. Much of Turkey 2023 goals were just partially achieved. In the current circumstances, it is likely that the country will not be able to reach its self-imposed aims during the next five years. The abovementioned problems, such as political challenges and security issues, diplomatic crises threatening foreign trade and investments (especially with Russia and EU countries), deteriorating economic perceptions about the country (decision of credit rating agencies etc.) affect Turkey. Subsequently, the difficulties of the Turkish economy can decrease its capabilities to extend economic power to the Balkans if the AKP cannot find the antidote for these challenges.



### **3.2. Evaluation of Turkish-Balkans economic relations**

#### **Overall economic picture of the Balkans**

The previous chapters have revealed the importance of the economic and social transformation in Turkey that outlined the need for a more economy and business oriented foreign policy. The frequent high-level visits in the Balkan countries, the fairs and events organized by business associations also drew the attention to growing Turkish interests and influence in the region. The increase in Turkish political activities is not and cannot be decoupled from Ankara's economic interests in the region. Nevertheless, the dynamics in economic relations differ slightly from those in politics.

By looking at the Balkans, one can state that the region during the last twenty years has faced various political and economic problems which damaged its economic performance. Especially the 90s have created a challenging period: the dissolution of Yugoslavia followed by wars and ethnic cleansing, mass emigration toward Western Europe and to neighbouring countries (e.g. the war in Kosovo in 1999 that pushed some two hundred thousand people to Macedonia causing huge economic and political challenges for the country) in line with the difficulties of the regime changes and transition from state-planned to free-market economy. These countries went through huge losses in welfare, social capacity and productivity (Gabrisch, 2015, 309).

After the end of turmoil of the 90's, the economic outlook the region has become more favourable: the prospect of accession to the European Union (especially after the summit of Thessaloniki, 2003) interrelating to the financial assistance programmes and the launch of Stability Agreements contributed to the stabilisation of the economy of these countries, even though the amount of assistance from the EU raised criticism. Moreover, some regional economic integration organisation has been formed. The BSEC, founded in 1992 has usually given more opportunities for countries being the Eastern part of the peninsula (Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey which group was enlarged by Serbia and Montenegro in 2004).

The Eastern part of the region, avoiding deep economic and political turmoil (Romania, Bulgaria) and the more developed Western states of the former-Yugoslavia, Slovenia and Croatia providing more efforts towards the EU have become members of the Union. These changes contributed to the massive inflow of investments and steady economic growth in these countries, especially after 2005 when they could benefit from

either the prospect of or the actual EU Member State status. The remaining part of the Balkans, albeit instability continued to be permanent part of problems (among others dissolution of the Federal Republic of Serbia and Montenegro in 2006; clashes in Kosovo in 2004, 2011, and the declaration of his disputed independence in 2008; constant inter-ethnic tensions in Macedonia, political crises in Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina) also benefited from the overall growth.

This favourable progress was halted by the financial crisis reaching the region at end of 2008. In 2009, Western Balkan countries had to face an average of 3.9% GDP contraction (Zeneli, 2014, 53). During the upcoming years, South-eastern European countries had to face significant recession resulting increasing unemployment, social tensions and budget deficits triggering austerity measures and the request for IMF packages in order to help recovering the economy. The financial crises triggered a fall of remittances of expatriates and a downturn in FDI especially in the Western Balkans where the decrease was around 30% in 2009 (Zeneli, 2014, 54). The spillover effect for the fragile Balkan countries facing high unemployment and weak institutions was harsh when the Eurozone crisis hit Greece. The Greek state which was an active and influential political and economic actor in the 1990s and 2000s had to face deep economic downturn, social and political instabilities as well as perpetual bailout packages forced by the EU. The crisis weakened its position over the region (especially in the financial sector, as Greek banks were active in Bulgaria, Albania etc.) that granted Turkey a special status (Fisher-Onar –Watson, 2013, 413-416). Ankara's positive image of sustainable economic growth, its successful handling of the crises created favourable circumstances for economic power projection. It is not a coincidence, that even Serbia, a traditionally reluctant country toward Turkey intended to increase the cooperation and was ready to sign a free trade agreement during these crisis years.

After 2011, a slow but steady economic growth returned to the region, however, its scale has remained low compared to the booming years of 2005-2007. Recent years show a more promising economic performance in case of these countries. Especially Romania and Bulgaria demonstrated a strong GDP growth by benefiting from the favourable international economic circumstances and EU funds. Nevertheless, even these changes could not overwrite the region relative underdevelopment and poverty compared to the neighbouring regions (especially in the Western Balkans), that led to the mass emigration of population toward wealthier EU member states (especially Italy,

Austria, Germany and the UK) and also, in a limited extent, towards Turkey (Istanbul/Marmara region). Nevertheless, the emigration did not affect these countries in the same manner; while some have to face with lack of workforce, others have high unemployment (Macedonia, Kosovo etc.).

By losing millions of people and having an aging population with decreasing and low fertility rate, even the sustainability of economic growth is questioned. Alarms are ringing because of the sharp decline of population in Bulgaria and Romania, but smaller states, like Croatia, BiH are also affected by this phenomenon. Even Albania and Kosovo – countries having relatively high fertility rate and young population – lose high percentage of their inhabitants due to the emigration. The thesis does not want to address this problem, but highlight its relevancy for Turkish economic (and political) interests: decreasing and aging population means decreasing market that weakens Turkish business perspectives in the region on the long-run. The fragmentation of the region resulting in smaller markets, the relatively high corruption also makes the Balkans less attractive economic market.

	2007- 2008	2008- 2009	2009- 2010	2010- 2011	2011- 2012	2012- 2013	2013- 2014	2014- 2015
<b>Albania</b>	109	108	96	88	78	89	95	97
<b>BiH</b>	106	107	109	102	100	88	87	n.a.
<b>Bulgaria</b>	79	76	76	71	74	62	57	54
<b>Croatia</b>	57	61	72	77	76	81	75	77
<b>Macedonia</b>	94	89	84	79	79	80	73	63
<b>Montenegro</b>	64	65	62	49	60	72	67	67
<b>Romania</b>	74	68	64	67	77	78	76	59
<b>Serbia</b>	91	85	93	96	95	95	101	94
<b>Turkey</b>	53	63	61	61	59	43	44	45

Table 13. Ranking of Competitiveness of SEE countries (Source: World Economic Forum)

The weakening of the EU's transformative power can also have disadvantageous effects on the middle-income countries of the Balkan. Even the implementation of the neoliberal economic model based on the Washington consensus had huge deficiencies (Zeneli, 2014, 57). Despite the efforts, these countries' productivity and competitiveness had remained low, even compared to Turkey which managed to achieve a higher rank over the last decade (see Table 13).

The region also possesses some advantages which was attractive to (Turkish) investors. First, the Balkan states have cheap labour force that leads to relatively cheaper

production (however low labour productivity counterweights it). Furthermore, its proximity to EU markets and strategic position also boost a favourable economic image. Its relative wealth of resources opened investment opportunities. Furthermore, while elite in the 1990s were not able to realize the economic reforms, these measures were postponed to the 2000s, especially in the Western Balkans. As neoliberal policies gained momentum, mass privatizations were launched providing opportunities for foreign investors; Turks also benefited from this (see later).

### **Turkish economic interests and policies**

Ankara's economic relations with the Balkans were shaped by its export-oriented neoliberal economic policies. Thus, it also intended to establish the economic regime portrayed in previous chapter, like signing bilateral agreements about investment, free trade etc. and also founding high-level business councils. Nevertheless, as it was already explained, the neoliberal economic policy in Turkey is not the AKP's invention, nevertheless, it continued its implementation.

Turkish and regional authorities have signed a number of agreements to boost economic ties as tables 14-16 show. The main feature of these agreements is based on political and economic stability in case of given country. As Balkan countries have left behind the planning economy and pushed towards market economy and further integration into the world economy their readiness to sign trade and other economic agreements have risen. Turkey has managed to conclude these agreements with the relatively stable countries which avoided any wars in the mid-1990's such as with few exemption with Romania and Bulgaria or Albania. The fact that some countries have gained independence during this period has also affected the signature of these agreements: before 2006 it was impossible to conclude them with Kosovo or Montenegro.

By analysing these agreements, it can be stated that the AKP has managed to fill the hiatus that could have not been done in the Western Balkans due to the wars in 1990's. Bilateral investment agreements were signed with Croatia and Serbia, free trade agreements with Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, and double taxation agreements with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. It is important to emphasize that while the some of these agreements were signed by previous government in the 1990's, overwhelming majority of them (especially the free trade agreements) came to

force just during the AKP's era. By facilitating export and import Turkey could reach a better turnover in its trade and investment.

Country name	bilateral investment agreement	
	signature	In force
Albania	1/06/1992	26/12/1996
Bosnia and Herzegovina	21/01/1998	10/02/2009
Bulgaria	6/07/1994	22/09/1997
Croatia	18/02/2009	
Kosovo	14/07/1995	31/12/2017
Macedonia	14/07/1995	27/10/1997
Montenegro	-	-
Romania	02/03/2001	10/12/2003
Serbia	03/03/2008	08/07/2010

Table 14. Biletarel inverstment agreements between Turkey and SEE countries (Source: Ministry of Economy)

Country name	Signature	Entry to force
Albania	22/12/2006	01/05/2008
Bosnia and Herzegovina	03/07/2002	01/07/2003
Bulgaria	06/03/1995	01/01/2007
Croatia	6/03/1995	01/07/2013
Kosovo	-	-
Macedonia	07/09/1999	01/09/2000
Montenegro	26/11/2008	01/03/2010
Romania	6/03/1995	01/01/2007
Serbia	1/06/2009	01/09/2010

Table 15. Free Trade agreements between Turkey and SEE countries (Source: Ministry of Economy)

Country name	Signature
Albania	04/04/1996
Bosnia and Herzegovina	16/02/2005
Bulgaria	07/07/1994
Croatia	22/07/1997
Kosovo	28/05/2009
Macedonia	16/06/1995
Montenegro	12/10/2005
Romania	15/06/1997
Serbia	12/10/2005

Table 16. Double Taxation Agreements between Turkey and SEE countries (Source: Ministry of Economy)

The establishment of supportive economic regime for Turkish trade and investment strengthened the formation of business support intuitions in the region. Turkey has at least one economic attaché in every Balkan country.

### Evaluation of economic relations

The foreign trade of Turkey was booming during the AKP's period. Its value rose by six times from nearly 70 billion of USD in 2001 to 400 billion in 2014. The export increased from 31 billion to approximately 160 billion USD while the import rose from 41 billion to 240 billion USD. The foreign trade with the Balkans closely followed this spectacular change, even the region managed to increase its weight within the trade. The exports and imports between Turkey and the region have increased between 2002 and 2017 from 1.3 billion to USD 8.4 billion (export) and from 1.2 billion to USD 6.3 billion (import). The export share of these countries rose from 3.7 to 5.3 percent while the import from 2.3 percent to 2.7 percent.

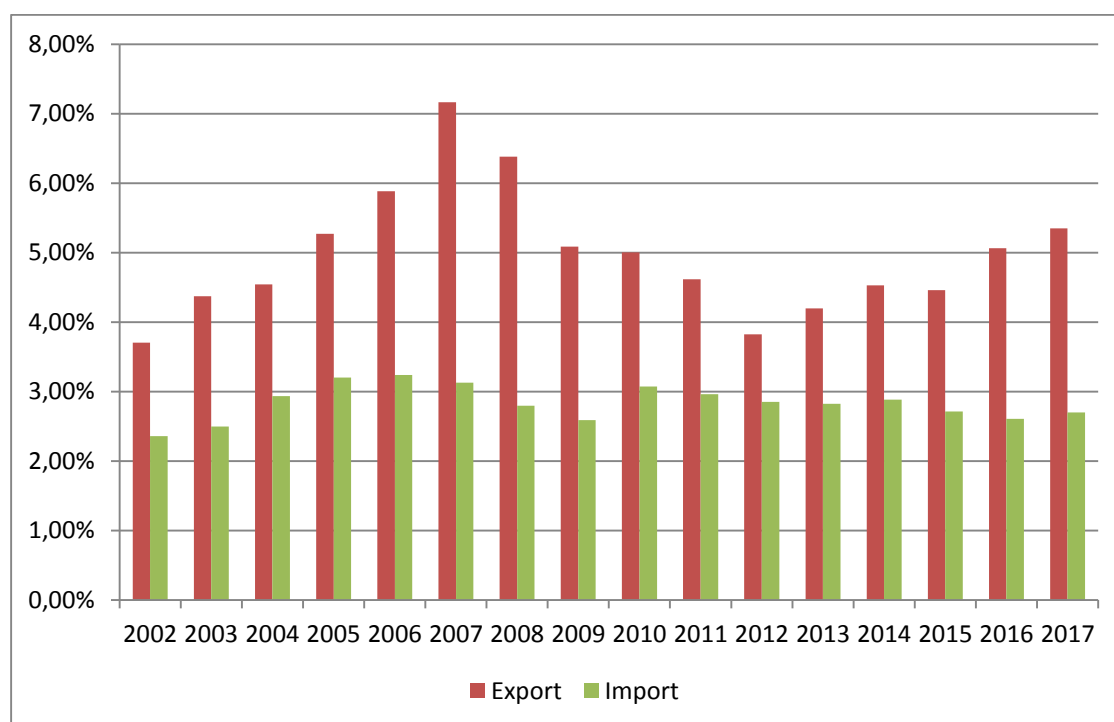


Chart 8. Share of Balkan countries' exort and import in Turkey's trade (Source: TÜRKSTAT)

Nevertheless, this change was also not linear. The export increased sharply until 2007, while the upcoming years caused a decline in the Balkans's share in Turkey's export and imports. The economic downturn was relatively short in Turkey whose GDP growth already returned to its pre-crisis level by 2010. Meanwhile Balkans states reacted differently to the crisis. Small and less-open economies, like Bosnia and Herzegovina or the Kosovo were less affected due to their relative low integration to the international markets. Crisis management also affected these countries' economies

while some (e. g. Romania) implemented a harsh austerity package that later facilitated the economic growth while others (like Croatia or Serbia) were slow to address the crisis.

Following the downturn in 2008-2009, the slow economic recovery helped to revive the foreign trade, however, it could not reach the previous levels. The crisis had another effect. It not just reduced the volume of trade but also cut the Turkish export to these countries as their demand for import goods have decreased. The recovery shows that the import from Turkey started to grow leading to a new trade sufficit in Turkey. This decrease of export and import stopped in 2013 mainly due to Romania's and Bulgaria's increasing trade volume with Turkey.

The balance of trade has also changed several times during the AKP's rule. Usually Turkey has a tight trade sufficit with the Balkan countries except the years of 2010-2013 when it had to face with measurable trade deficit. Despite the growing sufficit in recent years, its level could not reach that of the 2006-2007 period (Chart 9).

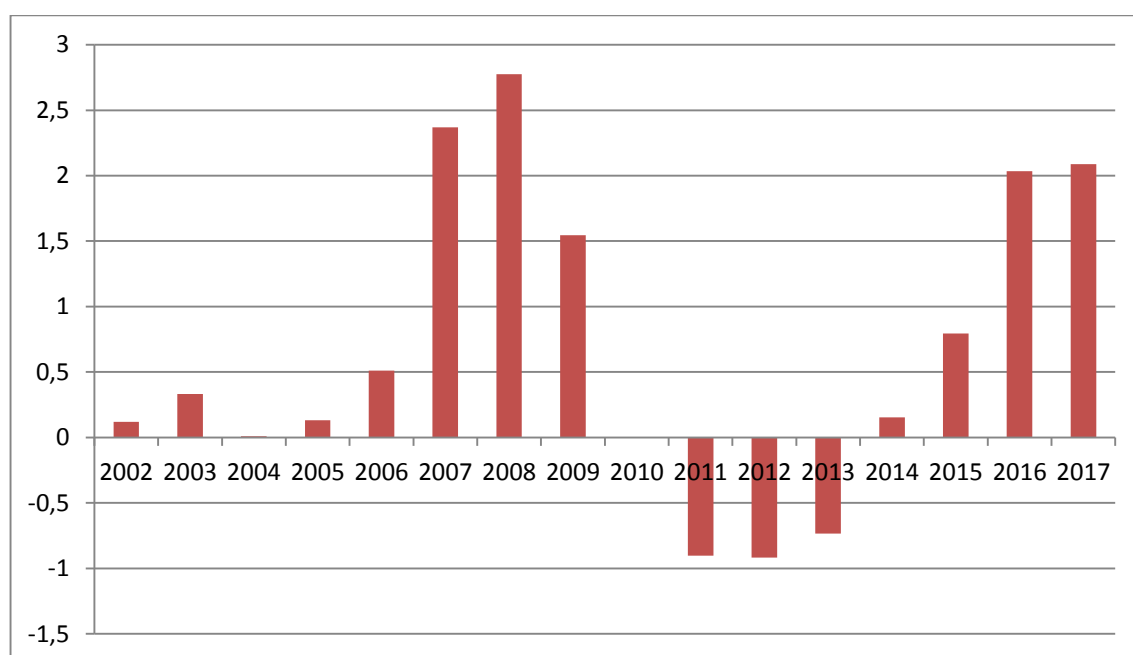


Chart 9. Turkey's trade of balance with SEE countries (Billion USD) (Source: TÜRKSTAT)

The analysis of foreign trade relations shows that the main trading partners of Turkey are Romania and Bulgaria. Romania represented some 40 percent; Bulgaria received almost 30 percent of the total regional export in 2014. The import has been similar: in 2014, Romania's share from to total import to Turkey was 47 percent while Bulgaria's was around 40 percent. This value highlights the double-face of the Turkish interests. Although Ankara claims that it is committed to boost economic relations with

the Western Balkans, seemingly Turkish business groups prefer to choose greater and closer markets. Romania with its population of 19-20 million, Bulgaria with 7.3 million inhabitants give more than half of the total population of Southeastern Europe. Not just the size and the distance affect the foreign trade, although these are the major factors that explain these countries share. Romania's and Bulgaria's accession to the European Union in 2007 also improved the prospects for trade as Turkey is the member of the customs union since 1996.

The second group – former Yugoslav states and Albania – has relatively balanced export relations with Turkey as the Chart 10 shows. While they diverge according to their level of development and size of their population, the picture is more complex. Kosovo's relatively high proportion in the Turkish export, compared to its size can draw attention.

Nevertheless, Turkey's import is minuscule from these countries. The main trading partners from this group are Serbia and Croatia – the most developed ones – while Kosovo's export towards Turkey is almost negligible. However, recently Bosnia and Herzegovina's share within Turkish import started to increase from its nadir 10.5 percent in 2011 to 22 percent in 2014 within this country group.



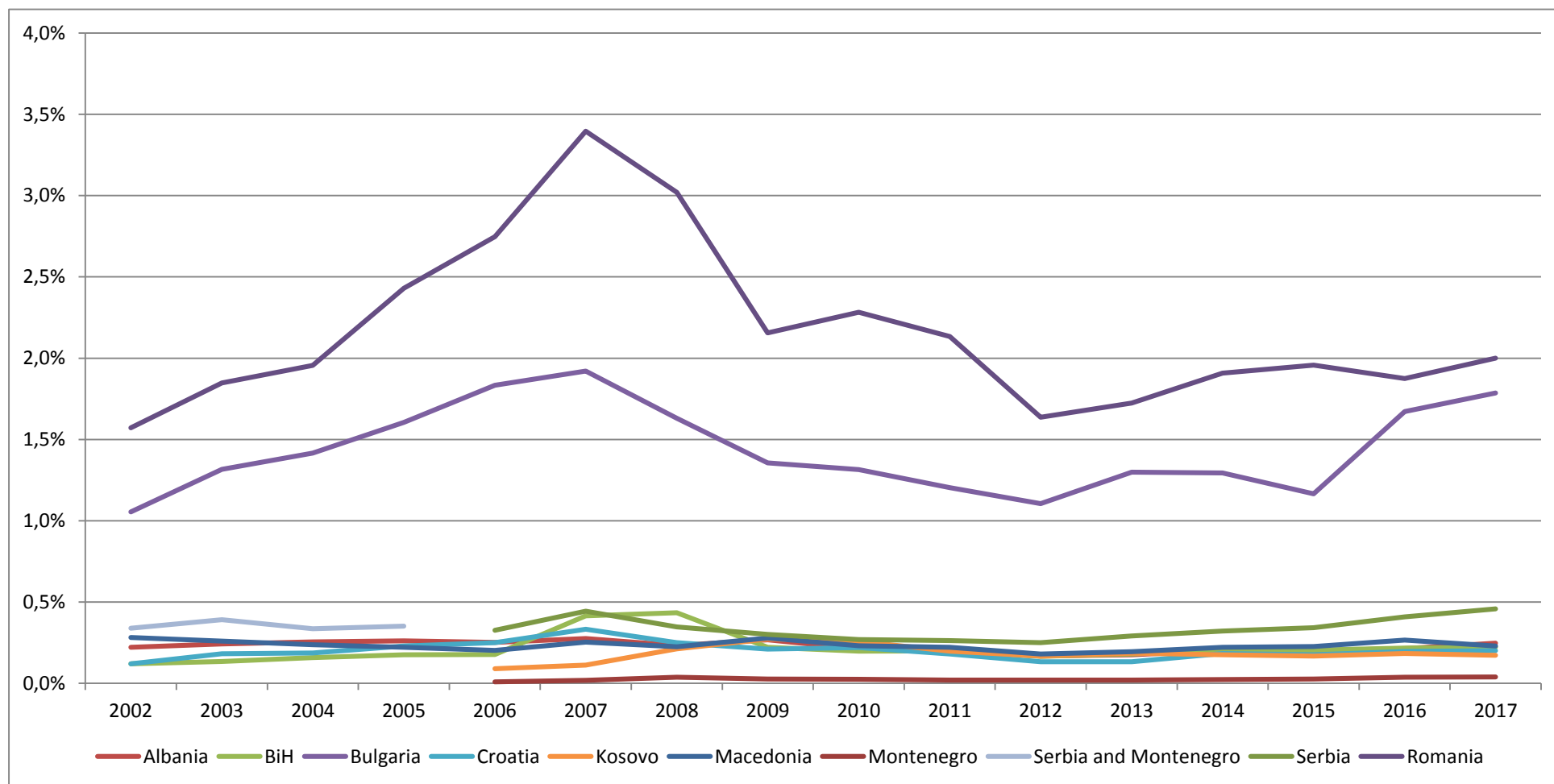


Chart 10. SEE countries' share in Turkey's export (%) (Source: TÜRKSTAT)

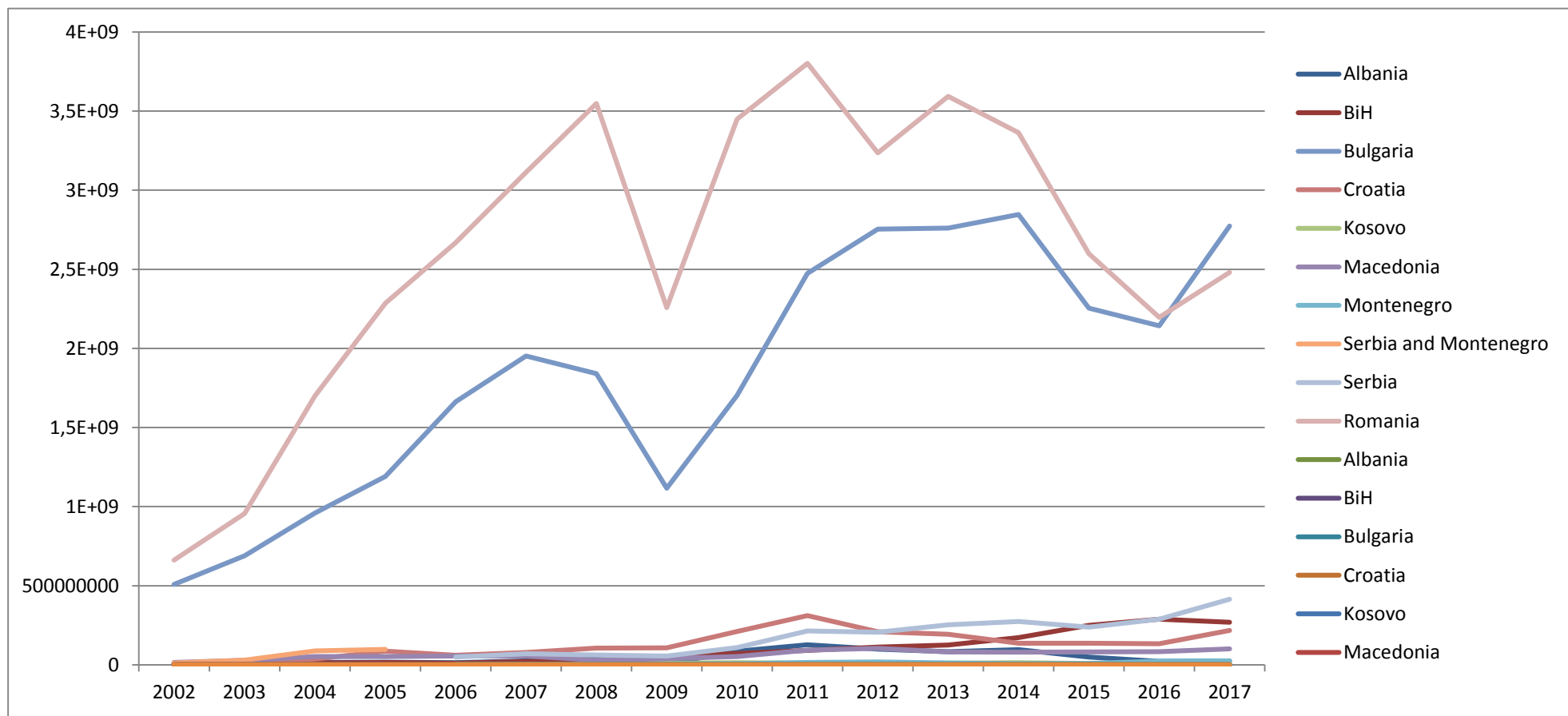


Chart 11. SEE countries' share in Turkey's import (%) (Source: TÜRKSTAT)

While Balkan countries play a limited role in Turkey's trade and investment, the economic importance of Turkey for these states also remains narrow. Despite the efforts, the country could not become a major trading partner of the region. Turkey usually occupies the 7-10th position among the most important trading partners which is far from being crucial for these countries. Germany, Italy and even Hungary and other regional countries usually have bigger volume of trade with the region than Turkey.

Furthermore, Turkey's export and import to the Balkan countries also remains under 10 percent, even if one can notice a narrow increase in recent years, and the volume of imports coming from Turkey are skyrocketing in Albania and Kosovo. In the case of major trading partners such as Bulgaria and Romania Turkey's share is rather in decline than in increase. Based on the trend, only Kosovo and Albania have the prospect in the near future to become dependent (more than 10 percent of imports or exports from a given country) on Turkey, nevertheless, the economic struggle in the Anatolian country questions the sustainability of the positive trend.

In line with the relatively small volume of trade, Turkish investments also remained limited in these countries. The share of the region within the onward Turkish investment flow has varied between 2.4-5.4 percent within the 2002-2016 period, even if the trend is rather positive as in 2016 it reached 5.34 percent compared to the 3.17 in 2015.

Turkish companies have rather invested in Romania and Bulgaria at the beginning of the period, nevertheless one can see a strong increase in case of Western Balkan countries, such as in BiH and more recently in case of Albania and Kosovo. Enterprises are usually active in construction, financial and telecommunication sectors.

Bulgaria is popular among Turkish investors. According to the Sofia Office of Commercial Councillor, the number of Turkish companies was 55 in 2017, employing more than 10 000 people (Sofya ticaret müşavirliği, 2017, 89)

Şişecam has established several factories, mainly in the Turkish inhabited region – partially due to Kasim Dal's lobbying. In 2012, in cooperation with Qatari companies, Turkish firms started to construct a highway between Ruse and Svilengrad.

Turkish investors' position is the strongest in Albania where they give the third in the total investments in the country. The Çalık Holding in partnership with the Türk Telekom has bought 76% of the Albtelecom. After gaining ground in the IT sector, Çalık Holding acquired BKT bank as well.

In Bosnia, Turkey was the fourth biggest investor in 2016. The Ziraat Bankasi which entered in the Bosnian market right after the end of the war in 1997, has become one of the biggest bank in the country. Turkish Airlines seized 49% of the Bosnian national Airlines in 2008.

In Kosovo, Limak constructed and operates in cooperation with the French Aéroport de Lyon the airport of Prishtina. The Bechtel was awarded by the EUR 700 million highway project. Turkish companies also seized assets in the Telecommunication sector.

In Serbia, Turkish investors have appeared relatively late. Despite the governmental promises, they are rather active in Central Serbia and in Belgrade than in the Bosniak inhabited Sandjak. The Halk Bank opened some offices in the country.

In case of Macedonia, TAV won the tenders for operation of Skopje and Ohrid's airports in 2008. Halk bank has assets in the financial sector.

In Montenegro, the Torcelik company has invested in the aluminum factory of Nikšić. The Global Ports Holding has bought the majority share of Bar's harbor in 2014.

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Albania</b>	0	0	0	2	2	53	162	136	148	17	4	37	37	51	492
<b>BiH</b>	0	17	24	31	34	44	89	181	240	257	252	343	277	193	197
<b>Bulgaria</b>	39	41	46	51	52	54	40	92	76	75	84	89	87	119	261
<b>Croatia</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	9	22	168	174	154	166
<b>Kosovo</b>	0													104	153
<b>Macedonia</b>	0	1	1	1	0	1	22	25	29	110	125	146	137	103	121
<b>Montenegro</b>	0						15	15	18	18	0	61	50	51	39
<b>Serbia</b>	0					1	0	0	0	1	68	19	18	46	76
<b>Romania</b>	125	120	133	159	162	185	263	253	277	244	114	198	189	57	152
<b>TOTAL</b>	164	179	204	244	250	338	591	702	798	731	669	1061	969	878	1657

Table 17. Turkey's onward FDI (directly from Turkey, sotck, million USD) (Source: Central Bank of Turkey)

Important to emphasize, that Turkish businesses usually did not follow the politicians' promises. This is obvious in case of Sandjak region in Serbia, which was frequently visited by Turkish president (Abdullah Gül) and Prime Minister (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan) in 2009-2011. Nevertheless, despite their promises to bring Turkish investors to the region and the seemingly growing activities of TİKA, no Turkish companies have appeared in the region according to the field research done in March 2012.

Country	Turkish companies
Albania	ENKA, Gintaş, Armada, Metal Yapı, Aldemir, Servomatik, Çalık Holding/Türk Telekom, Makro-Tel/Hes Kablo, Istanbul Foundation
BiH	THY
Bulgaria	Şişecam, Alcomet, Nursan Otomotiv Ltd, Techno-Aktaş AD, Sertan Bulgaria Ltd, Teklas, Perfektüp, First Dialysis Services Bulgaria EAD, Türk Ekonomi Bankası (TEB), Çalık Grubu'na ait BKT (Banka Kombetare Tregtare) Türkiye İş Bankası
Croatia	Uzel Grubu, Sembol A.Ş. , Eksen Holding,
Kosovo	Calik, Özerler Holding, Şen Kardeşler Şirketler Grubu, Aksoy Grup, Konak İnşaat, Uluova İnşaat, Enka, Limak, FTM Group Kosova
Macedonia	Halk Bank, TAV, Sisecam, Cevahir Holding
Montenegro	Gintaş Şirketler Grubu'na
Serbia	Halkbank
Romania	Credit Europe, Garanti Bankasi, Ülker

Table 18. Main Turkish companies in SEE (Source: own research)

Table 17. Turkey's onward FDI (directly from Turkey, sotck, million USD)

To sum up, Turkey's economic interests in the Balkans are obvious, however, the region importance for the country is rather limited, even if one can see minor increase in the recent years. Turkish trade rather goes to bigger and closer EU countries, such as Romania and Bulgaria whose share is around 70 percent in the total SEE trade.

The picture is more complex when one analyses the case of investment. Onward Turkish investment also focuses on these two countries, as usually they also give the majority of the Turkish FDI, however, the picture is more balanced in favour of Western Balkan region, especially in case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Moreover, even if Turkish investments are not that strong, they are more visible. The airports in Macedonia, Kosovo are run by Turkish firms, some highways in Bosnia, Bulgaria and Kosovo were constructed by Turks. The Halk bank's logo ruled the view in the main square of Skopje for years.

But as a whole, Turkey cannot compete with other, usually EU players, such as Germany, Austria, Albania and even Hungary in the majority of these countries. Higher share in trade and investment was achieved only in Kosovo and Albania, however, these are too small to really challenge the EU's economic position and importance in these countries. Having an unfavourable economic prospect for Turkey, even its current rank will be challenged by other partners. Thus, despite the strong Turkish commitment to boost its economic influence over the region, this aim was not achieved even if tangible gains and truly increasing economic relations can be detected.

## Conclusion

This piece intended to reveal the internal dynamics of Turkish domestic politics by utilising Antonio Gramsci's theoretical framework about hegemony, reflecting on the neo-Gramscianist writings on neo-liberal hegemony and analysing these dynamics' effects on Turkey's foreign policy in the Balkans. It argued that the AKP under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was successful in becoming a counter-hegemonic actor based on the rising Islamist classes and capital. While it accommodated the neo-liberal economic policy and embedded Turkey into the neo-liberal, globalising world order, it gained enough social legitimacy and power to counter the traditional veto players such as the military and top courts, which served as the last bastions of Kemalist elites. Later, the AKP also defeated the opponents within the Islamist field, most prominently the Gülenist movement and weakened the position of Islamist and nationalist parties (such as the Saadet Partisi, MHP or İYİ) by absorbing the majority of Islamist and conservative voters into its hegemonic bloc.

The AKP was successful in creating its own electoral hegemony. This was based on several factors, such as a perpetual ability to manage political crises and to set the national agenda. It also could benefit from steady economic development and stable growth, especially in the first years of power (until 2007). Later, Turkish economic performance remained sustainable despite internal difficulties (e.g. the decline in of tourism, the devaluation of YTL, the deteriorating business climate, etc.), which did not harm its popularity to a great degree. The government's large-scale infrastructure, education and healthcare programmes also convinced the deprived social classes that the only viable option for them was to keep the AKP in power.

After the emergence of the AKP as a governmental party in 2002, scholars did not predict a long future based on the party's Islamic roots and the fate of its predecessors – banned regularly by the Constitutional Court and removed from power by the army. Although the AKP established a remarkably strong presence in the parliament, with only one opposition party (the Republican People's Party, or CHP), the Kemalist elite and especially the TSK were deeply suspicious of the party's rhetoric, along with its domestic and foreign policy endeavours. Past experiences of the shutting down of former Islamist parties oriented the AKP leadership to use a more pro-



European discourse and follow an EU-compliant policy-making strategy. Accompanied by remarkable economic growth, this policy ensured electoral victory in the following elections. Steady economic growth stabilised the party's position at home, which was rewarded by the start of EU accession negotiations in 2005.

After tackling the threat imposed by the Kemalist establishment – namely the memorandum in April 2007 and the so-called ‘constitutional coup’ attempt by the chief prosecutor and Constitutional Court in 2008 – the AKP continued to increase its influence. This process was – at least indirectly – helped by various investigations and probes, like the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases. These contributed to weakening the opposition forces, as (retired) generals, university presidents, leftist politicians, intellectuals and journalists were detained and later sentenced to prison. These affairs silenced many of the critics of the government. Moreover, they also influenced the relations between the AKP and the army by easing the transformation of the latter's leadership. The next wave of internal fights started at the end of 2013: probes were launched by the judiciary, however this time they aimed at targeting pro-government circles and this step led to a government crisis. This attempt was reframed as a coup attempt by the so-called ‘parallel state’ – the Gülenist movement – and was dealt with through the mass dismissal of suspected Gülenists from state institutions and an open ‘war’ against the movement. This internal struggle culminated in the 15<sup>th</sup> July coup attempt associated with the movement, which ultimately failed and paved the way towards even harsher retaliations and the almost complete annihilation of the movement.

The 2010 constitutional referendum also enhanced the growth of AKP's power as it made it more difficult to ban political parties and changed the Constitutional Court's statute. The general elections in June 2011 granted the highest share of votes in the party's history, nearly 50 percent. Although the second half of the third Erdoğan government's term resulted in unprecedented social unrest and corruption scandals, the AKP managed to overcome these challenges and even won the local elections in March 2014. This era culminated in Erdoğan's victory at the presidential elections in August 2014. He could save its position after the 2015 June elections when the AKP could not seize the simple majority. The snap elections in November secured the party a comfortable majority in the TBMM but the Turkish ‘war on terror’ launched in July 2015 led to the gradual destabilisation of the country, growing insecurity, perpetual attacks by PKK/TAK, ISIS and other terrorist groups. Although the coup attempt in

2016 did not achieve its goal; the increasing authoritarian tendencies, spreading violence and the gradual crackdown on Kurdish political movements with the constitutional change opened a new chapter in the modern history of Turkey.

The AKP was able to win consecutive elections since 2002 which is a unique case for the establishment of the Turkish multi-party system in 1950. There was no other party or leader that could stay in power for more than fifteen years and survived a great number of ‘coup attempts’ from the judiciary to the military ones, as well as defeat various internal adversaries, like the Fethullah Gülen movement. The party’s electoral success played a key role in maintaining its hegemonic position. It helped the AKP to acquire the majority in the parliament, to gain almost two-thirds of the municipalities and acquire the presidential post after 2007 (firstly for Abdullah Gül in 2007, later for Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 2014). Thus, the electoral victories based on 35-50 percent of votes provided the opportunity to boost its popularity among vast parts of the society, to seize key institutions and control over the state apparatus, create economic and media dominance; in summary, to create a hegemonic bloc.

Its hegemonic project based on Islamist circles combined with neo-liberal economic policies was successful. The emergence of the Islamist middle classes can be described as a slow process of war, a passive revolution of a counter-hegemonic force that intended to occupy the hegemonic position of the Kemalist elite. This process could not avoid the perennial coercive forces of the state as Islamist parties (along with others) were regularly marginalised since the 1970s. Nonetheless, the AKP as a depositary of pro-market economy, religious, conservative groups won the elections in 2002, which opened a way a gradual change without violent events – e.g. without a war of manoeuvre – that finally resulted in the establishment of cultural hegemony. This can be characterised as neo-Ottomanism due to the use of religion and the Ottoman legacy in the field of cultural policy. Nevertheless, the AKP’s hegemonic project cannot be declared as a finished one in Turkey. The ambiguities of its hegemonic project are represented by the struggle between the AKP and the existing – but obviously declining – Kemalist elites, leftist groups, and Gülenists. The clashes over power in recent years led to the increasing authoritarianism in Turkish domestic politics characterised by one politician’s growing power. This politician, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has managed to transform the country’s political system from a parliamentary to a presidential one and to centralise the state in an increasingly authoritarian way.

The author described the neo-Ottomanist characteristics of the AKP's cultural policy focusing on the mighty imperial past with strong religious connotations and a type of 'Kulturkampf' (cultural war) against the Kemalist heritage. Contrary to the common belief, the AKP's foreign policy was less neo-Ottomanist (in terms of irredentism, revisionism towards former imperial lands and aggressive spread of Islam) because its turn towards its 'near abroad' (essentially the post-Ottoman territories) stemmed from the neo-liberal turn in the Turkish economy and the need for a more autonomous foreign policy in an more and more insecure, multipolar world. The AKP's pro-active foreign policy advocated globalisation, economic opening and boosted the image of the country and the self-confidence of an emerging global player. Turkey joined the G20 in 2002, was able to start the European Union accession negotiations in 2005, whereas it launched a new initiative with Spain called the Alliance of Civilisations promoting intercultural (inter-civilisational) dialogue. In the same year, it was elected to the UN Security Council as a temporary member for 2009-2011, it also managed to position itself as one of the main depositaries of human rights for a while and one of the leaders of the Muslim countries, and via a fast-growing net of institutions, such as the TİKA, YTB and the Yunus Emre Institutes emerged as an important actor not just in the former Ottoman territories but in the entire Muslim world.

The government was ready to use foreign policy as a tool for its election purposes. At the beginning of the AKP's era, EU accession was a major goal, thus seeking good relations with EU members states appeared on the party's agenda. After 2006, when the accession negotiations lost their momentum due to the dead-end of the Cyprus issue, the AKP gradually withdrew from emphasising the EU's role, or even started to use a more critical approach stating that the 'Christian bloc' has been using double standards and had an anti-Turkey or anti-Islam stance. The 2009 municipal election campaign coincided with the Davos crisis and the deterioration of Israeli diplomatic relations, which boosted the support of Erdoğan within Turkey and in the Arab world as well. The Mavi Marmara flotilla issue was also used by the AKP to strengthen its popularity by benefiting from anti-Israeli sentiments before the 2011 elections.

Recently, the 2017 referendum also showed the readiness to sacrifice diplomatic relations for domestic gains: the Turkish government weathered the conflict with the Netherlands by insisting on pursuing rallies on its territory despite the prohibition of the

Hague. The AKP implemented sanctions and used belligerent rhetoric against the Netherlands after Dutch authorities prevented its ministers Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and Fatma Betül Sayan Kaya from speaking at rallies of the Turkish diaspora.

The foreign policy discourse, especially under Ahmet Davutoğlu, highly reflected on the Ottoman past, values and glory that could be of use for domestic political purposes. Turkey's foreign policy towards the Balkans also gained a new context: the good relations with this region, especially the close cooperation with the Muslims granted the AKP more popularity in the religious electorate and was also convincing at least in a limited manner for the voters who had any Balkan affiliation. This Ottoman cause received strong incentives from Bosnia, which was easy to interlink with the role of Islam. As the Yugoslav wars revitalised the discourse about identity and Islam not just in the Balkans but in the whole world, Necmettin Erbakan's Islamist party, the Refah's politicians and charity organisations, such as the İHH, closely followed the developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina and intended to send aid (which however resulted in a corruption scandal). The Bosniaks were described as Muslim people of the Ottoman legacy in the Balkans. The writings and ideas of the Bosniak leader, Aliya Izetbegović gained momentum in Turkey even during the AKP's era, and soon became a reference point (e.g. new publishing of his writings, or Erdoğan's good personal relations with his son, Bakir Izetbegović). Furthermore, the genocide of Srebrenica appeared in Turkish politics and media. Srebrenica has become a *lieu de mémoire* for pious Turkish Muslims, and commemorations are held for every anniversary not just in the Balkans but in Turkey as well.

The Balkans retain a unique place in the neo-Ottoman discourse. As İlber Ortaylı pointed out, the Ottoman Empire was also a Balkan Empire and the Ottoman rule had greater effects on the region compared to that on the Middle East; subsequently, one could argue that the Balkans had a greater reverse impact on the Ottoman Empire and later on the history of Turkey. The more Ottomanness is linked to multiculturalism and religion, the more the Muslim people of the Balkans gain ground in the AKP's Ottomanism. Moreover, several centuries of Ottoman rule (approximately 550 years in Macedonia, 500 years in Bulgaria, some 400 years in Serbia and Bosnia) produced an immense 'constructed heritage' in the form of bridges, caravanserais, mosques, hamams, etc., which are specific mementos of Turkey and its cultural impact.

From this respect, Balkans is more important for Turkey than Turkey is for the Balkans. It has no real hard power leverage, especially after the 2016 coup attempt

when the Turkish military was decimated and almost half of the admiralty and brigadier levels were dismissed or detained. Despite sending its troops, Turkey's military presence in a rather stable region (compared to the 1990s and early 2000s) can be identified as a soft power tool to demonstrate its commitment towards 'its brethren' and assure the Turkish electorate about the country's allegiance to its kin. Even if Turkey makes gains against the PKK in southeast Turkey and against the PYD in Afrin or northern Syria, the above-mentioned internal purges and lack of (experienced) commanders weaken the image and the real capabilities of the (omni)potent TSK.

The AKP's goal of ensuring good economic relations and boosting trade and investment also delineates the limits of Turkish foreign policy. Economic interests have a great leverage on Ankara's approach to the Balkans. The success of these policies are linked to the growing statistical figures (e.g. volume and value of trade, investments, number of companies), but one can conclude that neither the Balkans plays a crucial role for Turkey nor is Turkey a major economic actor for the region after analysing the data. Only 5-6 percent of Turkish trade goes to the Balkans (the Western Balkans' share is even less) and it has been declining during the AKP's era, highlighting that the economic importance of the Balkans does not grow as fast as Turkey's economic relations with other regions and countries. If one looks at the other side, similar patterns can be outlined. The share of Turkey's export and import for Balkan countries is also small, in every case it is less than 10 percent, and with the exception of some countries, like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Albania, it is decreasing.

The internal problems and features of the region and Turkey itself explain these dynamics. First of all, the Balkan region is so fragmented and divided among small states that it is more vulnerable to external political powers but less attractive for external investors. Their internal troubles, corruption (their weak performance in competitive indexes has already been shown) and market size are the main factors that makes Turkish companies' activities more limited.

Furthermore, Turkey's economic performance also has its own limits and affects its relations with the region. The years after 2013/2015 have seen more and more economic challenges for Turkey, like the devaluation of the Turkish lira despite the yearly 4-5% GDP growth led by the construction sector. The economic struggles of the country also reduce its potential for investments and trade with southeast Europe.

Turkish activism in the Balkans, even after Davutoğlu fell from power, is an outcome of the internal economic, social and political changes of the country. Turkey's

main activities in the region did not change after May 2016, the same institutions continue their tasks in roughly the same manner. Bosnia and Herzegovina and other Balkan countries, like Macedonia or Kosovo, play an important role in Turkish domestic politics and for the AKP's decision makers, especially Erdoğan. Srebrenica has been used as a tool for mobilising the more religious electorate and it is also a tool in order to build the feeling of collective belonging among various Muslim communities.

But the power projection of Turkey to Muslim communities has its own limits as well. There is a strong difference between the Balkan countries in this respect. In the Western Balkans, while the Diyanet supports its kin these Muslim communities rather look up to their states and align themselves rather with their respective capitals than with Ankara. In these countries Turkey appears as a strong supporter of religious communities by providing publishing (translation), aid packages for religious events, exchange for students, religious personnel and financial help via various ways, especially constructing or renovating mosques. The interference in these communities' internal affairs has remained limited, and the mediation between conflicting factions of these communities did not reach a breakthrough (see the case of Serbia). The co-optation to the AKP's hegemonic bloc was strengthened by establishing close links between various congregations in the Balkan countries and Turkey. These inter-community relations were boosted by the Diyanet local muftis and the Turkish towns as well. By building these bridges, the commitment of Turkey has become more tangible and noticeable. However, the Diyanet's moves are under suspicion, even if the support is welcomed. There is a strong difference between the Muslim communities in the Balkans and Turkey: in the Balkan countries, they are autonomous, the state does not interfere in their affairs (or does not intend to interfere), which in turn has led more internal conflicts between their leaderships, while on the other side the Bosphorus the Diyanet works as a state institution with an appointed (and not an elected) leader, meaning its activities are part of state policy.

Bulgaria and Romania constitute a different group compared to the Western Balkans. The majority of their Muslims are Turks. These countries allowed Turkey during the 1990s to act as a kin state in the field of religion. Thus Ankara managed to gain a strong institutional leverage, especially in education because the imam-hatip schools are run by the Diyanet. Furthermore, imams sent from Turkey are also present.

The Diyanet mediation in the case of the conflict over the leadership of Chief Muftiate was also handled with its help.

From this perspective, Albania is a special case. After many decades of strong anti-religious policies, the country in the early 1990s welcomed the support of various Muslim countries and faith-based religious networks. Turkey, and more importantly the Gülenist movement, were successful in gaining ground in this context and emerged as a partner in (re)building the Islamic education system. It has become not the only one, but one the most important actors in this field.

The co-option of these Muslim communities into the Turkish state is happening via governmental and non-governmental actors. The above-mentioned state organs, like the Diyanet, the TİKA development agency, the Maarif Vakfı and so on follow the same logic in creating leverage and supporting the Ottoman-constructed legacy and Muslim communities. Non-governmental actors also participated in these endeavours. The various Balkan immigrant communities participate rather indirectly in foreign policy making because of their influence for the higher ranks is rather negligible. However, via twin town programmes, through electoral tourism and participation as well as political campaigns and protests they are able to influence the public opinion and gain leverage over the electoral performance of the Turkish parties, especially in Bulgaria where the Turkish minority live in greater number.

The various Islamist charity organisations and faith-based networks are more tangibly linked to the state's endeavours. Their projects are often realised in close cooperation with Turkish state institutions (TİKA, Diyanet) and through twin town projects. Faith-based Islamic networks also contributed to the strengthening of Islam education in these countries in line with the principles of Hanafi Islam that the Diyanet supports.

Turkey did not generally change its foreign policy towards the Balkans during the AKP era compared to the 1990s. It follows the main principles of seeking security and promoting 'Ottoman Islam' alongside upholding every aspect of the Ottoman heritage. This in practice entails the support of 'local' or 'traditional' Islam, which is different from the new Wahabbi influences of the 1990s and 2000s. Thus, Turkey emerged as a historical partner for these communities, even if there are strong domestic political considerations behind Ankara's aid. Nevertheless, despite the growing Turkish institutional network, the vast amount of invested money in building soft power capabilities, Ankara has acquired a limited number of local allies, even if these

countries' governments usually seek to establish good political and economic relations with their emerging middle power neighbour.

Good relations with the Islamic communities' leaders, the Turkish political parties (except the MRF) and Izetbegović's SDA and some intellectual circles represent the main strongholds of the AKP in the Balkans, which can be used for domestic occasions as well. Nonetheless, the Turkish leadership's gains in secular countries and mainly secular communities has marked limits (the best example of which is the antipathy towards the AKP among Bulgarian Turks), even if it behaves as a kin state for the religious Muslims. Thus Turkey has remained a strong centre of gravity for the religious institutions.

This focus on Ottoman heritage and Islam in foreign relations can cause dissent among the Christian population. Due to the different nation-building processes, the perceptions about the shared history may be the opposite for these communities, thus they do not see Turkish endeavours in too positive a light. This is especially true in Bosnia, where the Republika Srpska's political leadership is more sensitive to Ankara's pro-Bosniak stance. The pro-Muslim discourse of Turkish politicians has led to diplomatic conflicts with Serbia or Bosnia (Serbian part) on several occasions; Turkey sometimes behaves like an elephant in a china shop by not paying enough attention to this sensitivity. While the current hegemonic bloc relies strongly upon this discourse for domestic reasons, it is fair to say that there will be no change in the prospective future and the probability of diplomatic crises will remain high.

The Balkan countries have also felt the spill-over effect of the internal troubles of Turkey and are involved in the fight over domestic hegemony. The government pushes toward weakening or closing down Gülenist institutions and networks abroad. This war presented a dilemma for these states in the Balkans. Despite some people's extradition the movement's organisations have remained intact for the most part. This also suggests that Ankara may not be the main reference point for the countries of the region.

Turkey has two main incentives to increase its leverage on the region. First, the AKP pushed towards co-opting its kin through neo-Ottoman cultural policy: emphasising the shared heritage, Ottoman legacy, importance of (Hanafi) Islam, etc. But only limited segments of the population were supportive, namely some parts of the religious circles and the Turkish minority groups. Second, Turkey's economic expansion based on the success of the AKP's neo-liberal policies was successful in



many ways. Nevertheless, its importance in the Balkans has remained limited compared to major EU powers, like Germany and Italy, but even Austria and Hungary (in some cases). Furthermore, its economic difficulties weaken its opportunity to become a more pivotal economic actor in the Balkans.

### **New achievements of the thesis:**

- Conceptualising the scientific literature about Turkish foreign policy and identifying the main driving trends.
- Using a Gramscian and neo-Gramscian approach for Turkey and its foreign policy in a detailed and comprehensive manner.
- Describing the neo-Ottomanist cultural policy as a tool of hegemony making in Turkey.
- Explaining the importance of various Muslim peoples (especially the Bosniaks) in (daily) Turkish domestic politics instead of national minority groups (Turks in Bulgaria) by identifying the change in the kin policy of Turkey.
- Elaborating and updating the body of knowledge about the relevant Turkish foreign policy institutions.
- Analysing Ankara's foreign policy in a given region – in the Balkans, and not just in the Western Balkans – chosen as a case study and identifying its main tenets; by doing so, describing the Turkish economic (foreign trade) institutions and Ankara's incentives to strengthen its neo-liberal economic transformation.
- Revealing the main features of economic relations and outlining the importance of the region in economic terms to Turkey and vice versa, by claiming that despite the strong political emphasis Turkish capital has remained rather reluctant to enter the region.
- Highlighting how Albania and Kosovo are the most dependent on Turkish economic relations in the Balkans, and this economic dependence has some chance of being converted into certain political advantages.
- Identifying the importance of non-state groups in shaping Turkish foreign policy and perceptions, like the immigrant groups and associations in Turkey and their leverage, including the faith-based organisations (especially Gülenists) and charity organisations in the region.

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TİKA

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28. 2017 'Merre tovább? A német–török kapcsolatok a 2017-es német választás után' Stratégiai Védelmi Kutató Központ *Elemzések* No. 24. <https://svkk.uni-nke.hu/document/svkk-uni-nke-hu-1506332684763/svkk-elemzesek-2017-24-merre-tovabb-a-nemet-torok-kapcsolatok-a-2017-es-nemet-valasztas-utan-egeresi-z.original.pdf>
29. 2017 'A centrum nyomában: geopolitikai gondolkodás és külpolitikai útkeresés Törökországban' *Külügyi Szemle* Vol. 16, No. 4. 64-87.
30. 2018 'Konfliktusok az amerikai–török kapcsolatokban' Stratégiai Védelmi Kutató Központ *Elemzések* No. 7. <https://svkk.uni-nke.hu/document/svkk-uni-nke-hu-1506332684763/svkk-elemzesek-2017-24-merre-tovabb-a-nemet-torok-kapcsolatok-a-2017-es-nemet-valasztas-utan-egeresi-z.original.pdf>
31. 2018 Mozgalom a Jogokért és Szabadságért. A bulgáriai török kisebbségi párt. In: Etnikai pártok Kelet-Közép-Európában 1989-2014 (Fedinec Csilla – Szarka László – Vizi Balázs) Budapest 379-452

## Author's conference participations

Conference title: Etnikai pártok, társadalmi, politikai törésvonalak Kelet-közép- és Délkelet-Európában

26/11/2010, Budapest, Kisebbségkutató Intézet

Title: *A Mozgalom a Jogokért és Szabadságért – etnikai párt Bulgáriában*

Conference title: Euromed forum for young researchers

13-15/04/2011, Istanbul, Kadir Has University

Title: *The Kurdish initiative: a new attempt for dialogue, different interpretations of modernism and nationalism*

Conference title: State, Society and Economy in the Modern Middle East

07-08/05/2011, London, School of Oriental and African Studies

Title: *Kurdish identity-making: instruments and possibilities during the last 100 years in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey*

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/ssemme/file67904.pdf>

Conference title: IX. Vámbéry Ármin Emlékkonferencia

29-30/09/2011, Dunaszerdahely

Title: *A bulgáriai törökség 1989 után: közösségépítés határon innen és túl*

Conference title: XII. RODOSZ

02-04/12/2011, Kolozsvár

Title: *Törökországi iszlamista pártok: út a hatalomig?*

Conference title: EBES Conference

25-26/05/2012, Istanbul

Title: *Comparative Analysis of Turkey and Hungary's Economic Policy in South Eastern Europe*

Conference title: From War to Eternal Peace on the 100th Anniversary of the Balkan Wars: Good Neighborhood Relations in the Balkans

04-07/10/2012, Istanbul

Title: *Turkish Societal Actors and the Balkans: Associations and Cities in the Process of Bridge-making*

Conference title: XIII. RODOSZ

09-11/11/2012, Kolozsvár

Title: *Török fejlesztéspolitika: az új neooszmán soft power?*

Conference title: 6th International Balkan Forum

02-03/05/2013, Edirne, TASAM

Title: *Turkish and Hungarian minorities in the Balkans: a comparative analysis*

Conference title: Közép-Európa: együttműködés és versengés, Magyar Politikatudományi Társaság XIX. Vándorgyűlése

30/05 – 01/06/2013, Kolozsvár

Title: *Török nemzetpolitika: rokon népektől a diaszpóra felé?*

Conference title: 3. Dünya Türk Forumu

28-30/05/2014, Edirne, TASAM

Title: *Turkish Soft Power and Hungary*

Conference title: WOCMES

18-22/08/2014, Ankara, Middle East Technical University

Title: *Turkey and the Middle East: a neo-Gramscian Approach*

Conference title: POLITSCI'14

10-12/12/2014, Istanbul, Istanbul University

Title: *Hungary and Turkey: diverging or converging hegemonic projects?*

Conference title: New Order in the Middle East? Current Dynamics and the Role of External Actors in the MENA region

13/12/2016, Budapest, Corvinus University

Title: *Turkey – Russia Rapprochement: A Real Shift in Ankara's Foreign Policy?*

Conference title: Anna Lindh Conference

23/03/2018, Budapest, National University of Public Service

Title: *Turkey and the Mediterranean region*

Conference title: Taking Stock of the EU-Turkey Relations: Estranged but Interdependent Partners

29/05/2018, Budapest, Central European University

Title: *Turkey, domestic politics and their effects on EU-Turkey relations*