TURKEY’S ROLE IN INTERETHNIC RELATIONS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC DEPTH DOCTRINE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, KOSOVO, AND MACEDONIA (2009-2014)

BY

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THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies in the Graduate College of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2014

Urbana, Illinois

Adviser:

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Abstract

The coming to power of the Justice and Development Party has marked the start of a more pro-active Turkish foreign policy which implied a dynamic engagement in the Balkans, an area that had been dominated roughly for five centuries by the Ottoman Empire. Turkey’s new strategy of involvement in the Balkans is largely based on scholar and current Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu’s work Strategic Depth, published in 2001, eight years prior to his assuming office in 2009. During Davutoğlu’s energetic diplomacy in the years 2009-2014 Turkey made clear its ambitions to emerge as a new regional leader in the Balkans. I examine the theoretical concepts of Strategic Depth and their actual implementation in diplomatic and soft-power engagement in three former Yugoslav states in the Western Balkans: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Macedonia. My case studies demonstrate that Turkey’s engagement and Balkan policies are led by a pragmatic and positive agenda including intense regional cooperation and reconciliation initiatives, in addition to more active economic cooperation. The main downside to Turkish strategic thought and engagement is a tendency to idealize the legacy of the Ottoman past of the region. I argue that Turkey remains an important strategic ally for the US and the European Union and should be assisted in its efforts to strengthen regional cooperation. The future of Turkish engagement in the Western Balkans will depend on the ability of Turkish politicians to dismiss the all too common for the region idealization of the past and place an even stronger accent on dialogue and regional cooperation that would include all ethnicities and adherents to all religions in the larger Balkan region.
To my love
# Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction.............................................................................................................1

Chapter Two: *Strategic Depth: Turkey’s International Position. An Evaluation of Its Most Important Concepts with Regard to the Topic*........................................................................7

Chapter Three: Neo-Ottomanism and Turkish Foreign Policy in the Western Balkans.................................................................................................................................28

Chapter Four: Engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Trilateral Consultations Mechanisms: Successes, Limitations, and Important Implications for the Future of the Balkans ..................................................................................................................41

Chapter Five: Turkish Engagement in Kosovo and Macedonia. Turkish Soft Power.................................................................................................................................70

Chapter Six: Conclusion...............................................................................................................79

Chapter Seven: Bibliography.......................................................................................................83
Chapter One

Introduction

The twentieth century has seen the bloody dissolution of one of the most diverse multi-ethnic states in Europe. The fall of former Yugoslavia has left three multi-ethnic states that still cause concern in the international community because of the looming potential for further ethnically-based conflict and animosity: Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia. Recent developments have demonstrated clearly that conflicts and resolutions in each of these three entities tend to spill across the border and have an impact on neighboring states. Since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, we have witnessed continuing efforts to obtain sustainable peace and development in the region on behalf of the United States, as well as international actors, most importantly the United Nations and the European Union, an actor whose power has steadily increased since the end of the most bloody conflict in Former Yugoslavia, the Bosnian War (1992-1995).

On the other hand, only one Balkan state has risen to become one of the world’s most powerful economies. During the last twelve years Turkey’s development has been marked by the coming to power of an ideologically conservative but at the same time economically liberal and business-oriented political force, the Justice and Development Party (AKP). It is easy to notice Turkey’s growing involvement in the greater region of the Balkans, involvement that can be seen as part of this country’s increasingly active foreign policy and quest for regional cooperation and involvement with all of its neighboring regions including: the Caucasus, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and the Balkans. During the years of AKP rule, a tendency towards more open and active foreign policy that has been present since the years of the late prime minister and president

1 From Turkish Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP).
Turgut Özal (1927-1993) has dramatically changed in terms of intensity. Turkey is currently seeking active engagement with all its neighbors, as well as virtually all the important actors in the greater regions surrounding the country. In this context, it is important to evaluate Turkey’s engagement in what is, perhaps, still the most problematic region in the Balkans - the former member states of the Yugoslav Federation and in particular Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia. Turkey’s overall role in the whole region of the Western Balkans has been significant, but the focus of this work will be on the above-mentioned potential hotspots, as I will argue that Turkey’s role is particularly important with regard to relations between the ethnicities living in these countries, and with regard to the future peace, security, and sustainable development of the region.

I shall focus in particular on policies and initiatives dating from the moment when the current Foreign Minister of Turkey Ahmet Davutoğlu assumed office. Mr. Davutoğlu’s previous position was that of chief foreign policy advisor of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan until he became the head of Turkey’s Foreign Ministry in May 1, 2009. His Strategic Depth doctrine, explained in his work of the same name, had considerable influence on Turkish foreign policy prior to his assuming office, but it is only as Foreign Minister that his theoretical concepts could be comprehensively put to the test.

The recency of these developments requires considerable caution with regard to evaluations. However, I believe that there is a sufficient record to conduct a preliminary evaluation of the strong and positive sides of Turkey’s strategic engagement and influence in the region of the Western Balkans, as well as some important downsides to the theoretical concepts of the Strategic Depth doctrine and their implementation on the ground.

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2 Ahmet Davutoglu, Stratejik derinlik: Türkiye'nin uluslararası konumu (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2001).
While European integration processes are already in a relatively advanced stage in several Balkan countries, ethnic peace and stability should not be taken for granted in the greater Balkan region, as recent events in Bulgaria point out.\(^3\) This makes the engagement of a powerful actor like Turkey particularly important and worthy of serious analysis. Significant engagement in soft power, mediation, and dialogue requires resources that only relatively powerful countries and international actors possess. I argue that Turkey’s influence in the Western Balkans is comparable to that of the most powerful international actor in Europe, the European Union.

While Turkey cannot be reasonably seen as competing for influence in the region, I argue that Turkish engagement nonetheless carries a lot of importance on a different level. Turkey is seen as a big and powerful neighbor with traditional ties to the larger region, a Balkan country sharing similar culture and values, and can thus exert influence in a different manner – complementing rather than interfering or competing with EU and US efforts to obtain stability.

While I do not find allegations of a Neo-Ottoman agenda to be entirely groundless, I will demonstrate that this issue can be easily related to the very Balkan tendency to idealize the historical past of a nation and, as such, should not be overestimated. Turkish engagement in the Western Balkans is closely related to the theoretical concepts of the Strategic Depth doctrine but it also has very pragmatic motivations and has proven capable of evolving in direct correlation to opportunities and experience. According to a Turkish diplomat in Bosnia, Turkey’s foreign policy with its neighbors is based on four pillars: high-level political dialogue between countries of the region; regional economic integration; respect for multiculturalism, principle of security

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for all. These basic principles guiding Turkish foreign policy in the Western Balkans represent an encouraging trend and should be seen as a base for optimism for the future of the region rather than a threat to strategic EU and US interests.

Despite the pitfalls of overestimating an idealized Ottoman past, Turkey is and will continue to be well-positioned to lead mediation and reconciliation initiatives because of its cultural ties with the ethnicities in the region combined with significant capacities for excercising soft power. The latter include unlikely allies to diplomacy such as the increasingly popular Turkish TV series. Correctly identifying the strengths and weaknesses of Turkish diplomacy would allow us to take advantage of and assist positive initiatives that would bring to more stable relations in a Balkan region of fragile cultural pluralism.

I will begin my argument by presenting the most important elements of the Strategic Depth doctrine of Foreign Minister Davutoğlu as presented in his work of the same name, with particular attention to his thoughts on Turkish foreign policy strategy in the larger Balkan area. Afterwards, I will present the issue of Neo-Ottoman tendencies in Turkish foreign policy under AKP rule, in addition to providing some historical background on the matter, as this will prepare the ground and allow the reader to better understand the developments in current actual initiatives undertaken by Turkey in the region of the Western Balkans.

After this, I will present the most important initiatives undertaken by Turkey, with a strong focus on Turkey’s most active engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in facilitating processes of dialogue and communication with Bosnia’s key neighbors: Serbia and Croatia. The trilateral consultations mechanisms developed by Turkey, Turkey-Bosnia and Herzegovina-

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Serbia and Turkey-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Croatia represent the most concrete example of direct Turkish diplomatic engagement in the region. These initiatives, especially the engagement with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, deserve further attention both in terms of academic research, as well as in terms of the assessment of the US and the EU strategic interests in the region. I will argue that it is of extreme importance to understand correctly the significance of such initiatives and the perspective of future developments in this direction, as they represent a new trend in Balkan politics that deserves attention and encouragement. The current negative developments in Turkey, in particular in the area of basic human rights and freedoms, the separation of powers, and the freedom of speech, only demonstrate some of the possible negative effects of neglecting and disengaging partners with positive potential in the European neighborhood such as Turkey. I also examine the sometimes stark contrast between Turkey’s formidable diplomatic potential in the face of its energetic Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and President Abdullah Gül on the one side, with their relentless work guided by a pragmatic and optimistic vision, and Prime Minister Erdoğan’s taste for more controversial statements and faux pas on the other.

My brief discussion of Turkish engagement in Kosovo and Macedonia will serve to complete the picture of Turkey’s policy in the region and lead to evaluating the potential for further policy initiatives and the role that Turkey will likely be playing in the foreseeable future.

While Turkey’s current internal political turmoil does put into jeopardy the moderate successes of its engagement in the Balkans, I argue that there are reasons to believe that the tendencies that began before Davutoğlu’s entry into office and were developed into a practically implemented strategy afterwards will most likely be maintained even after serious political changes within Turkey. Turkey will remain a key partner for the European Union, the United
States and the International Community in their efforts to build sustainable peace and economic development in the Balkans.
Chapter Two

Strategic Depth: Turkey’s International Position. An Evaluation of Its Most Important Concepts with Regard to the Topic

Ahmet Davutoğlu’s work entitled Strategic Depth: Turkey’s International Position while arguably being one of the most important works on international relations and foreign policy strategy in the greater Balkan and Middle East regions at the moment, unaccountably, has not yet been translated into English.\(^5\) Before I go on to analyze the most important ideas of this work with regard to our subject, I must note that arranging for an English edition to be published in the US or Western Europe should be a matter of urgency and the present situation can by no means be accepted as normal. Had I not had achieved a reasonable fluency in Turkish, this essential source would have remained inaccessible for my research.

In the chapter on Strategic Planning and Political Will Davutoğlu argues that strategy is crucial for the successful outcome of any initiative in foreign relations.\(^6\) In the aftermath of the Cold War, he argues that a country needs diplomacy and strategy that are both flexible and characterized by a strong will to defend national interests.\(^7\) The important thing to note here is the desire of Turkey to turn from subject of international relations into an actor: the analogy used by Davutoğlu is that a country without a national strategy in its foreign policy can be seen as a

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\(^5\) Modern Greek and Arabic translations of the work have already been published. Apparently, the immediate neighbors of Turkey understood better the importance of this new doctrine that has had an immense impact on diplomatic developments in the region for quite some time. See Ahmet Davutoğlu, To stratêgiko vathos: hê diethnês thesê tês Tourkias (Varê Attikês: Ekdoseis Poìetêa, 2010) and Ahmet Davutoğlu, al-‘Umq al-istrâtîji: mawqa’ Turkiyâ wa-dawrâh fi al-sâhah al-duwaliyah (Bayrût: al-Dâr al-‘Arabiyyah lil-‘ulûm, 2011).

\(^6\) Davutoğlu 2001, 31 and 60-61.

\(^7\) Ibid., 32-34.
chess piece, while a country that has adopted one and has the political will to support and implement it can be seen as a chess player.  

In the preface to his work Ahmet Davutoğlu argues that “the greatest challenge to the determination and reevaluation of Turkey’s strategic position after the Cold War period” is the fact that the country is undergoing “extremely dynamic developments” within itself in an environment already abundant in “extremely dynamic developments.” Davutoğlu argues that it is important to build a strategy that would allow for better understanding and usage of Turkey’s position in international affairs. Comparing developments in society and politics to a river, Davutoğlu argues that the scholar’s task is to analyze “the river bed, speed, direction of flow, and relations to other rivers” in order to “depict, explain, make out the meaning, and redirect the flow” of the river. He sees his work as a natural continuation and product of his cultural and educational background rather than an innovation of his own. The introduction interestingly ends with the statement that his work represents “in terms of time, a bridge from history to the future and in terms of space from the center to the periphery.” The most logical way to interpret this thought is by tying it to the idea of reconnecting with the Ottoman historical and cultural heritage, combined with reconnecting the former political center of the Empire with Balkan communities that are seen as connected to this cultural and historical heritage.

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8 Ibid.
9 This and all subsequent quotations from Strategic Depth are my own translations from the original edition in Turkish. As I already noted above, there is no English translation of the work published as of May 2014.
10 Davutoğlu (2001) V. This point has recently become quite relevant with the unfolding of the Ukraine Crisis. See Davutoğlu’s recent interview for TRT, “Dişşleri Bakanı Ahmet Davutoğlu TRT’de” [Interview With Foreign Minister Davutoğlu on TRT]. Interview by TRT 1. Internet Video Stream, March 2, 2014. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJIVgIlXmSM.
11 Ibid., VI.
12 Ibid. VII.
13 Ibid.
In Davutoğlu’s words, it is impossible to evaluate Turkey’s international position and its potential influence on different points of crisis without taking into consideration the fact that Turkey is a “modern nation-state found on the Ottoman heritage”.\textsuperscript{14} In addition, Turkey is seen as situated in an area where interaction of the main geopolitical zones takes place.\textsuperscript{15} Davutoğlu argues that in order to determine the international position of Turkey today, one has to consider the “historical and geographic depth” of the country.\textsuperscript{16} He explains that Turkey holds certain human resources\textsuperscript{17} with “deep historical experience” who have had an effect on politics, the social structure, and cultural particularities in the country. In addition, these human resources’ “historical depth”, according to Davutoğlu, has had its influence on the country’s foreign policies.\textsuperscript{18} Here Davutoğlu likely refers to the different ethnic groups that have come to the political centers of the Ottoman Empire and later the Turkish republic after the wars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and have always had a pronounced influence in all spheres of life.\textsuperscript{19}

In \textit{Strategic Depth} Davutoğlu importantly argues that the Cold War period had established a conjuncture of more static international relations where the historical and geographic depth of Turkey remained in the background. In contrast, after the end of the Cold War, the new international conjuncture has allowed the resurfacing of these historical and geographic particularities not only of Turkey but also for the entire Balkan region. According to Davutoğlu, the chaos occurring in the Balkans after the end of the Cold War is one of the “most

\begin{footnotes}
\item[14] Ibid. p. 6-7.
\item[15] Ibid.
\item[16] Ibid.
\item[18] Ibid.
\item[19] This is a valid argument historically as the family origins of most of the crucial figures of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 laid outside of the Anatolian hinterland and Istanbul. See Erik-Jan Zürcher, “The Young Turks: Children of the borderlands?,” International Journal Of Turkish Studies 9, no. 1/2 (January 2003): 275-285.
\end{footnotes}
striking examples of that [development].” In this situation Turkey is seen both as a “pivotal country in the focus of universal and regional strategies” and a “torn country” in terms of its identity. We have to note that these words of Davutoğlu sound particularly current with regard to the situation we have at present in Turkey: the country seems more divided than ever at the moment but manages to continue very active foreign policies.

Davutoğlu believes that the complexities of Turkey’s geostrategic location and its Ottoman past can be turned into a power and used to gain leverage in international relations. He sees three potential forms of behavior in international relations. The first is a more static behavior based on established norms that seeks to stay out of dynamic developments and awaits a re-established equilibrium to retake its place in the international system. This approach is perhaps comparable to the more traditional isolationist stance of Turkey that dominated Turkish foreign policy prior to Özal’s coming to power. A second stance would be based on complete compliance with the dynamism of international developments, turning the country into an “object” of international developments. The third strategy would utilize the country’s own dynamism’s potential combined with the “potential of international dynamism” in order to gain power in international relations. Davutoğlu argues that the third approach to international relations allows for the optimal use of each and every moment or development as the latter is

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21 Ibid.
22 At the same time, if we look at the historical perspective, the Ottoman empire was even more torn in terms of its multiple identities until its very end and dismantling at the end of World War I.
seen to “carry the potential to shape the future” and hence “an opportunity not to be missed”. This activist strategy gives substantial advantages, as the other two approaches do not allow for the potential opportunities brought by dynamic developments to be used in the first case or turn the country into a “subject” rather than an agent in international developments in the second.

This concept of three possible modes of behavior and approach to international relations is particularly important both in the context of Turkey’s own past which gravitates towards the first strategy mentioned and in the context of the history of all the small Balkan states. Davutoğlu argues for the need of showing character in international relations and appreciating one’s own potential. The diverse nature and complex identities of a nation, in this case Turkey, are seen as carrying actual potential that has to be used rather than ignored. This concept connects, as we shall see later, with the ideas of “regional ownership” of peace initiatives and the problems in the Balkans being solved by the Balkan countries themselves. Davutoğlu talks about the “whirlpool” of dynamic international developments, a “whirlpool” avoided by the first, blindly joined by the adherents of the second strategy, while those who pick the third approach are seen as “agents who try to facilitate the transition from chaos to cosmos.” In the future Foreign Minister’s words, Turkey is at an “important historical crossroad” that brings the opportunity of a “breakthrough” in its role in the region if it chooses to use the complexities of its historical heritage and geographical location, what Davutoğlu calls “historical and geographic depth.” He underlines a certain “shortage of strategic theoretical base” that needs to be overcome.

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26 Ibid., 11.
27 See the case studies of the Trilateral Consultations Mechanisms in Chapter Four below.
29 The work is written eight years prior to his appointment as foreign minister.
30 Ibid.
After a succinct discussion of some of the most prominent political science and international relations theorists, Davutoğlu importantly notes the decreasing importance of ideologies providing legitimacy ground for nation-states combined with the increasing influence of traditional cultural values to the field of international relations and on the countries’ position in the international community.³¹

Davutoğlu also discusses some key international relations concepts such as “national sovereignty”, “zones of strategic influence”³², “geo-cultural and geopolitical loops”³³, “core areas”, and, finally “shatter areas.”³⁴ After introducing the concepts, Davutoğlu gives some historical examples of this sort of Great Power interaction. What is important for our purposes is that one important “shatter zone” is still considered to be the Balkans³⁵ and, in particular, more unstable countries like the Yugoslav successor states.³⁶ A political analyst from Bosnia points that “the states that emerged from the former SFRY are on the threshold of new Balkan and European integration processes.”³⁷ It would be useful to keep this in mind when examining the cases of Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia.

Perhaps one of the most salient concepts for Turkish foreign policy introduced in Davutoğlu’s strategic work is that of the increased importance of the Ottoman Heritage after the end of the Cold War: “Turkey’s engagement during the last ten years in the Balkans, as well as

³¹ Ibid., 15.
³² In Turkish stratejik yayılım alanları.
³³ In Turkish jeokültürel ve jeopolitik hatlar.
³⁴ In Turkish jeostratejik çatışma kuşakları. All the quotes in this paragraph are from Davutoğlu 2001, 19-20.
in the Caucasus regions is fundamentally related to this historical heritage.” According to Davutoğlu, there are certain “elements” of the Ottoman heritage in the peninsula, referring to the Bosnian Muslims, the Kosovar Albanians and all Muslim minorities in the Balkans. These peoples, under the pressures of the dynamic changes in the region brought by the “geopolitical vacuum” [after the cold war], turn their attention to the Ottoman Heartland [referring to Istanbul]. Turkey, being a nation-state founded “on the base of the Ottoman historical heritage” has to face the “geopolitical and geocultural responsibilities associated with this fact.”

Davutoğlu further states: “In the forthcoming period, together with certain commitments, these responsibilities will bring new horizons and opportunities to Turkish foreign policy; they will serve as elements shaping Turkish strategic thought and identity.” He importantly notes that countries living an identity and cultural crisis are bound to be trapped in a “strategic deadlock,” most likely referring to Turkey’s previous stance on its own cultural identity completely detached from the country’s Ottoman past, as opposed to a more integrated national identity based on historical continuity in the cases of important European powers like Germany and England.

Davutoğlu invokes several standard means of Turkish leverage on regional politics. He sees Turkey’s young population as a source of strategic leverage to the country but also argues that it is one of the main reasons for Germany’s reserved position with regard to Turkey’s bid for membership in the EU. Turkey’s intensely developing economics, technology and science, and

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38 Davutoğlu 2001, 22.
39 In Turkish ‘unsurlar’.
40 Ibid.
42 Ibid., 23.
military capacities are also underlined as sources of strategic leverage in the region.\textsuperscript{43} Davutoğlu rightfully notes that in modern times relations between international corporations may influence international events to a larger degree than relations on interstate level.\textsuperscript{44} Indeed, Turkey is arguably economically the most powerful country in the larger Balkan region and this determines to a large extent its active role and leverage in regional relations.\textsuperscript{45}

The most important framing of the regional context however is a dynamic historical one. Davutoğlu makes the plausible argument that there is certain continuity in the development of a national “strategic mentality”\textsuperscript{46} that transcends the turmoil of political changes. Thus, after giving the examples of Germany and Russia, he argues that Turkey is no different in this respect and should “come face to face” with and reevaluate “the continuity and change aspects of Ottoman-Turkish strategic thought”. Davutoğlu argues that only societies with “established strategic mentality” who are also able to create “new notions, means, and forms” to interact in the international sphere “gain the ability to influence the power balance in international affairs”.\textsuperscript{47} In addition, he states that societies who have been through a “radical break of their strategic thought” and have “destroyed their [previous] national identity” jeopardize their very existence and “isolate themselves from human knowledge and marginalize themselves.”\textsuperscript{48} Thus, we see that Davutoğlu is arguing for a more reasonable national strategy that builds upon

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 24-29.  
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 25.  
\textsuperscript{46} In Turkish 'stratejik zihniyeti'. All quotes in this paragraph are from Davutoğlu 2001, 29-31.  
\textsuperscript{47} In Turkish 'güç parametrelerine de ağırlık koyabilme kabiliyeti kazanırlar’ in Ibid., 31.  
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.}
historical experience rather than attempting to build its foreign policy anew, most likely implying republican Turkey’s previous experience.49

Davutoğlu argues that Turkey’s historical heritage, geographic location, and cultural characteristics together with its human resources including immigrant communities from just about all the countries of the larger geographic regions surrounding the country, in particular the Balkans, put it into a position that a lot of countries would “be jealous of” but that it is up to Turkey’s leaders to transform this potential into leverage that can be used in international politics.50

Further in the work it is already possible to note some negative aspects of the new Turkish diplomatic strategy in this relatively early work, such as the idealization of the controversial final ruler of the Ottoman Empire, Sultan Abdul Hamid II, and the argument that the Second Constitutional Period of 1908 brought a chain of events that led to the collapse of the Empire.51 We will see in the subsequent chapters how idealizing the Ottoman past, in particular some of its negative aspects and controversial historical figures, will have a detrimental effect on otherwise very successful diplomatic openings in the Balkans. This theme tracked in Davutoğlu’s work, as well as in some of his public speeches, has led some scholars to call him “the Grand Vizier of New Turkey.”52 While it is beyond the scope of this work to prove that the

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49 With the 1980s Bulgarian Turks Expulsion from Communist Bulgaria and the Bosnian War of 1992-1995 seen as disasters to a large extent caused by this lack of continuity.
50 Davutoğlu 2001, 36-37.
51 Ibid., 35.
Second Constitutional Period and the Young Turks Revolution of 1908-1909 were attempts to save the Empire, I will say that it is simply not serious from historiographical point of view to simplistically argue that Abdul Hamid II was a good ruler and that it was the 1908 events that led to the eventual collapse of the empire. In Davutoğlu’s defense, we must say that his portrayal of Abdul Hamid II does include some negative sides of his policies but nevertheless falls short of realistically assessing this leader’s legacy and in particular its negative perception in the eyes of nearly all Christian populations in the Balkans.

It is important to evaluate correctly Davutoğlu’s assessment of the significance of the Ottoman historical legacy. As we will see further in this work, alongside with the idealization of certain moments and key figures in Ottoman history, Davutoğlu also points to some of the obvious characteristics that do position the country differently in the eyes of its Balkan allies, such as the fact that the Ottoman Empire did not follow a systematic exploitation of the resources of subjected peoples policy similar to other empires of the time (such as the British Empire).

Had this not been the case it would have been difficult to imagine that Turkey could ever be seen as “one of us”, as former Croatian Ambassador in Ankara Zoran Vodopija puts it.

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53 For a concise account on the main reasons for the fall of the Ottoman Empire, see Alan Palmer, The Decline and Fall of the Ottoman Empire (New York: M. Evans, 1992).
54 See Davutoğlu 2001, 53 where he mentions Abdul Hamid’s lack of vision and tendency to impose oppressive policies with the aim of maintaining the borders of the Empire.
55 For a more concise account on the decline of the empire, see Patrick Dumberry, "Is Turkey the "Continuing" State of the Ottoman Empire Under International Law?" Netherlands International Law Review. 59 (2) (2012): 235-262.
56 Davutoğlu 2001, 52.
Davutoğlu sees Turkey’s traditional ties with all the Balkan Muslims and, in particular, with the Bosnians and the Albanians who have the distinction of having their own states, as very natural. He argues that Turkey’s influence in the Balkans is related to the preservation of these Muslim minorities (or, in the cases of Kosovo, Albania, and Bosnia majorities) and the normal functioning of their states. In Davutoğlu’s eyes, these minorities are to be seen as a responsibility for Turkey, the same way as Balkan Christians were often perceived in the past as groups that would naturally fall under the protection of Christian powers like Russia, Great Britain, or France up to the early 20th Century. In the context of the mass repressions and expulsion of Bulgarian Turks by the Zhivkov regime in the late 1980s and particularly in the aftermath of the genocide against Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica, it would be normal to expect that an emerging Balkan regional power such as Turkey with a Muslim population and historical ties to these regions would adopt protective policies towards Muslim minorities in the region. Turkey’s position of patron of these groups is neither a positive nor a negative development, it is dictated by historical realities and Turkey’s recent emerging as a regional power.

Davutoğlu rightfully notes that in the recent past there has been a tendency to ignore the problems of Muslim minorities in the Balkans, in particular in Bulgaria until the latest repressions against the Turkish and Muslim minorities in Bulgaria during the last period of Zhivkov’s rule in the late 1970s and in the 1980s when it simply became impossible to continue ignoring the problem. At the same time, it appears that there is an over-emphasis of the importance of these cultural ties, especially with regard to their ramifications for Turkish foreign policy in the area. A certain tendency to over-estimate the extent of such solidarity and support

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58 Ibid., 55.
from the side of the so-called Muslim allies goes back to Ottoman times and will be examined in more detail in the following chapter.\textsuperscript{60}

For the moment, it is important to note that the cultural and social ties between the Muslim minorities in the Balkans and Turkey are, indeed, “natural” as Davutoğlu points.\textsuperscript{61} They are based on a “common historical culture” and carry obvious benefits for Turkey’s strategic interests in the region. At the same time, I don’t see a reason why this should be seen as a source for worries or necessarily a Neo-Ottoman side of Turkey’s new foreign policy strategy but rather as a natural ambition to seek consistency and take advantage of the historical, cultural, and geopolitical characteristics of the country rather than a complete rupture with the Ottoman past of Turkey with all the consequences of that in terms of foreign policy. Turkey’s historical past and its position as a heir to the Ottoman Empire in addition to the fact that the predominant religion in the country remains Islam are a historical given. Should there be any strategic benefits to this given, it is only normal that a pragmatic foreign policy would seek to capitalize on it rather than simply ignore it. At the same time, Turkey is well aware of its limitations and has not given up on its bid for full membership in the EU or its commitments as a key ally of the US.\textsuperscript{62} It is simply striving to establish its new position in the surrounding region that would reflect historical reality and the country’s increased economic potential. In fact, as we will see in Chapters Four and Five, one of the main goals of its increased activism in the Western Balkans is facilitating the building of good neighborly relations, a necessary precondition for membership in the EU, an aspiration common for all states in the region. This has been accompanied by a

\textsuperscript{60} See the interesting account of Sultan Rešid’s rather unusual visit of Macedonia and Kosovo in 1911 in Erik-Jan Zürcher. "Kosovo Revisited: Sultan Resad’s Macedonian Journey of June 1911". Middle Eastern Studies. 35 (4) (1999): 26-39.
\textsuperscript{61} Davutoğlu 2001, 54-55.
\textsuperscript{62} Shortly after he assumed office Davutoğlu stated that the Turkey-US partnership can be seen as a ‘model partnership’ that is rather a ‘necessity’ than a ‘choice’, cited in Marina Šerić, “Turska kao dobar učitelj [Turkey As a Good Teacher],” Večernji.hr, June 3, 2009. http://www.vecernji.hr/turska-kao-dobar-ucitelj-876331.
commitment to support each-other in this aspiration. The commitment to strive for Euro-Atlantic integration of the entire region could hardly be reconciled with any alleged Neo-Ottoman agenda.

As somebody with firm Balkan origins, I understand very well why Turkish invocation of the Ottoman historical heritage in this region would be met with suspicion. At the same time it is only reasonable to see the patronage of contemporary Turkey of the Muslim minorities in the Balkans in light of their recent troubled past in the hands of more powerful Christian peoples. In other words, if we are to remember the mass repressions against the Turkish and Muslim minorities in Bulgaria in the 1980s, as well as the repressions, war, and ethnic cleansing of the Bosnian Muslims and the Kosovar Albanians in the 1990s, the patronage of a powerful Balkan country that is also Muslim should be seen as a normal reaction on the part of Turkey, rather than a clear sign of Neo-Ottoman agenda. If we look at this practice in historical context, it would be easy to find parallels in the patronage of Bulgarian Orthodox Christians from the side of Russia and, at times, even the public in Great Britain, France, and other countries as remote as New Zealand. At the same time, for various reasons, the Baghdad Jews, as well as many subjects of the Ottoman Empire who were Jews were under the patronage of Great Britain. In this context, Turkey’s protection for Muslim minorities in the Balkans can be seen as a natural phenomenon. These groups also have strong cultural and social ties with Turkey because of the developments from the recent and more remote historical past. It is important to note that there have been multiple waves of migration of Ottoman Turks and other Balkan Muslim minorities to the receding Ottoman Empire since the nineteenth century. They have been motivated by repressions

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63 I was born in Sofia, Bulgaria.
and the fear of repressions of the advancing new national states. These waves of migration have continued in the twentieth century which has provided for large subcultures of Macedonian Turks, Turks from Western Thrace, Albanians from Kosovo, Bulgarian Turks and others. While the Zhivkov regime repressions gained publicity in the 1980s and have provided for the single most numerous migration, there have been many more smaller waves from Bulgaria and the other regions mentioned. The subcultures of these immigrants provide for natural cultural bonds that do have strategic implications for Turkish foreign policy in the region. Turkey’s aspiration to protect the remaining Balkan Muslim minorities should be seen as a normalization of its position in the region and as a reality that will likely not change in the foreseeable future.

As long as it is combined with a credible outreach to all the ethnicities in the region and a policy of seeking settling of differences through negotiation and reconciliation, Turkey’s cultural ties and engagement with Muslim minorities should be used to advance the causes of obtaining sustainable peace and security in the region rather than being seen as a reason for concern with Turkey as a political ally of the US, the European Union, or even the Balkan states for that purpose.

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65 See the testimonies of Serbian misrule in the form of diplomatic reports by diplomatic agents, ally generals, and other first-witness accounts abound in the proceedings of the Paris Conference. For instance, see Papers Relating To The Foreign Relations Of The United States: The Paris Peace Conference, 1919 IX, 402.
66 The portion of Thrace currently part of Greece. The region has a Muslim majority composed of Bulgarian Muslims or Pomaks and Turks.
68 A point made in Davutoğlu 2001, 321.
Another important moment to note here is that the peoples that Davutoğlu calls “natural allies” should not be assumed to either support Turkish policies unreservedly, or affiliate with an idealized Ottoman past. I will examine this in more detail in the next chapter but for the moment I will mention that two of the most important revolts against Ottoman authorities in the 19th century were organized respectively by the Bosnian Muslims and the Albanians, both Muslim and Christian: the Great Bosnian Uprising in 1831-1833 and the League of Prizren in 1878-1881.

While this concept of the Ottoman past, its legacy, and its importance in the building of new international and interethic relations in the Balkans can be seen as idealistic, Davutoğlu also puts a strong accent on the present historical moment in the development of new relations and power balance in the region. Turkey’s future energetic foreign minister argues in 2001 that this is a moment of new beginnings in “regional power balance” and that powers that demonstrate “the ability to use these new dynamics in a flexible and swift manner would increase their influence while countries that remain passive would lose their quality of decisively influencing local events and fall into isolation.” While it is clear that he is referring to Turkey or to the Turkey he wants to see implementing his strategy in the first case, it remains unclear which Balkan power he is referring to in the second instance – perhaps, Greece, although I would argue that Turkey’s policy of non-interference in neighbor affairs and of relative passivity has by no means been an exception in the larger region and it would be hard to argue that anything has changed dramatically in Balkan international affairs after the so-called “Fall of Communism” except for low-intensity regional cooperation initiatives. This is largely due to the economic hurdles of virtually all countries in the region. The only other Balkan economy of some

70 In Turkish tabiî müttefikler, Davutoğlu 2001, 55.
71 Davutoğlu 2001, 55.
significance is that of Greece but it would be unrealistic to expect any serious engagement of this country before it solves its internal economic and administrative capacity issues. This is just another reason to believe that his point is very valid in the historical context of the Balkans and the timing is, indeed, very suitable for Turkey to become more active and engaged in the region, even more so with regard to the fact that Turkey is the only country in the larger region with a really powerful economy. The sheer size and the level of development of Turkish economy will be impossible to approximate to by any Balkan power in the foreseeable future.\footnote{Bechev 2012, 142.}

It is understandable that only a country with strong economy can afford intense activism and hope to influence events in the region. Davutoğlu pays relatively little attention to this particular factor determining Turkish foreign policy strategy, partly because his work is dated 2001, significantly before the economic boom that took place during the initial years of AKP rule. He does, however, point to the very important geo-economic position of Turkey, emphasizing its close proximity to some of the most important energy sources, as well as the potential to participate in the distribution of these resources and their rechanneling towards the west.\footnote{Davutoğlu 2001, 332-338}

Perhaps the most important idea of Davutoğlu’s foreign policy strategy monograph is the consistent theme that Turkey should occupy its natural place in international relations in the region with self-esteem and without allowing negative memories of the past to condemn any future engagement. On the contrary, he stresses the importance of evaluating the Ottoman historical and cultural legacy, learning from the lessons it brings but also building on the strategic benefits of its traditional ties to the larger Balkan region. Davutoğlu rightfully argues
that had major European powers of today such as France and Germany paid too much attention
to their defeats throughout history with all their consequences (in the case of Germany only 55
years had passed between the rout and humiliation of Nazi Germany and its division into two and
the writing of Davutoğlu’s work), they would never have gotten to their current position of
undisputed European leader-countries, leading the way for one of the most powerful
international organizations and international actors that is the European Union.74

Davutoğlu discusses the more passive role Turkey plays on the international scene after
the establishment of the Republic of Turkey noting that in this period Turkey becomes “part of
the Western Axis”.75 While he does point to some pragmatic reasons for this stance, he also
stresses the dramatically changing conditions after the fall of the Soviet block and the Berlin
Wall noting that the changes in power balance during this period allows for countries that
manage to evaluate the situation to increase their influence and importance in international
affairs.76 In order for Turkey to achieve that and to take this step successfully it needs to “couple
its rich historical experience, geopolitical and geoeconomic facilities with rigorous and
consistent internal political reform” strengthening its “international position and forming its own
zone of influence”.77

Turkey possesses a strikingly different political culture, as opposed to the more stable
political systems in Western countries. In Turkey, Davutoğlu argues, the dynamics of internal
political life reflect “an intense transformation happening inside society”.78 He argues that a
consistent tradition has been established throughout history to impose certain radical reforms

74 Ibid., 61.
75 Ibid., 69.
76 Ibid., 75-76.
77 Ibid., 78-79.
78 Ibid., 80.
“from the center to the periphery” (meaning the political center)\textsuperscript{79} aiming at a transformation of society in the direction of another civilization, generally referring to Western Europe. The pattern was repeated with a much greater intensity with the reforms of the first years of the Republic. Here Davutoğlu notes that despite the great sacrifices associated with the radical reforms undertaken by Atatürk and his successors, Turkey is never allowed to occupy its place in the alliance it has been aspiring to and has remained isolated by this Western civilization circle,\textsuperscript{80} remaining “neither a colonized country with little historical experience, or an established, central country with a steady political system.”\textsuperscript{81}

Indeed, while there has been a rather lively discussion among scholars, as well as among politicians from EU member states and even EU officials on this matter, it is widely accepted that Turkey’s bid for a full membership in the European Union is a matter of controversy. As prominent Turkish scholar Kemal Kirişçi points, Europe has been divided into two camps: those in support of Turkey’s bid and countries with a large disagreement on the bid or even some expressing open disapproval like: Austria, France, and Germany.\textsuperscript{82} Kirişçi talks about Turkey seen as the “other” or Turks seen as “the “others” of Europe.”\textsuperscript{83} While it would be difficult to argue that there are any strategic benefits to the exclusion of Turkey from the European community in the face of European Union, the question of whether Turkey belongs in Europe as a full member is still the subject of debate.\textsuperscript{84} It is interesting to note that many of the supporters of Turkish accession to the Union cite certain advantages that Davutoğlu discusses in his work,

\textsuperscript{79} Davutoğlu 2001, 81.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 82.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 83.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{84} A debate often influenced by internal politics of powerful EU member states such as France. On the election of Sarkozy’s impact on Turkish-EU relations see Angel Rabasa and F. Stephen Larrabee, The rise of political Islam in Turkey (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008): 78-79.
such as Turkey’s traditional ties with the Muslim world, or the community of the Turkic peoples, the so-called “Turkic world”, 85 large communities of people to which Turkey has the strategic advantage of reaching out, in addition to the advantages brought by its geopolitical location. 86

In Davutoğlu’s eyes, the geopolitical location of Turkey, connecting the Anatolian peninsula with the mainland of Europe, the possession of the straits at Istanbul that control the traffic between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, as well as its location between the Caucasus and the Middle East with Europe both by land, as well as important sea routes make for a formidable ally in geopolitical and strategic terms. 87

One of the most important points made in Strategic Depth and a central idea of Davutoğlu’s strategic concept for Turkish foreign policy is the necessity to end in a definite manner the policy of relative isolation from Balkan matters in the country’s aspiration for closer cooperation with Western Europe. Instead, Davutoğlu argues that Turkey’s political, economic, and cultural leverage in the international community will continue to be related directly to its established and perceived influence and “performance” in neighboring regions, including the Balkans. 88

In conclusion, I will say that certain points made in Strategic Depth can be seen as dated, as realities in the Balkans have changed rather significantly since 2001: relations between Balkan countries have to a certain degree improved, certainly in a good direction with regard to Turkey’s role in the region. Turkey has already established itself as an important factor in regional politics

88 The Balkans are mentioned first: Balkanlar, Kafkaslar ve Ortadoğu...[the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East...] in Davutoğlu 2001, 119.
and as a protector of the rights and culture of Muslim minorities in the region, whereas Davutoğlu argued back in 2001 that Turkey should take care to avoid remaining isolated against a new Balkan alliance [between Serbia and Greece, and, possibly, Bulgaria].

Turkey has begun a one-way process of establishing itself as a center of influence in the region, providing balance in international and interethnic relations with regard to other influential actors like Russia, the EU, and the USA. At the same time, let us note that as far back as 2001, as stated in Davutoğlu’s doctrine, Turkey has set as a goal the protection of the internal security and the territorial integrity of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia. I would argue that Albania could hardly be seen as threatened with regard to any of the two mentioned factors as of 2001. The reference here to Albania and Albanians very much leads us to think that what Davutoğlu really refers to is the yet unstable Kosovo. As we will see in the subsequent chapters, Turkey’s engagement in the region after Davutoğlu’s coming to office as a foreign minister gives us serious clues to believe that that is the case. He argues that Ottoman’s pull out of the Balkans has brought with itself the formation of “points of conflict”:

what he mainly refers to here are the following regions: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Macedonia. Bosnia is still torn between its three constituent peoples: the Bosnian Muslims

Footnotes:

89 Solana recognizes Turkey’s emergence as a regional leader with increasing power and leverage in Balkan affairs in Solana 2011.
90 Davutoğlu 2001, 124.
91 In Turkish çatışma noktaları in ibid., 122.
92 Part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after the Congress of Berlin in 1878 and later of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes or the first Yugoslavian state after the end of World War I.
93 Taken by Serbian and Montenegrin troops and officially becoming part of Serbia after the end of the First Balkan War in 1913. The Muslim majority population along with other minorities immediately became subject of repressions and large-scale violence during the war itself. See Mehmet Öcal and Ayşe Aslıhan Çelenk. “Making of a New State in the Balkans: Kosovo,” Insight Turkey 12, no. 4 (2010): 167–168.
94 Most of the Vardar portion of the region became part of Serbia after the end of the First Balkan War. The local Bulgarian majority along with the Muslim minorities of Albanians and Turks, similarly to Kosovo, were subjected to repressions and violence by the Serbian and Montenegrin troops although not on the same scale.
or Bosniaks, the Serbs, and the Croats. Kosovo is now ruled by its Albanian majority but continues to experience some tensions with its small but not insignificant Serbian and Gorani minorities. Macedonia, on its side, has continued to face problems with its sizeable Albanian minority that hinder this country’s path towards EU integration. We will examine these three areas of Turkish strategic concern in more detail in the subsequent chapters with a focus on Bosnia, as this is arguably the region of most active diplomatic and soft power engagement on behalf of Turkey. Davutoğlu importantly argues that only an active policy employing the cultural and historical connections of Turkey’s to the region can allow it to assume its natural role as protector of the Muslim minorities in these areas and become a balancing factor with regard to the other, international actors who are not as closely related to the region, at least not in the sense that Turkey is.

We will now examine the Davutoğlu doctrine’s interesting relation with the Ottoman past and the resulting allegations of Neo-Ottomanism that have stimulated criticism from certain Balkan scholars, political analysts, and the public. I will demonstrate that the only veritable relation with the Ottoman past of the political doctrine of Davutoğlu is related to Turkey’s historical responsibility to protect Muslim minorities in the Balkans, as a natural result of the end of the centuries-old Ottoman Empire combined with a rather naïve perception of the latter as “natural allies”.

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96 Davutoğlu 2001, 55.
Chapter Three

Neo-Ottomanism and Turkish Foreign Policy in the Western Balkans

The pro-active orientation of Turkish foreign policy developed after the coming to power of AKP\(^7\) is combined with the determination to discontinue the policy of rupture with the Ottoman past and an attempt to capitalize on its benefits in terms of historical and cultural connections. This has caused certain concerns among political circles and political analysts in the Balkans, and even among the public. A majority of the Balkan nations have mixed at best and very bad and even painful memories at worst with regard to the Ottoman past of their respective nation.\(^8\) Being of Bulgarian origins myself, I am aware of the crucial importance that national emancipation from the years of Ottoman rule and the building of a new and independent state have for the formation of national consciousness in this region. This is true for virtually all Christian Balkan states: Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Romania, and even for one of the few Muslim majority states in the region, Albania. In a sense, the end of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans is seen as the real beginning of a fully emancipated national movement by these Balkan nations and is often times associated with the economic, educational, and political progress of the region.

The new Turkish activism in the Balkans combined with a call for reevaluation of the country’s Ottoman past has thus been met with very mixed reactions in the Balkans and

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\(^7\) The Justice and Development Party.

\(^8\) Arguably a mixed case is Albania, a country with a Muslim majority and significant Orthodox minority in the South, and a Catholic minority in the North. Albania was the last to become an independent state after the demise of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First Balkan War in 1913. While the cultural and religious ties of the Muslim majority with the Ottoman past are hard to deny, it is also noteworthy that this tiny nation was to organize one of the most significant uprisings against Ottoman power in the 19\(^{th}\) century, the League of Prizren in Kosovo (1878-1881). Albanians were always considered allies of the Empire but in reality they were one of the small Balkan nations who were striving ultimately for nothing short of complete national emancipation and eventually an independent political future.
sometimes with nothing short of hostility. Balkan nations remember their Ottoman past but usually those are not good memories. In the case of Bulgaria, March 3, the day when the San Stefano Peace Treaty was signed between the Russian and the Ottoman Empires in 1878, the equivalent of what July 4 means for America, is still celebrated as a Bulgarian National Holiday. In Bulgaria special emphasis in high school history instruction is placed on the atrocities committed by Ottoman forces after the failed April Uprising in 1876 and the infamous Massacre of Batak, one of the worse episodes in national history still remembered with pain. There is a little-known detail in this massacre that was, indeed, quite horrific in its nature. The massacres and horrible atrocities committed in the town of Batak in the Rhodopes were mostly perpetrated by irregular troops, the so-called *bashi bozuk*, many of whom were ethnically Pomaks – Bulgarian Muslims. Those were people whose mother’s tongue was Bulgarian. Despite that, the tradition in historiography usually talks about the atrocities committed by the Turks, which, at least in this case, is simply not accurate. Nonetheless, while regular troops did not engage in this outrage, the complacency of Ottoman authorities, as well as the fact that instead of the promised punitive measures against the perpetrators, some of them were promoted in rank are beyond doubt and speak volumes of the actual state of affairs in the empire. The April Uprising brought international attention and eventually built up the case for war between the Russian Empire and Ottoman Turkey.

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100 A detailed and well-research account on this event can be found in James Reid, "Batak 1876: A massacre and its significance," *Journal of Genocide Research*. 2 (3) (2000): 375-409. After the town was seized in early May 1876, the civilian population was put to the knife, including old people, women and children. Out of a population of approximately 8,000 this act of sheer cruelty left a few hundred of the former inhabitants of the town alive.

101 From Turkish *başı bozuk* literally meaning ‘someone whose head is gone or damaged’ or ‘a crazy person’.

102 Ibid., 392.
This episode clearly demonstrates why any reference to a glorious Ottoman past would be met with a high degree of suspicion by Christian populations in the region. Thus Serbian scholar of oriental history Professor Darko Tanasković argues that Turkey’s diplomatic advances in the region “have to be observed closely.”103 It is indicative that in the case of Bosnia only approximately 40 percent of the population considers Turkey to be a friendly state, a number that corresponds roughly to the percentage of Bosnian Muslims in the country. In the case of Serbia, another Balkan state that celebrates one of the most important instances of defying Ottoman power, the First Serbian Uprising (1804-1813) as the most important national holiday, the number is 15 percent, despite the significant cooperation on the political level in recent years.104

The question we have therefore to answer is: does Neo-Ottomanism inform Turkish foreign policy strategy and diplomatic activity in the Western Balkans and what is the importance of the Ottoman heritage in Turkey’s new approach to the region?

Parallel to the economic progress Turkey has made in the years of AKP rule (2002-2014), it has further developed a tremendous potential of academic and analytical support for its policies and strategic advances in foreign policy. The Turkish Foreign Ministry works closely with an academic think tank directly associated with and part of the government, the Center for Strategic Research (in Turkish SAM, Stratejik Araşturma Merkezi), which describes itself as “established as a consultative body to provide Turkish Foreign Policy decision makers with scholarly and scientific assessments of relevant issues, and reviews Turkish foreign policy with a futuristic perspective.”105 The foreign ministry also works with a number of similar institutions not

104 Petrovic and Reljic 2011, 170.
directly linked to the government but likewise informing Turkish foreign policy including: SETA (from Turkish Siyaset Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı or Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research), a powerful think tank with branches in Ankara and Washington, DC, and USAK (from Turkish Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırmalar Kurumu or International Strategic Research Organization) in addition to many others, mainly based in Ankara and Istanbul.

During my one-year study in Turkey in 2012-2013 I had the chance to meet with experts from all three institutions and discuss some of the main aspects of Turkish engagement in the Western Balkans. This engagement is goal-oriented and the common goal is to build good neighborly relations among the nations in the region, based on tolerance, multi-culturalism, and economic inter-dependence. The goal of a common future in the European Union for all the countries in the region is clearly emphasized and the intended establishment of good and strong neighborly relations is clearly aimed at enhancing the countries’ European aspirations. I did bring up the question of the importance of the Ottoman legacy for Turkish foreign policy strategy. The experts who inform Turkish foreign policy decisions’ understanding is that this importance lies in the capability to learn from the historical lessons of this legacy. There is a clear tendency to approach Turkey’s relations in the region with pragmatism, with policies directed at concrete goals including: normalization of bilateral relations, as we will see in the following chapter on Turkey’s engagement in Bosnia; a goal to facilitate normalization in

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106 In May 2013 I conducted informal interviews with analysts from all three of the think tanks I mention above: SETA, SAM, and USAK. The following account in this paragraph is based on my impressions from these interviews.

107 This is also the official position of the Turkish Diplomacy as expressed in a recent interview with Mr. Davutoğlu for the Serbian media Blic in Tamara Spaić, “Srb i Turci su braća Balkana [The Head of Turkish Diplomacy: Serbs and Turks are Balkan Brothers],” Interview with Ahmet Davutoğlu, Foreign Minister of Turkey by for Blic Online, Blic Online, January 13, 2014. http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Politika/434046/Srbi-i-Turci-su-braca-Balkana.
bilateral and interethnic relations; and strong support for a common future for all the countries of the Western Balkans.

I should note that the pragmatic outlook of the foreign policy analysts differs slightly in tone from the official doctrine of Turkish foreign policy, as expressed in Strategic Depth. Pragmatism is clearly present in Foreign Minister Davutoğlu’s reasoning, but there is also a certain idealization of the Ottoman past. While the latter is not the single most important aspect of Davutoğlu’s strategic doctrine, I will argue that it is one of the doctrine’s weak spots. Idealization of the Ottoman past does carry the potential to bring counter-productive results for diplomatic activity in the Balkans.

I will now go over some important points made in Strategic Depth related to the Ottoman heritage and cultural legacy and afterwards analyze to what extent they have influenced actual policies implemented in Turkey’s relations with the region.

I already mentioned that one of Davutoğlu’s main themes in Strategic Depth is the need to replace the policy of complete rupture with the Ottoman past with a policy seeking continuity and preservation of the cultural and historical monuments related to this past in order to capitalize on what he sees as instruments of influence in the region. Davutoğlu argues that there has been a process of gradual annihilation of “Ottoman historical heritage and Islamic culture, in particular in Bulgaria and Greece” to which the Turkish government has not reacted, a process which ultimately culminated in the attempts of complete assimilation and the expulsion of Bulgarian Turks in the 1990s by the Zhivkov regime.108

The effacement of the Ottoman legacy that Davutoğlu decries is reflected in the emergence of the Kemalist regime installed after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I and the Turkish War of Independence. The Kemalist regime’s extreme measures directed towards a complete rupture with Turkey’s Ottoman past included: assuming complete government control over all religious institutions, confiscation of the Ulama\textsuperscript{109} properties, rewriting national history with a special emphasis on the Turkic past that projects to the times Islam had not yet come to the world as an important religion.\textsuperscript{110} In addition to Atatürk’s efforts to replace all Arabic and Persian words with words of Turkic origin, there were instances when the new republican government went as far as disposing of certain Ottoman archives. There is a famous instance when an enormous quantity of valuable archives from the Ottoman period were saved by sheer coincidence by Bulgarian authorities. In 1931 three train cars with paper were purchased for the paper plants in Kostenets and Knyazhevo. When Bulgarian authorities realized that the content of the said cars was mostly precious archives documenting Ottoman administration of Bulgaria, most of the documents were preserved and made their way into the State Archives.\textsuperscript{111} This unique collection is now available to scholars in the National Library of Bulgaria St. Cyril and Methodius in Sofia. The archives were bought as recycled paper at a price of three grosz\textsuperscript{112} for the oka\textsuperscript{113} and, had they not been purchased by Bulgaria, would have been destroyed.\textsuperscript{114} This real story demonstrates that there is some validity to Davutoğlu’s argument

\textsuperscript{109} The class of educated Islamic scholars.

\textsuperscript{110} Fuller 2008, 25-27.


\textsuperscript{112} A common name for the cents of Turkish lira, the kuruş.

\textsuperscript{113} An Ottoman measure of mass equaling 1.2829 kg.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
that a complete rupture with Ottoman past is detrimental to the nation. More importantly in terms of the topic, he also claims that it is detrimental to Turkey’s leverage in the region.

According to Davutoğlu, the Bosnian Crisis has demonstrated that “the connection between Islamic identity and Ottoman heritage and Turkish regional policies has become unavoidable.” According to Davutoğlu, “Every mosque destroyed, every Islamic institution that disappears, every Ottoman tradition that is destroyed in a cultural sense in the Balkans means the destruction of a base stone of Turkish cross-border influence in the region.”

Davutoğlu further argues that the Bosnian and Kosovo crises and the subsequent call for help from Turkey by the Bosnian Muslims and Kosovar Albanians demonstrate that the protection of these two peoples can be seen as a “responsibility” of the new Turkish state and a mandatory element of its “foreign policy parameters”. The Muslim and Turkish minorities in Macedonia, Bulgaria, Sandzhak, Romania, and Greece are similarly seen as elements of Turkish regional policies for the Balkans. Davutoğlu argues that there is a need to build a basis in international law for the protection of these ethnic minorities and that Turkey should strive to assure itself the right to intervene and protect in issues involving Muslim minorities in the Balkans. This can understandably be seen as a worrying tendency in Turkish policy by Balkan nations and even Turkey’s European allies and the US. It becomes more comprehensible, however when put in the context of the Bosnian War and its horrible results for the Bosnian Muslim population. Indeed, there have been multiple historical instances when Muslim

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115 Davutoğlu 2001, 54.
116 In Turkish mesuliyet, Davutoğlu 2001, 122.
117 Ibid.
118 A majority Muslim area in Serbia located near the border with Montenegro and Kosovo.
119 Ibid., 123.
120 Ibid.
minorities in the Balkans have needed protection, starting as early as the 1860s but intensified with the 1877-1878 Russian-Turkish War and especially during and after the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913.

The head of Turkish Diplomacy is aware that everything that relates to Islam and the Ottoman cultural heritage in regions such as Bosnia and Kosovo will be looked at with suspicion by the Serbs, as they have an negative opinion of the Ottoman Empire and its rule in the region - a perception captured in the widespread use of the phrase “Ottoman yoke.” Balkan citizens may also see anything labeled “Islamic” as the work of “Islamic Fundamentalists.” In this situation, Davutoğlu argues that Turkey needs to build “realistic and diplomatic means” to intervene and achieve its goals of protecting the local Muslims and Ottoman cultural heritage without agitating the local Christian populations. As we will see in Chapter Four, this goal is to a large extent accomplished over the course of the intense Turkish diplomatic activity in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the trilateral consultations mechanisms built between Bosnian authorities, Serbia, and Croatia with Turkey as a mediator. In order for this to be accomplished, Davutoğlu argues for the need to establish “a new balance and coordination between internal political culture and foreign policies” of Turkey. This remark obviously includes the reevaluation of the importance of Ottoman heritage itself, a change that started during the years of the late prominent Turkish politician Turgut Özal, continued during the years of the Islamic

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123 Exemplifying this attitude, upon hearing the proposal to reconstruct the Ottoman mosque in Banja Luka, the Serbian mayor of the town stated that the mosque was “a monument of the cruel Turkish occupation” (in Hajdarpasıç 2008, 715. 
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
Welfare Party (1996-1997)\textsuperscript{127} and only culminated during the years of governance by the AKP, the party that continues to be in power in Turkey after twelve years (2002-2014), recently winning local elections with a sizeable majority.\textsuperscript{128} Thus, the Neo-Ottomanist concepts in Strategic Depth are not a novelty but rather the fruit of an evolution that has taken place in parallel in Turkish internal politics and foreign policy agenda since the years of Tugut Özal, first as Prime Minister between 1983 and 1989 and then as President of Turkey, 1989-1993.

Turgut Özal is a rather interesting and innovative political figure and a profound study of his political legacy is beyond the scope of this work. However, to illustrate the point I make above, it would probably be sufficient to note just a couple of ideas that we can readily see reappear in slightly modified form in Davutoğlu’s foreign policy doctrine. In 1992 Özal wrote: “...The Ottoman-Muslim population shares the same historical legacy and fate as the Turks of Anatolia and they still regard themselves as “Turk” in the religio-cultural sense. These groups live in Bosnia, Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Western Thrace.”\textsuperscript{129}

While the statement that these Muslim peoples would often be called “Turks” until the end of the Ottoman Empire by the Christian population is a historical fact,\textsuperscript{130} this was no longer true by the late twentieth century and, even less in the beginning of the twenty-first century. Albanians from Macedonia or Kosovo could hardly be seen identifying themselves as Turks in

\textsuperscript{127} Prominent Turkish scholar Hakan Yavuz writes in 1998: “...in recent years, Ottoman-Islamic origins of Turkish nationhood in particular have become more assertive and effective in conditioning and shaping the state’s policies and the society’s perception of ‘self.’” In Yavuz 1998, 22. Yavuz also notes that despite the ousting of the Refah Party from government Islamic groups continue to play an important role in Turkish politics in subformations of leading center-right parties.


\textsuperscript{130} See, for instance, Hajdarpasić 2008, 717.
any sense; they would simply identify as Albanians and assign less importance to religion than Özal and a number of Turkish scholars and politicians would assume.131

In comparison, Davutoğlu emphasizes the common cultural heritage left by the Ottoman Empire that binds Turkey with these peoples but limiting himself to stating the obvious truth: “Everyone is familiar with the historical and sincere proximity [of Turks] to Bosnians and Albanians.”132 Davutoğlu also consistently emphasizes in Strategic Depth the need to form flexible policies that would reflect current realities in order to capitalize on recent developments rather than seeking to reestablish the past. Thus, we see a more realistic approach to foreign policy that combines the newly valued Ottoman heritage with a credible effort to engage with all players in the Balkans.133

The challenge to any elements of Neo-Ottomanist thinking in Turkish foreign policy strategies is that they cannot possibly have any but negative resonance among any Christian nation or ethnic group in the Balkans.134 In addition, even some of the “natural allies”135, the Bosnians, Albanians136, or a smaller and quite unusual group such as the Gorani in Kosovo may not necessarily respond positively to such rhetoric. It would be useful to take briefly the example of the Gorani, as it is rather indicative of the cultural diversity of Muslim minorities in the Balkans and their complex identities. The Gorani are a relatively small ethnic minority who live

131 According to a recent report on Muslims in the world by the Pew Research Center, only 15 percent of people in Albania believe that religion is important: see The World’s Muslims, 8.
132 As opposed to Özal’s suggestion that these Balkan peoples can be seen as ‘Turks’ in cultural and religious sense in Yavuz 1998, 24.
133 Michaela Ježová, “Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Balkans,” Politics in Central Europe. 7 (2) (2011): 22.
134 Erhan Türbedar, “Turkey’s New Activism in the Western Balkans: Ambitions and Obstacles,” Insight Turkey 13, no. 3 (2011): 149-150.
135 In Turkish tabi müttefikler, Davutoğlu 2001, 55.
136 Türbedar 2011 argues that Albanians in Albania proper make no exception to the general perception among Balkan peoples of the Ottoman past as times of trouble. In publications of the Albanian Academy of Sciences “…Ottomans have been described as fanatic, backward and intolerant rulers, who oppressed Albanians with heavy taxation, political discrimination and the absence of the most elementary human rights…” in Türbedar 2011, 150.
mainly in the South-Western part of Kosovo in the Gora region. They are a Slavic-speaking
ethnicity whose dialect closely resembles Western Bulgarian and Pomak dialects in Thrace.
Many of them hold Bulgarian passports although there have been systematic but unavailing
overtures from Skopje. While they are 100% Muslim, the Gorani feel closely affiliated with
the Bulgarians and Serbs, rather than with the Ottoman heritage, Turkey, or the neighbor
Albanians with whom they have rather uneasy relations. Turkish scholars and politicians often
incorrectly lump the Gorani together with the Bosnians with whom they share almost nothing
other than the common religion.

Davutoğlu recognizes that Turkey’s long-term strategic goal of becoming the patron of
Muslim minorities in the Balkans is not only a “responsibility” but also “the main means of
establishing its influence in the region.” Davutoğlu envisions an axis starting from Bihać-
Middle Bosnia-Eastern Bosnia-Sandžak-Kosovo-Albania-Macedonia-Kardzhali-Western Thrace
that “in geopolitical and geo-cultural sense represents an aorta for Turkey.” If we look at an
ethnographic cart of the Balkans, we can see that this imaginary axis roughly corresponds to
areas with substantial Muslim minorities or Muslim majorities, in the cases of BiH and Kosovo.

While this statement may initially cause understandable concerns both among Balkan
nations, as well as among the Western allies of Turkey, it is important that Davutoğlu also states
the goals envisioned in maintaining this axis of influence: strengthening the internal security of
these countries, protection of cultural assets, assisting the strengthening of economic and social
infrastructure, facilitating an increase in the communication between these societies, in other

137 The Gorani remain unconvinced they are the heirs of Alexander the Great who happen to be Muslims.
140 Ibid.
words, a combination of political and soft power that is designed to increase Turkey’s influence in the region and preserved these ethnic groups often seen as threatened and vulnerable.

As we will see in the subsequent chapters, the greatest challenge to Davutoğlu’s doctrine is dealing with the negative effects of his idealization of the Ottoman past and identification of Turks and Turkey with the Muslim populations in the Balkans, even though this emphasis is toned down as compared with Özal’s vision. This would be a challenging task, as it is comparable to changing the existing attitudes towards the Ottoman heritage among Christian peoples – stereotypes are sometimes difficult or almost impossible to change. At the same time an effort to further temper the tendencies of idealizing the Ottoman past and emphasize the importance of inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue could bring enormous benefits to Turkish foreign policy strategy in the region.

Davutoğlu importantly does state that the way to protect the Ottoman cultural heritage and minority cultures in the Balkans from annihilation is through “common projects” and “reconciliation initiatives”. He further emphasizes the need for common efforts in lowering tensions in the region and seeking large economic projects that would lead to common gains referring to all the Balkan states and ethnic groups. He also doesn’t fail to mention the importance of integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures like NATO and the EU of the entire region. This is a vision that has been confirmed by the foreign policy analysts with whom I met, as well as in all diplomatic initiatives of Turkey in the Western Balkans and the rest of the larger Balkan region.

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141 See Bechev 2012, 140 and note 15, revealing that Turkey’s positive engagement in Bosnia has fallen short of changing popular attitudes among Bosnian Serbs and Croats.
143 For instance, this has been a constant motive in Bulgarian-Turkish official diplomatic relations.
Thus, while Neo-Ottomanism is present in Davutoğlu’s doctrine, it rather consists of a noticeable idealizing of the Ottoman past of the region, in addition to a tendency to overestimate the allegiances and strategic importance of Muslim minority groups that are quite diverse and are not to be lumped together for strategic purposes. These are the liabilities of the Strategic Depth doctrine. However, as I have shown, it also includes elements that mitigate the negative effects of these liabilities such as the concepts of flexibility, intense engagement in diplomatic contacts, and regional cooperation that point the way to more fruitful interaction with Turkey’s neighbors. I believe that my case studies will illustrate this point and make evident the need to further tone down Neo-Ottomanist rhetoric and even seek to transform it into a more encompassing initiative of inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue in the Balkans. Multi-culturalism in the twenty first century does not need to be based on Ottoman imperial past but there would likely be no harm done if it were to be informed by its historical lessons.

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144 İnan Rüma, “Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Balkans: New Activism, Neo-Ottomanism Or/so What?,” Turkish Policy Quarterly 9, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 140.
Chapter Four

Engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Trilateral Consultations Mechanisms: Successes, Limitations, and Important Implications for the Future of the Balkans

This chapter will attempt to present the practical aspects of two concrete diplomatic initiatives initiated by Turkey aimed at improving Bosnia and Herzegovina’s precarious position in the region, as well as good neighborly relations in the entire Western Balkans region: the trilateral consultations mechanisms: Turkey-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Serbia and Turkey-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Croatia. The mechanisms are a product of Ahmet Davutoğlu’s Strategic Depth doctrine and can be seen as its exemplar actual implementation in one of the key areas of the tumultuous Western Balkans, Bosnia and Herzegovina. I argue that this important diplomatic development for the region has to be examined in the context of the problematic situations in two other countries that appeared after the breakup of former Yugoslavia: Kosovo and Macedonia. Experience shows that crisis and conflict tend to spill across national borders in the region: the Kosovo status crisis has had a noticeable effect on Bosnian Serbs’ separatist tendencies, as well as on ethnic animosities in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The geographic proximity of the three young states and some cultural and religious connections that transcend state boundaries are among the reasons for this interdependence (see Map 4.1 below). Thus, Bosnia is a key country for the Balkans and successful mediation there has the potential to impact the entire process of Euro-Atlantic integration and security of the region across national borders.
Map 4.1

Central Balkan Region

While hopes for successful EU integration of Turkey are fading among growing worries about authoritarian tendencies in the 21st century Turkish Republic, especially following the Gezi Protests that started in 2013, I argue that these diplomatic initiatives clearly demonstrate the immense strategic importance of Turkey as a US ally and partner, and prospective member of the EU. Through the trilateral consultations mechanisms, an original initiative of Ahmet Davutoğlu, Turkey demonstrates that it is uniquely positioned to facilitate dialogue in the Balkans and to contribute to the establishment of sustainable peace and economic development and more harmonious relations between the ethnicities living in these areas.

Because of the recent character of the developments I am going to examine, my narrative is based to a large extent on official government documents, mostly originating from the Turkish Foreign Ministry and the Turkish Presidency, video and audio materials presenting the consultations, more recent scholarly articles, in addition to political analyses by some of the prominent foreign policy experts from the various think tanks who provide formidable support and academic backing to Turkish foreign policy actors. I will also be drawing on my personal encounters and conversations with such experts who work closely with the Turkish government in Ankara.\(^\text{146}\)

I believe that Davutoğlu’s work lays out a number of ambitious tasks for Turkish involvement in the Balkans and in particular in what he calls “points of conflict”\(^\text{147}\) left after the demise of the Ottoman Empire. These “points of conflict” include three present states: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Macedonia. Among them, Bosnia occupies a key strategic position in Turkish foreign policy, as it is seen as an “economic and cultural outpost of Turkey in

\(^{146}\) See footnote 106 on p. 31.

\(^{147}\) In Turkish çatışma noktaları in Davutoğlu 2001, 122.
Central Europe.” I will first examine in more detail Turkey’s diplomatic engagement in Bosnia, as it is accordingly significantly more intense than in the other two smaller states of Kosovo and Macedonia. There are several additional factors that make Turkish engagement in Bosnia more significant: it represents a successful engagement in post-conflict mediation; it shows the pragmatic face of Turkish diplomacy and its potential to play a positive role in bringing about new and better relations between the Balkan ethnicities; Turkey’s attempt to facilitate reconciliation and good neighborly relations in Bosnia arguably seeks to redress some of the past failures of European and US diplomacy in this region, creating a positive trend in interethnic and international relations in the larger Balkan region.

In his speech addressing the Conference on the Ottoman Legacy and the Balkan Muslim Communities Today in Sarajevo in October, 2009 — on the eve of the start of the mediation mechanisms we are going to look at — Foreign Minister Davutoğlu calls Bosnia a “miniature of the Balkans”. It is a land where Bosnians and other Muslims, Serbs, Croats, and Jews have lived together for centuries.

Bosnia’s capital city of Sarajevo, indeed, used to be one of the best examples for multicultural co-existence in the Balkans. Unfortunately, there has been a long Balkan tradition of marring the multi-cultural heritage of Ottoman cities: what scholar of the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire Edin Hajdarpašić calls “the radical ‘un-mixing’ of the populations in the former imperial realms” affected all corners of the former Ottoman domains. The examples of Skopje, Thessaloniki, Istanbul, and Smyrna or Izmir come to mind among the more famous ones.

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148 Ibid., 317.
150 Hajdarpašić 2008, 719.
Sarajevo was one of the last to suffer this fate during the Bosnian war in the years 1992-1995. It is difficult to imagine that only ten years prior to these horrible times the city had hosted the 1984 Sarajevo Winter Olympics.

Despite the horrific interethnic violence of the years of the Bosnian War in 1992-1995, prominent Bosnian public figure and scholar Rusmir Mahmutčehajić characterizes Bosnia as a land marked not by violence but rather by “resistance to violence in the name of the fraternity of the Abrahamic religions in a community of difference.” The strategic geopolitical location of Bosnia suggests frequent international conflicts and its essentially multi-ethnic character throughout history has often been challenged by imperial rivalries and the rapid rise of nationalism in the 19th and 20th centuries. The formation of Yugoslavia as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918 gave significant leverage to the Serbian element in the new state that does not recognize any Bosnian identity and, similarly to its heir, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, prefers to lump Bosnians together with any citizen of Yugoslavia that happens to be of the Islamic denomination as “Muslims”. Despite this, the national ideology of the Bosnian Muslims started to take a definite shape towards the end of the nineteenth century, intensifying in the twentieth, especially in 1960s and 1970s Yugoslavia.

The self-identification Bosnian so far remains almost limited to the cultural and historical identity of Bosnian Muslims, a European people which is rooted in Ottoman and Islamic culture.

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151 Followed shortly after by Prizren, another exemplary colorful and multi-ethnic town in Kosovo that didn’t suffer destruction on the same scale but was nevertheless heavily affected by the 1998-1999 conflict and gradually lost a lot of its multi-ethnic character and atmosphere of tolerance for all ethnicities. The Serbian population of Prizren today (2014) is almost non-existing.
155 Ibid., 171.
This rather curious cultural identity is exemplified by the late Bosnian politician, scholar and intellectual Alija Izetbegović. Bosnian Serbs and Croats tend to identify as, respectively, Serbs or Croats before the category “Bosnian” is even mentioned which creates an additional challenge to state building in Bosnia. While the prospect for militarized ethnic conflict seems remote at the moment, Bosnia remains an unstable political entity suffering from a political and institutional impasse that has lasted for years after the Dayton Agreement.

One relatively wide-spread assessment of the Dayton Peace Agreement is, as former High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina Paddy Ashdown puts it, that it was “a superb agreement to end a war, but a very bad agreement to make a state.” Indeed, it appears that Bosnian politicians from the three different constituent peoples have consistently failed to establish mechanisms to work together. There continue to exist strong separatist tendencies coming from two out of three of them: the Bosnian Serbs and, to a lesser extent, the Croatians.

While all the sources I have consulted seem to validate the second part of this statement, I will present two points and leave it to the reader to decide whether Dayton can be seen as a “superb agreement to end the war”.

Map 4.2 below shows the Bosnian ethnicities prior to the 1992-1995 conflict. It is very clear that such a distribution makes the division along ethnic lines impossible. Map 4.3 shows Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina composed of two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, the autonomous entity controlled entirely by the Bosnian

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158 Ibid.
Serbs. The military campaigns of the Bosnian Serbs were specifically aimed at altering the pre-war ethnic balance and did not shy away from methods such as ethnic cleansing and even genocide in the case of Srebrenica. If we look at Map 4.3 below, I believe that it becomes clear that the Dayton Peace Accord, as a diplomatic settlement clearly sanctions the ethnic cleansing and genocide that had been carried by Bosnian Serb troops in the course of the war. As Lord David Owen notes, this may be seen, while not a desirable outcome by any means, the only possible outcome of a civil war.\(^{159}\)

The second point I would like to make is that the agreement came after three years of bloody conflict that left over 100,000 people dead between 1992 and 1993.\(^{160}\) The slow reaction of the international community (the UN, the leading Western European countries, most notably Great Britain, and the United States) is characterized by Former Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke as “the great collective failure of the West, the greatest one, in my view, since the late 1930s”.\(^{161}\)

In addition to the strange and unnatural shape of the two entities of Republika Srpska and the Federation, Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country of approximately four million population has three presidents, one representing each “constituent people”: Bosniacs, Croats, and Serbs. There is also a rather intricate cantonal structure providing for a large degree of local autonomy, as

\(^{159}\) Ibid.


\(^{161}\) Williams et al., *Bosnia: peace without honor*, documentary. On the reasons behind the West’s failure to reach an appropriate solution in Bosnia, see also Druckman and Mitchell 1995, 199-201.
Map 4.2. Ethnic Map of Bosnia According to the 1991 Census

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Map 4.3. Dayton Peace Agreement Partition of Bosnia

each canton is entitled to a cantonal government. Finally, this institutional structure provides for more than 150 ministers and 14 constitutions in force.\textsuperscript{164} For a region that traditionally experiences problems with administration capacities such as the Balkans, in addition to the looming ethnic animosities that are still present, this provides for a formidable institutional deadlock and a lot of incentives for corruption practices, the main reason behind recent mass protests in Bosnia and Herzegovina.\textsuperscript{165}

After Dayton, relations between the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the one side and Republika Srpska and neighboring Serbia on the other had been uneasy at best and marked by a complete lack of trust. Indeed, before the start of the trilateral consultations mechanism Bosnia and Herzegovina and its neighbor Serbia had no official diplomatic relations, and contacts between the two countries were limited to visits by the Bosnian Serb leadership of Republika Srpska to Belgrade.

I believe that it is clear why in this context, Turkey was rightfully concerned that bad relations of Bosnia with its neighbors leave its Bosniak majority politically and economically isolated. At the same time, only one year prior to the beginning of the trilateral meetings Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence in February 2008 had strained Serbian-Turkish relations bringing them to almost a complete halt.\textsuperscript{166} This was rightfully perceived as an abnormal situation but also as an opportunity for Turkey and a time to act. Davutoğlu’s ambitions to adopt a more active Balkan policy became clear shortly after he assumed office in 2009, as he embarked on official visits to Serbia and Montenegro. However, through the

\textsuperscript{164} Eralp 2012, 39.
\textsuperscript{166} Bechev 2012, 141.
establishment of the trilateral consultations mechanism Turkey-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Serbia, he demonstrated Ankara’s will to play henceforth an active and important role as a mediator wielding enough power to motivate the two other parties to make substantial progress in improving bilateral relations, with the ultimate goal of EU integration in mind for all the participants in the mechanism. This common goal continues to be a source of motivation today.\textsuperscript{167}

It is noteworthy that Turkey had been interested in participating as a moderator in the US and EU-sponsored Butmir talks that started shortly prior to the trilateral consultations but Turkey was not invited. Thus Foreign Minister Davutoğlu decided to embark on an initiative of his own that would involve the key actors who had the potential to contribute to a more stable Bosnia and, subsequently, more stable Balkans. Foreign Minister Davutoğlu’s previously mentioned address to the Ottoman Legacy conference invoked a common Ottoman legacy and made some controversial statements. On the one hand, Davutoğlu confirmed Turkey’s desire to lead the region into initiatives aimed at increased regional cooperation: “As the Republic of Turkey, we would like to construct a new Balkan region based on political dialogue, economic interdependence, cooperation and integration, as well as cultural harmony and tolerance.”\textsuperscript{168}

This statement sums up Turkey’s new multifaceted foreign policy strategy and the realistic and pragmatic concepts that were to be applied in the upcoming diplomatic initiative.

On the other hand, some of the other messages given in his speech are very good examples of why many scholars, political analysts, and journalists in the region accuse Turkey of


\textsuperscript{168} Davutoğlu address to the conference in Halit 2011, 16.
having a hidden Neo-Ottoman political agenda. For instance, Davutoğlu ventures to claim that: “…between the 16th and the 19th centuries, Balkan history was a success story. We can reinvent and reestablish this success by creating a new political ownership, a new multicultural coexistence and a new economic zone.”

While the sixteenth century was marked by the reign of some of the strongest rulers of the Ottoman Empire, including Süleyman the Magnificent, it would be hard for any historian to claim that the nineteenth century history of either Ottoman rule on the Balkans or the developments in the region can be characterized as a “success story”. The nineteenth century was turbulent times for the region which saw, among many other calamities the unsuccessful attempt by Sultan Selim III to reform the Empire’s army by diminishing the role and influence of the Janissary corps that ended in the Sultan’s brutal assassination by the latter. In 1878 the Empire lost a lot of territory to the new Bulgarian state, Serbia, and Montenegro. Even from the perspective of Balkan states, there were no notable successes achieved. Davutoğlu’s words here represent an emotional appeal to a Balkan Muslim audience, invoking the tendency to idealize the Ottoman past that was already noted in the previous chapter. The speech is obviously aiming to incite a pride in the Balkan historical heritage as an important part of Ottoman Empire. The downside of this approach, especially when the speech is given in a multi-ethnic country such as BiH is that rhetoric specifically targeted at the Muslim audience and invoking the centuries of

169 For instance, see prominent Bulgarian journalist Petar Volgin’s article entitled Neoosmanizmat - da refreshnesh edna imperiya=Неоосманизъмът - да рефрешнеш една империя [Neo-Ottomanism: to Refresh an Empire], see also Leading Serbian Orientalist Darko Tanasković’s criticism in Tübedar 2011, 151-152.
170 Halit 2011, 16.
171 For a detailed account on this unsuccessful attempt to eliminate the influence of the dysfunctional Janissary Corps (from Ottoman Turkish yeni çeri, ‘new soldiers’) by one of the most intelligent and visionary leaders of the Ottoman Empire, Sultan Selim III, see Stanford J. Shaw, “The Origins of Ottoman Military Reform: The Nizam-I Cedid Army of Sultan Selim III,” The Journal of Modern History. 37 (3) (1965): 291-306.
172 Stands for Bosnia i Hercegovina or Bosnia and Herzegovina in Serbian - an abbreviation often used interchangeably for practical purposes by English scholars as well. I will be using it interchangeably with Bosnia or
Ottoman rule is guaranteed to have negative effects among the former Christian subjects of the empire. This idealized view of Ottoman heritage is by no means something unique to Foreign Minister Davutoğlu as a scholar and a politician. It is my impression that he holds a rather widespread view that may be tied to conditioning originating in the years of secondary education. This is a problem rather common for the Balkan region: an idealized past that leaves no room for error when it comes to one’s own government, and Turkey makes no exception.\footnote{173}

Parallel with the tendency to exaggerate and idealize the successes of Ottoman rule, among Balkan scholars there is a tendency to exaggerate the downsides of Ottoman rule and downplay some of its positive legacies including the multi-culturalism of cities like Thessaloniki\footnote{174}, Prizren, and Smyrna (Izmir) which clearly sets the stage for conflicting narratives and ultimately impasse in regional relations.\footnote{175} There has to be a process on both sides towards reconciliation with this contested past in order to utilize it as a basis for current interaction.

Towards the end of his address Davutoğlu sends a message of Turkey’s unconditional support for Muslim communities from the Balkans or the Caucasus saying that Turkey is their “safe haven and homeland”. His next words bring a message that also has the potential to do harm to the imminent diplomatic initiative that we are about to discuss: “\textit{You are most welcome as well, because Anatolia belongs to you; and make sure that Sarajevo is ours.}”\footnote{176}
While Davutoğlu clearly means here that Muslims should feel at home in Turkey, the same way that Turks feel at home in Sarajevo, for anyone familiar with the region it would not be hard to understand why this would sound an alarm in the mind of any of the former Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire: Serb, Bulgarian, or Greek. It is precisely this sort of statements that fuel the divisive rhetoric of nationalistic leaders like Bosnian Serb politician Milorad Dodik.177 We will see how later similar naïve emotional rhetoric from Prime Minister Erdoğan would put at hazard Turkish diplomatic openings in the region altogether in 2013.

At the same time, Davutoğlu gives some clear messages of Ankara’s intent to promote dialogue and understanding in the region and some of the most important positivistic aspects of Turkey’s new foreign policy doctrine: a multi-faceted approach to foreign policy, a call for dialogue, and the ambition of Turkey to lead these openings as an economically powerful actor with newly acquired political self-esteem: “The Turkish perspective in the region is to reestablish a new regional order based on the understanding of a political dialogue, solving problems through dialogue, intensive economic relations and cultural coexistence and harmony.”178

Perhaps the most important point made by Davutoğlu is that only regional activism, initiatives born and carried within the region, would unite the nations of the Balkans. The Turkish Foreign Minister rightfully notes that the region has become a geo-political buffer zone.179 With the First and Second World Wars in mind and the ensuing Cold War division of the region, it is easy to see that this is a very valid point. Being of Balkan origins myself, I am aware that Balkan nations have consistently had the feeling that their fate does not depend on

177 See Bechev 2012, 140.
178 Halit 2011, 17.
179 Ibid., 16.
themselves but rather on their geographic location and the mercy of the Great Powers. Instead, Davutoğlu argues for the creation of a “new sense of unity” saying: “We have to strengthen regional ownership of cooperation initiatives and a regional common sense.”

This last point represents in a nutshell the main idea and strategic means at the base of Turkey’s imminent serious diplomatic engagement in Bosnia, the Trilateral Consultations Mechanisms Turkey-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Serbia and Turkey-Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia.

**Important Meetings and Decisions**

The foundations for the trilateral mechanism were laid during the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative summit in Istanbul as an informal meeting between the foreign ministers of Turkey, Ahmet Davutoğlu, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sven Alkalaj, and Vuk Jeremić for Serbia. Despite the unofficial character of the meeting the three parties importantly agreed, in Mr. Davutoğlu’s words, that “no matter what differences of view appear between the sides, they would continue to meet each month.” The first meeting in trilateral format was strengthened by President Gül’s official visit to Belgrade in late October of 2009. This was importantly the first official visit on such level since 1986, signaling a warming of bilateral relations that would help in the ensuing intensification of the trilateral consultations.

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180 Ibid.
The second meeting followed in November 8 again in Istanbul, shortly after it became clear that the Butmir talks, a joint EU and US initiative, were leading nowhere\textsuperscript{182}. The third meeting was in Sarajevo in December 13-14, 2009.

Even if we put aside any results achieved at this initial stage, I believe that the very idea of regular meetings aimed at finding solutions to the problems and the obvious will and determination of all sides to participate in such an initiative is quite significant. I would argue that this is part of a process of normalization in terms of Turkey’s role in Balkan affairs and part of a quest for normalization of its relations with all Balkan neighbors. Turkey’s increased economic power during the first seven years of AKP rule called for a revision of foreign policy as it placed it in a position to influence events and seek regional leadership.\textsuperscript{183} It can also be seen as part of a general trend towards normalization in international relations in the region, a normalization, in which Turkey as a bigger and economically more powerful country occupies a very natural place.\textsuperscript{184}

The fourth trilateral meeting took place in Belgrade on January 15. In addition to the commitment to the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Serbian President Boris Tadić, this meeting began to bring concrete economic results for the Serbian side: Turkey and Serbia agreed to initiate important highway projects in Serbia, infrastructure projects in the Muslim majority area Sandžak, in addition to a cooperation

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{182} See Bechev 2012, 139.
  \item \textsuperscript{184} A point also made by Javier Solana in “Reset Turkey/EU Relations” (Project Syndicate, June 13, 2011).
\end{itemize}
agreement between Turkish Airways and JAT, as well as a decision to open an Islamic Cultural Center in Belgrade.\textsuperscript{185}

The fifth official meeting took place in Ankara on February 9, 2010. I will examine this particular meeting in more detail, perhaps the most emblematic of all, as it is the one that offers brings to the first serious advances in Bosnian-Serbian dialogue. In addition, the three foreign ministers offer their common vision for the future of the region in a spirit of true friendship and openness. After their meetings and decisions, Foreign Ministers Davutoğlu for Turkey, Vuk Jeremić for Serbia, and Sven Alkalaj for Bosnia and Herzegovina gave a joint press conference in Turkish and partly in English.\textsuperscript{186}

In Minister Davutoğlu’s words, the goals of the mechanism were to share the common regional vision (for the Balkan region), to turn the Balkans from a region of conflicts and tension to a region of cooperation where problems are solved through negotiations and diplomacy, and eventually establish this as a new image of the Balkans, one that highlights “understanding”, “open-mindedness” and a common “vision” for the region. Foreign Minister Davutoğlu opens the conference addressing his “dear friends” from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.\textsuperscript{187}

This spirit of friendship is quite important in the context of the Balkans, especially with the gruesome war in Bosnia in the recent past in mind. There is a very Balkan concept of


\textsuperscript{186}The recording of the joint press conference that took place on February 9, 2010 in Ankara is available on the internet and cited in my sources. It is one of the most detailed and important primary sources that I will use.

which transcends national borders and brings up the good side of Ottoman heritage. In Turkish the word means “neighbor”. The tradition is to have open and good relations with your neighbor no matter what. The good will expressed by an economically powerful neighbor, as this initiative shows, has the potential to mobilize Balkan peoples to work together for a better future in the region. Davutoğlu underlined that in the last five months, the three foreign ministers have been able to establish a “very good cooperation mechanism” that started on October 10, 2009. Davutoğlu described the mechanism as aimed at improving relations in the entire larger region, the relations between the three respective countries, and, most of all, relations between BiH and Serbia. What has to be noted here is that, in addition to the obvious benefits of regular diplomatic exchanges and economic cooperation between Serbia and Bosnia that did not exist prior to the consultation mechanism, as there were no official diplomatic relations, Serbia has a considerable influence over the second most important constituent people in Bosnia, the Bosnian Serbs. Belgrade’s support for Bosnia as a state is thus seen by Turkey as crucial for the establishment of normal interethnic relations within Bosnia.

Davutoğlu emphasized the common historical heritage and common geography of the three nations and the need to take the initiative and transform the region’s image from one characterized by “conflict and division” to a region where outstanding issues are solved by “cooperation, consultation, and where problems are solved through diplomatic means.” The Turkish Foreign Minister expresses his content with the “understanding, open-mindedness, and vision” demonstrated by his Bosnian and Serbian colleagues, characterizing this as a “new and positive development for the region.”

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188 Комшия in Bulgarian, комшија in Serbian, κομσία in Greek etc. The word is common to just about all Balkan languages.
and Belgrade that had lasted for three years, Davutoğlu heralds the embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina soon to open in Belgrade as a psychological threshold that has been passed, and that would provide ground for normalization and development of the relations between the two countries.\footnote{Ibid.}

Davutoğlu pledges to continue the meetings with a meeting in Sarajevo in March and in Belgrade in April which he sees as the best way to deal with prejudices and continue this positive trend in regional relations: “Our region, which is perceived to always have the potential for crises needs badly this kind of news.”\footnote{Ibid.} Turkey is very pleased with this result because, in Davutoğlu’s words: “we see every friendship in the Balkans as a step towards a brighter future.”\footnote{Ibid.}

Foreign Minister Sven Alkalaj overall confirms the main messages of Foreign Minister Davutoğlu’s opening remarks but also importantly states that this initiative is seen as part of the aspirations of all three countries for full membership into the European Union.\footnote{Ibid.} Indeed, this remains one of the most important incentives for the participants from the very beginning of the initiative until the last meeting in 2013.

Foreign Minister Jeremić of Serbia starts his remarks with thanks for the host's “warm hospitality” saying that it is “a pleasure to be back and talk to friends.”\footnote{Ibid.} While these remarks may seem insignificant at first, they are ultimately quite important. In addition to its economic power and capabilities to invest and foster economic cooperation in the region, Turkey is a
country known for its hospitality which additionally positions it as capable of successfully organizing such initiatives of good will.

Jeremić additionally affirms that the consultations mechanism has proven to be “the most resilient form of reginal cooperation” and that it is important to “continue this trend.” He also importantly states that all participants in the mechanism are committed to a regional future of positive relations between all Balkan countries. He states the awareness that, due to the recent memories and the different views on certain matters, this will be a rather challenging task to achieve. However, Jeremić expresses his belief that the standing issues have to be overcome for the sake of “a more prosperous future for the Western Balkans.” Jeremić is notably more reserved on the prospects of the initiative but, at the same time, expresses his firm will to struggle until the end affirming that giving up is not an option. Similar to his colleagues from Bosnia and Turkey, he states that all participants are proud of their “Balkan” identity and will strive for a “European” future of the Balkans, a region where they all believe the Balkan countries belong.195 This is a very important point that was confirmed in my meetings with foreign policy analysts in Ankara think tanks, people who inform Turkish foreign policy decisions.196

Despite the naive idealizing of the Ottoman past that may slip in addresses like the one I commented on earlier, in terms of practical foreign policy purposes, Turkey has a European agenda for the Western Balkans regions.197 Turkey wants to see the Balkan states united under the umbrella of the EU, as this is the best guarantee for stability and economic development, the

195 Ibid.
196 The informal interviews I conducted in May 2013 I refer to earlier in Chapter Three.
security of the region, as well as the protection of the human rights of all minorities, including the already mentioned Muslim ethnicities.\textsuperscript{198} This can hardly be seen as a Neo-Ottoman agenda and Turkey's concrete initiatives reflect this concept rather than anything even closely resembling ambitions to revive the late Ottoman Empire.

The challenge here is to gradually neutralize historical rhetoric that may be seen as controversial and problematic and, instead, seek a dialogue on this matter as well, similarly to what Turkey has proven it has the will and the capability to achieve at the negotiations table in this extremely positive initiative.\textsuperscript{199}

The first significant and concrete result of the trilateral consultations mechanism was the decision to end the freeze in Bosnian-Serbian relations through the appointment of an ambassador of BiH to Belgrade.\textsuperscript{200} Perhaps the second most important development that took place shortly after the meeting, on March 30, 2010 when the Serbian Parliament adopted a resolution condemning the Srebrenica Massacre, a decision facilitated by Turkish mediation.\textsuperscript{201}

Parallel with the Turkey-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Serbia consultations mechanism, Turkish diplomacy organized a mechanism in the same format with the Croatian side: Turkey-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Croatia, again on the level of foreign ministers. Turkish-Croatian relations had been quite good and the two countries even saw each-other as strategic partners in a


\textsuperscript{199} Özkan’s analysis confirms this assessment (in Özkan 2013).

\textsuperscript{200} Joint press conference of February 9, 2009.

common path to the European Union. In 2009 there was already a well-established mutual support for each country's bid for EU membership.\textsuperscript{202}

Thus, the trilateral consultations mechanism Turkey-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Croatia came as a logical continuation to already cordial bilateral relations. The initiative has a very similar agenda to its counterpart\textsuperscript{203} as Turkey engages in a mediation effort to settle any outstanding issues between BiH and Croatia and facilitate the improvement of relations between the two respective ethnicities. Croatians are the third constituent people of BiH and hold majority in a number of municipalities, the most known being Mostar.\textsuperscript{204} In 2010 alone four trilateral meetings took place between foreign ministers Ahmet Davutoğlu, Sven Alkalaj, and Gordan Jandroković. Some of the most important points on the agenda are: important restoration projects in Mostar, intensification of cooperation in the field of tourism, and construction projects. This consultation mechanism is marked by lower intensity, partly because of the smaller amount of outstanding issues between Croatia and Bosnia and also additionally lost intensity after 2010.

In the months following the February meeting of the Turkey-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Serbia meeting on foreign ministry level, the consultation mechanism was upgraded to the level of summit meetings. On April 24, 2010 the Istanbul Summit brought together the Heads of State of BiH, Serbia, and Turkey. The most important result from the meeting was the adoption of the Istanbul Declaration, the main provisions of which were: the mutual commitment to strive for lasting peace and stability in the Balkans, and the protection of the territorial integrity of Bosnia

\textsuperscript{202} See Šerić 2009.
\textsuperscript{203} Turkey-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Serbia.
and Herzegovina.\textsuperscript{205} The decision was taken for joint participation of President Boris Tadić and Prime Minister Erdoğan in the commemoration ceremony of the 15th year of the Srebrenica Massacre, carried out in July 2010.\textsuperscript{206}

The April 2010 Istanbul Summit was the first official meeting on the presidential level between Serbia and Bosnia. In addition, President of Bosnia Silajdžić stated his intent to soon visit Belgrade with members of the presidency, an event characterized as historic.\textsuperscript{207} While this qualification may seem exaggerated at first, we have to remember the context here. The Bosnian War had ended only some fifteen years prior to this summit and President Sijadžić is a politician with nationalistic inclinations and a tendency to utter rather strong words. Only days prior to the summit, he had qualified Serbia as “a country spoiling regional relations” after the arrest of Eyup Ganić, participant in the war on the side of the Bosnian Army.\textsuperscript{208}

Despite the intention to organize such summit meetings three times every two years, in reality a different formula took place as two more Balkan Summits took place in the subsequent three years. The second Balkan Summit took place in April, 2011 in Karadordevo, Serbia. The organizer, President of Serbia Boris Tadić was criticized for the choice of the place, as Karadordevo's legacy was rather negative. It is precisely there that late Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević had met with his Croatian colleague to discuss the partition of Bosnia in 1991. President Tadić admitted that Karadordevo is, indeed, a place where “some good and some hard and pretty bad decisions were taken” during the Yugoslav years, decisions that “resulted in


\textsuperscript{206}“Relations with the Balkan Region.” Rep. of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs.


\textsuperscript{208}Türbedar 2010, 1.
negative consequences and bad experience for everyone”. But he goes on to say: “It is our intention to do everything to set things right in the future with our hard and complex past in mind.” Tadić stressed that despite the recent positive trends in the region, “not all wounds have healed.”

The important accents in the summit are: cooperation and support in the common EU accession efforts between all participants in the mechanism, condemnation of war crimes and a commitment to cooperate for the punishment of everyone involved in them, overcoming the legacy of the past and building new and peaceful Balkans based on mutual respect and cooperation.

The Third Trilateral Balkan Summit took place in Ankara on May 14 and 15, 2013 bringing together all three Members of the Bosnian Presidency: Željko Komšić, Bakir Izetbegović, and Nebojša Radmanović, President of Turkey Abdullah Gül and Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić. The accents of the summit organized under the motto “Building Future Together” are: transition from reconciliation to institutionalization of the process, strengthening of economic cooperation with the adoption of the Declaration on Economic and Commercial Cooperation adopted at the summit and the establishment of a Trilateral Trade Committee; the commitment to support each-other on the path of EU integration is confirmed and underlined

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210 Ibid.

211 Ibid.

212 The fact that the third summit did not take place in 2012 has a lot to do with internal political changes in Serbia. Former President Tadić had rather liberal views and had made a strong commitment to parting with the wartime nationalistic legacy of Yugoslavia but the same cannot be said about the new President Nikolić who has shown notable hesitation with regard to facing the negative historical legacy of Milošević. See Bechev 2012, 141. Nikolić’s decision to continue with the trilateral mechanism meetings in 2013 is dictated by very practical concerns.
together with the appeal to develop trilateral cooperation in various fields including: culture, common historical heritage, education, military and security cooperation.\textsuperscript{213}

The last trilateral consultations meeting on foreign ministers level between Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia took place in September 24, 2013 in New York, focusing on concrete projects of future cooperation in the field of education and business. The organization of a Trilateral Business Forum in Sarajevo in the near future was discussed.\textsuperscript{214}

\textbf{Limitations}

Recent mass protests in Bosnia suggest that there is an acute need for the reform of BiH’s political structures. While the trilateral consultations cannot solve the Dayton impasse, they could be instrumental in fostering an initiative to deal with this issue. A solution of the current political and administrative crisis in Bosnia would take an effort by all the sides who participated in Dayton. This said, it would be reasonable to argue that Turkey’s mediation initiatives can be quite helpful as they can prepare the ground for it and this was one of the main goals of the initiative from its very start in October, 2009.\textsuperscript{215}

Another important limitation is the fact that the initiative’s results cannot reach fruition until Turkey makes a credible effort to reach out to the third constituent people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Bosnian Serbs. There are positive signs in that direction, as FM Davutoğlu during a recent visit to Sarajevo has expressed his will to reach out to all sides as a necessary

\textsuperscript{213} “Relations with the Balkan Region,” Rep. of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
\textsuperscript{214} “Türkiye-Sırbistan-Bosna Hersek Dışişleri Bakanları New York'ta biraraya geldi.” [The Foreign Ministers of Turkey, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina Meet in New York] T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı [Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs], September 24, 2013.
\textsuperscript{215} During the October 8 meeting in Istanbul, first of the trilateral consultations on foreign ministers level, Davutoğlu emphasizes the ‘need for constitutional reform in Bosnia’. See Bechev 2012, 139.
condition to find a solution to the crisis in Bosnia but a lot remains to be achieved in this respect.

There have been continuing concerns that the economic cooperation between the three sides is lagging behind the political will and way short of reaching its full potential, given the dynamic growth of the Turkish economy in recent years. For instance, Turkish investment in Bosnia totaled 623 million dollars in 2011 and only increased to 632 million in 2012. Turkish investors have expressed concerns with the relatively complicated regulations and bureaucracy in addition to financial insecurity that hinders investment in Bosnia. There is a consciousness among Bosnian officials that the climate for investment needs to improve in order for Turkish investment to achieve its full potential.

At the same time, some of the limitations of Turkey’s engagement in the Balkans are self-inflicted. I already discussed a certain tone deafness with regard to the importance the Ottoman heritage carries for the different ethnicities living in this region. The following event demonstrates that sensitivity to the conflicting feelings and perceptions of the past and of cultural spaces of each Balkan country and ethnicity have to be taken into account in order to successfully achieve Turkey’s strategic goals in the region.

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217 Bechev argues that this is also due to a large extent to Dodik’s inflammatory rhetoric and influence on more moderate leaders like Nebojša Radmanović, member of the Presidency of BiH.


Erdoğan’s Faux Pas

At a rally in Kosovo in October 2013 Prime Minister Erdoğan was addressing an audience of Kosovar Albanians and talking about the common history and shared culture by Turks and Albanians when he uttered the phrase: “Do not forget: Turkey is Kosovo and Kosovo is Turkey!” While he was not referring to the territorial integrity of either country, this was immediately followed by mass demonstrations and a huge diplomatic scandal in Serbia. Part of the repercussions was President Nikolić’s statement that he is withdrawing from the trilateral summits until he receives an apology for the incident. This was hardly a surprise. One analyst argues that Erdoğan’s words twisted “the knife in the heart of Serbian national identity” in the center of which is precisely Kosovo, the theater of the famous war between the Ottomans and Serbs in 1389. Erdoğan’s words as he addressed the Kosovar Albanians in Prizren, one of the former multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religion city urban centers of the Ottoman Empire I mentioned above, were aimed at reassuring the local population but instead caused the cancellation of the Trilateral Summit Meeting scheduled for December 2013.

This recent incident shows us that Turkey has yet to recognize the counter-productiveness of invoking an idealized Ottoman past — a version of the past that cannot serve as the intended bridge between the Balkan ethnicities. The misstep occurred despite the fact that Turkish politicians had received timely warnings about this problem by some of Ankara’s many capable foreign policy analysts like Erhan Türbedar who addresses this issue at length in his article “Turkey’s New Activism in the Western Balkans: Ambitions and Obstacles” written in 2011.

222 ibid.
223 Türbedar 2011.
Türbedar prophetically assesses that the way Ankara and Belgrade deal with “future developments in Kosovo” will represent the “true test of the two countries” rapprochement.  
One of the main goals of the trilateral consultations mechanisms was to build confidence among the three sides. The damage done by Erdoğan’s Kosovo speech is yet to be assessed and the lack of an official apology is the cause for a continuing stalemate in this very positive Turkish initiative.

There have been voices of reason calling for the renewal of the process, most notably coming from prominent politicians like the former President of Serbia, Boris Tadić who recently gave an extended interview underlining the substantial benefits for both sides and the previous successes like the trilateral consultations mechanisms. Tadić underlines that Erdoğan’s statement should be taken for what it is, namely a “diplomatic gaffe” and shouldn’t be given more importance than it deserves. He also stresses the vulnerability of countries like Bosnia and Macedonia and the negative effects that present stagnation in EU integration processes can have for these former Yugoslav states.

While certain Neo-Ottomanist tendencies are present in Turkish foreign policy strategy, as we saw when examining Davutoğlu’s work Strategic Depth, I think that it is safe to say that Turkish engagement in Bosnia is dictated by the desire to achieve the integration of the entire region of the Western Balkans in the Euro-Atlantic organizations: the EU and NATO. It is a point underlined by Tadić in the cited interview, as well as the participants in virtually all

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224 Ibid., 146. Türbedar further states that: “...officials from both countries [Serbia and Turkey] will be well advised to mind the language and imagery used on certain highly sensitive issues.”
226 Faruk Vele, Interview with former Serbian President Boris Tadić. See note 167.
227 Ibid.
trilateral meetings. It is a very positive initiative that deserves the encouragement of Turkey’s western allies: the EU and the US. Turkey’s openings in this region have occasionally been looked upon with suspicion\textsuperscript{228} but the reality is that in substantive terms its diplomacy follows a pragmatic, goal-oriented approach aimed at the well-being of all ethnicities in the Balkans and regional cooperation between all Balkan states. The priority given to Muslim ethnic groups is understandable with regard to the country’s strong cultural, historical, and social ties with these populations.\textsuperscript{229} In fact, these strong ties make it an important potential force in any initiatives aimed at improving the often tense relations between the different ethnicities in Bosnia, as well as in the rest of the region, including Kosovo and Macedonia. Another proof for this potential is Turkey’s assistance in mediation with two opposing factions of Bosnian Muslims in the Sandžak Region in Serbia in 2010. Turkey managed to convince the two sides to seek a consensus figure, efforts that ended successfully in the same year. Turkey’s help had been solicited by Serbian authorities.\textsuperscript{230}

\textsuperscript{228} See Türbedar 2011, 153.
\textsuperscript{229} Most of these groups like the Kosovar Albanians or the Bosnians have quite large communities in Turkey proper who are at times able to influence politics within Turkey.
\textsuperscript{230} See Bechev 2012, 141.
Chapter Five

Turkish Engagement in Kosovo and Macedonia. Turkish Soft Power

According to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Balkans remain “Europe’s most fragile region.”231 This is true not only for Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also for the other two multi-ethnic states mentioned in Strategic Depth that appeared as independent states after the demise of Yugoslavia: Kosovo and Macedonia.

We already mentioned earlier the notion of “points of conflict”232 referring to territories that appeared after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, leaving their Muslim and other non-Serbian populations including Bulgarians and Albanians vulnerable to the new authorities’ repressive measures. It is important to note that mass repressions in these regions go way back in history. They were initiated by the Serbian government over the course of the First and Second Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and continued after the end of World War I causing the mass flight of masses of Muslim Albanians, Bosnians, and Turks to Anatolia.233 The reasoning behind the need to protect and assist these populations, in particular all the Muslim ethnicities who, according to Davutoğlu have very strong ties with their former “political center”234 suggests that Kosovo would have the same kind of priority as Bosnia in terms of an absolute commitment to help its population and the new and vulnerable state that formed after the Kosovo War in 1998-1998 and only recently announced its independence in 2008.235 However, one substantial difference with

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231 In Turkish Avrupa’nın en kırılgan bölgesi, in “Türkiye neden AB’ne üye olmak istemektedir?” [Why Does Turkey Want to Become an EU Member?] T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı [Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs] in the Government Documents section.
232 In Turkish çatışma noktaları in Davutoğlu 2001., 122.
234 In Turkish siyasi merkezi ibid.
235 Turkey being the first country to recognize it as an independent state.
Bosnia is that Turkey has only engaged diplomatically on a limited scale in Kosovo, mostly lobbying for its international recognition and participation in important meetings related to international and regional cooperation.\(^{236}\)

Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan has offered Turkey’s services as mediator between the authorities in Prishtina and Belgrade but it seems that the offer has not been accepted by either one.\(^{237}\) As we have seen in recent years, the task has been taken up by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton. The EU mediation initiative has proven to be largely successful as the EU has a more powerful tool that Ankara cannot possibly match, the pre-accession conditionality, something that has proven quite effective in the past in inducing Serbian compliance with the ICTFY.

Ankara knows its limitations and has instead embarked on the complex use of its multifaceted or “multidimensional” foreign policy. The effects in modern Kosovo are very visible. A modern highway is being built by Turkish-US joint venture connecting the capitals of Kosovo and Albania: Prishtina and Tirana.\(^{238}\) It is indicative that the segment Prishtina-Prizren is already completed which brings me to my next point.

In *Strategic Depth* Davutoğlu argues that there is a specific axis formed by Kosovo where “three rings cross”: the first one is formed by Kosovo (or Kosovo+Serbia), Albania, and Macedonia. According to Davutoğlu, due to the division of the Albanian ethnic element there,  

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\(^{236}\) For instance, Turkey assisted EU officials to find an acceptable formula for Kosovo’s participation in the EU-Western Balkans Summit in June 2010, see Türbedar 2011, 148.

\(^{237}\) Bechev 2012, 141 and Poulain and Sakellariou 2011.

there tend to be “significant tensions” in this region.\(^{239}\) This is a reasonable point, as ethnic tensions in the region have proven to jump easily across the border and this is particularly true in the case of the Kosovo-Macedonia border, a spillover so dangerous that in 2001 the Macedonian government saw itself forced to seek help from NATO to handle the volatile situation across the borderline and require EU and US mediation.\(^{240}\)

The second ring is larger and it is formed by Greece, Yugoslavia,\(^{241}\) Bulgaria, Turkey, and Bosnia and Herzegovina,\(^{242}\) all countries that could be directly affected by a spread of crisis and capable to intervene directly.\(^{243}\) The third ring includes the countries who are capable to influence the two other smaller rings and includes: Croatia (capable to intervene in Bosnia), Hungary (capable to intervene in Vojvodina\(^{244}\)), and Romania who “due to its geographic location is capable to influence the balance in all these relations.”\(^{245}\) According to Davutoğlu, Turkey needs to develop its diplomacy in accordance with these three rings’ interactions. He also stresses the crucial importance of strengthening the Albanian element in the first ring (formed of Kosovo, Macedonia, and Albania) “in any way possible” obviously referring to economic and other assistance, citing an example with Turkey’s failure to assist Albania in a banking crisis that has led to assistance from Greece, thus practically increasing its leverage in the region.\(^{246}\)

Thus, we can already see a policy that has the potential to aggravate both the Macedonians and the Serbs, ethnicities that both border with the Albanian ethnicity in the region.

\(^{239}\) Davutoğlu 2001, 319.
\(^{241}\) At the time the work was published, this stood for Serbia and Montenegro.
\(^{242}\) See Map 4.1.
\(^{243}\) Davutoğlu 2001, 319.
\(^{244}\) A multi-ethnic region of Serbia with a substantial Hungarian minority.
\(^{245}\) Ibid.
\(^{246}\) Ibid.
Similarly to the Neo-Ottomanism rhetoric, such policies have the potential to immediately alienate nations or ethnicities that may otherwise be willing to engage in dialogue facilitated by Turkey. At the same time, his accent on the importance of financial assistance as an instrument of influence points to the concept of regional cooperation and interdependence, also an essential element of the Strategic Depth doctrine.247

Davutoğlu further argues that, along with protecting the Albanian ethnic element in countries where it is a minority, most importantly in Macedonia, Turkey should engage in a diplomatic initiative between Albania and Macedonia. This is a very important point in the context of previous initiatives such as the active engagement in Bosnia and with the looming ethnic tensions persisting in the Republic of Macedonia. Macedonians continue to have a tense relation with the country’s sizeable Albanian minority that has been moderated by the latter’s active participation in government: both central and local, as well as by the country’s relatively liberal constitution of 1991, amended in 2001 in line with the Ohrid Agreement, to include even more protections for minority rights.248 Nevertheless, relations with the Albanian minority remain uneasy.249 On the other hand, the Bulgarian minority in the country still faces persecution and outright hostility, especially from the central authorities in Skopje.250

Both Macedonia and Kosovo have a number of smaller minorities including: Turks, Aromanians, Torbesh, Gorani,251 in addition to Greeks in southern Macedonia, and Catholic Albanians in several small enclaves across northern Macedonia and mostly Kosovo. As we saw

247 Halit 2011, 16.
248 After the Macedonian-Albanian conflict triggered by the spillover across the border with Kosovo. The conflict ended with the Ohrid Agreement of 2001.
249 Dordeska argues that one of the reasons for that ‘the absence of a clear European perspective’ is among the factors that influence negatively this tension in Marija Dordeska, “Between Myths and Reality—Macedonia between Turkey and the European Union,” EU and Its Neighbors. 4 (2) (2011): 3.
250 Michaela Ježová, “Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Balkans,” Politics in Central Europe. 7 (2) (2011): 32.
251 Already discussed above on p. 37-38.
earlier with the Gorani,\(^{252}\) these smaller minorities can also be very vulnerable to pressure from the larger ethnic group dominating the country. Thus, Turkey can easily argue for the need to protect the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic environment of these two otherwise small states and it would be, again, very well positioned to do that because it has good relations with all sides\(^{253}\) and possesses significant political and economic leverage that, as the case with the EU led talks with Prishtina and Belgrade demonstrates, is crucial for success.

Turkey has maintained strong ties with both Macedonia and Kosovo from the moment each state announced its independence. Turkey assisted Macedonia with the Kosovo refugee crisis over the course of the war (1998-1999) when some 300,000 Kosovar Albanians fled across the border to Macedonia, a large portion of which were given asylum in Turkey.\(^{254}\)

Turkey’s engagement in Kosovo and Macedonia is most visible in the economic, cultural and educational fields. Turkish banking has a substantial influence in both countries, in addition to the already mentioned construction sector, especially in Kosovo, as well as transportation: Turkish companies have won contracts to operate the airports in Prishtina, Skopje, and Ohrid.\(^{255}\)

Both countries have visa-free regimes with Turkey which has brought huge increase in the exchange of tourists.\(^{256}\) If the reader is already asking: what do these matters have to do with interethnic relations in the region, I would say that they have everything to do with the subject of this thesis. Increased communication and tourism often have the potential to annihilate prejudice and negative historical memories, something that has been experienced recently by thousands of

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\(^{252}\) On page 37-38.

\(^{253}\) For instance, recent surveys show that in Macedonia, a country with a Macedonian Orthodox majority, a very large Albanian minority and a number of smaller ethnic minorities including Greeks, Aromanians, and Roma, 80% of the population have a positive view of Turkey, see Bechev 2012, 146, Note 15.

\(^{254}\) Ježová 2011, 32.

\(^{255}\) Bechev 2012, 144.

\(^{256}\) Ibid.
Bulgarians and Serbs who enjoyed the visa-free regime with Turkey and have discovered a friendly, rich, well-developed, and relatively cheap country with whom both peoples share more than they would have previously thought. The effect has not been less significant for citizens of Macedonia and Kosovo. There has also been a marked increase in the interest of Bosnian citizens for tourist destinations in Turkey.\textsuperscript{257}

Shared popular culture is also important. One of the micro-topics I discussed in my meetings with policy advisors and analysts from several think tanks in Ankara was the influence of soap operas on the mentalities of various Balkan peoples. This has also become the subject of discussion for many foreign policy analysts in the region as the effects of the spreading popularity of Turkish soap operas have started to change perceptions about Turkey, not only in the larger Balkan region but also in the Middle East, North Africa, and even globally.\textsuperscript{258}

Turkey has a thriving industry producing relatively high-quality television series with substantial budgets that closely resemble movies. A good example for this trend is the rising in popularity soap opera The Magnificent Century\textsuperscript{259} presenting the reign of one of the greatest sultans in Ottoman history, Süleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566). The series presents the main historical events that took place in this epoch, noticeably without idealizing any of the historical characters; the Sultan, his powerful spouse Hürrem Sultan, his princes and princesses, his closest aides, the Grand Viziers, and all the other historical characters are represented as human beings with strengths and flaws. The series also does not shy away from showing the more violent face of Ottoman rule, something skilfully avoided both by academia and politicians from Turkey.

\begin{itemize}
\item[258] For instance, Remiddi 2013, 222, Bechev 2012, 143, and others.
This avoidance has cultivated a myth of an ideal Ottoman past, which could be at the root of the rather naïve rhetoric employed by Davutoğlu and Erdoğan that we already noted, rhetoric that has damaged a lot of hard and positive work. In a sense, this soap opera with historical thematic is arguably doing better in winning in the Balkans a bit of sympathy for the Ottoman cause as they have made it a point not to idealize this past. The creators of the series present the Empire’s strong sides but also some of its negative sides like religious fanaticism and, at times, extreme brutality. At the same time the main characters are depicted as human beings with their strengths and weaknesses, characters with whom regular people can associate. The series is quite popular in Bosnia among both Muslims and Serbs. In one of its most recent episodes Sultan Süleyman addressing his Grand Vizier, Rüstem Pasha points to a collection of beautiful flowers of different colors and varieties saying: “In the lands that I rule, regardless of tongue and faith, Christians, Muslims, and Jews should be able to live together in peace and happiness, just like these flowers. Harmony and variety are the greatest richness.”

Sultan Süleyman’s remark refers to his recent acceptance of a number of refugees from Spain. The Ottoman Empire’s act of good will to accept the Sephardic Jews who were forced out of Spain and Portugal in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is a well-established historical fact, as well as the prominent role these large Jewish communities played henceforth in the large imperial city centers like Thessaloniki, where the Jewish community was the largest ethnic group until the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars.

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Thus, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu has recently won an unlikely ally in Turkey’s thriving soap operas industry which, according to some scholars, is simply “increasing Turkey’s popularity in the region.” I still remember my shock when I entered a restaurant accompanied by two KFOR soldiers and discovered that Serbs in the northern Kosovo town of Ljeposavić are just as fond of Turkish soap operas as anyone else in the region. Local people were watching a famous Turkish soap opera with Serbian subtitles. Northern Kosovo is known to be a stronghold of Serbian nationalism and yet it appears that the Turkish soap opera industry has taken this stronghold by storm.

Another important form of influence and soft power largely employed in the entire region of the Western Balkans by Turkey is through the country’s many and powerful foundations and cultural centers. Let us briefly recall one of the more important points made in Strategic Depth: “Every mosque destroyed, every Islamic institution that disappears, every Ottoman tradition that is destroyed in a cultural sense in the Balkans means the destruction of a base stone of Turkish cross-border influence in the region.”

The preservation of Ottoman heritage is taken seriously by the Turkish government, and its auxiliary foundations like the TİKA or the Emre Foundations have embarked on campaigns of collecting private funds to restore mosques and madrasas across Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Albania. The Gülen Movement’s powerful educational institutions have also made headway in these areas along with the Turgut Özal Education foundation. Parallel to exporting culture and education, the Turkish government has awarded thousands of scholarships

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262 Bechev 2012, 144.
263 Davutoğlu 2001, 54.
264 See Remiddi 2013, 221.
265 Ibid.
to citizens of Macedonia, Kosovo, Bosnia, and Albania to study in prestigious Turkish universities like Boğaziçi University in Istanbul. These young students educated in Turkey are seen as future capital for influence in the region. Of course, the initiative is also clearly helping these small countries, as there can only be benefits to a more educated workforce.

These mechanisms for soft power influence are not always directed by the government but their effect can often be even greater than that of diplomatic initiatives and openings. In the case of Kosovo and Macedonia, Turkey’s influence has been mostly indirect with a large role played by soft power institutions.
Chapter Six

Conclusion

Despite its multi-cultural and multi-ethnic legacy, the Balkans remain a region of fragile ethnic peace. As the recently rising tensions along ethnic lines in Bulgaria demonstrate, especially in countries with weak economies and lower income levels, conflict may erupt at any time.266

For centuries Balkan nations have lived under the impression that their fate is being decided by more powerful countries and that there is little they can do to avoid becoming an object of international relations rather than playing any substantial role in them. In this respect, the most important concept of Turkish foreign policy engagement in the Western Balkans is “regional ownership” of peace initiatives and the idea that problems in the Balkans should be solved by Balkan countries themselves. However, such peace and reconciliation initiatives can only be led by a strong country that would have the leverage to influence other actors and compel them to work together. As we saw in the case of the trilateral consultations mechanism, Serbia is mostly compelled by Turkey’s potential for economic cooperation and investment. In addition, as I noted earlier, Turkey is perceived as a different kind of political actor, familiar with the problems of the region, as it is seen as part of the Balkans, and also “one of us”.267

266 This country has traditionally been associated with religious tolerance. In the city center of Sofia the main Mosque, one of the most important churches, St. Nedelya, and the Central Synagogue form a rather curious triangle with a distance of respectively approximately 200 and 300 meters between the buildings. However, this tradition of tolerance has been marred by extremist party Ataka’s recent activism and a recent attack on the Dzhumaya Plovdiv Mosque, a historical monument from the late 14th or early 15th century. About the attack see “Bulgarian Police Detain 120 after Mosque Attack,” Reuters, February 14, 2014. http://news.yahoo.com/bulgarian-police-detain-120-mosque-attack-213203406.html.

267 In Turkish icerden biri. Croatian Ambassador in Ankara Zoran Vodopija in interview for Diplomatik Gözlem. See note 57 on p. 16 above.
Turkey has notable ambitions to emerge as a regional leader that can only be seen as normal with regard to its size and vibrant economy. Turkey’s success in future initiatives will depend on its ability to address the importance of the Ottoman historical and cultural legacy in a more adequate manner. Rather than idealizing what is a controversial past, Turkish diplomats would do better to expand some of the other important concepts of the Strategic depth doctrine like the ability to grasp the flow of events — “flexibility”, — and, most importantly, regional cooperation and seeking solutions to problems through intense diplomacy and engagement with all important actors in the region. Neo-Ottomanist rhetoric has already done great damage to positive and fruitful efforts. Thus, it appears that is now time to reflect on the mistakes made and go ahead with the lessons from this experience.

As Bedrudin Brljavac rightfully notes, in order to succeed in establishing itself as a constructive regional leader and a model country, Turkey needs to address its internal issues, which does not seem likely anymore with the present government and prime minister in power. Perhaps the greatest self-inflicted damage, most of all to Turkey’s leverage in international relations, currently is the reputational and economic impact of the internal turmoil that started last May. The Turkish government’s response to the Gezi protests has definitely had a negative effect on the image of the country and its leverage in Balkan affairs. However, the civil protests could also be seen as a positive development in terms of Turkish politics as they show a determination by the public not to tolerate anything short of real civil liberties, freedom of speech and free media.

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268 Brljavac 2011, 88.
At the moment, after its success in recent local elections in March 30, 2014, AKP seems to be retaining its hold on power after proving capable of amassing enough popular support to retain control over most of the big cities in the country.\textsuperscript{270} The corruption allegations against the current government, together with its increasingly violent methods and the encroachment on civil liberties, the judiciary, and police indicate that the turmoil will likely continue.\textsuperscript{271}

However, even if a government change were to happen, I do not anticipate a major change in terms of foreign policy priorities and it is reasonable to expect that a highly developed economy like Turkey’s can recover and allow the country to continue to be an important player in the region.\textsuperscript{272} Recently, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu has continued his frequent visits in neighbor countries,\textsuperscript{273} as energetic as ever and the continuity that we discussed earlier in terms of the evolution of Turkish foreign policy and engagement in the neighborhood will likely bring similar policies in the future, even after a fundamental government change.

The trend created by Turkey’s active engagement in the Western Balkans and its bid to facilitate good neighborly and interethnic relations in the region will affect both relations in the region in general, as well as future initiatives led by Turkey, provided that it manages to achieve a certain maturity and tone down the historically related rhetoric searching for a reasonable middle ground rather than idealizing the Ottoman past.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{270} Although Ankara (in addition to several smaller places) was won by approximately one percent margin.
\item \textsuperscript{272} As already noted, Turkey’s opening towards the Balkans were conceived and started during the Özal era, intensified in the 1990s, and only transformed into more active diplomacy in the 2000s after the coming to power of AKP (see Bechev 2012, 136-139).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
In conclusion, both the European Union and the United States need an ally that is positioned to be at the same time an influential country and one that is considered “one of us” by local states but also by local peoples and ethnicities. Turkey should be assisted in its mediation efforts as it continues to be a key ally in a common quest for more stable relations in the region and sustainable development. The idea of multi-faceted approach to foreign policy is a reasonable and innovative concept as economic prosperity is a key element in overcoming ethnic tensions. The lack of sustainable economic development always carries the potential for instability as recent events in Bosnia and Bulgaria show. During his visit to Turkey in March 2011, Serbian Prime Minister Mirko Cvetković rightfully notes that “good relations between Serbia and Turkey constitute a critical contribution to stability in the Balkans.” Turkey’s trilateral consultations mediation initiatives can be seen as a beginning of a good trend in neighborly relations in the region. The very Balkan concept of komşu — your neighbor as someone with whom it is very natural to maintain good and open relations — promoted by an economically powerful Turkey still has the potential to bring good fruits and lead the region to a better future.

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274 Croatian Ambassador in Ankara Zoran Vodopija in interview for Diplomatik Gözlem cited on p. 16 above. In Turkish içerden biri.

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